

https://dspace.org/

The same in all but name: marriage, slavery, patriarchy and politics, Sierra Leone 1890–1990

Delius, Sarah

2022
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/34309

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

The Same in All but Name?
Marriage, Slavery, Patriarchy and Politics:
Sierra Leone 1890–1990

by

Sarah Delius

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Studies

University of the Witwatersrand

February 2020

Prof Joel Quirk _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor Joel Quirk provided unwavering support, encouragement and intellectual inspiration. He also provided me with research opportunities and work experience that are afforded to very few PhD students. Our wide-ranging conversations and his tolerance of my various intellectual detours were highlights in the process of researching and writing this PhD. His input and comments were critical to the completion of the project.

Trina Hogg helped me navigate my time at the Sierra Leone National Archives. She provided detailed and thoughtful comments on the early draft. Our chats have been key in shaping the project, and have always been hugely enjoyable.

To the groups who funded the project: the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development; the Governing Intimacies: Sexualities, Gender, and the State in the Postcolonial World; and the SSHRC Conjugal Slavery in War (CSiW) Project. Without their support the research would not have been possible.

Annie Bunting, Benedetta Rossi, Shireen Hassim and Christine Whyte offered support, help and advice. In the United Kingdom, Graham and Wendy Furnnis welcomed me into their home for many months while I was doing archival research.

In Sierra Leone, to everyone at Purposeful Productions and especially Chernor Bah, who not only helped and assisted in the research but also made me feel so welcome. To Joseph Kaifala for his support and friendship; our long chats enriched the project immensely. To David Makunga, without whom my upcountry trip to Kenema and Bo would not have been possible.

At the Sierra Leone National Archive, Albert Moore offered valuable assistance. His dedication to the archive and preserving Sierra Leone's rich history is truly inspiring. Abu Koroma continued to answer messages and offer assistance, even

though he was in Canada. Mustapha Kallon gave invaluable help in the archives and accompanied me to Kenema, making the journey both fun and productive. In Dust We Trust!

Irene Sansalvadore Stewart provided beautiful maps and support and friendship over many years. Laura Philips led our spartan writing regime in the last few months of the thesis.

There are many friends who must be thanked: Isabella Kentridge, Luke Spiropoulos, Nicole Beardsworth, Jana Mudronova, Jesse Harber, Micah Reddy, Thoko Jean Chilenga-Butao, Dineo Skosana, Palesa Nqambaza, Katie Smith, Steph Diepering, Grace Edy and Sharon Cort. Their friendship sustained me over the past four years.

My mother Harriet Perlman, sister Emma Delius and her partner Ian Gordon, gave continued help, love and support. Without their continuous cheerleading, this thesis would never have been completed.

To my father Peter Delius, my thesis may have nothing to do with the Pedi Kingdom, but your help and support have been invaluable. It cannot be easy as an academic to watch your child do a PhD, knowing how difficult the journey can be. You allowed me to make the mistakes you made yourself, as well as my own without any comment or criticism. There are also non-humans who need to be thanked: Toby and Lola (team thesis), thank you for being the best dogs a person could ask for.

ABSTRACT

Women and girls captured during times of violent conflict have frequently been forced to marry their captors. Following the recent civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), the Special Court for Sierra Leone determined that women who had been forced into wartime marriages had been subjected to a specific criminal offence that combined elements of sexual enslavement and 'forced conjugal association'. This ruling can best be understood as the latest in a series of attempts to classify and demarcate both slavery and marriage in Sierra Leone. Drawing upon a range of archival sources, this interdisciplinary dissertation explores how the intersecting categories of slavery and marriage have been defined and deployed from the late nineteenth century to the present day. The dissertation foregrounds three key concepts, namely kinship, households and rights-in-persons that have played a continuous yet constantly evolving role in the ways in which peoples in Sierra Leone have organised their political and personal relationships within an historical context chiefly defined by British colonial conquest and authority. In the colonial period, the persistence of domestic slavery was concealed or legitimated by references to 'marriage'. By maintaining a fluid definition of slavery and marriage, colonial officials maintained and extended their authority via local intermediaries. Though never entirely successful, these alliances were designed to maintain colonial authority. I show how women in rural Sierra Leone made the most of limited opportunities to challenge the prevailing status quo. It is a mistake to assume, as a number of recent analysts have done, that both the 1880s and 1990s are symptoms of an unchanging and immutable social order.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ..... **ii**

Abstract ..... **iv**

Table of ContentS ..... **v**

Acronyms ..... **vii**

People ..... **vii**

Honorifics ..... **viii**

Maps and Illustrations ..... **ix**

Introduction **1**

Core Argument 6
Literature Review 12
Marriage, Slavery And The Household In Africa 17
Methodology and archival sources 29
Organisation Of thesis 37

Chapter I: Political Authority, Rights-in-PersonS and the Household **41**

Introduction 41
Political Authority in Sierra Leone 42
The Household 62
Marriage, Slavery, Patriarchy and Rights-in-Persons 66
Conclusion 77

Chapter 2: Very Many Wives and Very Many Slaves **78**

Legitimate Commerce and the Abolition of Slavery 84
They did not have money: they had war 86
The Political Economy of Violence 93
Conclusion 107

Chapter 3: Burn Down the Town: Colonial Violence 1890–1914 ..... **109**

British Colonisation 1890–1896 111
The Captor's Captive: Violence and the Colonial Administration 1901–1915 124
Conclusion 144

Chapter 4: 'No Semblance of Scandal': Colonial Responses to Domestic Slavery, 1880–1930 ..... **146**

Anti-Slavery and Imperialism 1880–1926 148
Slavery in Sierra Leone 153
Benign Slavery 165
The Slave Trade up to 1928 170

The End of Slavery in Sierra Leone 180
Conclusion 187

Chapter 5: 'Founded on Purchase': Marriage and Slavery, 1880–1930 189

Abduction of Wives and Slaves 190
District Commissioners and the Courts. 206
Conclusion 220

Chapter 6: Marriage to Solve the Problem; Post-Slavery, 1930-1945 220

Sierra Leone and the Great Depression 223
The Immediate Aftermath of Abolition 224
Fictive Kinship 232
Post-Slavery and Gender in Sierra Leone 235
Gender and the Cash Economy 242
Native Administration and the Solidification of Chiefly Rule 246

Chapter 7: The 'Honey Trap' Element: 'Modernisation' and the Household after 1945 250

Sierra Leone and the Second World War 251
New Imperialism After the Second World War 256
The Transition to Independence, 1948-1961 264
The Young Men are Conscious 270

Conclusion: Marriage, Slavery, and the Civil War 287

Summation 293

Epilogue: Forced Marriage or Conjugal SLavery? 300

Bibliography 303

Archives 323

ACRONYMS

Armed Forces Revolutionary Council -	- AFRC
All Peoples Congress	- APC
District Commissioner	- DC
Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group	- ECOMOG
Consolidated African Selection Trust	- CAST
Revolutionary United Front	- RUF
Special Court for Sierra Leone	- SCSL
Sierra Leone People's Party	- SLPP
Sierra Leone Selection Trust	- SLST
West African Frontier Police Force-	- WAFF
United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone	- UNAMSIL

PEOPLE

T.J. Alldridge	- Travelling Commissioner
Bai Bureh	- Leader of the Hut Tax War
Frederic Cardew	- Governor of Sierra Leone 1894-1900
Captain Carr	- Captain in the Frontier Police Force
John Cooper	- Assistant District Commissioner in Liberia
A.B. Ellis	- Cornel West Indian Regiment
Fabundo	- Chief of the Luawa 1895-1912
Major Fairthlough	- Captain in the Frontier Police Force

G.H. Garret	- Travelling Commissioner
James Hay	- Governor of Sierra Leone 1888-1894
Kailondo	- Chief of the Luawa (d) 1895
Sir Charles Anthony King-Harman	- Governor of Sierra Leone 1900-1904
Lieutenant Lendy	- Lieutenant in the Frontier Police Force
Major William D. Lomax	- Major in the Liberian Frontier Police Force
Milton Margai	- President of Sierra Leone 1951-1964
Major A.C. Moore	- General Inspector Frontier Police Force 1891
J.C.E. Parkes	- Head of Native Affairs
Leslie Probyn	- Governor of Sierra Leone 1904-1910
Siaka Stevens	- President of Sierra Leone 1970-1984
Nancy Tucker	- Chief of Bagru
H.G. Warren	- District Commissioner Ronietta District
Madam Yokko	- Chief of the Kpaa Mende (d) 1908

HONORIFICS

Bai	- Paramount Chief and Descendants
Alimani	- Sub Chief (Temne); Paramount Chief (Lokko)
Santiggi	- Messenger for the Chief (North)
Kaprul	- Chief Advisor (Groups along the Rokelle River)
Mansa	- Paramount Chief (South Temne)
Alkali	- Leader of Port Lokko
Pa	- Title for Male Elder
Pa Masa	- Chiefly Speaker

MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Upper Guinea Coast 42
Geographic Map 44
Sketch Map of Makeni 1886 64
States in the 19th Century 79
Approximation of Slave trade Routes 87
Sketch maps of Tambi: 1892 97
Map of KAILONDO'S TERRITORY 106
Sierra Leone 1896–1906 118
Fa Bundo's Territory 1907 131
Kissi Field Operation 133
The Neutral Zone Between Liberia and Sierra Leone 138
Annexed Territory 144
Administrative Map Early 20th Century Sierra Leone 148
Map Showing the Kaffu Bullom Shore 160
160
Agricultural Sector Sierra Leone 244
Fines Given in Women Damage Cases – Kono 280
Court Returns Moyamba, Pujehun, Kono: Cases Relating to Women Damage, 1960–62 281

INTRODUCTION

Question: Was there any distinction between the position of a wife and a slave?

Answer: In name.

Captain Carr's response to David Chalmers

David P Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner and Correspondence on the Subject of the Insurrection in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1898: Part 2 Documents and Evidence', vol. C.9391 (London, 1899).

The Civil War in Sierra Leone has been viewed as one of the most brutal conflicts in the latter half of the twentieth century. The world watched in horror as stories of extreme acts of violence and cruelty, including amputation, cannibalism, the forced conscription of child soldiers, and rape appeared in the international media. One of the violent acts that became synonymous with the civil war was the abduction of girls and young women who were then given to soldiers as 'wives'. In the rebel camps these women were subjected to extreme physical abuse, forced impregnation, forced labour and sexual slavery. One ex-captive woman interviewed in Port Lokko in 2003 stated, 'We were all used as their wives, it is impossible for the rebels to capture a woman and not make her a wife'.[1] Some of these women were also forced to become fighters and participated in attacks on innocent civilians.[2] In 1998, Human Rights Watch released a report that detailed what had happened to these women. The rebels held

[1] CSIW project interview conducted in Port Lokko, 2003.

[2] Chris Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone* (London: Cornell University Press, 2009).

> these women and girls indefinitely and required them to perform a variety of tasks, such as preparing food. Women and girls may also have been abducted to care for the many young children captured by the AFRC/RUF. Some who have escaped report that the soldiers divide them up amongst themselves and refer to them as their 'wives'.[3]

After the war, the United Nations Security Council was asked by the President of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, to prosecute those responsible for the crimes committed during the ten-year civil war.[4] The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SPSL), which sat from 2004 until 2012, broke new ground in international law by adding the crime of forced marriage to the charge sheet.

However, it became clear early in the trial that forced marriage would not be as straightforward a crime to prosecute and secure convictions for, in comparison to torture, rape or abduction. Trying to unravel how to define forced marriage under international law opened up broader questions about how to understand war, slavery, and marriage in Sierra Leone and broader international instances of wartime enslavement.

More importantly for this thesis, the question of forced marriage before the Special Court raised questions about whether the abduction of women during the war was an aberration from social norms or an extension of marital roles and women's positions in local society during times of peace. Attempts to answer the question produced contradictory opinions. Dr Dorte Thorsen, an anthropologist tasked with researching the connections, opposed the idea that there was any connection between the customary marriage and wartime enslavement so vehemently that she declined to

---

[3] Human Rights Watch. 29 July 1998 Sowing Seeds Atrocities Against Civilians in Sierra Leone. https://www.hrw.org/report/1998/07/29/sowing-terror/atrocities-against-civilians-sierra-leone

[4] Joseph Kaifala, *Free Slaves, Freetown, and the Sierra Leonean Civil War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017).

conduct the research in its 'requested form' when asked to produce a report by the Special Court. She responded to the request as follows:

> My response is founded on deep concerns with the longer-term consequences of making straightforward links between complex social practices of arranging marriages between kin groups, international conceptualisation of forced marriage and the coercion of women into being bush wives during the civil war. Not only does such a simplification deny women – and young women in particular – agency in decisions relating to their own daughters' marriages, it also describes social practices as static and unresponsive to processes of economic, social and political change. Most importantly, I am worried that the requested research focus on forced marriage in West Africa endorses a general view on rural populations as backward and on their diverse social practices as the primary source of malevolence, sexual abuse and war atrocities.[5]

Thorsen's response was in stark contrast to the position taken by a male NGO worker in Sierra Leone who offered the following explanation: 'It's the same in war and peace; these little girls are sold into marriage by their parents; they are slaves in marriage. They are no more than slaves to their husbands'.[6] An academic offered a similar explanation in conclusion to a lengthy article about customary law in Sierra Leone arguing that, 'customary marriage in Sierra Leone might be considered an institution of sexual slavery'.'[7]

---

[5] Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL-2004-16-TL, 'Joint Defence Disclosure of Export Report on Forced Marriage by Dr Dorte Thorsen' (2006), 2.

[6] Chiseche Salome Mibenge, *Sex and International Tribunals: The Erasure of Gender from the War Narrative* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 123.

[7] Karine Bélair, 'Unearthing the Customary Law Foundations of 'Forced Marriages' During Sierra Leone's Civil War: The Possible Impact of International Criminal Law on Customary Marriage and Women's Rights in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone', *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15, no. 3 (2006): 552–607, 576.

At the heart of these diverging opinions is an attempt to grapple with and understand the complex nature of wartime female enslavement and in particular, why it played such a pervasive role in the Civil War. In addition, they raised questions regarding the broader nature of patriarchal power and the position of women in society and how this had changed over time.[8]

Another report commissioned by the SCSL in 2005 argued that wartime enslavement and peacetime practice could be distinguished by the fact that there was no familial consent in the former, 'no official ceremony of any form took place and nor was the consent of the parents sought'.[9] Therefore, these 'marriages' had no connection to customary marriage practices. The use of the word 'wife' by the rebels was symbolic of control. The term 'wife' essentially showed that the women belonged to a particular man and could not be touched by another.[10]

The practice of wartime enslavement in Sierra Leone was not a new phenomenon. In 1885, during a period of conflict that historians have termed the 'trade wars', a group of women told of their experiences after they were violently abducted:

> We thank the governor for his kind interference in our matter and saving us from the hands of our own countrymen who without provocation fell on us about 5 months ago; we experienced all manners of ill treatment at their hands. The whole of us females

---

[8] Patricia Viseur Sellers, 'Wartime Female Slavery: Enslavement?', *Cornell International Law Journal* 44 (2011): 115–42.

[9] Zainab H. Bangura and Christiana T. Solomon, 'Expert Report on the Phenomenon of 'Forced Marriage' in the Context of the Conflict in Sierra Leone and, More Specifically, in the Context of the Trials Against the RUF and AFRC Accused Only' (2005), 13.

[10] *Ibid*., 15

> became common use as wives to the Warmen, willing or not and were beaten with sticks and swords, besides cleaning, gathering wood and fetching water for their use.[11]

In both of these cases of wartime female enslavement, the women abducted from their homes were given to soldiers as 'wives' in order to perform domestic tasks, which women would traditionally do in a homestead, as well as bear children for their husbands. The women were also given to men who had proved themselves in battle and were considered loyal.[12]

The story of Asheh Cole, who was abducted during the siege of Mafwe during the Hut Tax War, provides another historical comparison. While her brother was sold north into Guinea, she remained relatively close to the location of her old home. She recalled in an interview in 1930 that,

> … she saw the house burning and heard the noise of iron sheets from the roof falling to the ground. At daybreak this party of Mendis, about 8 in number started off with her to Bumpe, the principle town of Chief Gruburu, who organised the attack on Mafwe. Arriving there on the following day they proceeded at once to the chief who instructed them to hand her over to his head wife stating he would marry her when she was older. Asheh Cole remained at Bumpe for about [a] month and during this time she was well treated and looked after by the wives. [13]

Young women being given to older wives in the compound for training was also a common occurrence during the civil war. Chris Coulter, in her extensive research on women in the RUF camps, described the Mammy Queens who were

---

[11] British National Archives (BNA) CO 267/360/21913. 19 December 1885. 'Execution for Two Men Convicted of Murder in the Recent Raids on Bendoo'. Enclosure No. 2.

[12] Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers*.

[13] B.W. Fitch-Jones, 'A Victim of the '98 Rising,' *Sierra Leone Studies* no. XVI (August, 1930): 2–18. 8.

charged with looking after the younger girls until they were ready to become the 'wives of soldiers'. In the camps, her [the woman interviewed by Coulter] role was to take care of the girls and she said that 'when a man found a girl he liked she would "do the marriage". …[she] was held in high esteem and had more authority over most women'.[14]

These cases, separated by over a century, raise the question as to why in a context where no legitimate marriage has taken place, women describe their relationships with their captors as being that of a wife. By extension, why do the experiences of wartime enslavement seem so similar? I explore the context in which these processes played out. Equally importantly, I trace the continuities and discontinuities in the intersection of marriage, slavery, and conflict from the 1880s until the end of the civil war.

CORE ARGUMENT

The central argument of the thesis is that the intersection between marriage and slavery in Sierra Leone was shaped by historical processes of struggle and conflict. In this changing context patriarchs sought to adapt mechanisms for controlling female reproductive and productive labour. But these changes were far from uncontested, and there were ongoing challenges by women to both the structure and language of gender relationships in Sierra Leone.

In order to understand the changing relationships, I focus on three key themes. The first is the relationship between the core and the periphery of political power. In

[14] Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers,* 106.

Sierra Leone after colonisation in 1896, there was a triangular relationship between the Colonial Office in London, the Colony of Sierra Leone, which encompassed most of the coastline, and the 'protectorate' or the interior of the country. The often tenuous colonial control over Sierra Leone was refracted through these different levels of administration, each of which left its imprint on policy and practice. This was far from a static relationship, and at different points in time the balance of power between the dimensions of administration shifted and were differentially influenced by interactions with wider interest groups. Of particular significance in this political dynamic were the resources of power commanded by pre-existing forms of political authority and the tenacity of pre-existing social relationships – especially in relation to gender, generation and slavery.

The second major theme is the importance of rights-in-persons in changing social relationships, since in many parts of Africa accumulating and controlling people (rather than land) underpinned political authority. Consequently, the productive and reproductive labour of women were a central mechanism of accumulating political power. I argue that as the socio-economic context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries unfolded, the centrality of women to the political project remained intact. The household, patron client relationships and kinship were central institutions to understanding how patriarchal structures mobilised control over people.

Thirdly, I contend that in order to understand social change, one needs to look at it from the perspective of the household. Patriarchal power did not go unchallenged. Many scholars have painted these relationships as static and unchanging, and have uncritically used ethnographic sources from the late nineteenth century to explain present day societies. I show that kinship networks as well as

domestic spaces are deeply political and contentious spaces. I argue that, in attempting to reconstruct a history of the household in Sierra Leone, it is crucial to explain social changes and conflict, and to allow the perspectives of men and women to inform the analysis. These relationships were fundamentally affected by colonialism and the abolition of slavery.

In this introduction I firstly unpack why I have used Sierra Leone as a case study. I then give an overview of the literature on the intersections between marriage and slavery both in Sierra Leone and more broadly. This is followed by an overview of my methodology and how I used the archives. Lastly, I provide a breakdown of the chapters.

Sierra Leone provides a highly appropriate unit of study for an enquiry into the intersections of marriage and slavery over time. In part, the country's importance in relation to these issues stems from the Civil War and the Special Court that sat in its aftermath and placed a powerful spotlight on gender roles. But its relevance goes far beyond this recent history.

The history of the region is intimately connected to the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the reconstruction of African social and economic relationships that it stimulated. The abolition of the overseas slave trade in 1807 also had major repercussions for the political economy of the colony. A particularly salient feature of its history was that domestic slavery in the interior of the colony (the Sierra Leone protectorate after 1896) was only abolished in 1928. Therefore, in the case of Sierra Leone, we can interrogate the nature of wartime enslavement against a rich historical backdrop and draw on a relatively rich source base (discussed further below), which makes it possible to identify key processes of change in power relationships, especially in relation to the major themes of this thesis.

The core period of study of this thesis starts with the Brussels Conference of 1885, which presented colonisation as an instrument of the abolition of slavery. This allows me to engage at the outset the extent to which anti-slavery was or was not realised in relation to Sierra Leone. It concludes in the 1990s, by which time key changes in the substance of gender and generational relations had taken place and the major social cleavages, which contributed to the Civil War, had been entrenched.

While the major period of the study is the decades of formal colonial control, the study does not take the view that colonialism and the colonial state created a complete separation from the pre-colonial past. Much of the literature pertaining to post-colonial Sierra Leone falls into this trap. Reid argues that 'a modern historiographical obsession with the colonial impact has frequently obscured long-term patterns'. [15]

This is of course a far from novel insight. Decades ago Ajayi and the Ibadan School pointed out that the colonial period was no more than an interlude in the much longer and deeper history of the continent, and that historians should be wary of overstating its transformative impact.[16] Herbst argues that the weaknesses of colonial power in much of Africa resulted in pre-colonial patterns of political authority continuing into the present.[17] Nonetheless one needs to interrogate the specific ways

[15] Richard J. Reid, *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 147.

[16] J.F. Ade Ajayi and E.J. Alagoa, 'Black Africa: The Historians' Perspective', *Daedalus* 103, no. 2 (1974): 125-34.

[17] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

and the extent to which colonial states reshaped African societies, and this will be one focus of this thesis.

Embedded in questions of periodisation is the nature of historical change. Continuity is important, but a continuity of form can sometimes disguise profound changes in the substance of social relationships. Marxist approaches to the issues of major periods of change or of rupture, stress that they are dictated by moments of crisis where class struggle reaches a point of intensity that creates a fundamental change in the relations of production.[18]

Applying class analysis to African societies raises the question of whether notions of class struggle rooted in European history can be translated into different contexts. This issue was a driving force in the development of the French school of Marxist anthropology and the works of Maurice Godlier, Claude Meillassoux and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch who all grappled with the question.[19]

The French school variously identified slavery, marriage, kinship, and generational relationships as sites of class struggle – and therefore change – over time.[20] While their work provided important questions and helped bring issues of

---

[18] Duncan Kelly, 'Karl Marx and Historical Sociology', in *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, ed. Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003), 11–26.

[19] David Seddon, ed., *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978).

[20] For the more specific discussion of models of production, see Maurice Godelier, 'The Object and Method of Economic Anthropology', in *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, ed. David Seddon (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978), 49–126; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Research on an African Mode of Production', in *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, ed. David Seddon (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978), 261–88; Claude Meillassoux, 'Kinship Relations

marriage, gender and generational struggle into sharper focus, the extent to which the notion of class and class struggle illuminates these dimensions remains open. It can also obscure the multiplicity of forms and locations of struggle in societies that play an important role in shaping social change.[21] As Thavolia Glymph aptly shows in relation to the Antebellum South: 'Unfortunately, gender wielded as a primary category of historical analysis often obscures as much as it reveals of the nature of the social relations between free and enslaved, white and black women in the plantation household'.[22]

A crucial problem in tracing social institutions from the past to the present is that one can fall into the trap of creating a linear narrative. The consequence of a teleological approach clouds the complexity of history by only focusing on a historical trajectory that affirms present outcomes and contexts. In Sierra Leone a linear approach would posit that the Atlantic slave trade begat colonialism, which begat domestic slavery, which begat post slavery, which begat patrimonialism, which in turn begat civil war.[23]

---

and Relations of Production', in *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, ed. David Seddon (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978), 289–330.

[21] Heidi I. Hartmann, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union', *Capital & Class* 3, no. 2 (1979): 1–33; Belinda Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1983): 139–71; Heather A. Brown, *Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).

[22] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[23] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1984). Many of us even grew up believing that this West has a genealogy, according

The consequence of this approach, Elizabeth and Eugene Genovese argue, is that 'much of Marxian social history has suffered from a quasi-teological bias, derived from eighteenth-century ideas of progress and nineteenth-century ideas of determinism that seriously undermine a flexible and fruitful reading of the past'.[24]

A study of social change over a century in Sierra Leone very quickly shows that history it is not, as H.E. Carr famously stated, a 'study of causes' which fit together in a neatly linear pattern proceeding from antiquity to the present.[25]

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the connection between the historical and the contemporary in Sierra Leone, one is able draw on rich literature. As was the case on the rest of the continent, academic studies on Sierra Leone accelerated with the development of the discipline of African Studies in the 1960s. Partly as a result of Sierra Leone's centrality on the West African coast and in relation to the slave trade, it has played a key role in some of the most important debates about the history of Africa.

---

to which ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, and Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution. Industry, crossed with democracy, in turn yielded the United States, embodying the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Such a developmental scheme is misleading, first, because it turns history into a moral success story, a race in time in which each runner of the race passes on the torch of liberty to the next relay. 4

[24] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, 'The Political Crisis of Social History : A Marxian Perspective', *Journal of Social Hitsory* 10, no. 2, 10th Anniversary Issue: Social History Today and Tomorrow (1976): 205–20.

[25] Edward H. Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1961).

The most influential of the early academic texts on Sierra Leone was Christopher Fyfe's 800 page magnum opus, the *History of Sierra Leone*, published in 1962, which remains one of the most comprehensive and impressive accounts of Sierra Leone's history up until 1900. Fyfe's book focuses on the Freetown Colony and the development of the Krio community (descendants of the freed slaves). A P.E. Hair, Peter Kup, J.D. Hargreaves, Kenneth Little and Michael Crowder all worked on the history of the Interior beyond the Colony of Sierra Leone.[26]

Although best known for his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney's *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-1800* is an even more important source for understanding the rich and dynamic history of Sierra Leone, and argues that the arrival of Europeans brought the institution of slavery to Sierra Leone.[27]

John Grace's *Domestic Slavery in West Africa with Particular Reference to the Sierra Leone Protectorate*, remains one of the most comprehensive studies of slavery up until its final abolition in 1928. His analysis shows how the British sanctioned and entrenched the institution of slavery in Sierra Leone, and how slavery played a central part in the social make up of society.[28]

---

[26] Peter Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone: 1400–1789* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962); J.D. Hargreaves, 'The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate and the Insurrection of 1898', *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, no. 1 (1956): 56–80; Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, Third 3rd ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1973).

[27] Walter Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press , 1970).

[28] John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa: With Particular Reference to the Sierra Leone Protectorate 1896-1927* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

Sierra Leone followed a similar historiographical trajectory to many other West African countries. With the rise of nationalism, the historiography shifted to understanding nationalist movements. Of particular importance is the work of Martin Kilson and John Cartwright, who show how political parties and the transition to independence was captured by the traditional protectorate elites. They also grapple with the decline of the Krio's elite dominance in the political sphere, the transition of the political parties of the SLPP, the later breakaway and creation of the All People's Congress (APC), and the rise of Siaka Stevens and final switch to dictatorial rule in 1978.[29]

However, Ismail Rashid challenges the idea that the decolonisation process in Sierra Leone was a politically smooth transition. He also argues that the creation of a peasant class fundamentally challenged elite control.[30] After the outbreak of the war and invasion of the RUF in 1991, most new studies on Sierra Leone were geared towards understanding the civil war. Issues related to state failure and transitional justices have also played an important part in the analysis of Sierra Leone.

Somewhat surprisingly, a significant gap in the analysis is the longer and deeper history of gender in Sierra Leone – as Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley notes:

> Up until the eve of independence the women of Sierra Leone had simply been left out of the scholarship of Sierra Leone; due to the fact that the scholarship [was] largely produced by European men. Since Independence, however, there are more Sierra

---

[29] John R. Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947–1967* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Martin Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966).

[30] Ismail O.D. Rashid, 'Patterns of Rural Protest: Chiefs, Slaves and Peasants in Northwestern Sierra Leone , 1896–1956' (PhD diss., McGill University, 1998).

> Leonean' [involved in the production of knowledge about the country but the subject of women who now make up 52 per cent of the population somehow continues to elude scholars.[31]

Surveys of 85 scholarly works written in the period 1961–1992 show that only nine percent of these works are about women. Even less of the literature is about women who were not Krio. This has somewhat been rectified since 1992, especially in anthropology, which in many ways has driven the study of women in Sierra Leone. The main focus of this research has been on female chieftaincy in Sierra Leone, and Lynda Day's survey of female chiefs over 200 years is an important contribution to the understanding of the evolution of elite female political power. Other historians, such as Carol MacCormack through her work on slavery in Sherbro, and Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley's PhD on the history of gender in northwestern Sierra Leone, have greatly added to the understanding/analysis of the position of women.[32]

Given the limited historical analysis on the gender history of Sierra Leone, I have drawn on social anthropology to illuminate women's position in Sierra Leone. The works of Caroline Bledsoe, Mariane Ferme, and Rosaline Shaw are important in understanding women's position within societies in the 1970s and 1980s in the lead-up

---

[31] Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley, 'Clapping With One: The Search for a Gendered 'Province of Freedom' in the Historiography of Sierra Leone', in *Paradoxes of History and Memory in Post-Colonial Sierra Leone*, ed. Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley and Ismail Rashid (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), 37–58.

[32] Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley, 'Women Power and Change in Northwestern Sierra Leone 1896–1993' (PhD diss., Howard University, 1997); Carol P. MacCormack, 'Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Delears: Sherbro Coast and Hinderland', in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, eds. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997), 271–94; Carol P. MacCormack, 'Control of Land, Labor, and Capital in Rural Southern Sierra Leone', in *Women and Work in Africa*, ed. Edna G. Bay (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), 35–53.

to the civil war, especially with regard to forms of kinship and marriage.[33] More recent ethnographic accounts that are key to understanding modern-day constructs of kinship, are those of Jennifer Diggins, who studies fishing communities on the Sherbro coast.[34]

Rosalind Shaw illuminates the enduring impact of the Atlantic slave trade through a study of divination rituals. Through locating the studies in the period in which the research was undertaken, it has been possible to a degree to overcome the limitations of the ethnographic present. The work of William P. Murphy, Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho has also informed my understanding of how historical change takes place at the local level of societies.[35]

The changing nature and interaction of marriage and female slavery has received even less attention. A scholar who has done very helpful research is Barbara

---

[33] William P. Murphy and Caroline H. Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory in the History of the Kpelle Chiefdom (Liberia)', in *African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Mariane C. Ferme, 'Consent, Custom and the Law in Debates around Forced Marriage at the Special Court for Sierra Leone', in *Marriage by Force: Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa*, ed. Annie Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance, and Richard L. Roberts (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015), 225–40; Mariane C. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Mariane C. Ferme, *Out of War: Violence, Trauma, and the Political Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019); Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[34] Jennifer Diggins, *Coastal Sierra Leone: Materiality and the Unseen in Maritime West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[35] Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho, 'Introduction', in *Powerful Presence of the Past: Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast*, ed. Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

E. Harrell-Bond, who analyses modern marriage and the operation of family law in the context of the 1970s, and has enabled me to identify key changes from the depictions in earlier ethnographic accounts. Bledscoe's work on marriage and women in Kpelle society in Liberia has also been helpful in my understanding of the everyday lives of women.[36]

More recently, Mariane Ferme has written about gender in relation to the civil war and how these intersections relate to peacetime practice.[37] The best account of this transition is in Chris Coulters', *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers*. In her conclusion she argues that,

> It was necessary to take into account context such as local notions of morality, gender and kinship in order to really understand my informants and post war experiences and why these experiences were commuted in the way that they were. Relationships between kin and affine constituted a large part of overall social organisation in Sierra Leone. Therefore I argue that is nearly impossible to understand some the sentiments of families and communities surrounding former female combatants and their bush husbands without knowledge how social relations are organised in Sierra Leone society.[38]

MARRIAGE, SLAVERY AND THE HOUSEHOLD IN AFRICA

This thesis draws upon literature from both Africa and beyond to compensate for the gaps in the literature on Sierra Leone. These bodies of literature relate to debates on

---

[36] Caroline H. Bledsoe, 'Transformations in Sub-Saharan African Marriage and Fertility', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 510 (1990): 115–25.

[37] Ferme, 'Consent, Custom and the Law'.

[38] Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers*, 243.

historical iterations of marriage and slavery, as well as broader historical studies about the moral economy of the household.

An issue when looking at marriage and slavery, is understanding how they became conceptually entangled. This is partly because slavery has often been used as an analogy for the treatment of women. When treated badly they are referred to as slaves; conversely when enslaved women are said to be 'treated well', they are [considered/referred to as] wives not slaves.[39] But while the analogy of marriage and slavery has been an important metaphor in fighting for women's rights, it has often muddied the waters by conflating bad treatment with slavery, a problem especially pronounced in relation to African women.

Marriage has often been used as an analogy to show how patriarchal structures have turned women into second-class citizens.[40] The fact that women have legally been the property of their husband has made the slavery analogy particularly telling. The American abolitionist and feminist Sarah Moore Grimké observed, 'The very being of a woman, like that of a slave, is absorbed in her master'.[41] Similarly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton explained that the very act of forcing a woman to change her

---

[39] Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007); Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Context of African Abolition', in *The End of Slavery in Africa*, eds. Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 485–503.

[40] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 269.

[41] Karen Sanchez-Eppler, 'Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition', *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988): 28–59, 31.

name when she gets married is an act of enslavement; a woman 'has no name! She is Mrs John or James, Peter or Paul, just as she changes masters; like the Southern slave, she takes the name of her owner'.[42]

Debates around marriage are central to these debates about the agency of women, since marriage is one of the key institutions that solidify broader societal understandings of gender and female agency.[43] Marriage is also key to understanding how patriarchal power is asserted and expresses control over women's productive and reproductive labour.[44] Nancy Cott argues that, in 'turning men and women into husbands and wives, marriage has designated the ways both sexes act in the world and the reciprocal relation between them'.[45]

The perception of slavery as synonymous with bad treatment of women is particularly important when separating marriage from slavery in Africa. To some extent this elision answers the question of why academics could suggest that 'customary marriage in Sierra Leone might be considered an institution of sexual slavery'.[46]

---

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] Nancy Rose Hunt, 'Placing African Women's History and Locating Gender', *Social History* 14, no. 3 (1989): 359–79.

[44] Pavla Miller, 'Gender and the Patriarchy in Historical Sociology', in *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, eds. Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003), 337–45.

[45] Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

[46] Bélair, 'Unearthing the Customary Law Foundations of 'Forced Marriages'', 576.

The concept that African marriage turns women into slaves has long been pervasive in Western writing. In this view, African social forms and practices almost never fit into European models of what is considered modern. In the evolution around debates about human rights in the eighteenth century, African societies were routinely located on the margins of the 'civilised'. Thorsen argues that the law very rarely engages with cultural differences, and thus overlooks the extensive research done on these societies.[47]

Marriage is notoriously difficult to define, and coming up with a universal definition is nearly impossible. Over the course of the twentieth century many anthropologists have debated what it means for people to be married. In 1949 George Peter Murdock defined marriage as a 'universal institution that involves a man and a woman/women living together, engaging in sexual activity, and cooperating economically'.[48]

This definition was quickly abandoned because in some customary marriages men and women live very separate lives, for example communities in Ghana, Indonesia, Zambia and eighteenth-century Austria. This definition also excludes all practices of polygamy, which have been common across the globe throughout history.[49]

---

[47]Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL-2004-16-TL, 'Joint Defence Disclosure of Export Report on Forced Marriage by Dr Dorte Thorsen' (2006).

[48] Quoted in Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (London: Viking Penguin, 2005), 41.

[49] *Ibid.*41.

Next the Royal Anthropological Institute made an attempt to define marriage as a 'union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both partners'.[50] Once again this definition was far too narrow. In certain societies in West Africa women marry 'female husbands', and the children born to the 'wives' from their lovers are considered legitimate. Similarly, before the nineteenth century in Japan, the idea of an illegitimate child did not exist. In certain parts of Sudan and China some people did not marry other people at all; they married the ghosts of dead members of the in-law's families.[51] In 1955, Edmund Leach argued that 'marriage should be seen as being more about regulating property than regulating sex and child rearing … marriage is the set of legal rules that govern how goods, titles, and social status are handed down from generation to generation'.[52]

Anthropologist Suzanne Frayner who, in the 1980s, used a sample of 62 societies around the world to try create a universal definition of marriage, argued that it is 'a relationship within which a society socially approves and encourages sexual intercourse and the birth of children'.[53] Leach and Frayner's definitions are the most useful when trying to locate the intersections between marriage and slavery. Both hinge their definition on the idea that the key to marriage is legitimacy. Coontz argues that marriage has been a crucial institution in setting up military and socioeconomic alliances. It organises the divisions of both class and gender within a society, manages

---

[50] *Ibid.* 41

[51] *Ibid.*41. n

[52] *Ibid.*, 44.

[53] *Ibid*., 43.

inheritance and property, and defines who is considered legitimate and who is considered an outsider.[54]

What is interesting about these definitions is that neither love nor the consent of the two parties getting married plays a central role in defining marriage. Marrying for love is a relatively new phenomenon. In order to really get to grips with the complexity of marriage today we need to understand that historically and cross-culturally, marriage has been regarded as far too important an institution to political and economic stability to be left to the choices of individuals, 'especially if they were going to base their decision on something as unreasoning and transitory as love'.[55] Only during the industrial revolution did the socioeconomic and political climate allow young couples to be far more financially stable and therefore independent from their parents to be able to marry whom they wanted.

However, defining marriage is not only about coming up with universal definitions, as these are often static and lack historical nuance. Throughout history marriage has played a central role in the human life cycle. How one defines 'legitimate marriage' not only changes over the longue durée of history, but from society to society and from person to person.

Just as complicated, and just as crucial to this thesis, is grappling with definitions of slavery and freedom. Once again, part of the problem in disentangling slavery from freedom is the way that debates have been constructed, as well as the politics behind those debates. In Africa the debate around the nature of slavery is

---

[54] *Ibid.*, 19.

[55] *Ibid.*, 19.

almost as old as the discipline of African Studies itself. In general, the debate has fallen into two camps. One camp argues that slavery in Africa was assimilatory and, in the long term, led to incorporation into kinship structures. The second more Marxist camp stresses class cleavages and enduring divisions. These divergent views can to a degree be explained by differences between societies. In the bigger, more centralised states there are clear class-based demarcations. However in smaller, more decentralised societies, which have been a more frequent occurrence in Sierra Leone, divisions are less pronounced, although by no means absent.

The key debates about slavery in Africa were strongly influenced by the seminal works by Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers' *Slavery Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspective,* and Claude Meillassoux's *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold.*[56] Meillassoux, Miers and Kopytoff agree that slavery always began as a violent act, and that the slave was initially treated as an outsider within the society. However, while Miers and Kopytoff argue that, over generations, slaves would become part of the society and lose their slave status, Meillassoux argues that kinship was the antithesis to slavery, and that these slaves and their children were assimilated into their master's societies.[57] Klein agrees with Meillassoux's analysis, noting that it better describes communities in West Africa.[58]

---

[56] Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, *Slavery Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977*)*; Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (London: Athlone Press, 1975).

[57] Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[58] *Ibid*., 159.

But one needs to remember that the extent of slave assimilation in African societies differed from society to society, and often from household to household.

Slaves have always straddled a complicated identity between property and humanity. This strict distinction comes from a post-enlightenment development of the individual rights of man. The consequence is that, in today's societies, we draw a sharp distinction between slavery on the one hand, and freedom on the other. Both Hans Joas and Kamari Clarke argue, however, that in order to fully understand the debates around human rights, one needs to understand their genesis and evolution, and not just make assumptions about their universal validity.[59]

Human rights are often seen as universally infallible truths, which can dictate which cultural practices are 'good' and which are 'bad'. However, as Knörr and Filho contend,

> It cannot be a society's 'good' or 'bad' traditions, values, and structures as such that lead to either integrative or violent interaction, depending on whether the 'good' or 'bad' ones are at work. Rather, the same traditions, values and social structures within a society may indeed have different – peaceful, integrative, violent – outcomes at different times, depending on the given historical, social, political, and economic context and dynamics of a given situation and setting.[60]

Julia O'Connell Davidson argues that 'liberal thinkers have long been concerned to draw sharp lines between slavery as a wrong or a logical impossibility

---

[59] Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2013); Kamari M. Clarke, *Fictions of Justice: The International Criminal Court and Challenges of Legal Pluralism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[60] Knörr and Filho, 'Introduction', 15.

and individual autonomy as a good and a right'.[61] In order to disentangle the relationship between freedom and slavery one needs to view it as a spectrum. Slavery and freedom are not binaries. In her analysis of female enslavement in the Ottoman Empire, Madeline Zilfi explains that 'in the context of human relationships, the polarity between free and unfree was rarely articulated in absolute or even oppositional terms'.[62]

The debate about the true nature of slavery would take up the entire thesis. However there is a seemingly universal theme running from ancient Rome to Sierra Leone, namely that there is 'no such thing as a typical slave'.[63] Some would have been captured and abducted during conflicts and raiding, some would have been traded and sold or given as gifts, while others would have been born into the houses of their masters. The lives and experiences of slaves have been as different and varied as the lives of free members of society, which range from desperate to powerful. Frederick Cooper sums up all these points, and his definition forms the basis for the definition of slavery used in this thesis:

> In daily life, no neat set of characteristics necessarily distinguished the slave from all others: people have been subordinated in many ways. But slaves, because they came

---

[61] Julia O'Connell Davidson, 'New Slavery, Old Binaries: Human Trafficking and the Borders of 'Freedom'', *Global Networks* 10, no. 2 (2010): 244–61.

[62] Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design Of Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14.

[63] Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), 329.

> from outside under conditions they could not control, lacked the local affiliations and knowledge of local society with which others could defend themselves.[64]

This difference sheds light on an important aspect in the definition of slavery, namely that society plays a role in deciding who is a slave. Orlando Patterson argues that, 'slavery, however, has never existed in a social vacuum. Like all enduring social relationships, it has existed only with the support of the community … A slave relationship, in short, requires at least the tacit support of those not directly involved with it'.[65]

An important component of understanding is how the enslaved themselves have coped in these circumstances. An influential debate in relation to this study has been the agency of slaves and their ability, to some degree, to make lives for themselves despite the 'hegemonic nature of the law'.[66] This perspective sheds light on the complicated household dynamics created in slave owning households. The relationships between slaves and 'slavers [should] be seen as more than just an oppressed-oppressor dyad, although it certainly was that too'.[67]

But one should not overstate how much agency ordinary people have – a caution which is especially pertinent when trying to understand the lives of enslaved

---

[64] Frederick Cooper, 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies', *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 1 (1979): 103–25.

[65] Orlando Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 10.

[66] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1976).

[67] Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent*.

women[68]: As Karl Marx once said, 'Men [and women] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, and given and transmitted from the past'.[69] This body of literature is particularly important in recreating the ways in which enslaved women understood their own positions within changing socioeconomic contexts.

In order to understand how the bodies of literature interact, one needs to create an overarching definition of patriarchy. I am not going to engage in the vast body of literature that seeks to define patriarchy.[70] My focus is on how structures of male domination play out at household levels. In particular, I examine the way in which the control of 'big men' over their dependants has adapted and been contested in changing historical contexts. In order to trace how this process has played out over time, patriarchy needs to be understood within the moral economy of the household.

Of particular importance in my approach to the concept of moral economy is the work of Richard Roberts and Emily Burrill, who draw on Thompson's idea of the moral economy to trace relationships of obligation within household spaces, and analyse how challenges to patriarchal structures can lead to violence.

The household is also an important prism through which to understand change and conflict. Changing contexts impact on established roles and expectations, which

---

[68] Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life-Stories from East/Central Africa* (London: James Curry, 1993).

[69] Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', *Die Revolution*, 1852, 5.

[70] Miller, 'Gender and the Patriachy in Historical Sociology'.

create tension and conflict. In the thesis I analyse how women used the arrival of soldiers, the courts, and the abolition of slavery, to create autonomous spaces for themselves. The resulting mass desertions of women created tensions between patriarchs and the colonial state over ways to control women.[71] Another important concept to understand is the power relationships between women. Thavolia Glymph aptly notes in her work on the antebellum American South:

> Ideas about what constitutes public and private, and differentiates them, are central to all of these matters. The notion of private/public assumes that the household is a family and thus private. This has made it difficult to see the household as a workplace and, beyond gender relations, as a field of power relations and political practices. Historians have long been interested in how questions of power and hegemony informed relations between slaves and slaveholders and between women and men. We have paid less attention to power relations between women. My task is to reconstruct, as best I can, the day-to-day practices of domination and its responding discontents within the antebellum.[72]

Essential to understanding the history of marriage and slavery in Sierra Leone is an analysis of the changing nature of patriarchy. The intersections of slavery and marriage are directly linked to preconceived and historical patterns of dependency and kinship. In her examination of Mende society, Ferme argues that to understand marriage and slavery and how they intersect, you have to understand this within the context of kinship and concepts of patronage.[73] To separate the identity of slave from

---

[71] Emily S. Burrill and Richard L. Roberts, 'Domestic Violence, Colonial Courts, and the End of Slavery in French Soudan, 1905–12', in *Domestic Violence and the Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Emily S. Burrill, Richard L. Roberts and Elizabeth Thornberry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 33–53.

[72] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 2.

[73] Ferme, *The Underneath of Things*.

a previous identity of dependency, including the identity of wife, is to misunderstand the conceptualisation of society in colonial Sierra Leone.

An historical understanding of dependency is critical to understanding how law, in relationship to women's position in society, needs to be seen as a product of a time when women were viewed as socially inferior. Ali shows the historical difficulty of defining slavery as a distinctive form of property. There has been a close relationship between the ownership of slaves and women's positions in law, as both have been considered legally inferior.[74]

METHODOLOGY AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Over the period of my research, I collected 64 000 individual photographic copies of documents. I spent three months in the Sierra Leone National Archive, carefully going through every single box in the upstairs rooms in the Kennedy Building, as well as many of the boxes downstairs. I also went to the Southern Provinces' archives in Bo and the Eastern Provinces' in Kenema. These boxes often contained letters of complaint to the district commissioner that yielded helpful insights into the issues of the day. I went through hundreds of court cases from the circuit courts, district commissioner courts, police courts, and supreme courts, which were often the only places where the voices of women were noted.

Several major incidents of violence and rebellion led to the appointment of commissions of inquiry that provided examples of ordinary people talking about their

[74] Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

lives. These include the Chalmers Commission of 1898, the Idara Revolt in 1931, the Boama and Luawa Disturbances in 1955, and the Cox Commission in 1955.

Some of these sources are often referenced in the thesis. The Chalmers Commission of 1898 and the Cox Commission of 1956 were especially valuable because of the sheer volume of evidence. The evidence collected in the Chalmers Commission amounts to 700 pages, which was used to produce a 200-page final report.

The Cox Commission has ten volumes of hand-written evidence – amounting to over 800 pages, and has a final report of over 300 pages. The Cox Commission generated enough concern in the United Kingdom (UK) to form part of the newly declassified Foreign and Commonwealth Office migrated archive documents.

Systematically and exhaustively processing this mountain of material generated some especially rich snippets of information about the lives of people, and allowed me moments of almost hearing the women's voices.

Using this approach I was able to find and use material that had been little used in previous studies. I also spent four months in the UK at the National Archives at Kew, the Cadbury Library, the CNS archives in Birmingham, the SOAS archives, and the British Library – drawing from various materials, including ethnographic accounts, and missionary and admiralty records. Working on these varied sources allowed me access to different kinds of voices and how they interpreted the society around them. Of particular use was looking at discrepancies between the documents related to the inquiries in Sierra Leone and the documents that were sent to the UK.

The digitisation of archives has also been of immense help. Websites like Proquest, John Matthews, GALE, and the Tubman Institute gave me access to hundreds of years of materials. Particularly useful were the early anthropological

dissertations written in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, when immersive anthropology was still the norm. I also had access to numerous newspaper articles from both international and Sierra Leonean newspapers.

I had hoped to be able to at least partially employ an ethnographic methodology for this thesis, and I received ethics clearance to interview women who had been victims of forced marriages during the civil war. However, given that I was there during the 2018 elections, it was very difficult to move around in the country. Although the elections were peaceful, people were nervous, since electoral violence had been a feature of previous elections. It therefore felt inappropriate to try to speak to people about the civil war.

I did conduct some interviews with the teachers at Sierra Leone Girls High School where I enquired into how marriage had change over the years, and had many informal chats with people during the election. These chats and interviews were of immense value to the thesis. Although I did not conduct many interviews myself, I consulted many transcribed interviews. Fortunately, many of the dissertations from the 1960s-'90s provided full transcripts of interviews conducted during research.

Given the volume and richness of the archival material that I located and processed, I realised I would not have had the time or resources to do in-depth fieldwork. I hope to be able to fill this gap in the near future. Both historical anthropology and social history emphasise the importance of listening to voices of people, even if they are only available in muted or fragmentary forms. When tracing history it is easy to focus on the big events, powerful leaders, and major processes –

such as colonisation and decolonisation – and to ignore how ordinary people saw and engaged with the world around them.[75]

Another difficult question was how one can use fractured and largely official colonial external sources as a means to grapple with social processes which have been under-documented and poorly understood. Researching such processes often involves reading between the lines of historical texts written by men who were often outsiders. Coquery-Vidrovitch argues that reports on Africa dating back to the tenth century written by Arabs, as well as European sources from the fifteenth century, were all dominated by 'men's affairs', and paid scant attention to the role of women, except as stereotypes. Women were depicted as 'princesses and Chiefs' mothers, slaves and concubines'.[76] Reports by missionaries focused on women mainly through the lens of proving how barbaric African 'pagan' societies were, and the exploitation of women was often exaggerated to illustrate the evil of practices like polygamy.[77]

The Sierra Leone Archives contained other stumbling blocks, for example the handwriting in the circuit court transcripts is very difficult to read. To make sense of the transcripts one has to make informed guesses about words they should contain. The clerks who did the transcribing also lacked consistency in spelling, which means that in some instances one has to assume that the same person is being referred to.

---

[75] Genovese, *Roll, Jordon, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*.

[76] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, trans. Beth Gillan Raps (Boulder, CO and Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 3.

[77] *Ibid.*

The clerks also made their own judgements when doing the transcripts.[78] The best example of the clerks themselves acting as gatekeepers between the historian and the people on paper, is found in the Cox Commission in 1956 after an uprising in the protectorate. The person taking notes doodled a smiley face on the side, and wrote little notes that read, 'RUBBISH'[79] and later 'BLAH'[80] and 'LUNATIC[81], and when someone was absent, wrote: 'I don't blame him'.[82]

However, a problem that remains with an historical analysis is not only how you analyse and understand historical time, but also how ordinary people fit into larger narratives of history. A second difficult question is how to use very flawed sources as the basis of your work. William Clarence-Smith aptly sums up the dilemma for the historian attempting to understand the past:

> History is in the first instance only a story or a legend. Past events are manipulated in order to produce a pattern, which reinforces the beliefs of the day. The only way in which the historian can subvert the recuperative present discourse about the past is by having recourse to documents. The essential guarantee of the authenticity of the document lies in the fact that it is a past and not a present sign. A historian is never a specialist of past events, it is impossible to know what does not exist. He is, however,

[78] Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

[79] Sierra Leone National Archive (SLNA), 'Cox Commission', Port Lokko, vol. III.

[80] *Ibid.*, 67.

[81] *Ibid.*, 69.

[82] *Ibid*., 17.

> a specialist of past signs. More accurately, he is a specialist of those past signs, which have survived into the present.[83]

These limitations beg the question of how to recover 'the voice' or to 'reconstruct [the] experiences' of women from archival sources.[84] Marisa Fuentes asks the obvious but nonetheless vital question of how it is possible to reconstruct a history of women in a context where they were buried in layers of documents written by those who sought to actively dehumanise them, and whose purpose was to entrench colonial, racist and patriarchal power relations.[85]

Fuentes seeks to rectify this conundrum of using historical sources that are 'partial, incomplete, and structured by privileges of class, race and gender'.[86] She argues that it can be done through the use of archival fragments, which allow for teasing out the voices of women in a way that does not reproduce the same problematic discourses that appear in the texts.[87]

---

[83] W.G. Clarence-Smith, 'For Braudel: A Note on the 'Ecole Des Annales' and the Historiography of Africa', *History in Africa* 4 (1977): 275–81, 277.

[84] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*.

[85] Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[86] *Ibid.*, 4.

[87] *Ibid.*, *4*

Florence Bernault uses the idea of the 'poetics of fragments'[88], and suggests that archival fragments can be untangled by thinking of these archival fragments as small microcosms of society, which links that fragment of insight into the lives of women to all the other fragments that one has acquired. This method asks large questions about small fragments, which will always remain incomplete and 'full of holes, incoherence and surplus of information'.[89] These gaps are what Ann Stoler refers to as the 'pulse of the archives'.[90]

Although pulses and fragments can aid the historian in 'voice recovery'[91], Toledano argues that 'voice' is not always the spoken or written words of the people whose lives one is trying to reconstruct, but also their actions. The idea of the voice needs to be expanded beyond 'mere utterances, verbal statements, and speech'.[92]

He argues that, 'actions speak louder than words' should be the central mantra of any historian conducting historical research, and that while evidence of what slaves 'said' is limited, what enslaved peoples 'did' is abundant'. In order reconstruct

---

[88] Florence Bernault, 'Suitcases and the Poetics of Oddities: Writing History from Disorderly Archives', *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 269–77, 274.

[89] *Ibid.*274.

[90] Ann L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[91] Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent*, 35]

[92] *Ibid.*, 35.

experiences, 'action and intention are almost inseparable'.[93] Toledano explains the methodology involved when the historian uses action as the basis of voice recovery:

> We shall first try to establish what enslaved individuals did, but immediately ask the questions. What did they intend by so acting? What did they want to achieve by their deeds? Since actions are not always intended and intentions are not always followed by corresponding actions, we shall try to weigh all the options available to a specific enslaved person at the time of his or her action, look at the choices made, and attempt to assess the motives.[94]

Toledano's focus on action was used to examine the lives of slaves in the Ottoman Empire, but this approach is also pertinent in the case of Sierra Leone. A prevalent and important example of action that requires analysis is that of women running away. Another important aspect of action to consider is 'commission and omission, - that is, not only what the enslaved did, but also what they did not do, whether by choice or by various constraints'[95] Through analysing women's actions or inaction, we can build up a 'bank of available options and consider the options of which the person could have been aware or unaware at the time of action or non-action'.[96]

Therefore, using fragmentation and pulses to build up and reconstruct the world in which these historical figures lived, we can try to extrapolate why they made

---

[93] *Ibid.*

[94] *Ibid.*, 35.

[95] *Ibid.*35.

[96] *Ibid.*, 35.

the decisions they did, based on their actions. However, Toledano cautions that actions cannot be uncritically analysed:

> For this kind of puzzle work, social historians will always need to use their imagination, albeit with due circumspection, to travel the distance between their own time and space and those inhabited by the people they study. We need constantly to move between carefully reading the texts, which we need to do with wide-open and critical eyes, and imagining the actual lives of the women and men with whom we deal, for which we often need to close our eyes.[97]

The pertinent point Toledano makes is that, in order to 'recover' people's voices and to try and rectify the dehumanising way in which they wound up in the archive to begin with, we need to treat them as human.[98]

ORGANISATION OF THESIS

In the first chapter, I outline the historical development of political authority in Sierra Leone. I set out and define the key themes that form the theoretical basis for the rest of the thesis, namely broadcasting power, rights in persons, and the household. In the first part of the chapter I look at the early development of societies, and how specific geographical and economic factors led to the development of fairly small, decentralised societies. These polities put primacy on the accumulation of dependants; especially women and slaves. A system of political control was created based on rights-in-persons in which the household was a key location of power and wealth.

---

[97] *Ibid.*, 35.

[98] *Ibid.*, 35.

This underlying social dynamic can – though in changing form and degree – be traced from the historical past to the present.

The first important 'moment' I examine is the effect of the arrival of Europeans and the increasing levels of violence associated with the Atlantic slave trade, and the later shift to legitimate commerce. During this period we see shifts in the importance of slavery, and how an increased demand for cash crops meant that men were gradually incorporated into agricultural practices rather than being sold into the Atlantic slave trade. This practice, as scholars have argued, created a slave mode of production, which the British encountered as they encroached from the coast. Their initial base was Freetown, a colony developed as the poster child of abolition and legitimate commerce. In this period we see the development of British colonial policy towards Sierra Leone and its difficult relationship with the abolitionist drive, which was one of the justifications for imperial expansion.

In the subsequent chapter I show how violence and the threat of violence in the formation of the colonial state in Sierra Leone shaped the administration's relationship with both its allies and enemies. I examine the impact that the construction of the colonial state had on older forms of political authority. Freetown's control of the interior was not just dictated from the coast, but was also shaped by pre-existing political economies and social norms, which played a role in determining the political-legal framework of the interior.

However, the colonial government realised that they could not rule through violence alone. The British, in order to maintain control in the protectorate, ignored and sometimes entrenched slavery. This contradiction brings to light an important dilemma of the colonial project, especially in Sierra Leone, which was that slavery underpinned the way that society was structured. The fact that slavery and other forms

of dependence – especially marriage – became intertwined, had dramatic implications for the way slavery was understood. In order to justify this contradiction, the British adopted the idea that domestic slavery was a benign if backward institution, which would slowly fade away as a result of modernisation and colonisation. However, in 1926 this camouflage could no longer be sustained, and the government was forced to abolish slavery in the protectorate.

I explore how the colonial entrenchment of slavery affected women. Previously women were central to wealth creation, and the number of women attached to a household was a key indication of economic and political power. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, control over women, and especially enslaved females, remained important to chiefly power in the protectorate, and wealth remained gendered at its core. Marriage consequently became a key site of conflict, and the lines between slavery and marriage became increasingly blurred. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, old notions of patriarchy, marriage, and the household were challenged by women through various methods, which included adultery, turning to the courts, and running away.

As in many parts of Africa, after the abolition of slavery collusion between chiefly power and the colonial governments meant that there was continuity in the structures of political authority that existed before abolition. The lack of real structural changes after abolition meant that rural societies continued to rely on various types of servile relationships and labour, and women and marriage remained vital to political success. Indeed, in some ways control over women became even more crucial to success in the mid-twentieth century. I also show how during this period women were increasingly marginalised in agriculture, which was an economic

sector in which they had been given some scope for economic independence prior to colonisation.

But World War II initiated important processes of change. The strategic position of Freetown as a harbour port saw increased funding for both the colony and the protectorate. Britain became much more interventionist in a colony that had previously mostly been ignored. The shift in the relationship between London and Freetown did not end after the war, and a new form of interventionist colonialism continued the modernisation project. In many other African colonies these changes contributed to the emergence of mass-based nationalist movements. However, in Sierra Leone the political processes of decolonisation followed a different path in which the older traditional authorities became increasingly powerful in the central government of Freetown. At the same time, the expectations of young people shifted and they grew increasingly frustrated with the increasing power of chiefs. These struggles show that the nature of the post-colonial society was not simply determined from on high but also shaped by more grassroots struggles, which sharpened gender and generational cleavages. The deepening in divergent expectations and heightened social tensions provided a fertile seedbed for the development of the struggles that came to the fore in the civil war.

CHAPTER I: POLITICAL AUTHORITY, RIGHTS-IN-PERSONS AND THE HOUSEHOLD

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I look at the historical development of political authority in Sierra Leone. I set out and define the key themes that form the theoretical basis for the rest of the thesis, namely broadcasting power, rights-in-persons, and the household. In the first part of the chapter I look at the early development of societies, and how specific geographical and economic factors led to the development of fairly small, decentralised societies. These polities put primacy on the control of dependants, namely women and slaves, creating a system of political control based on rights-in-persons in which the household was a key location of power and wealth. I also show how rights-in-persons was highly gendered. This underlying social dynamic can be traced – in changing form and degree – from the historical past to the present. These forms of accumulation of power also provided fertile ground in which patrimonial relationships could flourish.

In seeking to highlight these dimensions, I use broad brushstrokes, and do not prioritise periodisation. Of course none of these social elements are static and unchanging, and they will be more fully located in time and place in subsequent chapters.

POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN SIERRA LEONE

UPPER GUINEA COAST



It would be incorrect to think of Sierra Leone prior to 1896 as a single unit of historical analysis, or to project colonial boundaries back into the pre-colonial past. [99] The fluidity of the borders was aptly described by the district commissioner in 1902

[99] Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

when he stated that, '[t] he present boundary is merely an imaginary line and is, of course, of no practical value'.[100]

Although the chapter uses the name Sierra Leone, one must remain cognisant that even after the colony was created, its boundaries were fluid and changing. Suzanne Schwarz and Paul Lovejoy aptly state that the name 'Sierra Leone has meant different things at different times'.[101] It was first used by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century to describe the 'steep range of hills on the peninsula, a feature of the landscape, which was striking in contrast to the low-lying land of the adjacent coastline'.[102] However, by the early nineteenth century the name Sierra Leone was used to refer to the colony created by the British in 1808. As the nineteenth century continued and the colonial project was underway, Sierra Leone came to encompass different political units, the colony, and the protectorate, which would eventually become the independent state of Sierra Leone.[103]

In order to get around this complicated issue, Sierra Leone will be explored as part of the historical region of the Upper Guinea coast. The focus in this chapter is on

---

[100] BNA CO 267/463/39856, 24 September 1902. 'Kissi Disturbances', Acting Governor Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Thomas Henstock to the Right Honorable J. Chamberlain MP.

[101] Paul E. Lovejoy and Suzanne Schwarz, 'Sierra Leone in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2015), 1–28, 4.

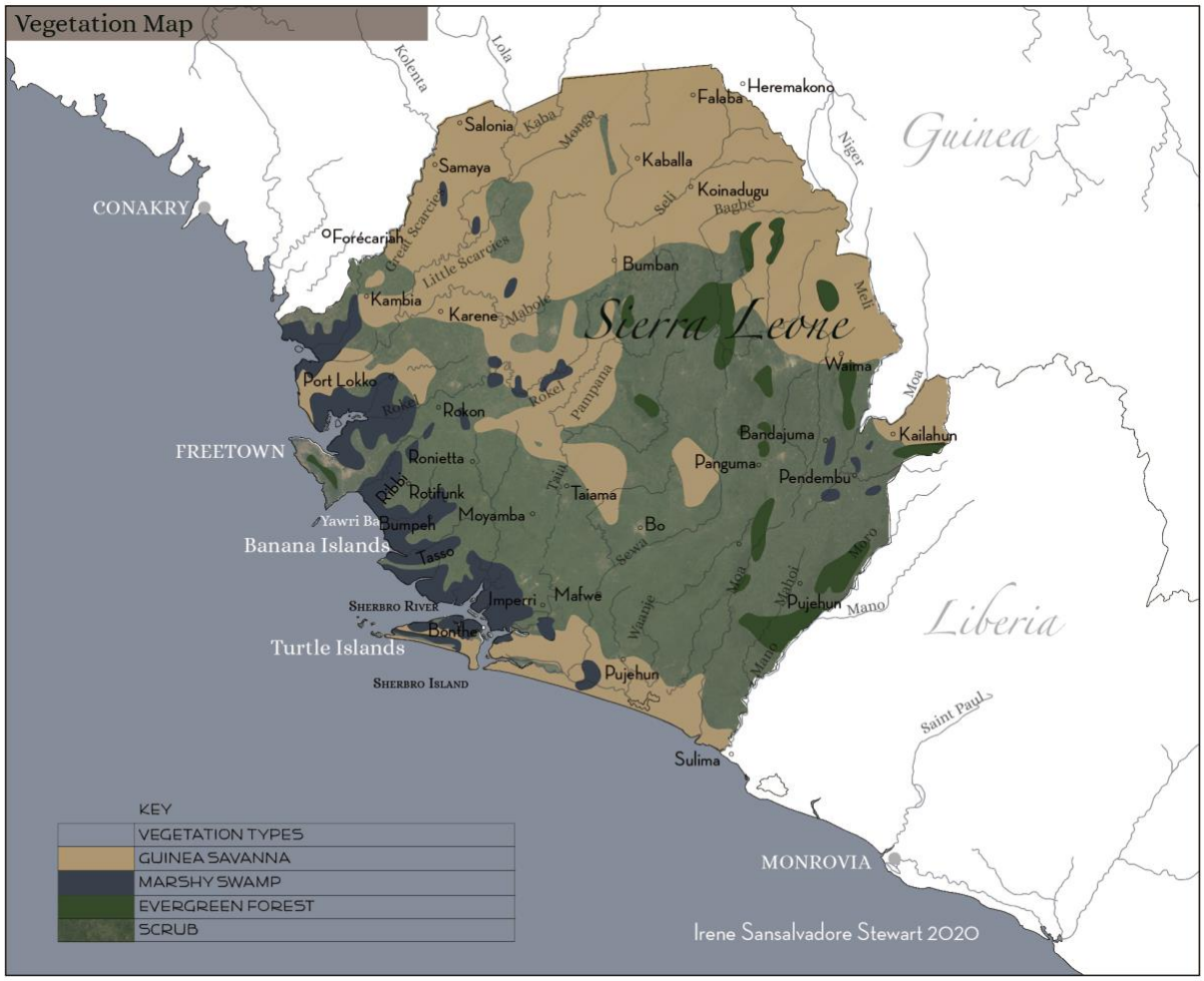
[102] *Ibid.*

[103] *Ibid.*

the lower half of the region, running from the Nunez River in Guinea to Cape Mount in Liberia.

Given that geography plays such an important role in historical definitions of Sierra Leone, it is unsurprising that the location of Sierra Leone has been a crucial factor in the region's socioeconomic and political history. The country is situated on the coast of West Africa, with Liberia to the south and southeast, and Guinea to the east and northeast. It covers a range of geographic zones, with mangrove swamps running along much of the coast, and forested areas in the south and southeast. In the north are the Guinea Savannah and the Loma Mountains.

GEOGRAPHIC MAP



A forested fertile area below the Gambia River increases in density the further south you go. Sierra Leone also falls within the Tsetse fly belt, which makes keeping cattle and horses a challenge at best.[104] These environmental factors have shaped the process of statecraft. Creating large political units straddling this varied ecology would have required a multiplicity of techniques for political control, which would have been costly and difficult to maintain.[105] Toby Green points out:

> To the south of the Gambia River lay a more fertile forested area that stretched south to Sierra Leone, generally known as Upper Guinea. In contrast to the Senegambian region, this area was characterised by smaller-scale, decentralised political units that flourished in an area of marshland and swamps, which made centralised control hard to impose.[106]

The region has been continuously inhabited since 2500 BCE, or what is known as the Guinea Neolithic.[107] There is evidence of communities living in rock shelter sites, and iron tools and pottery have been found in early village settlements. In the northeast of Sierra Leone, archaeologists excavated two iron-smelting sites in the

---

[104] J.C. McCann, 'Climate and Causation in African History', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 2–3 (1999): 261–79.

[105] Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*.

[106] Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 33.

[107] B.W. Andah, 'The Peoples of Upper Guinea (between the Ivory Coast and the Casamance)', in *General History of Africa*, vol. III: *Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, ed. I. Hrbek and M. El Fasi (California: Heinemann and UNESCO, 1988), 530–58.

1970s, and found thousands of small statues and artworks dating from the first to the fourth century AD, which were attributed to a group called the Nomoli.[108]

Linguistic history has also helped historians to locate the early inhabitants of Sierra Leone; the earliest inhabitants were the Mel, Limba, Temne, and Bullom groups. From approximately the twelfth century, Mande-, or Mandinka-speaking groups started moving towards the coast. Some have argued that these groups arrived after fleeing the disintegrating empire of Ghana in the twelfth century.[109] However, in the fifteenth century Portuguese travellers described this diverse group of people as falling under the Kingdom of the Sapes.[110]

In the fifteenth century, Mande (the Mane) groups began to arrive in the south. This invasion became one of the first documented major political events in the history of Sierra Leone. Most scholars agree that the Mane invasion came in two waves, the first of which began in the early fifteenth century and was exceptionally brutal.[111] The Mane were finally defeated by the Susu in 1640. The first Mane invaders are thought to be the forebears of Mende speakers – the largest language group in Sierra Leone.[112]

---

[108] *Ibid*.

[109] Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone: 1400-1789*.

[110] George E. Brooks, 'Ecological Perspectives on Mande Population Movements, Commercial Networks, and Settlement Patterns from the Atlantic Wet Phase (Ca. 5500–2500 B.C.) to the Present', *History in Africa* 16 (1989): 23–40.

[111] Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545–1800*.

[112] Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

The second Mande invasion came from the south, and created the Kquoja Kingdom, possibly in the seventeenth century, which established its capital at Cape Mount in Liberia. The Vai, who inhabit the south of Sierra Leone and the north of Liberia, originate from this area. Another consequence of the arrival of these groups from the south is that they displaced other groups, like the Kono, who were forced deeper into the forests to the east of the country.[113] The nature of the African state, especially the decentralised state that developed in the Upper Guinea coast, is a much debated topic. Emily Osborne argues that states can be defined as,

> … structures of formal authority that exert political supremacy over their subjects and that provide formalized protection to people in exchange for the sacrifice of some degree of independence or autonomy. States typically offer basic rules or principles of exchange and dispute resolution, and they may also be informed by a belief system and corresponding set of rites and rituals. In some states, only members of certain families may occupy leadership positions, whereas other states employ a variety of criteria for determining who may wield authority. Many states are highly flexible and knitted together by patron-client, marital, and kinship ties, but the state nonetheless exists as an autonomous, identifiable political institution that stands apart from, or independent of, any one person, officeholder, clan, or kin group.[114]

This complicated and multifaceted view of the state is of particular significance for Upper Guinea, since it encompasses all the variations of political units one finds in Sierra Leone. Osborn makes another important point that is critical for this thesis, in that she distinguishes between states and statecraft. She argues that

---

[113] Adam Jones, 'The Kquoja Kingdom: A Forest State in Seventeenth Century West Africa', *Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde* 29 (1983): 23–43.

[114] Emily L. Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here: Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State from the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press), 5.

'state refers to a product, and statecraft refers to a process'.[115] The distinction is important because analysing political power as 'process' allows one to 'consider the dynamic forces and relationship that give form to a particular polity'. The 'dynamic forces' that I focus on in particular are the interaction of gender dynamics with patterns of state formation.[116]

As Jeffrey Herbst observed, the 'fundamental problem facing state-builders in Africa – be they precolonial kings, colonial governors, or presidents in the independent era – has been to project authority over inhospitable territories that contain relatively low densities of people'.[117] A range of factors, including endemic diseases and relatively difficult environments for humans to master, meant that population levels remained low. This reality, combined with the high levels of migration meant that wealth and power were derived from controlling and accumulating clients and subjects rather than occupied land.

As a consequences of low population densities spread over large geographically challenging areas, Herbst contends that African states were 'states without fiction'. These states described a scenario where political units extended as far as they were able to 'broadcast power' or exert control, and this formed the boundary of the state rather than a territorial border.[118] In the Sudanic states further

---

[115] *Ibid.*

[116] *Ibid.*

[117] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11.

[118] *Ibid.*,11.

into the interior of West Africa, control could be enforced via cavalry as well as large numbers of infantry, and in areas where rivers were navigable, through militarised canoes. However, forested areas presented far more challenging environments for military manoeuvres, and broadcasting power and controlling populations in such terrains proved more difficult.[119]

The difficulties in controlling the periphery of a political unit contributed to relatively high levels of mobility. The combination of low population densities and the availability of alternative land meant that if people found that conditions under which they lived were unsatisfactory, they could leave relatively easily and find other places to settle.[120]

But mobility was not without difficulties; conflict could take place between the original inhabitants and the new arrivals. In some cases the old inhabitants would have to flee their homes and settle somewhere else – in turn displacing the population of the new area. In periods of intensified conflict and warfare, not having a powerful patron was a highly risky condition, and families and groups endured harsh treatment rather than expose themselves to new dangers. People moving into new areas did not necessarily result in conflict. However, the process of assimilating new groups shaped the creation of 'land-lord stranger relationships, which played a key role in the development of political units in West Africa'.[121]

---

[119] *Ibid*.

[120] John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

[121] Igor Kopytoff, 'The Internal Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture', in *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana

The landlord-stranger relationship was fundamental to the way in which societies constructed their identities, hierarchies and lineages. Christopher Fyfe and V.R. Dorjahn describe this process in the area of Rowula, in the centre of the country:

> … the first chief of the Kolifa area, Masa Kama Koranko, gave permission to one Pa Bambara, a Kamara, to hunt the southern part of his domain and settle if he wished. To strengthen his position, Pa Bambara married a daughter of Masa Kama, and ultimately some of their descendants founded the chieftaincies of Mayoso, Mabang, and Mamunta, all subordinate to Rowala.[122]

The oral tradition collected by Fyfe and Dorjahn has been corroborated by many sources. But in the report on Native Law in 1902, a British Colonial Officer, Geo Page, reported that,

> A person desiring to settle among the tribe usually expresses his wish to the paramount chief using a Lavari or Speaker as an intermediary. A meeting generally takes place in the presence of the elders of the tribe and a present – [the] amount according to the means of the applicant is tendered. On the present being accepted a plot of land on which to a build a house as well as land to farm are given, but the entrant does not as a rule become an elder, although in the course of time any of his descendants may do so.

University Press, 1989), 4–84; Bruce L. Mouser, 'Landlords-Strangers: A Process of Accommodation and Assimilation', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no. 3 (1975): 425–40.

[122] V.R. Dorjahn and Christopher Fyfe, 'Landlord and Stranger: Change in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone', *The Journal of African History* 3, no. 3 (1962): 391–97. Most ethnographic accounts throughout the history of Sierra Leone stress the importance of the landlord-stranger relationship. For more comprehensive accounts from various periods, see: Kenneth L. Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition* (New York: Routledge and London: Kegan Paul, 1951); Thomas W. Northcote, *Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone: Part 1: Law and Custom of the Timne and Other Tribes* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1916); Frederick W.H. Migeod, *A View of Sierra Leone* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1926); and Thomas J. Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony: Sierra Leone, As it Was and As it Is; Its Progress, Peoples, Natives, Customs and Undeveloped Wealth* (London: Seeley & Co. Ltd, 1910).

> He is always a stranger. He holds his lands on good behaviour, observes the country laws, and pays obedience to the Paramount Chief.[123]

The landlord-stranger relationship gave primacy and status to groups who first arrived in an area. They would then give permission for other groups of people to settle in the area. The new population, or 'strangers', would make alliances with the original group. These connections would be replicated over time as more and more people moved into the area.[124]

The assimilation of people took diverse forms. More powerful groups with access to more resources would be welcomed, and alliances through marriage would be created. People with fewer resources, for example those fleeing wars or conflict, would be given protection on much less generous terms.[125]

People would often move away from one 'landlord' to another. In a context where there are no official borders, gauging where the political authority of one group ended and another began, was difficult. Fluid borders created 'inter-statial' areas between societies where political control was weak.[126] These undefined peripheries created 'perpetual frontiers', and populations tended to move further and further away

---

[123] SLNA, 'Report on Native Laws and Customs of the Ronietta District and Physical Distribution and Political Organisation of the Sherbro District'. Geo. W. Page 30.01.1907.

[124] A. Endre Nyerges, 'The Ecology of Wealth-in-People: Agriculture, Settlement, and Society on the Perpetual Frontier', *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 4 (1992): 860–81; Murphy and Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory', 391.

[125] Murphy and Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory'.

[126] Nyerges, 'The Ecology of Wealth-in-People'.

from the centres of political power until they reached inhospitable environments, or encountered the spheres of influence of other social groups.[127]

In this context, control over people became a key source of power. As Jack Goody argues: 'politically, chiefship tended to be over people rather than land; these leaders had to attach rather than restrain. The conditions for the forms of domination that were obtained in the European Middle Ages hardly existed.'[128] Kopytoff argues that, 'traditionally African kin groups had an insatiable demand for people and jealously guarded those they already had'.[129]

Wealth-in-people created political authority grounded on the incorporation of people. This end was achieved through a variety of forms, including clientage, polygamous marriage, taking captives, and slavery. Slavery was particularly important. As one district commissioner suggested in 1907: '… slaves are counted as property and form the main source of wealth of the principle people of the country'.[130]

Since polities were not territorially defined, state power had to be reflected through networks rather than land. The best basic model to illuminate political authority that incorporates the difficulty of 'broadcasting' power and the landlord-stranger relationship, is provided by Max Weber's concept of the patrimonial state.

---

[127] Murphy and Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory'.

[128] Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (Tiptee, Essex: The Anchor Press Ltd, 1971).

[129] Kopytoff, 'The Internal Frontier', 43.

[130] SLNA, 'Report on Native Laws and Customs of the Ronietta District and Physical Distribution and Political Organisation of the Sherbro District'. Geo. W. Page 30.01.1907.

This model describes a system of government where power is exercised through personal connections and linkages between those in power and their dependents.[131]

By extension, state mechanisms of control are mediated through a large network of rulers and sub-rulers radiating outwards from the central figure in power. Most importantly for the study of states, this individual and his allies hold power over the legitimate use of violence.[132] These relationships are based on a moral economy of loyalty, protection and exchange. A district commissioner, D.J. Maxwell, reported that in Sierra Leone these networks would be made up of the following groups:

1. Chief or sub-chief
2. The official advisor of the chief
3. The ordinary freeman native to the chiefdom
4. Freemen, generally strangers, in the chiefdom under the protection of a member of one of the above groups
5. Freemen who are under an obligation and are bound to render certain services to a member of one of the groups 1, 2, or 3
6. Persons in pledge

---

[131] Anne Pitcher, Mary H. Moran, and Michael Johnson, 'Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa', *African Studies Review* 52, no. 1 (2009): 125–56.

[132] Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*; Allen M. Howard, 'Re-Marking on the Past: Spatial Structures and Dynamics in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain: 1860-1920s', in *The Spatial Factor in African History: The Relationship of the Social, Material and Perceptual*, eds. Allen M. Howard and Richard M. Shain (Leiden: Brill: 2005), 291–349; Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here;* William P. Murphy, 'Patrimonial Logic of Centrifugal Forces in the Political History of the Upper Guinea Coast', in *The Powerful Presence of the Past: Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast*, eds. Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 25–53.

7. Slaves[133]

The freemen were an elite group from which official advisors were chosen, and who approved the accession of the chief. It was also from this group that chiefly advisors where chosen. Maxwell describes group four as 'all other natives of other chiefdoms or of other people'. Group four was fairly socially mobile: 'In time [when] they settled down and intermarried with the natives of the chiefdom and showed their intention of becoming permanent inhabitants they were admitted to all the privilege of group three (ordinary freeman)'.[134]

Groups five, six and seven could be considered as under the protection of any of the first four groups. In exchange for this protection they would help the latter on their farms. These could be a poorer 'freeman who put himself or herself under the protection of a more powerful neighbour to prevent attack and enslavement'.[135] When the threat of war diminished, people would ask for help in the event of famine or other forms of economic difficulty.

In the slave strata:

> A third class was formed by the gradual upward progress of slaves. The descendants of slaves of the house were in most respects indistinguishable from freemen, they could not be bought and sold, they were allowed to hold property and the only condition distinguishing them from the members of [a] group were that they were bound to render

[133] BNA CO 267/503/16672/9 May 1908. 'Native Law and Custom'. Report by Dr J.C. Maxwell, District Commissioner.

[134] *Ibid.*

[135] *Ibid.*

> certain services to their normal master and that they had not the right to move with their property to any other chiefdom.[136]

Slaves were often located in separate villages, unless they were attached to the chief's household – usually as a wife or the child of a slave wife.

> In former times, the slave rarely lived in the larger towns. His place was usually working on his owner's land and doing his master's will. So long as he worked in conformity with his master's wishes he was generally well treated and a wife was given to him, and he had a portion of land allotted to him for his own use. As his family increased, a small township sprang up.[137]

Thomas Northcote, a British government anthropologist, described the life of slaves in 1916;

> A slave got his own farm if he behaved well; and his master was responsible for feeding him, at any rate for as many days in the week as the slave worked for him; his rice was his own and [he] could utilise most of it for his own purposes, though a tribute of rice was due to his master. A slave worked for himself on his free day or days.[138]

Anthropologists gathering oral evidence later in the twentieth century corroborated this pattern. Kenneth Little paints a similar picture in the 1940s and '50s, describing how '[s]laves captured in war were set down to cultivate land or to clear virgin bush.

---

[136] [136] SLNA, 'Report on Native Laws and Customs of the Ronietta District and Physical Distribution and Political Organisation of the Sherbro District'. Geo. W. Page 30.01.1907.

[137] BNA CO 267/503/16672/9 May 1908. 'Native Law and Custom'. Report by Dr J.C. Maxwell, District Commissioner.

[138] Northcote, *Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone,* 160.

Houses were built for them, wives found amongst other slaves, and villages grew up adjacently, as a rule, to the compound of their owner'.[139]

Enslaved people were both inheritable and passed their status down to their children. Thomas also states that the status of wife would not change if a woman married a freeman.[140]

Dr T. Hood, the district commissioner of Ronietta, when asked to clarify the status of children born to enslaved people, responded that if a free woman married a slave her children would be slaves. If a freeman married an enslaved woman, their children would also be slaves, and their 'owners would therefore be allowed to sell them'.[141]

Societies were structured around a 'big man' (or in some cases a woman)[142] who controlled women, children, slaves, and young men attached to the household. Most of them answered to a more powerful big man. In varying degrees these patriarchal households were seen as part of structured hierarchies of power, which

---

[139] Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone*, 79.

[140] Northcote, *Anthropological Report*.

[141] Sir David P. Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner and Correspondence on the Subject of the Insurrection in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1898' (1899), 888.

[142] Sierra Leone has a long history of female paramount chiefs. There is a long debate about the extent to which their power was bolstered by colonial rule: see Lynda Day, *Gender and Power in Sierra Leone: Women Chiefs of the Last Two Centuries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2012). Lynda R. Day, 'Nyarroh of Bandasuma, 1885–1914: A Re-Interpretation of Female Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone', *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 3 (2007): 415–37. Although female chieftainship is an important part of the history of Sierra Leone, this thesis cannot go into extensive detail on how it would have affected gender relationships.

were often expressed in clan or lineage terms. Each subset 'merged with the next circle of tribute-paying polities, straining at the centre's political leash'.[143]

Little argues that in Mende society the households generally comprised one or two older patriarchs who controlled the household; their wives, their sons and daughters, and the latter's respective wives and children. In earlier periods when slaves were attached to households and given property, according to Little, one household could consist of 40 households and 120 people.[144]

The best way to explain these hierarchies is through a 'nested' model of kinship, where the hierarchy of a household would 'nest' within a similar hierarchy of a village, which would then reproduce over a larger geographic area until you reached the highest level of authority, namely the paramount chief. [145]

If networks were the cornerstones of political authority, then power would converge in one central point. Allen Howard contends, using central place theory,[146] that from a 'central place' resources and tribute moved both in and out, and were either maintained or diverted to another point. He observes: 'If mapped, the networks would appear as spokes radiating outward, linking towns to other towns and smaller

---

[143] Murphy, 'Patrimonial Logic of Centrifugal Forces', 43.

[144] Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone*.

[145] Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*.

[146] Murphy and Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory'; Howard, 'Re-Marking on the Past'; Allen M. Howard, 'Big Men, Traders, and Chiefs: Power, Commerce and Spatial Change in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1865–1895' (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972).

settlements',[147] and 'the settlements and networks would ultimately converge with a single household'.[148] The household is a critical site of enquiry in the thesis.

A Weberian approach helps to illuminate this ethnographic approach, and allows for a more dynamic and multifaceted analysis, which can illuminate how larger processes link together through networks of patron-client relationships. This provides greater scope for analysing the part played by ideology and gender, and constructs of values and beliefs, and struggles for power.[149] A Weberian approach also avoids the problems created by reifying kinship relations and mistaking the ideology of social relationships for their substance. Not least of all, a focus on kinship can underplay the fact that the accumulation of people who are kinless is fundamental to the accumulation of power and wealth.[150] In Sierra Leone, as elsewhere in Africa, a key objective of buying slaves was to increase the member numbers of households, which added prestige and power to the homestead heads and increased the numbers of people who could work the land.[151]

---

[147] Allen M. Howard, 'Re-Marking on the Past , 312.

[148] *Ibid.*,312 .

[149] Holton Robert, 'Max Weber and the Interpretative Tradition', in *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, eds. Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003), 27–38.

[150] Peter Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1983).

[151] Trina L. Hogg, "Our Country Customs': Diplomacy, Legality, and Violence on the Sierra Leone Frontier 1861–1896' (PhD diss., New York University, 2013).

An important part of connecting both men and women within these networks were secret societies. Elements of statecraft in pre-colonial Upper Guinea were often mediated and articulated through both male and female secret societies. Although there is some debate, most scholars believe that these societies originated in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries.[152]

These societies (the most famous being the Poro for men and the Bundu for women) allowed links and connections between separate and often remote communities, and were both hierarchically and horizontally organised. Powerful members of the societies were often high-ranking men and women.

The societies were crucial for conflict resolution, as well as for securing military aid. They also controlled judicial proceedings and made important decisions around harvests. Hogg argues: 'In general, the society was decentralized in small chapters or 'lodges' but came together in larger groups when big decisions needed to be made which affected a larger territory'.[153] Meetings would take place in the 'Poro-Bush'.[154]

Poro and Bundu societies have long been shrouded in mystery, and were often at the centre of accusations of witchcraft, cannibalism, and later the infamous human leopard societies. This was partially because they provided a bridge between the temporal and spirit worlds.[155]

---

[152] Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of African Societies to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[153] Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here*, 26.

[154] Hogg, "Our Country Customs', 20.

[155] *Ibid.*

Young men and women would join a particular society at puberty, when they would be separated from their community and initiated into the world of adulthood through various rituals. These spaces were strictly off limits to members of the opposite sex and non-members, and penalties for infractions could be as severe as death. In 1880, Thomas Alldridge describes an initiation ritual:

> The Bundu is a society that affects only women, and it is worked with even greater secrecy than the Poro. The Bundu bush, where the young girls are trained … These young Bundu girls are under the entire control of some of the elderly women of the town to which the Bundu is affiliated; the country laws in connection with the Bundu are so severe that for any man to penetrate within its sacred precincts would probably mean death. It is in the Bundu that the girls are initiated into certain secret country customs appertaining to their sex … it not infrequently happens that a child of nine or ten years of age is betrothed before entering the Bundu, and is kept there at the expense of her fiancé until she is of marriageable age.[156]

There are many accounts of the Poro in the archive, as it was a constant source of anxiety for the British, since it was seen as a possible source for the mobilisation of anti-colonial resistance.[157] In the case of women, the Bundu bush was also where circumcisions took place, another aspect of the societies that remains highly contentious to this day.[158] There is, however, very little evidence pertaining to female circumcision, and very few ethnographic accounts have mentioned that it happened;

---

[156] Thomas J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London, New York: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1901), 136–140.136

[157] The anxiety about the Poro was increased after the Mau Mau rebellion, and several reports were commissioned. These can be found in the newly declassified archives that form part of the F.C.O. 141 series.

[158] Hogg, ''Our Country Customs''.

although it is mentioned in the Chalmers Commission.[159] Roy Lewis, in the 1930s, writes:

> The great cult for women and girls in the Protectorate is the Sande of Bundu. It is a secret organisation with closed doors to female uninitiated and men folk. It exists among all the tribes with varying modifications and carries different local names … In whatever locality and among whatever tribe it is found however, clitoridectomy is universally practiced. The main object of the organisation is to instruct in the tribal qualities of womanhood and of wifehood, in domestic economy, dancing, singing, midwifery, nursing, fishing and in every tribal religious rite that concerns women.[160]

What is also puzzling is the disinterest by the colonial administration of Sierra Leone in female circumcision. In Kenya in the 1950s there was an outcry colonial officials and missionaries over female circumcision that never took place in Sierra Leone.[161] The only references to Bundu by the colonial government is in terms of 'women's welfare':

> The welfare work among girls continued to be organised in the Moyamba and Pujehun districts through the medium of the Bundu Society, the scheme being financed from the Protectorate Mining Benefits Fund. Eighteen teachers underwent courses of instruction in welfare work, who after training passed on the knowledge they had gained in such matters as domestic science, needlework, mothercraft, general health and sanitation, to girls concentrated in the various Bundu camps. Eleven camps were held attended by 531 girls, 468 of whom passed the prescribed tests. The Paramount Chief of Bari Chiefdom in Pujehun District recorded his opinion that the 'system is a renaissance in our traditional homes and customs and we like it whole-heartedly, and wish to see it introduced to other

---

[159] For secondary sources, see: Carol P. MacCormack (Hoffer), 'Bundu: Political Implications of Female Solidarity in a Secret Society', in *Being Female: Reproduction, Power and Change,* ed. Dana Raphael (The Hague and Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1975), 155–63; Caroline H. Bledsoe, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

[160] Max Gorvie, *Old and New in Sierra Leone*, Africa's Own Library, vol. III, no. 9 (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1945), 45.

[161] Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2003).

> parts of the Protectorate.' Other Paramount Chiefs wrote of the scheme in the same strain, and Madam Woki, Paramount Chief of Blama Gallinas Chiefdom, expressing approval of the camp held in her chiefdom, said the zealous teaching of the welfare workers would give girls ideas 'of how a woman should make a comfortable home even when she is married to a most primitive husband.'[162]

Therefore, although circumcision does play a complex role in gender history in Sierra Leone, the thesis cannot engage with the topic in any depth.

THE HOUSEHOLD

Although patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism are often deployed as a tool to interpret political structures in Sierra Leone, these concepts have not been as effectively used to analyse power at the grass roots. In Sierra Leone these networks infiltrate to the level of the household where they often merge with relationships predominantly described in kinship terms. William Murphy suggests, in relation to the Upper Guinea coast, that 'kinship provides the unifying conceptual structure that binds the entire political system'.[163] But, as noted above, the fact that it played a key conceptual role for the people of the region does not mean that it provided a complete picture of social relationships, or expressed the critical role of individuals without established kinship networks.

Osborn has argued that because people were the central point in wealth accumulation, creating a state in pre-colonial Africa was synonymous with creating

---

[162] 'Annual Report on the Sierra Leone Provinces for the Year 1947', Freetown, Sierra Leone,.

[163] Murphy and Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory', 27.

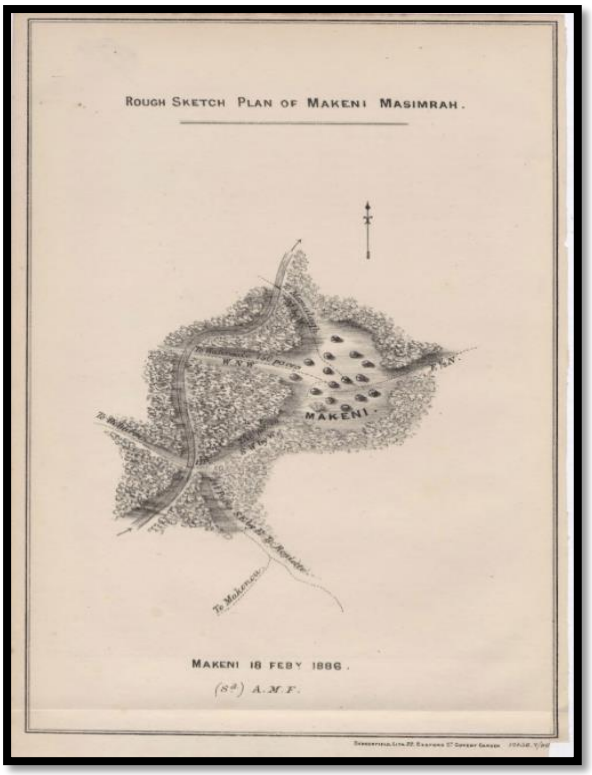
households.[164] The household becomes the location of power and conflict/resistance – an observation which is central to this thesis.

The importance of the household as a unit of historical analysis in Africa is not a novel approach. Household as a concept draws on a Marxist analysis of class struggles and how they manifest in domestic spaces. Megan Vaughan argues that the household can be 'regarded as a unit of production, controlling access to resources such as land and labour and making joint decisions about the allocation of such resources'.[165]

[164] Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here*, 4.

[165] Megan Vaughan, 'Household Units and Historical Process in Southern Malawi', *Review of African Political Economy* 12, no. 34 (1985): 35–45, 35.

SKETCH MAP OF MAKENI 1886



BNA Africans West 429. Correspondence Respecting Native Disturbance in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone

However, she cautions that we must be wary of uncritically using the household as a unit of historical analysis since it separates the household from broader networks, and from internal differentiation between women.[166]

The household as a unit of production emphasises the role of conflict and tensions that have historically played out in domestic spaces and how these spaces are

[166] Megan Vaughan, 'Which Family? Problems in the Reconstruction of the History of the Family as an Economic and Cultural Unit', *Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983): 275–83.

more broadly linked to larger processes of societal transformation.[167] As noted above, while kinship provides a partial conceptual map and carries a significant set of values, it should not be reified. There has been a long and extensive debate about the definition of kinship and how to separate biological connections from social ones. Once again, I do not wish to go into a detailed analysis of how Sierra Leone fits into the broader debates about the exact nature of kinship. In this thesis I broadly think of kinship as 'social management', and a way to conceptualisation and legitimation, which juggles a set of 'rules' and relationships regarding how societies fit together and relate to each other. The idea of kinship as social management is particularly advantageous because it is a useful mechanism for understanding how gender, marriage and slavery are 'managed' by various groups.[168] Social management is also an interesting way of thinking about how societies have changed over time along with shifting socioeconomic contexts and the ways in which groups of people 'managed' themselves.

I argue that defining kinship is less important than historically tracing how it has been used. Arguments about kinship hierarchies are often presented in the language of conflict and through claims to legitimacy. However, it was largely the accumulated power of leaders that determined the outcomes of disputes. Kinship became the ideology through which dominance was expressed. This does not mean that it was without force but simply that kinship systems were far from fixed, and

---

[167] Vaughan, 'Household Units and Historical Process'; David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984).

[168] Linda Stone, *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction*, 4th edition (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 2010), 2.

their impact has to be analysed in interaction with a range of other factors.[169] The continuities and discontinuities between kinship and fictive kinship, forms of clientage and slavery, the expectations associated with these social forms, and how they have changed over time, are key factors that I explore further in the chapters that follow.

MARRIAGE, SLAVERY, PATRIARCHY AND RIGHTS-IN-PERSONS

Highlighting the household as a historical unit of analysis also foregrounds the central role of women and their changing roles in society. Osborn argues that an investigation into the relationship between states and households is helpful as it 'exposes how major forces of historical change' have affected gender roles. Osborn further suggests that 'the effects of changes did not unfold evenly and affect unilaterally all members of a given society or state; rather, those processes typically operated along an axis of gender, affecting men and women differently'.[170]

The different effects on men and women of changing socioeconomic realities often resulted in conflicts and tensions within the domestic space. It was also a crucial context in which relationships between slavery, marriage, and gender were renegotiated.[171] The changing role that women played in politics is particularly

---

[169] Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us.*

[170] Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here*, 4.

[171] Emily S. Burrill, *States of Marriage: Gender, Justice, and Rights in Colonial Mali* (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015).

contentious in the context of Sierra Leone where there were very powerful female chiefs.[172]

In a context where people were the cornerstone of power control over women, the crucial productive and reproductive roles they played was especially important in the accumulation of power by patriarchs at all levels.[173] As the rest of this thesis will show, competition and conflict over women has played a central and recurring role in the history of Sierra Leone.[174]

Margaret Strobel suggests that women were at the core of three different types of reproductive labour, namely daily reproduction, biological reproduction, and the reproduction of relations of production by the transmission of ideologies, which support the whole social structure.[175] The ability of powerful leaders to control women's sexuality and young men's marriage prospects, ensured the exercise of considerable control over the labour of men and women.[176] Lyn Thomas shows that in Kenya this resulted in conflict:

> Relations of inequality have long entailed struggles over who should control women's sexuality and who should reap the rewards of and bear the responsibility for their

---

[172] Lynda Day argues that increased militarisation in the nineteenth century had a dramatic impact on the political power of female chiefs.

[173] Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here*.

[174] Brett L. Shadle, *'Girl Cases': Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya 1890–1970* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006).

[175] Margaret Strobel, 'Slavery and Reproductive Labor in Mombasa', in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, eds. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997).

[176] Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Research on an African Mode of Production'.

> fertility. The politics of the womb draws attention to elites' persistent efforts to regulate reproduction and the continual challenges that they faced from juniors and dependents, subjects and citizens.[177]

Marriage also played a fundamental part in statecraft. Ties were crucial to the formation and consolidation of both economic and military alliances;[178] Alldridge, although writing in 1910, draws on observations going back to 1871:

> Occasionally, when a chief or big man wishes to show some particular regard or esteem for an individual, or to recognise some service rendered, or to form some special alliance, the custom is, or rather was, until quite recently, to give a girl or daughter in marriage. The gift of a chief's daughter being one of the greatest honours that can be bestowed, the acceptance of such a young wife is always followed by a lavish display of presents, which usually far exceeds what would have been given had the bride been wooed and won in the ordinary commonplace manner.[179]

The alliances between households were a cornerstone of statecraft, and marriage played a critical role in forming and reinforcing supportive networks. To consolidate power, chiefs would arrange marriages with other high-status families to their daughters to create larger networks of relationships. Marriage was not only a tool to unify the families of elites; ordinary people who were not previously kin could be incorporated into existing lineage and kin groups through marriages.[180] As Osborn argues, 'political elites use the household as a foundation for statecraft, and they

---

[177] Thomas, *Politics of the Womb*, 7.

[178] Coontz, *Marriage, A History*.

[179] *Ibid*.

[180] Howard, 'Re-Marking on the Past.

deploy marital bonds and familial ties to build and organize the state'.[181] Thus, if the creation of the household was key to wealth, women and slaves were the foundations on which many of these societies were built. As Brett Shadle contends in his study on marriage in Kenya, 'big men' – the wealthy and important – built their success on the productive and reproductive powers of their wives'.[182] Although it would be impossible to trace all the various forms of marriage that took place over the specific timespan of the thesis, there are certain similarities that allow us a general picture from which the rest of the analysis can proceed.

The first stage of the marriage was a betrothal. This could take place in several ways: the man could approach the woman himself and give 'her a small present of Kola such as a headkerchief, a head of tobacco, a few beads, threepence or sixpence, or any little thing which she accepts if she is willing to favourably consider him'.[183] J.S. Fenton describes a similar process in the 1930s where a prospective husband would give the girl a 'present of friendship'.[184]

Another mechanism of betrothal, which contributed to the difficulties of disentangling marriage and slavery, was the case of early betrothal. This was when a young girl was engaged to a man while she was still a baby. When old enough, the young girl would be taken to the house of her husband and placed in the care of his

---

[181] Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here,* 2.

[182] Shadle, 'Girl Case', 7.

[183] E. Dudley Vergette, *Certain Marriage Customs of Some of the Tribes in the Protectorate of Sierra Leone* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, Sierra Leone, 1919), 6.

[184] J.S. Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone* (Freetown: Government Printer, 1948), 23.

wives, and eventually become a wife herself. This was often the fate of young enslaved girls. According to Dudley Vergette:

> These young children were taken by the man who had marked them to his place, where they were put in charge of his headwife or other female relatives, and were treated practically as slaves (unless they were of course from an exceeding good family).[185]

The young girls were however not always separated from their families from a young age. In some instances, the future husband would pay for the upkeep of the girl and expenses, such as the cost of Bundu society where she would be initiated. Later these costs may also have included school fees. These costs would be offset against the cost of the bridewealth paid to her family.[186]

During the second phase of the engagement, a female relative of the prospective husband or, if married, his first wife, would open negotiations. During these discussions the bride price was negotiated and agreed upon. Initially the bride price would have been paid in kind, and would have included country cloths, kola nuts, beads and other valuable goods. However, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cash became increasingly important. The marriage ceremony would take place a few days later if the women had already been initiated.

If there were more than two wives, they generally had a house to themselves:

> … wives followed in the order as they are married. The first wife married is the big wife, and then they follow in regular gradation. The big wife has possession of the keys

[185] Vergette, *Certain Marriage Customs*, 6.

[186] Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*; Vergette, *Certain Marriage Customs*.

> of the boxes and store cupboard. She gives out rations and apportions the work and duties to be performed.[187]

The arrival of a new wife, whether she was enslaved or free, could always create tension. As Page observes, for 'the husband lavishing his affections on the new comer to the exclusion of his wives'[188], the consequence would be increased levels of conflict between the wives.

Bridewealth payments, where the man's family 'pay' a certain amount in gifts to the woman's family as a dowry, are widely prevalent. The misunderstanding around the relationship between marriage and slavery was often based on the idea that by giving bridewealth a woman was effectively paid for. For example:

> Women are regarded as of small consequence by these people. They are made to work in the farm and cook food for the husband while he remains idle. When a man wants a wife he goes to the parents and haggles over the price to be paid. In Sierra Leone a wife costs £3 to £4, but the price varies a good deal. The sum is paid in the presence of witnesses and the woman becomes his wife. Polygamy is the rule among pagans as well as among Mohammedans. The wife has no rights; the husband can flog her or maltreat her without the woman having any chance of redress. Girls are married at twelve, and in many cases even at nine and ten.[189]

In contrast to this perspective, academics argue that paying bridewealth illustrated the centrality and importance of women in African societies. Barbara

---

[187] SLNA, 'Report on Native Laws and Customs of the Ronietta District and Physical Distribution and Political Organisation of the Sherbro District'. Geo. W. Page 30.01.1907.

[188] *Ibid.*

[189] Captain A.H.W. Haywood, *Through Timbuctu and Across the Great Sahara: An Account of an Adventurous Journey of Exploration from Sierra Leone to the Source of the Niger, Following its Course to the Bend at Gao and thence Across the Great Sahara to Algiers* (London: Seeley Service & Co. Ltd., 1912), 31.

Cooper argues that bridewealth represented how central women were to the success of a family. A woman leaving her family meant that they were losing a valuable asset. Carol MacCormack argues that it was 'emphatically not the case' that bridewealth meant wives and slaves were the same; once again 'idioms of kinship' dictated the differences. In the case of slaves, 'the payment symbolised a relationship of bondage in which the slave could not leave their master'.[190]

Bridewealth was also a representation of the social worth of the bride and the solidification of a relationship between two families.[191] The relationship solidified the right of children to inherit and be given a legitimate place in the household and the broader kinship group; they could therefore contest for leadership positions.

Wives were very rarely 'sent' to new kinship groups without their consent, and if the marriage broke down there were processes of arbitration that could resolve the issue or initiate processes that would result in divorce. Equally, if a family was concerned about the treatment of a daughter they could intervene.[192] If a woman chose to divorce her husband, the bride price would have to be returned. However, if the woman wanted a divorce for ill-treatment, the family would be allowed to decrease the amount returned. In many cases the dowry returned was lessened if the woman

[190] MacCormack, 'Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Delears'.

[191] Barbara M. Cooper, 'Women's Worth and Wedding Gift Exchange in Maradi, Niger, 1907–89', *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 121–40.

[192] MacCormack, 'Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Delears'.

had lived with her husband for a long time. However, if the husband divorced the wife, no dowry was returned.[193]

The consent of enslaved women was not sought when they were sold and relocated into a new household. Most significantly, enslaved women who had been severed from kin, and those who could protect them, had no recourse to family support if mistreated.[194] MacCormack argues that polygamous men,

> … had slave wives, but conceptually and functionally they were inferior to wives married with a proper gift of bridewealth, since they could not function to link one kin group with another … These women were considered useless in political alliances making, only their labour and their procreative abilities were seen as benefits.[195]

But the position of female slaves in households was not immutable. Dudley observes the different relationships that slave women could form, and the particular consequences of these relationships:

> If a man cohabits openly with one of his slave women she becomes a free woman and her children are free, and as this is looked [on] as a proper marriage the father has the custody of the children.
>
> A slave woman living with a free man who has paid redemption money to [her] owner becomes free and the marriage is good and the father is entitled to the custody of the children in which case the husband will redeem the parents and the other near relatives of the wife, even if he has to borrow money to do so.
>
> A slave woman's children by a slave man or by a free man who has connection with her secretly only, are slaves, and the property of the owner of their mother who has custody of them, if a freeborn women has a child by a slave man with whom she has

---

[193] Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*.

[194] MacCormack, 'Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Delears'.

[195] Carol P. MacCormack, 'Wono: Institutionalized Dependency in Sherbro Descent Groups', in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 181–204. 187

> been living secretly the child is freeborn and the mother is the owner of the children and entitled to its custody.[196]

The hierarchy shows the liminal position of both slaves and wives who were outsiders brought into the patriarchal family structure. Parker uses the idea of the 'outsider-within' in his description of ancient Greece and Rome to draw parallels between the positions of wives and slaves. Both wives and slaves were outsiders, brought into a kinship network; slaves through capture or sale, and wives from her own kinship group. However, both were strangers and thus shared a similar liminal position within the household.[197]

Parker argues that, 'they are in daily and physical contact with their masters. Yet they are the other; they come from outside'.[198] Both were defined by their relationship to the husband/owner. Parker argues that both slaves and wives were always 'intimate members of the family sometimes loved, always necessary'.[199] This position of dependence was seen as a way of achieving recognition, honour and humanity.[200]

---

[196] Vergette, *Certain Marriage Customs*.

[197] Holt N. Parker, 'Loyal Slaves and Loyal Wives: The Crisis of the Outsider-Within and Roman Exemplum Literature', in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, eds. Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 157–78.

[198] *Ibid.*, 175.

[199] *Ibid.*

[200] *Ibid.*

Relationships of marriage and slavery overlapped due to the complex process of overlapping obligations and expectations that exists within pre-existing patriarchal structures of households. These relationships could be conceived of as forming points in a 'hierarchy of belonging'[201] The obligations of slaves and the obligations of wives were not mutually exclusive but overlapping identities. There were interlocking bonds informed by preconceived ideas of gender roles, indebtedness, and protection within patriarchal systems of identity and belonging.[202]

Kecia Ali argues that 'slaves and women were overlapping categories of legally inferior persons constructed against one another and in relation to one another – sometimes identified, sometimes distinguished'.[203] The key concept that links the two is that both women and slaves were seen as legally disabled, and both were therefore under the control of a central patriarch who had exclusive sexual access and control over their bodies.[204]

As noted above, kinship ties, or the lack of them, played a fundamental role in identifying those who were enslaved and those who were not. If slavery is defined as social death, in Sierra Leone it would mean that a person lacked kinship networks. Kinship networks were central to understanding legitimacy in Africa. If you belonged to a kinship network, you were considered a legitimate member of that society. A lack

---

[201] Axel Harneit-Sievers, *Constructions of Belonging: Igbo Communities and the Nigerian State in the Twentieth Century* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 8.

[202] Burrill, *State of Marriage*.

[203] *Ibid*.

[204] Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam*.

of kinship in African history often meant being a slave. Cooper argues that in many African societies there was no 'neat' set of characteristics that differentiated a slave from being a free member of the community since there were many forms of subordination that did not necessarily make you a slave. The defining characteristic was that you were an outsider who lacked local networks and knowledge, and so were unable to defend yourself against being controlled and dominated by other members of the society.[205]

One of the more complex aspects of the intersection between marriage and slavery is the issue of bridewealth and a 'woman palaver'. In the evidence given by Mali, Fonti Serafi and Smani, sons of several arrested chiefs from the Northern Provence of Karene, to the Chalmers Commission 1898, a women palaver was defined as a case 'where one person has taken the wife of another; and if the woman reports it to her husband, it is a great matter in the country'.[206] The offender would have to pay a fine and, if he did not, he would be sold as a slave.[207] The woman palaver was another mechanism that chiefs used to control the labour of both male and female dependants, and after the abolition of slavery it would come to represent a key point of tension between young men and women in the face of patriarchal control.

---

[205] Cooper, 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies'.

[206] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner, 83.

[207] *Ibid*.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I looked at the key themes that form the foundation for the analysis in the thesis. On the surface, descriptions drawn from various points in time in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries suggest that the political structures, and how they were expressed within the household, have remained unchanged. However, this was not the case. All these institutions were constantly changing, and the following chapters show how they changed.

CHAPTER 2: VERY MANY WIVES AND VERY MANY SLAVES

Everything dear to them [Chiefs] seems to be wrapped up in the idea of very many wives and very many slaves [208]

- Mr Price, giving evidence at the Chalmers Committee.

This chapter looks at the political economy of Sierra Leone up until the mid-1880s when the scramble for Africa began. It covers two critical moments in the history of Sierra Leone. The first was the arrival of the Europeans and the creation of the Freetown colony. The second was the abolition of slavery and the shift to legitimate commerce, which had both profound ideological and structural effects.

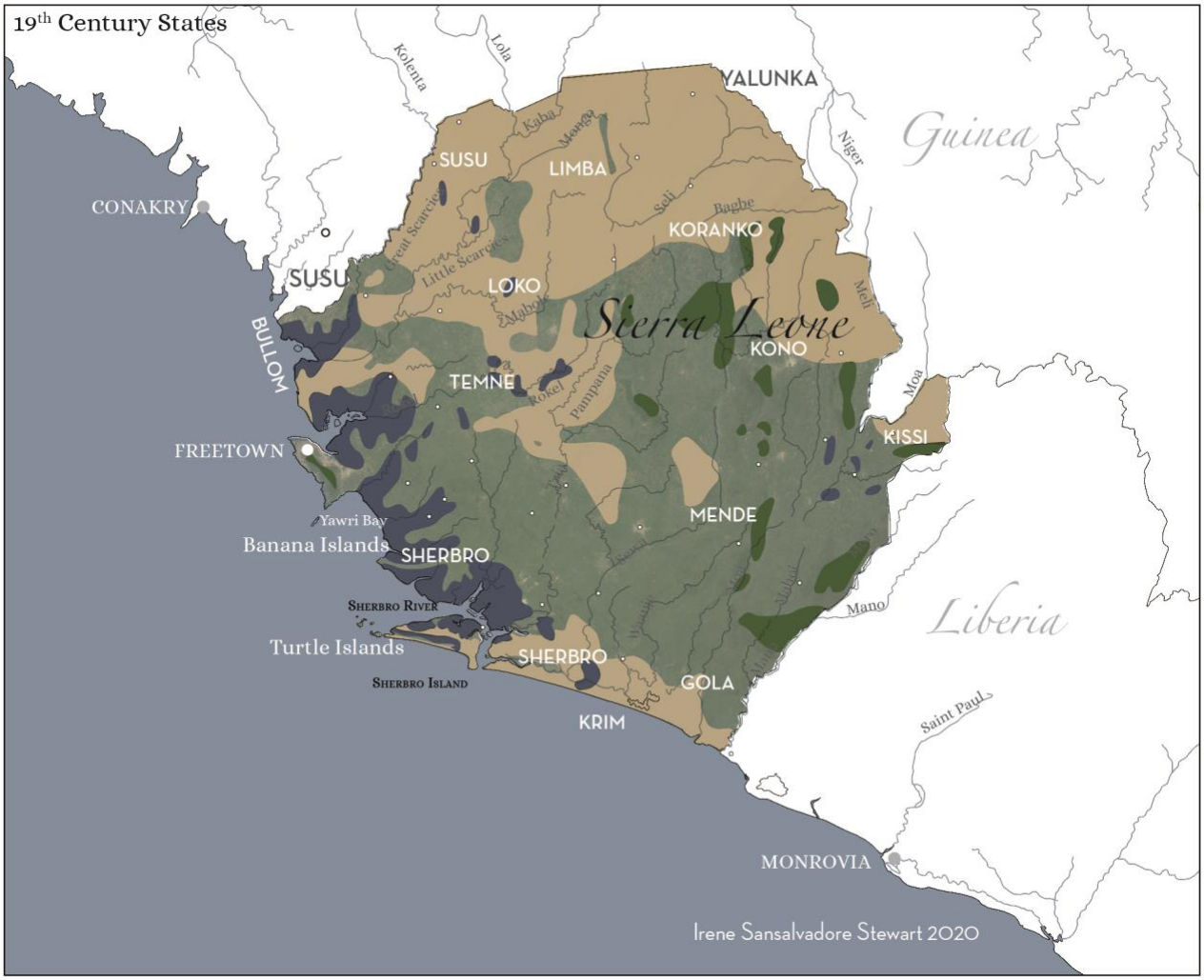
I show how, by the late nineteenth century, the socioeconomic history of the region had firmly entrenched 'a slave mode of production' and resulted in societies being both politically and economically rooted in the control of slave and servile labour. In the context of increasing levels of violence during the late nineteenth century, I show how the older social institutions discussed in the previous chapter were reshaped.

This chapter explores the early phase of the increasingly complicated relationship between the colony, built on the ideology of legitimate commerce, and freedom. It analyses how the 'Province of Freedom' interacted with societies whose economies and political structures were built on the control of servile and slave labour, and the British encroachment from the coast.

---

[208] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner',

STATES IN THE 19TH CENTURY



There has been a long debate about how the Atlantic slave trade impacted on West African societies. The balance of the debate suggests that, while there was not a complete rupture with the social forms and dynamics of earlier societies, there were fundamental shifts in the power structures. As Green notes, 'the cultural world established in Western Africa at the time of these exchanges did not spring from

nothing. Rather, it developed from antecedents, which had shaped fifteenth-century societies on the Upper Guinean coast'.[209]

The arrival of the Portuguese in 1456 and the opening of the Atlantic seaboard was a critical moment in the history of Upper Guinea. Since Sierra Leone has several natural harbours, Freetown, Pepel, and Sherbro, and a number of navigable rivers (the Scarcies, the Rokel, the Sherbro and the Sierra Leone River), it became the central point of trade.[210] By 1500, slave traders had shipped a total of 3 500 slaves from the coast of Sierra Leone. These slaves were traded along with kola nuts and ivory in exchange for salt and iron. Although there were iron-smelting sites in Sierra Leone, the iron produced there was of relatively poor quality.[211]

Originally, the Dutch and the Portuguese controlled the trade on the West African coast. However, the British saw an opening for trade in the late seventeenth century, and the Royal African Company was given a royal charter and monopoly for a thousand years of trade in 1672.[212] This trade was mainly based at Bunce Island and the Sherbro River. By the end of the nineteenth century, over 148 000 slaves had departed from Bunce Island alone.[213] British traders also sought to set up factories in the Sherbro Region. These men had children with local women, and their descendants

---

[209] Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*.

[210] Howard and Skinner, 'Network Building and Political Power'.

[211] Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*.

[212] Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[213] Lovejoy and Schwarz, 'Sierra Leone in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries'.

formed the Caulker, the Rogers, and the Tucker families, which together played a crucial role in the history of the region and in the conflicts in the nineteenth century – a focus of this thesis.[214]

Conflicts over trade routes were almost continuous during the period leading up to the eighteenth century. But the rise of the Islamic Jihadi states, and specifically the rise of Futa Jallon, was a key moment in the history of the region. Futa Jallon was located on the border of Guinea and Sierra Leone, and at the source the Niger River, which was the most important regional trading artery. Its economy was based on the trade in slaves – often traded for cattle from the north on the forest fringes.[215]

In the eighteenth century, Mandinka and Baga groups on the northern coast allied themselves with Futa Jallon and overthrew the ruling groups that dominated the trade routes along the Southern Guinea coast, resulting in an emergence of the two states of Sumbuya and Moriah. By the end of the eighteenth century, these two states dominated the trade routes into the interior to Futa Jallon.[216] The conflict created by the emergence of Futa Jallon and the raiding for slaves reached its zenith from

---

[214] Hogg, ''Our Country Customs''.

[215] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner'; BNA. Various References in CO 267/382; CO 276/408.

[216] Bruce Mouser, 'Rebellion, Marronage and Jihād: Strategies of Resistance to Slavery on the Sierra Leone Coast, c. 1783–1796', *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 1 (2007): 27–44; Winston McGowan, 'The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade between Sierra Leone and its Hinterland, 1787–1821', *The Journal of African History* 31, no. 1 (1990): 25–41.

between 1760 and 1780. These conflicts were exploited by British traders, and by the 1780s, 3 000 slaves a year were being traded to the coast from this state.[217]

However, by the late eighteenth century the abolitionist movement in Europe was gathering momentum. Horror stories from plantations in the Americas filtered back to Europe and galvanised many middle class British people into action. The number of freed slaves increased, and the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor was set up for poor Africans arriving in London.

A proposal by noted abolitionist Granville Sharpe, and others, that there should also be a haven for freed slaves on the West African coast, gathered support. With financial aid from the British Government, 457 freed slaves left Plymouth for Freetown, or the 'Province of Freedom', on 9 April 1787.[218]

However, by 1791, only 46 of the original settlers remained. The project was taken over by the Sierra Leone Company in 1791, which was run by a group of humanitarians and staunch abolitionists – William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Henry Thornton. The new settlement had a wider ideological component. Bronwen Everill observes that a key objective was to make the colony 'self-sufficient' through the introduction of 'legitimate commerce'. The concept of legitimate commerce was developed in the nineteenth century. It emphasises that 'free' labour rather than slave labour should produce export and staple crops, such as rice, kola nuts, palm oil, and ground nuts. In this way 'the colony would demonstrate that tropical plantation crops

---

[217] Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[218] Kaifala, *Free Slaves, Freetown, and the Sierra Leonean Civil War*.

of the sort grown in the West Indies could be grown without recourse to enslaved labour'.[219]

From 1791 to 1800, 1 200 previously enslaved people who had fought for the British in the American War for Independence, arrived from Nova Scotia, and in 1800 500 maroons arrived from Jamaica.[220]

After the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, Freetown harbour became an important location for the fleet of the Royal Navy dedicated to stopping slave ships going to the Americas.[221] These 'anti-slavery squadrons patrolled along the shorelines of West Africa and the slaves they liberated were dropped at the Freetown harbour and placed in small villages around the capital'.[222] Sizeable numbers of liberated Africans were settled there:

> The 99,752 Liberated Africans landed at Sierra Leone from intercepted slave vessels were among 2.8 million Africans who survived the transatlantic slave trade after 1807. Some 450 captured slave vessels were adjudicated in Freetown beginning with the arrival of the US slave ships *Baltimore* and *Eliza* in March 1808, and ending with the disembarkation of 366 people from the *Bela Augusta* in February 1863. A total of 95,640 Africans destined for the Americas were diverted to Freetown from these trans-oceanic vessels. In addition, 4,112 Africans disembarked from intra-African slave trading ships or from raids on coastal barracoons launched from naval vessels.[223]

---

[219] Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Houndmills, Bassingstoke, Hamphire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 19.

[220] *Ibid.*

[221] Lovejoy and Schwarz, 'Sierra Leone in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries'.

[222] Hogg, ''Our Country Customs'', 8.

[223] Richard P. Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone: Re-Building Lives and Identities in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 30.

These ‘parish villages’ were operated by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and Christianity became a key component in the development of the ‘Krio’ society that grew out of the freed slave population. This stratum also increasingly identified themselves as distinct from the African population in the interior.[224] Hogg observes that ‘Krio’s wore European clothing, spoke English, were generally literate, and were most often Christians’.[225] After 1853, the Krio population was also granted British citizenship.[226] By 1876 the colony of Sierra Leone had expanded to include much of the coast, including Sherbro Island and Turner’s Peninsula.

LEGITIMATE COMMERCE AND THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

There is no doubt that the economy of the Upper Guinea coast was significantly affected by the Atlantic slave trade. Yet the number of slaves exported from the Sierra Leone coast was relatively small in comparison with other regions of West Africa. The abolition of the Atlantic slave trade changed the socioeconomic makeup of the

[224] However, one must be careful when assuming the differences between Krios and those from the interior. These identities were much more nuanced and complicated. See Elaine F. White, ‘Creole Women Traders in Sierra Leone: An Economic and Social History, 1792–1945’ (PhD diss., Boston University, 1978).

[225] Hogg, "Our Country Customs”, 10.

[226] *Ibid*., 11.

region, and Philip Misevich suggests that 'few African regions were more directly affected by the early abolition movement than Sierra Leone'.[227]

As in many other parts of West Africa, the expectation that the abolition of slavery would create legitimate commerce proved profoundly wrong. In fact, rather than resulting in a shift to free labour, a substantial illegal trade in slaves continued. There was also a marked expansion in the role of production based on slave labour in the regional economy.[228]

The presence of the Royal Navy at Freetown resulted in slave ships moving to southern Sierra Leone – particularly to Sherbro Island and the Gallinas. The increase in the trade was so great that up until the end of the illegal trade in the 1860s, the South became the largest point of departure for slaves west of the Bight of Benin.[229] Another advantage of the South was its 'swampy creeks, shifting sandbars and inland waterways which made it relatively easy to conceal shipments of captives'.[230]

Between 1811 and 1820, approximately 7 800 slaves departed from southern Sierra Leone to Brazil and Cuba. From 1820 to 1830 this number increased to 36 400, and by the end of the illegal trade in the 1860s dropped to 3 400 (in the years 1851-

---

[227] Philip R. Misevich, 'On the Frontier of 'Freedom': Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s' (PhD diss., Emory University, 2009), 58.

[228] Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[229] Misevich, 'On the Frontier of 'Freedom", 4.

[230] *Ibid*., 63.

1866).[231] Yet the end of the illegal slave trade did not coincide with an end in slave raiding.

THEY DID NOT HAVE MONEY: THEY HAD WAR

Ironically, a key factor driving slave raiding was precisely the 'shift to legitimate commerce' that was expected to extinguish it. The expansion of global markets stimulated a growing demand for exports of West African resources and new cash crops. This demand for labour led to an increased demand for slaves whose labour was needed to grow the crops for export. Paul Lovejoy argues that the expansion of the agricultural economy in West Africa and the heightened demand for slaves resulted in increasing levels of war to acquire them.[232] Lynda Day suggests that:

> Instead of exporting their slaves, local chieftains put them to work clearing forests, planting rice, collecting palm kernels, and making palm oil. Consequently, despite the diminution of the overseas slave trade, the demand for slaves remained high, with an accompanying high level of insecurity and warfare.[233]

In many oral testimonies collected in the 1960s-'90s, there is a general consensus that war and the acquisition of slaves was key to the political economy of late nineteenth century Sierra Leone. Yapo Amadu Konte, who was interviewed on

---

[231] *Ibid.*

[232] Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*.

[233] Day, *Gender and Power in Sierra Leone*.

the history of the Birwa Limba, a powerful polity that controlled one of the key trading sights on the Falaba road, explained that:

> In the old days, they did not have money: they had war. People came from the north. They were called Bundukas. They used to come and buy things. If someone happened to commit a crime, he had to work for the leader of the country. In Bumban they sold slaves to the Bunduka people. They carried them away. People came from the south bringing salt. People were sent from here to get salt. The white men were there. They came to buy salt. They brought different cloths; they brought tobacco. One person was exchanged for a roll of tobacco.[234]

In almost all correspondence on the overland slave traffic, there is mention of Susu traders taking the slaves up north, often to Futa Jallon.[235] Slaves also continued to be shipped from the southern regions well into the 1880s, and were taken by boat, bypassing Freetown, up to Moriah as far up as Dakar. There is also evidence of slaves being supplied to Susu traders in Freetown itself.[236] Others were taken by canoe through the river systems up to major trade points, such as Rokon and Robari in the centre, and Port Lokko and Kambia in the north.[237]

Approximation of Slave trade Routes

[234] Richard Fanthorpe, 'Settlements and Networks in Birwa Limba Chiefdoms, Northern Sierra Leone' (University College London, 1994), 444.

[235] For a more detailed account of the routes traders were taking and how people were being transported see: CO/267/368; CO/267/383; CO/267/392; CO/267/399; CO/267/439.

[236] CO 267/395/16725, 20 August 1892. 'Alleged Sale of Slaves in Freetown'. From F. Fleming (Governor) to the Right Honourable Lord Knutsford.

[237] BNA CO 267/368/12968, 10 April 1887. 'Alleged Slave Dealing in Binty'. Mr Lawson to Deputy Governor Hay.



During the Atlantic slave trade it was more common for male slaves to be sold to European traders, and for women to be kept on the continent. Given the importance of women's reproductive and productive labour, they were central to building, sustaining, and expanding societies. They were also vital to the creation of political alliances, and slave women were fundamental to solidifying patron-client relationships. As Sama Kailondo said in an interview in the 1970s: 'in the days of our forefathers, women played a great part in the history of a country. Women were the

main cause of inter-tribal wars and they were the main peace-makers between hostile powers'.[238]

The ability to distribute abducted or captured women was central to securing larger networks of loyal followers, especially the young men who made up the army.[239] Alldridge, a district commissioner in Sherbro, wrote an account of one of his journeys, and in the 1880s and 1890s concluded that one of the principle mechanisms for gaining a wife was through capture. He describes how,

> internecine wars and slave-raiding expeditions were incessant, and a great many captives were of course taken. The young women and girls were amongst the most valued prizes, and from their number the captors and their friends selected such wives, as they desired.[240]

During the Atlantic slave trade male captives were in most demand from European traders, while female captives and children were absorbed by dominant African societies. Girls and women were especially important as slaves. The more women a state could accumulate, the larger its power base.

Women who were captured in raids would be distributed amongst men in the military (often themselves slaves who had been integrated into the military structure) as 'wives' for loyal service. They could then play a role in the creation of new

[238] Malcolm McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule: With Special Reference to the Period 1880–1930' (PhD diss., York University, 1974).

[239] Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*.

[240] Alldridge, *A Transformed* Colony, 213.

households or were incorporated into existing households – usually as additional 'wives' or concubines.[241]

However, the role of female labour shifted during the nineteenth century. Prior to the increased demand for new staple and cash crops, women – both wives and slaves – were the main component in the agricultural labour force. But in the nineteenth century the role of male labour in farming expanded to supply new markets and new forms of production influenced by plantation labour.[242]

During the nineteenth century slaves who would previously have been sold into the Atlantic systems were put to work on newly expanding peanut farms in the north, and in the in cultivation of palm oil, rice and timber (especially camwood). The amount of labour required in these new agricultural endeavours, as well as the retention of male slaves, meant that the number of slaves as a proportion of the population increased. Howard argues that at by the mid-nineteenth century at least 30 percent of people in the north were slaves.[243]

The reliance on slave labour for the expanding agricultural market increased the importance of controlling the labour of men. Key strategies for achieving and maintaining control included women damages cases, and accusations of the abduction

---

[241] Barbara M. Cooper, 'Women and Gender', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, eds. John Parker and Richard Reid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[242] Josephine A. Beoku-Betts, 'Agricultural Development, Household and Gender Differentiation in Rural Sierra Leone: A Study of the Eastern Integrated Agricultural Development Project Area' (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1990).

[243] Allen M. Howard, 'Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone', *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 1 (2006): 23–49.

of wives. These developments will be more comprehensively dealt with in Chapters 3 and 7.

In interviews with elders conducted by Richard Fanthorpe in the 1980s, informants described how slave settlements surrounded the main town in Birwa Limba. One of his sources suggested that there were up to 300 slave camps in the region. His informants also told him that both female and male slaves mainly did farm work, especially the planting and harvesting of rice.[244]

In the Chalmers Commission of 1899, several people gave evidence that the reason they could not pay the Hut Tax introduced in 1896, was because the slave trade had been abolished and they had no income. Nancy Tucker, an ally of the British, recounted what the chiefs told her:

> ... our ancestors have not been doing business in copper and coin: our simple money is our slaves: they have stopped our buying slaves, and pawning children: our slaves have taken freedom, the government wants us to prepare roads; those that had slaves before to clean roads are now left empty and the old people are now obliged to do it.[245]

Tucker was an ardent supporter of the British, and was installed as chief in 1897 because she was the lover of Edward Coker, a lieutenant in the Frontier Police.[246] Although we need to view this quote with a certain level of caution, the sentiment is

[244] Fanthorpe, 'Settlements and Networks'.

[245] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 238.

[246] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

repeated in the evidence of numerous other people who argued that it was difficult for them to pay tax because they could not sell slaves.[247]

It is clear that slaves were fundamental to the economic growth of these societies, although the capture and ransoming of people could also be a political statement. Nathan Carpenter succinctly expresses the importance of hostage-taking and ransoming in maintaining political supremacy:

> Where politics consisted of building and maintaining networks of obligations, where control over people and households was central to authority, and where political alliances were often forged through family and kinship, ransom must be seen as a fundamentally political act, part of a complex landscape of political alliance making and breaking.[248]

Fanthorpe adds another dimension to the way politics shaped the conceptualisation of abduction and ransom by suggesting that 'hostage taking may even have been part of a diplomatic game in which local rulers tested the power and resolve of rivals … the taking of hostages was also a way of sizing up one's enemy'.[249]

Given that status was built on the accumulation of wives and slaves, being stripped of a key means to acquire this resource was a direct attack on the symbolism of power and position and the material wealth of a patriarch. Men's wives were often

---

[247] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner, 81.

[248] Nathan Carpenter, 'Ransom as Political Strategy: Captivity beyond Commercial Transaction on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Journal of West African History* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1–18.

[249] Fanthorpe, 'Settlements and Networks'.

abducted to demonstrate the extent of their defeat and their diminution in status.[250] One war chief took his enemy's wife and son hostage and only returned them in response to their pleas. After this show of benevolence that solidified his victory and his enemy's shame, he left the region.[251] As I explore further below, the abduction of women as an attack on masculinity continued to play a key role in the history of gender relationships in Sierra Leone.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF VIOLENCE

Given the centrality of slavery in opening up the Atlantic seaboard, violence and warfare became fundamental to state building on the Upper Guinea coast. This is not to say that warfare had not previously played a role in state building, but that its importance dramatically increased.[252] A set of militarised 'predatory' states emerged during the Atlantic slave trade, and the later shift to a legitimate commerce economy was built on raiding and trading in slaves. Walter Hawthorne argues that when such states conducted warfare against smaller states, it often decentralised communities.

> The primary purpose of this warfare was captives, who were vital to the functioning and reproducing of state institutions … [But] decentralised societies were not necessarily passive victims of predatory state-based neighbours. Though they did not

[250] James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[251] N.C. Hollins, 'A Short History of the Luawa Chiefdom', *Sierra Leone Studies* XIV (1929): 10–27.

[252] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

> possess great armies, most decentralised societies discovered ways to defend themselves and engage with the slave market.[253]

The decentralised societies in Sierra Leone have mainly been depicted as pools of slaves on the periphery, which were plundered to supply the larger states who dominated the Atlantic trade. But the evidence suggests that decentralised societies used similar mechanisms of wealth accumulation as the great states. Power built on the accumulation of wives and slaves were thus just as important in decentralised societies as in the 'predatory' ones, and they were actively involved in raiding and accumulating slaves in their own right.[254] Misevich has shown that many of the captives did not come from the slave frontiers of the large states in the interior, but were generated by local conflicts within a few days' journey from the coast where societies were mainly decentralised.[255]

Consequently, Clausewitz's notion that war is the 'application of politics by others means, and Mann and Tilley's arguments that war is central to state building, which draw on European experience, also apply in the context of Upper Guinea. The history of warfare in Africa is not of wars fought by backward people, but of

---

[253] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

[254] Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformation along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400–1900* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); D.J. Siddle, 'War-Towns in Sierra Leone: A Study in Social Change', *Journal of the International African Institute* 38, no. 1 (1968): 47–56.

[255] Christopher R. DeCorse, 'Fortified Towns of the Koinadugu Plateau: Northern Sierra Leone in the Pre-Atlantic and Atlantic Worlds', in *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa Archaeological Perspectives*, eds. J. Cameron Monroe and Akinwumi Ogundiran (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

negotiations of political authority and state formation built into the socio-political and geographic contexts of the Upper Guinea coast. John Thornton observes that: 'Within all of Atlantic Africa, war was overwhelmingly the business of state. Declaring war, calling up armies, and maintaining or controlling the forces so deployed were the business of state'.[256]

> Peace and war, those contrary conditions of mankind, are nevertheless alike in one important characteristic – that both are aspects of societies' relations with other societies. They are linked too by an intermediary zone which the tension caused by the interaction of the two or more societies is mitigated towards, one end of the scale by peaceful tendencies while towards the other end it is exacerbated by influences hostile to peace.[257]

Warfare in this period was also shaped by the importance of slaves. Given that land was not the primary resource being fought over, wars did not consist of pitched battles over territory as in Europe, but rather of raids and small-scale insurgencies which were focused on taking captives and other forms of movable wealth. The effectiveness of this strategy is illustrated by a colonial official who stated:

> It was more trying on the nerves of those engaged than one would suspect. From the strain caused by having to march under the constant menace of sudden attack with the feeling of being shadowed by an enemy who sees you, but whom you cannot see, and who can choose his moment to attack you, but who you cannot attack because he is invisible.[258]

---

[256] Philip Misevich, 'The Mende and Sherbro Diaspora in Nineteenth-Century Southern Sierra Leone', in *The Rise and Demise of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Atlantic World*, eds. Philip Misevich and Kristin Mann (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 248–65.

[257] Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500-1800,* 1.

[258] CO 849 Africans, 587. 'Further Correspondence (1899-1901) Relating to the Disturbances in the Sierra Leone Protectorate 1898'. Colonial Office, June 1901.

Thus in a context in which violence became fundamental to the economic foundations of many societies, core social institutions adapted to accommodate this reality.

The development of war towns – strongly fortified towns in Sierra Leone from the eighteenth century onwards – are an indicator of increased levels of violence, and contributed to a further militarisation of the household. The war towns had formidable defences against possible invasion. In 1883, while passing into Yonni country, E. Vohseu describes how:

> … we reached the mountain fortress Robari; Here on a rather steep height there are 37 houses with about 250 inhabitants. The compound of houses is surrounded by a wall about 6 feet thick with four separate corner towers. The height of the wall is from 8 to 10 feet, the diameter of the area enclosed in 500 feet.[259]

The next day they left Robari to continue on their journey down the river. They arrived at the capital of Yonni country, Ro Nietto. The capital was bigger, although similarly stockaded, and estimated to hold 1 200 inhabitants.[260] Through most of his travels in the south, in both Mende and Yonnilands, E. Vohseu describes a 'citadel of earthworks in which natives can hide in case of surprise'.[261]

It was not only in Mende and Yonni that war towns became the centre points of both trade and political alliances. In Kailaun in the east, where chief Kailondo of

---

[259] CO 267/354/17268.9 October 1883. 'A Journey Through Timméné Country', by E. Vohseu.

[260] *Ibid.*

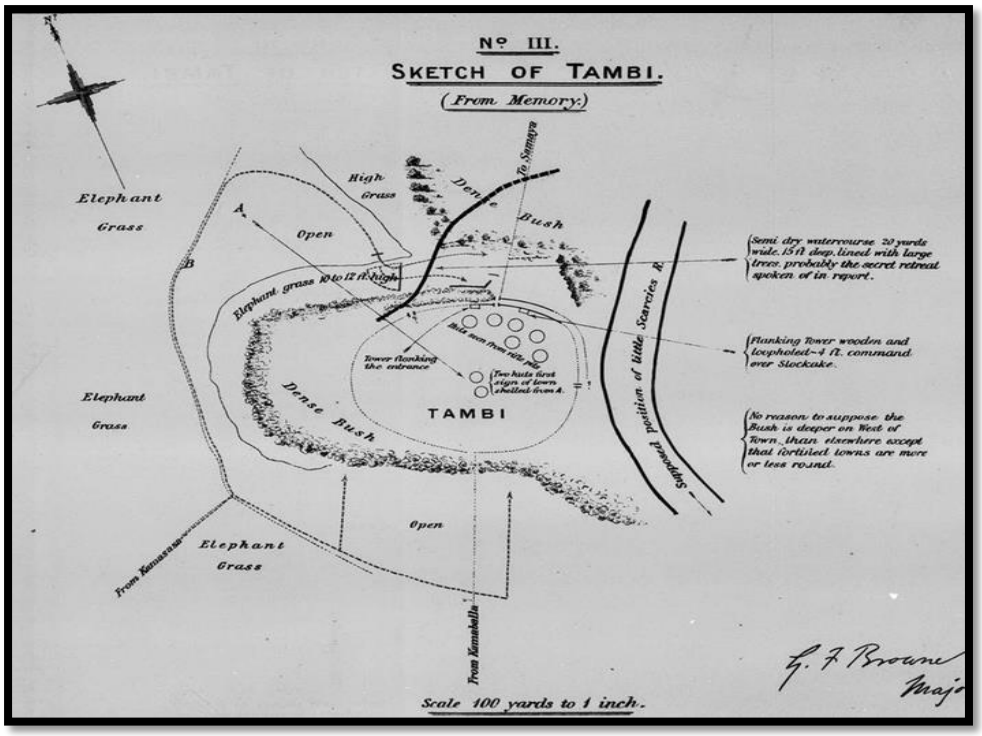
[261] *Ibid.*

the Kissi reigned, there were four main towns, each one surrounded by a war fence. Some had as many as four surrounding walls.[262]

By the late nineteenth century these fortifications were even more substantial. There is an 1892 description of one of these stockades in the northern town of Tambi, which the British soldiers could not breach and eventually retreated from:

> Tambi was defended by strong stockades. At the distance of about 12 and 30 feet respectively, were two war fences. These obstacles consist of a kind of lattice-work of poles, about ten feet high, too strong to be torn down by hand or thrown down by a rush, but sufficiently open in construction to afford no cover to an enemy. The object is to check assailants and keep them close under fire of the stockade. Watchtowers, the upper part built of bulletproof logs, were erected at intervals along the stockade. There was one of these structures on each side of the gates, of which there were two, one on the southwest, the other on the northeast.[263]

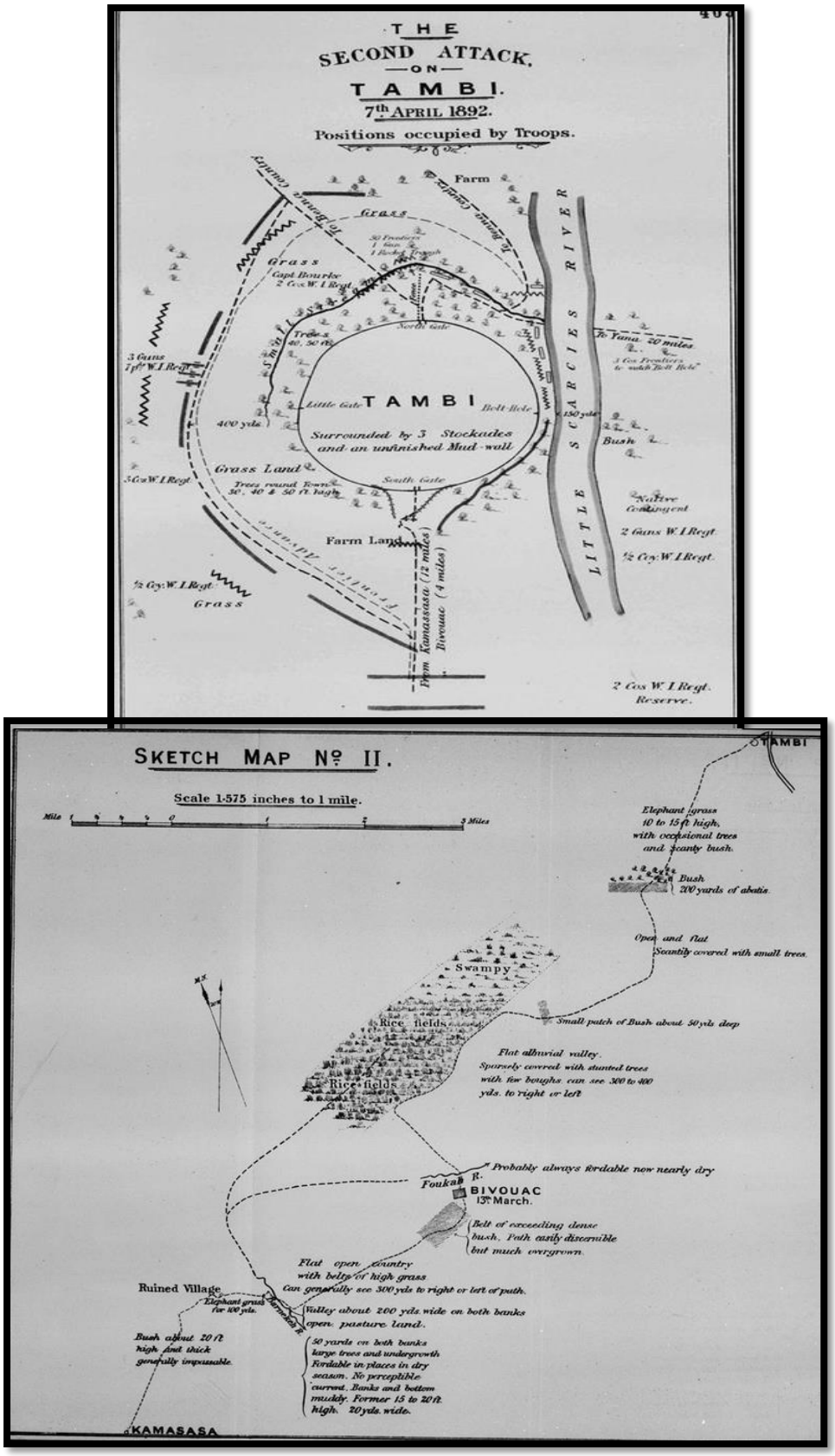
SKETCH MAPS OF TAMBI: 1892



[262] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

[263] BNA CO 267/397/10481, 24 May 1892. 'Operations Against Tambi'. From the Official Command, Troops, West Africa and Late Expedition to Tambi to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for War, London.

BNA Africans West 429. Correspondence Respecting Native Disturbance in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone?)



BNA Africans West 429. Correspondence Respecting Native Disturbance in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone

During the nineteenth century there was increased reliance on war and military alliances to uphold patron-client relationships that remained key social institutions. The big men who made up these networks were often warriors or warlords, and military alliances became the cornerstone of political, social, and economic life.[264] A professional group of warriors emerged in these conditions, known as the warboys. They were employed by chiefs as mercenaries and were used to 'buy war'. Their role was to plunder and raid other groups. In payment they were given a share of the goods captured, as well as women and slaves.[265]

However, as is often the case with mercenaries, these warboys were very difficult to control. Chiefs employing these young men would often find that they were no longer following orders. There are countless examples after 1880 of leaders losing control of their armies. The warboys could easily switch alliances – and many did. In the last years of Samori's rule in the mid-1890s, it seems as though he lost control of his Sofa warboys who tore through eastern Sierra Leone.[266]

Although creating networks of alliances (and the accumulation of dependants) can be a very effective state building mechanism, it can also create very unstable systems. Alliances are easily broken. Murphy argues that 'the patrimonial model of territorial expansion of authority entails a theory of political instability'.[267] As time

---

[264] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

[265] Day, *Gender and Power in Sierra Leone*.

[266] Mark Ross Lipschutz, 'Northeast Sierra Leone after 1884: Response to the Samorian Invasions and British Colonialism' (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1973).

[267] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule', 32.

passed the initially powerful warrior would find himself challenged by groups of subordinates who had built up more powerful networks.[268]

There is a case where, in order to prevent the imminent destruction of his home by Samori, the Sofa's chief gave his daughter to Samori as a wife. Samori took her and promptly attacked the town anyway. Alamani Suma describes this betrayal:

> After he had given the Alamani Samdoo one of his daughters for a wife with large presents of gold and cloth and while professing to be most friendly, the Sofas suddenly one morning attacked the people in the town shooting them down for no cause whatever, carried off the women and robbed them of all their possessions.[269]

Within this landscape there were several key conflicts and war leaders with whom the British would begin to clash as they attempted to expand further into the protectorate. The rise of Samori Toure (or Alamani Samdou) and his trained army known as the Sofas, carved out a territory from the forest fringes in Sierra Leone to the Upper Niger.[270] In 1884 Toure and the Sofas, comprising mostly cavalry, annexed northeastern Sierra Leone.[271]

---

[268] *Ibid.*

[269] BNA CO 267/383/15094, 12 July 1890. Mr Garret's Mission. From Mr Garret Travelling Commissioner to Governor Hay .

[270] Murphy, 'Patrimonial Logic of Centrifugal Forces'.

[271] John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The British saw Samori as an ally who had the ability to control and pacify the communities along the trade routes and Freetown. They were also nervous because, if Samori attacked the colony, little could be done to protect it.[272]

The first victim of the Sofa invasion was Falaba, the capital city of the Solmina Yalunka Empire. After a five-month siege, Falaba finally fell. Rather than submit, the royal family blew themselves up. By 1888 most of the northeast had been subdued by Samori's army.[273] We know that many were sold as slaves because years later, in 1907, people who had been enslaved at the time escaped and tried to return to their homes.

In 1890, while Samori was fighting the French, there were rumours that he had been killed. The people in the north rebelled and shut down the trade routes to Freetown. They paid dearly for this false information. Samori sent his most trusted general Balil to subdue Sierra Leone[274] The re-taking of the northeast produced comprehensive devastation. District Commissioner Garret, who went to negotiate with Samori, described what he found at the town Farannah after the local community had tried to resist the Sofas:

> It is now nothing but a mass of charred ruins. At the N.E extremity of the town on either side of the road are the remains of over 120 bodies heaped together in various stages of

[272] *Ibid.*

[273] 'The Capture of Falaba', *The West African Reporter*. 22 November 1884.

[274] Lipschutz, 'Northeast Sierra Leone after 1884'.

> decomposition, mostly with their hands tied showing they had been taken there for execution – some were headless and all ghastly in their given hideousness.[275]

It was not only Samori who was responsible for conflict in the north of the country. There was continuous conflict as to who controlled the towns of Kambia and Port Lokko, both central points on the trade routes to the coast. Chief Bai Bureh, who played a leading role in the Hut Tax War in 1898, rose to power as a result of these conflicts. Born with the name Kabali, he helped the more powerful chiefs from the Moriah state (now in Guinea), and in Kambia protected the major trade routes from the interior.

At first he served Alamani Bokari, but when the Sofas defeated Bokari, he switched allegiances to serve the chief at Port Lokko, Sattan Lahai. When he finally fell out with Sattan Lahai, he had enough followers to set up his own kingdom, and in 1886 was crowned as a ruler with the title of Bai Bureh.[276]

But it was not only the northern trade routes where levels of conflict increased. Throughout the period of 1880-1900, conflict over this trade route led to sporadic wars between the Mende, Yonni, and Temne.[277] The 'trade wars' were a product of competition over trade routes from the interior to the coast. The most important in the south central area was the Rokel River that runs from the interior to the coast at Freetown. Groups could become extremely wealthy if they controlled

---

[275]BNA CO 267/383/15094, 12 July 1890. Mr Garret's Mission. From Mr Garret Travelling Commissioner to Governor Hay

[276] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[277] Howard, 'Re-Marking on the Past'.

points where the river was no longer navigable and where traders met to exchange produce from the interior.[278]

There was conflict from the 1870s between old Krio families in Sherbro and the Kpa-Mende family that caused the annexation of Sherbro by the British in 1876.[279] There were regular incursions and raids from the Kpa-Mende, led by Madam Yokko, a famous female paramount chief.[280] There were also recurring raids and counter raids between Yonni and Mende groups. These conflicts became so serious that the British had to intervene in a series of campaigns against the Yonni between 1887 and 1888.[281]

Oral traditions recorded in the 1920s and 1930s showed how previous notions of the founder of a society included a second phase of a powerful military founder. An example drawn from many possibilities is that of Kailondo of the Luawa. His life history plays a key role in several of the chapters that follow.[282]

Kailondo's father was a famous warrior who had come to Sierra Leone from French Guinea in order to obtain slaves and fame. Sama Kulu II Kailondo recalled in the 1940s, 'for then the slave trade was the only trade of importance and anybody who

---

[278] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[279] Day, *Gender and Power in Sierra Leone*.

[280] Lynda R. Day, 'The Evolution of Female Chiefship during the Late Nineteenth-Century Wars of the Mende', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27, no. 3 (1994): 481–503.

[281] *Ibid.*

[282] Another famous chief who plays a role is Alimany Suluku's See. WO 287/7, The National Archives, Kew, 'Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone Military Report', vol I, 1933.

had the power and influence to get more slaves was considered a very rich and powerful man'.[283]

When Kailondo was a child he was sent to be trained by 'great men' in the art of war, so that he too could became a great warrior. At the end of his training he joined the war party of a man named Chief Nyangbi. During this time Sama contends that he 'fought so hard that his leader grew jealous of him, as reports were sent to chief Nyangbi that his men would have lost the war had it not been for the pluck shown by the young man Kailondo'.[284] Sama concluded this story by showing how central warfare had become for power and states: 'Thus began the life and history of one of the best men in the art of war when war was the only means of living in Sierra Leone'.[285]

An interview with Kailondo's son, James, in the 1970s shows how his father became the ruler of Luawa through military prowess. 'My grandmother, Kefui, called Kailondo. She said to him, 'Well you are here, our own land has been destroyed'. However, there was a condition to Kailondo becoming the leader; he had to defeat a powerful chief Ndawa.'[286] After Ndawa was defeated, his son contends that the leaders proclaimed, 'you are now the owner of this land. Of the animals in the bush, the fish

---

[283] C. Magbaily Fyle, *Almamy Suluku of Sierra Leone, c. 1820–1906: The Dynamics of Political Leadership in Pre-Colonial Sierra Leone* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1979).

[284] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

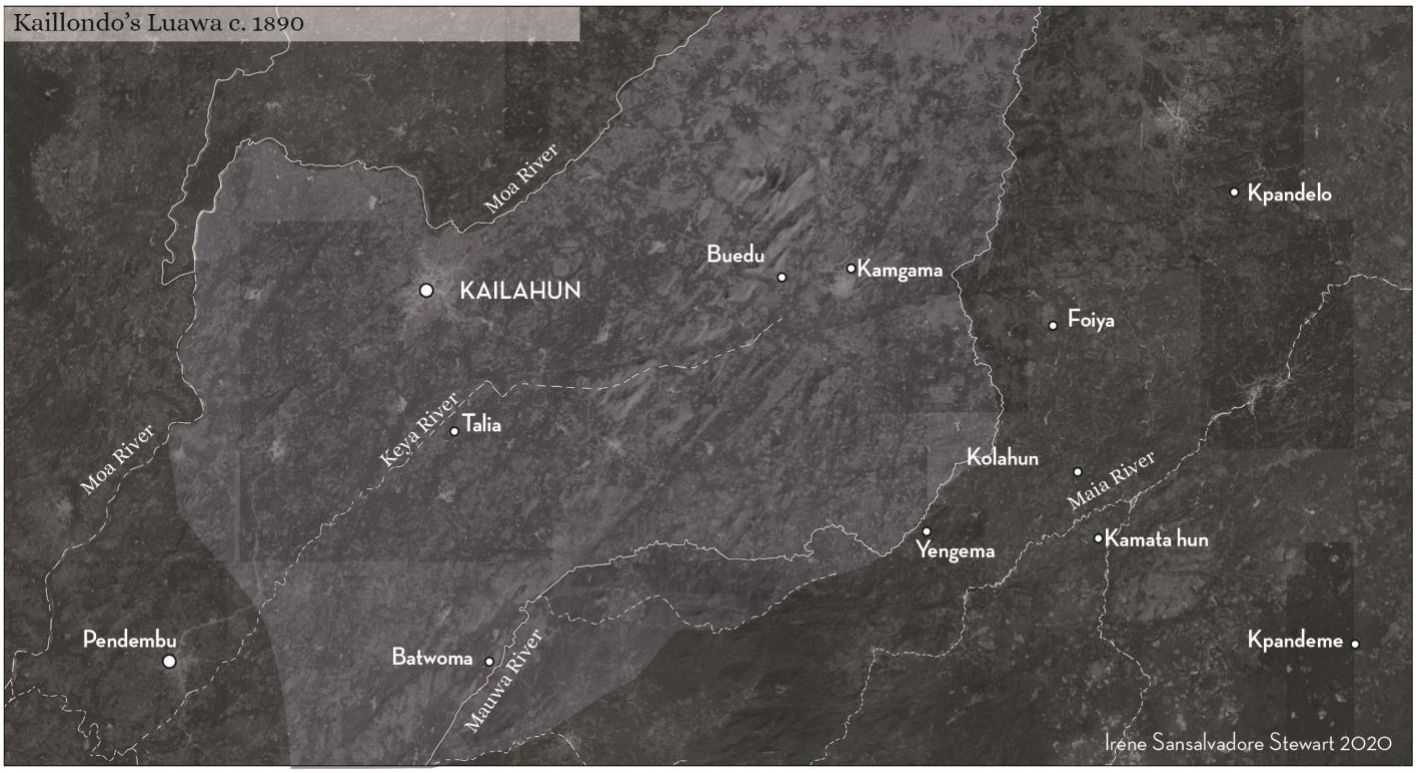
[285] *Ibid*.

[286] In certain of the accounts of Kailondo's rise to power, the name of the Chief is Dawa, in *ibid*. The wars in which Kailondo rose to power have either been called the Kpove or Pove Wars.

in the river, and the country itself, you are now the owner forever, with your own children and grandchildren after you'.[287] Another account of Kailondo being declared the chief also indicates how a powerful warrior rose to power. N.C. Hollins, writing down the history of the Luawa in the 1920s, wrote that:

> Having rid the country of the freebooter, [Ndawa] Kailondo called the headman to him at Giehun, and asked them what they would now do. Bundu of Nyanyahun was again their spokesperson. He took a handful of earth, put it in a white cloth, took a gun, cocked and then un-cocked it, and gave all to Kailondo saying, 'here is your country'.[288]

MAP OF KAILONDO'S TERRITORY



Map based on Malcolm McCall's 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule: With Special Reference to the Period 1880–1930', 1974

[287] Hollins, 'A Short History of the Luawa Chiefdom'; interview with James Kailondo, 1972.

[288] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

Marriage remained key in maintaining military alliances. Kailondo was called to the aid of a chief whose land was under attack. After Kailondo had negotiated a truce, Momo Bobawo gave his daughter to Kailondo as a 'wife token of homage, loyalty and gratitude for the help rendered to him by Kailondo'.[289]

Since societies were polygamous, rulers could diversify their political networks through multiple marriages. However, women were not just key to maintaining military alliances through marriage; the abduction of female slaves remained crucial to political authority.

A third account of Kailondo's accession to the throne is a poignant example of how marriage was used in solidifying a new warrior chief's arrival. After Kailondo was made the chief of the Luawa, he was given Jue Siangay as a wife, who was referred to as the 'only true daughter of the first inhabitants and founders of this town'. An interview conducted by McCall in Sama showed how important women were, both as a cause of warfare and in diplomacy:

> The handing over therefore of Jue Siangay (the true and only daughter of the first known inhabitants of what is now the greater part of the Kailahun Section …) to Kailondo sealed the bond that the country belonged to Kailondo, his sons and grand-children until his generation dies off. Thus came the relationship between the descendants of the first inhabitants the Kulu Family, and the first known Ruling House of the present Luawa Chiefdom.[290]

CONCLUSION

[289] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

[290] Ibid 664.

The opening up of the Atlantic seaboard and the later abolition of slavery had a major impact on core social institutions. The increased levels of violence influenced the way these societies operated. Patron-client networks became more militarised. Marriage, which was an important way of creating alliances, increasingly became a means to making and maintaining military pacts. Female slaves became a key source of 'booty' given to soldiers for loyalty. The households were increasingly constituents of war towns, which were geared towards protection from external attacks.

While women and enslaved women also remained central to reproductive and productive labour, there was a change in the division of labour in farming, with men playing an expanding part in the production of cash crops. It was in this turbulent context that British policy began to shift towards the colonisation of Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER 3: BURN DOWN THE TOWN: COLONIAL VIOLENCE 1890–1914

I cannot understand the mental attitude of any officer who is sent out to collect house tax and to arrest people who have defied authority and who considers it correct procedure to burn the town.

- CO 267/544/628/12/13. Sankoh Chiefdom Disturbances

Question: Why did they burn down the town? Answer: Because they had not paid tax.

- Chalmers Commission evidence by Porroh

This chapter examines the developing relationship between Britain and the Sierra Leone hinterland in the lead-up to formal colonisation from 1886-1914. It then explores the evolving relationship between the new administration and the existing power structures which laid the foundation for the development of indirect rule.

As the scramble for Africa intensified in the late nineteenth century, Britain realised that it 'could no longer adequately safeguard [its] interest in West Africa by just making treaties with certain chiefs and stating imprecise claims to spheres of influence'.[291] However, its 'interest' in the Sierra Leone protectorate had little to do with the economic potential of the colony but rather with

> … the realisation that much of its hinterland was going to France which was primarily responsible for the extension of British jurisdiction over the Sierra Leone hinterland. The fear that Sierra Leone Colony would become too small to support itself led to a more aggressive policy in the interior.[292]

But the threat of 'the French' did not persuade the British to put significant resources into this colonial project, and the colonisation of Sierra Leone was an

[291] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule', 67.

[292] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 68.

exercise in 'conquest on the cheap'.[293] The reluctance to spend money on building up a centralised colonial administration had a key impact on shaping the development of indirect rule, which Hogg aptly called 'domination without hegemony'.[294]

The administrative system was built through a combination of coercion, accommodation, and collusion between officials and traditional leaders. This process shaped an uneasy and fragile relationship between the core and the periphery. Although Freetown became more powerful in this period, the relationship between the colony and the interior was far from stable. Myles Osborne and Susan Kent argue that these relationships

> shifted constantly: beneficial relationships of trade morphed into war, and war gave way to commerce, sometimes on equal terms, at others, less so. At times, British colonialism inspired rivalries among various African groups, whereas at others, they joined forces to meet the new challenges. British systems of law and order threatened the autonomy of certain peoples, while providing new protections for others. Some prospered economically from the new foreign presence, building wealth and power, while others fared poorly. In some instances, the British presence was tangential to shifting dynamics of social and political ordering among African peoples. All of these encounters took place in an environment frequently marked by misunderstanding, confusion, and arrogance.[295]

This context also led to the entrenchment of the institution of slavery, which is discussed in the next chapter.

---

[293] *Ibid.*, 64; Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*; Ewout Frankema, 'Colonial Taxation and Government Spending in British Africa, 1880–1940: Maximizing Revenue or Minimizing Effort?', *Explorations in Economic History* 48, no. 1 (2011): 136–49.

[294] Hogg, ''Our Country Customs'', 110.

[295] Myles Osborne and Susan K. Kent, *Africans and Britons in the Age of Empires, 1660–1980* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

BRITISH COLONISATION 1890–1896

In Sierra Leone the initial means of expanding power was treaties and tours. Hogg contends that the British used 'diplomatic strategies such as treaties and tours in the hinterland to negotiate with local leaders, solve internal wars, or cede territory'. This was done in part because the colonial office wanted 'to limit all interference and responsibility in the interior'.[296]

T.J. Alldridge's tours in the south and Garret's tours in the north in the 1890s were conducted to achieve these treaties. However, the ways that these treaties were seen by local leaders was not simply as ceding territory to the British; from the perspective of a ruler, by accepting colonial authority he/she was 'using the idiom of surveys and deeds as well as the old idiom of politically charged kinship ties in order to define legitimacy of his/her territorial claim'.[297] Alldridge goes on to contend that the chief or leader had not 'given up his territory to the enemy but had secured the sovereignty of his people through the patronage of a more powerful leader'.[298]

Jean François Bayart argues that, in African societies, the external socioeconomic context was central to the structures of internal politics. Although he does not deny that African societies were forced to be subservient to European colonisers, he gives a much more nuanced sense of the relationship and argues that:

---

[296] Osborne and Kent, *Africans and Britons*, 29-30.

[297] Hogg, ''Our Country Customs", 46.

[298] Murphy and Bledsoe, 'Kinship and Territory'.

> The leading actors in sub-Saharan societies have tended to compensate for their difficulties in the autonomization of their power and in intensifying the exploitation of their dependants by deliberate recourse to the strategies of extraversion, mobilizing resources derived from their (possibly unequal) relationship with the external environment.[299]

What Bayart argued was that concepts of state sovereignty were not central to political power. The ability of polities to control the labour of their dependants was partly achieved through finding powerful allies who would support them. Allying with the British was thus not seen as defeat, but rather as a mechanism to increase the power and prestige of one's state. The treaties also facilitated connecting to a new powerful trading partner. Kailondo's son, when asked why his father had allowed the British into Luawa, replied: 'The distance between the Europeans and Kailondo was small, so they usually got salt, gunpowder, guns and other things for war from the Europeans, so he was happy when they came to his land'.[300]

However, as formal colonisation loomed, these treaties became less of a relationship of equals. The local allies of the British became less of an asset and more dispensable. The state's ability to enforce its rule became less reliant on the use of 'friendlies' and more dependent on the growing power of the colonial army and a police force.[301]

---

[299] *Ibid.*, 219.

[300] Jean-Francois Bayart, 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion', *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 217–67, 698.

[301] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

Sierra Leone's colonial army, the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) was established in 1891 to patrol the 'protected area', which encompassed the key trade route from the interior to Freetown. The force was initially divided into five districts under European inspectors and Creole sub-inspectors. The rest of the 280 soldiers were divided between the districts.[302] Many were recruited from the interior by the first Inspector General, Major Moore.[303]

The WAFF districts were Karene, Panguma, Bandajuma, Koinadugu and Ronietta. The three most important to note were the led by: Captain E. Carr (Bandajuma), Captain Sharpe (Karene), and Major Fairtlough (Ronietta).[304]

By 1894 the force comprised 'twelve British officers and about 500 African rank and file and was mostly dispersed in very small detachments based near the coast – particularly to the south of a track which joined the navigable heads of the principal rivers'.[305]

While the WAFF increased British presence and power in the interior, the force was initially not able to broadcast greater political power. The chiefs were not pleased about the arrival of this new military force, and the British government was still invested in previous alliances. Thus a fragile equilibrium between having a

---

[302] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 1992).

[303] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*; E.D.A. Turay and Arthur Abraham, 'The Sierra Leone Army: A Century of History' (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1987).

[304] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[305] *Ibid*., 59.

military presence in the interior and keeping the 'friendlies' happy, had to be maintained.[306] Governor Hay assured the chiefs that the 'frontiers were forbidden to interfere with their rule. They were not empowered to hold court or exercise authority over the people they were stationed among'.[307]

Added to the difficulty of balancing the relationship between the WAFF and the chiefs, the soldiers proved very difficult to control by their commanding officers. Fyfe argues that, 'all over the protectorate the frontier police assumed despotic powers, terrorised chiefs and seized goods, and brutalised those who protested'.[308] In evidence taken during the Chalmers Commission, F.M. Stewart from the African Methodist Episcopal Church was asked by Chalmers:

> At the different stations where you have been have you heard complaints of improper conduct by the police?—Plenty; I have settled several myself; they were ill-treating the poor natives. They used to come into a town and plunder, and take goats, and sheep, and property, and even men's wives and daughters.
>
> Do they carry off the wives and daughters?—Yes; several times they have gone into the house and taken them away for the night, and if the man made any objection they flogged him and sometimes put him in irons.[309]

It was not just soldiers who used their government positions to accumulate wealth and status. There is some evidence to suggest that government clerks also prospered. Captain Sharpe in his evidence at the Chalmers Commission suggested

---

[306] Hargreaves, 'The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate'.

[307] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

[308] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone,* 485.

[309] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 496.

that the chiefs gave the clerks, 'lodging, food and wives', so that they would not send news of any rule-breaking to Freetown. He described one clerk, who 'used to go from chief to chief making them keep him by means of threatening to report them and so on; and all [the] time collecting goods and wives'.[310]

Even after the creation of the WAFF, the violence that had become synonymous with rule in the late nineteenth century did not abate. In fact, the support of the WAFF meant that allies of the chiefs now had a powerfully armed military force to aid them. In 1896 a Captain Fairthlough

discovered 1 343 captives – mostly women and children. This is one of the many examples in the archives of the police being actively involved in the slave trade, which is covered in more detail in the next chapter. After the slaves were found, Fairthlough handed them over to two different chiefs – one of whom was Kailondo's successor Fa Bundu, an increasingly important ally who had helped the British in the campaign:

> 500 were present in Gorahun, which has been rebuilt through the agency of Chief Nyagwa. The remainder of the captives were sent to Dodo and were to start rebuilding the town. I may add that I have carefully instructed Chief Nyagwa and Fa Bundo that they must not consider these people as slaves, and they must be responsible for their safe production if at any further times they may be called for by government.[311]

An excellent example of how people used external forces to project authority through a nested hierarchy is seen in the case of Chief Smart, an important ally of the

---

[310] *Ibid.*, 198.

[311] BNA CO 267/427/ 25592, 12 December 1896. Major Fairthlough to the Inspector General of the Frontier Police Force.

British during the Hut Tax War. Bai Kompah (an honorific title of a chief) told the Chalmers Commission how Chief Smart used his links to the British to undermine Bai Kompah's authority.

After the death of his father, Chief Smart asked Bai Kompah, the paramount chief of the region, to crown him chief. Bai Kompah refused, but allowed him to rule the town that his father had previously been in charge of. Angered by this refusal, Smart went to the British to complain. He later returned with the governor who demanded that Bai Kompah make Smart chief, and the governor pronounced he would do it himself if Bai Kompah refused. The police were then called to conduct the inauguration. Once Smart received his papers from the government, he used these papers to assert his authority, and would say 'look at this paper that is what they gave me: do not pass beyond'.[312]

However, in 1894, after the arrival of a new governor, the historical trajectory of the colonial project in the interior shifted. Frederick Cardew, a career soldier, was far less interested in maintaining an amicable relationship with the chiefs and much more prepared to use violence to subjugate the interior. His approach had dire consequences, and in 1898 the Hut Tax War, led by Bai Bureh, took place in opposition to a new hut tax introduced to increase revenue from the protectorate.

However, it was not just the tax that caused the rebellion. Grace says about Cardew: 'If he had handled them (the Temne chiefs) with tact and patience instead of trying to bully them, the chiefs at the meeting might well have agreed to co-operate in

[312] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 353.

the collection of tax'.[313] There was also a backlash against the behaviour of the WAFF. Grace contends that the violent opposition to colonial rule was 'much aggravated by the sudden, uncompromising, and harsh methods by which it was endeavoured to be brought into operation, not merely by the acts of native policemen, but in the whole scheme adopted by the Colonial authorities'.[314]

Many chiefs also felt betrayed by the government after they had signed the treaties in good faith. T.J. Alldridge, the travelling commissioner, had signed a treaty with Kailondo of Luawa, but after the delimitation between Liberia and Sierra Leone, Luawa was cut in two. McCall argues that the delimitation of the border was 'crude and unsatisfactory',[315] and that 'the frontier was a straight mathematical line, bearing no relation to the human or physical geography of the area'.[316]

After the arrival of Cardew, in the lead-up to formal colonisation in 1896, questions of taxation needed to be addressed to secure the protectorate's financial base. The colony was already in serious financial trouble, and the announcement of the protectorate placed it under even more pressure. Consequently, Cardew decided that the protectorate needed to pay for itself.[317] Most of the revenue in Sierra Leone was generated from custom duties collected at the ports. In these changed

---

[313] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

[314] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 10.

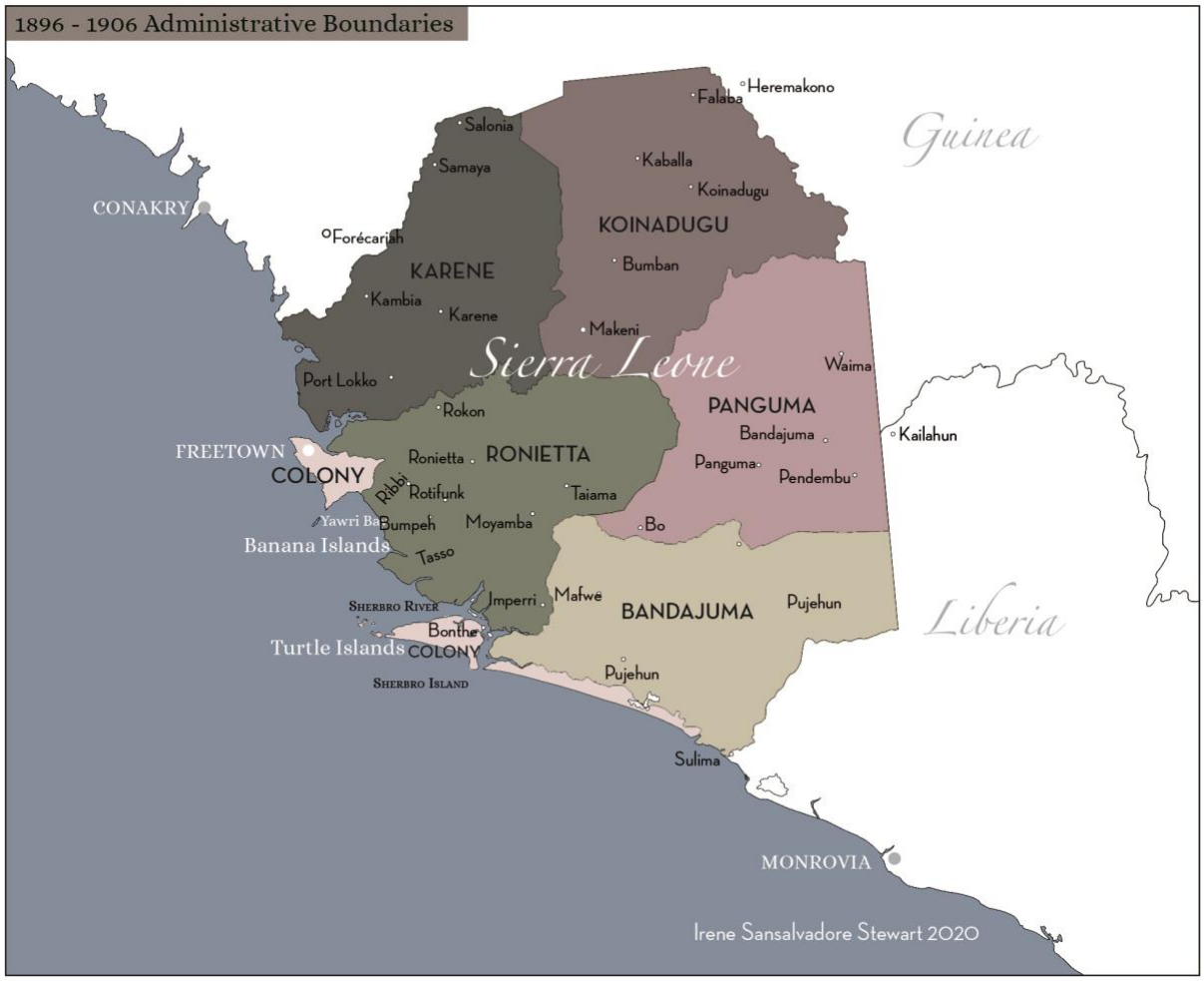
[315] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule', 281.

[316] *Ibid.*

[317] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

circumstances, certain forms of licence fees would have to be established in the interior so that the protectorate could pay for itself, and direct taxation would need to be implemented.[318]

SIERRA LEONE 1896–1906



Cardew argues that other colonies like Bechuanaland had been given subsidies by the British Territories to set up protectorates, but his request for financial

[318] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

assistance was denied.[319] As a result, the money for the protection of the protectorate and the expensive infrastructure projects needed in the colony had to be raised locally.[320] In Sierra Leone the solution to this problem came in the form of a hut tax. The list of what constituted a house was specified as;

1. Any house occupied by only the women
2. Any house occupied by only a man
3. Any house occupied by a man, and his wife and wives
4. Any man living with a woman in a room of another man's house. If the owner and his wife, and the tenant and his wife occupied one house, that house would pay 10/- 5/ for each family. The same thing applies to boys with girlfriends
5. Houses in the progress of being built[321]

Part of the argument for the imposition of this policy was the notion that taxation was a means of state building and civilisation. Major Crooks stated in 1906 that, 'no one can deny that it is clearly their duty to contribute in some way towards the wellbeing of their country and assisting government … and every nation must give the necessary aid by the simple method of paying tax'.[322]

---

[319] Leigh A. Gardner, *Taxing Colonial Africa: The Political Economy of British Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[320] Emily-Ann Langworthy, 'The Establishment of British Rule in the Sierra Leone Protectorate: 1896–1924' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1974).

[321] SLNA, Intel Diary. Shaingay 1906–1909.

[322] John J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone: Western Africa* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1903). 341.

There was serious resistance to this policy from chiefs, often allies of the government, and from the Sierra Leone legislature, including from the head of Native Affairs, J.C.E. Parks, considered an expert on liaison with the interior. But Cardew ignored their concerns, and in 1897 the hut tax was introduced.[323] At least 24 chiefs signed a petition begging the governor to reconsider the tax, but Cardew dismissed their protests. The chiefs became increasingly frustrated as their petitions to the governor to halt the tax and remove the police were ignored.[324]

Not only did Cardew ignore the pleas from Freetown; instead of increasing the administrative capacity of those collecting tax, he merely added more soldiers to the WAFF, bringing the total number to 574, while 'The District Commissioners still only had two clerks and [an] interpreter and 10 court messengers each to collect tax in an area averaging 5000 square miles'.[325]

Cardew, who was convinced of the Frontier Force's ability to destroy all resistance, ignored the pleas from Freetown not to go ahead with a hut tax policy. Instead of scaling back on the plan to tax, he increased the military power of the Frontier Police Force – with devastating effects.[326]

In February, when the first taxes were supposed to be collected, the rebellion led by Bai Bureh started. By April there was a second rebellion in the south. It was during this rebellion that Krio traders were massacred, missionaries brutally

---

[323] Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone*.

[324] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[325] *Ibid.*, 550.

[326] *Ibid.*

murdered, and one of the district commissioners killed. The brutality of the Mende rebellion led to international outrage. The *Manchester Guardian* reported, 'The Native Outbreak in Sierra Leone: Four Lady Missionaries Murdered'.[327] After the rebellion, 96 people – mainly chiefs – who were part of the Mende uprising were executed.

Although at first glance it would seem that the power of the chiefs was broken, this was not the case. Many chiefs used the Hut Tax War to further their own interests. Chief Smart, who earlier had used the British to become chief, looked on while the previous Bai Kompah who refused to pay hut tax had a gun put to his head, was dragged out of his house, and kicked and beaten by a British officer. Bai Kompah later died from his wounds, and the British installed a new chief.[328]

Momo Jah was another ally of the British during the Rebellion. In 1903, Governor King-Harman remarked to the secretary of state after his tour into the protectorate that he had, 'held a customary palaver with Momo Jah, formally a noted warrior who had given the Government most valuable assistance … profiting by that occasion to rid himself of many old and troublesome enemies'.[329]

The practice of allowing allies to keep plunder and slaves continued during the Hut Tax War, and there are many examples of it. Umkoro, a woman who was

---

[327] *The Manchester Guardian*, 'The Native Outbreak in Sierra Leone: Four Lady Missionaries Murdered', 7 May 1898.

[328] Kopytoff, 'The Internal Frontier'.

[329] CO 267/467/8954, 9 March 1903. 'Tour in the Protectorate'. Governor King-Harman to the Right Honourable Chamberlain.

captured, gave evidence during the Chalmers Commission and implicated Captain Fairtlough who had handed over slaves to Fabundo in 1894:

> I saw Captain Warren and Captain Fairthlough come with plenty of people. They came in the night and carried war. They plundered all the things in the town and they took all they got. They killed some of the people in the town. They killed a woman and a child. They stripped some of the women naked and burned the place. They took captives.[330]

Umkoro goes on to describe how those who were taken by the police were then given to another ally of the British who had provided the British with warboys. According to Umkoro, 'the police caught us and then took us to Fula Mansa'.[331] She goes on to state that that most of the almost 100 prisoners were young boys and girls. In later evidence given, Borlai Morlack asserted that Fula Mansa kept the captives as slaves.[332] Yamah tells a similar story of her abduction:

> … they took me and sold me in a village called Mokelpe with my daughter. I ran away, and they caught me, and took me to Masonki and put me in the stocks. That day Yoko's war came up to that country and they fled to the Mendi country. When I was there the Chief took me as his wife.[333]

The actions of the frontier police force are remarkably similar to the plunder and raiding tactics so central to pre-colonial patterns of warfare. According to

---

[330]Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 466.

[331] *Ibid.*, 432.

[332] *Ibid.*

[333] *Ibid.*, 392.

Frederic Taylor: 'The war boys came and plundered my house: they took away my wife and children, my cotton, tobacco, palm-nuts and oil, and wrecked my boat'.[334]

The extent to which the hut tax itself caused the revolt is debated. However, what is clear is that the major factor in the war was Governor Cardew's overestimation of the ability of central government to control the periphery. The Hut Tax War was a lesson to the government about the extent to which they were able to ram through an unpopular policy. It was also a clear warning of what might happen if the British interfered too much with powerful pre-existing institutions. As one chief said when asked by Captain Carr about the cause of the rebellion:

> Now, as between friends, how did all this happen: what was the cause of this rising? It is very hard to get a straight answer from them. I said, 'Is it the hut tax, or what is it?' Momo Jah said, 'You know when I want to fill my belly I get a big bowl and fill it with rice: but that is not enough. Before I eat, I put on a little pepper or soup or green stuff. That does not fill my belly, it is the rice that fills it. Well, the rice represents our wives, and slaves, and the pepper is the hut tax'.[335]

We need to be careful however not to take the evidence of the Chalmers Commission too literally. Cardew shaped the list of witnesses, with the intention of showing that it was the abolition of slavery that had caused the rebellion. While recognising that the hut tax was a cause, it also pointed to the impact of discontent at what was seen as the erosion of chiefly power, and the undermining of previous social institutions in which wives and slaves were crucial to power relations.

---

[334] *Ibid.*, 20.

[335] *Ibid.*, 18.

The administration learned that, in order control the interior within existing economic constraints, they needed the help of the chiefs. Chalmers aptly shows how the financial constraints created difficulty for the government in broadcasting power. One example was the underfunding of the police force:

> Looking to the large extent of territory sought to be controlled, and the slow means of communication (by foot-messengers) which alone are at present practicable, the District Commissioners and the Police, with their officers, though a larger and more expensive establishment than the financial resources can well support, are but a handful amongst a multitude. The force was large enough to be able to cause great annoyance and irritation, but not enough to successfully overawe, or show that a simultaneous rising would inevitably fail.[336]

THE CAPTOR'S CAPTIVE: VIOLENCE AND THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION 1901–1915

After the Hut Tax War, the nature of colonial violence shifted. As a consequence of 'cost cutting colonialism' the British encountered several of the same difficulties in broadcasting power that pre-colonial societies in Sierra Leone had previously encountered. The anxiety about the lack of ability to control the periphery led to a constant fear of the violence or rebellion breaking out, and 'punitive expeditions' became the main mechanism of dealing with resistance.

Indirect rule was a system of colonialism adopted by the British to manage their colonial territories. This policy allowed the British to rule though older political structures to govern protectorates of the empire, not colonies. A formalised system of indirect rule was developed by the governor of Nigeria, Frederick Lugard, as a blueprint to govern with a small number of white officials. A system similar to

[336] *Ibid.*, 48.

indirect rule was already implemented in 1896, but only formalised through the Protectorate Ordinance in 1897, which implemented policies regarding courts, taxes, licences, depositions of chiefs, and criminal and civil offences.[337] However, informal mechanisms of indirect rule had been used since the colonisation of Africa. Sara Berry makes an apt observation about the difficulties encountered in the historical trajectory of indirect rule:

> Although, over time, colonial administrators did evolve an elaborate set of principles and institutions for formalising the conception and practice of indirect rule, in fact they not only failed to preserve (or restore) stable systems of traditional social order, but actually promoted instability in local structures of authority.[338]

In George Orwell's short story 'Shooting an Elephant', he remembers when, as a policeman in Burma (Myanmar), he was required to shoot an elephant that had killed someone. Although he did not want to kill the elephant, he felt he had to shoot it to avoid being seen as weak in front of the local people.[339] To show strength of empire he was required to carry out an act of violence. Mark Condos uses Orwell's story as a springboard for his analysis of colonial India and argues:

> As a tiny ruling elite, the British in India were always acutely aware of their own vulnerability against a foreign and potentially hostile colonized population, and

---

[337] 'Protectorate Ordinance 1900: Ordinance to Consolidate and Amend the Ordinance Dealing with the Mode of Exercising Her Majesty's Jurisdiction in the Territories Adjacent to the Colony of Sierra Leone', Sierra Leone, 1900.

[338] Sara Berry, 'Hegemony on a Shoestring: Indirect Rule and Access to Agricultural Land', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62, no. 3 (1992): 327–55, 329.

[339] George Orwell, *A Collection of Essays* (New York: Mariner Books, 1970).

> understood that performative displays of strength and determination – in this case, the killing of an elephant – were all absolutely essential.[340]

Part of Condos's argument is that this anxiety about perceived weakness meant that extreme brutality was often meted out by the British towards any form of resistance. He argues that the size of the colonial armed forces did not mean that violence was an illustration of British strength but of 'fitful' and 'panicked behaviour' of an administration desperate to hide its weakness. There was constant fear of an uprising or rebellion. He argues that, 'British colonial state-building was intimately tied up with and predicated on a deep-seated, pervasive, and permanent sense of insecurity'.[341]

This chapter argues that colonial violence in Sierra Leone was also not an expression of domination. Isolated and often badly trained government officials anxious to show that they were in control, used violence as a tool. The punitive expeditions used force to hide weakness.

The propensity of colonial officials to burn down towns was by no means limited to the disputed territory between Liberia and Sierra Leone. Another incident took place in 1909 where the district commissioner, Mr G.D.A. Anderson, burnt down the town of Waima after a dispute. Although the acting governor, Maxwell, put the incident down to Anderson becoming 'unhinged', there are too many examples in the

---

[340] Mark Condos, *The Insecurity State: Punjab and the Making of Colonial Power in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 219.

[341] *Ibid*., 9.

archive for these to be regarded as the actions of madmen.[342] The policy of town burning remained a staple part of British colonial policy in Sierra Leone. In 1912, Dr Maxwell, the district commissioner of the Railway District, complained to the Governor, Sir Edward Merewether:

> I regret to say that Mr Fere is not the only official who is under the impression that the burning of a town may be resorted to as a punitive measure. I recently received an application from Major Williams Acting District Commissioner in the Northern Sherbro district for permission to burn down a town as he had been informed several leopard murders had been committed there. I can only surmise that because towns are occasionally burnt when military operations are taking place and armed resistance has been offered certain officers have formed the idea that civil officials of the government have the right to do the same.[343]

In the area of Northern Sherbro there had been a long-standing dispute between several chiefs, and in September of 1912, Dr Maxwell sent Mr Roper (a government official) to collect the house tax while settling the matter between the two chiefs. The population of a town called Tayia refused to go to the capital of the district to pay the house tax.

They were then ordered to come to Kenema to explain them – an order which they also refused. As no West African frontier police force 'could be spared in September the thing had to hang over until October'.[344]

---

[342] BNA CO 267/517/39597, 9 November 1909. Major G.D.A. Anderson, District Commissioner [and] Acting Governor C.B. Haddon-Smith to the Right Honourable the Earl of Crew.

[343] BNA CO 267/544/628/12/13, 21 November 1912. 'Sandoh Chiefdom Disturbances'. From the District Commissioner in the Kenema District to the Honourable Colonial Secretary.

[344] BNA CO 267/544/628/12/13, 21 November 1912. 'Sandoh Chiefdom Disturbances, Minutes'.

On 24 October 1912, Mr Fere, the assistant district commissioner, went up to Sandoh with eight or nine court messengers and fifteen WAFF officials. The initial report in late October stated that an attempt to collect tax was met with resistance. As a result the frontiers had been 'obliged' to open fire on the crowd, killing about ten people. One of the arrested chiefs was later shot and killed while attempting to escape.[345]

As in other parts of Africa, rule in Sierra Leone offered the advantage of control with minimum expenditure. The underlying logic was that you entrenched control by co-opting previous structures of political authority. But in order to incorporate the chiefs you had to accommodate previous patterns of governance and control over land.[346] This political system had several implications for political authority that are addressed in the next part of the chapter.

Fairthlough summed up the reason for indirect rule in 1912, when he gave evidence at the West African Commission on land tenure. When asked whether he thought indirect rule was the best mechanism to govern the protectorate he replied, 'Yes, I do, at the present stage. It is the cheapest and it suits the people. We could not run an administration of the country without an enormous army of officials we could not possible pay for'.[347]

---

[345] BNA CO 267/543/5662, 11 November 1912, 'Konnoh Sub-District, Rly (Railway) District Native Unrest'.

[346] *Ibid*.

[347] Co 879/Africa (West) No. 1046. 'West African Lands Committee, Committee on the Tenure of West African Colonies and Protectorates. Minutes of Evidence, Friday 15th November 1912'. Major E.C.D.H. Fairtlough, C.M.G.D.S.O 212.

Structures of indirect rule were not merely achieved through allowing chiefs to continue governing as they had before. The entrenchment of the system ensured that the ever-present threat of violence was diminished, and as Lonsdale and Berman argue in relation to Kenya over time, 'the official monopoly on public power … [began] to emerge. Backed by the present threat, and frequent use of force, so each African broker became less indispensable and were more vulnerable therefore to British displeasure'.[348]

Kenya, however, had a much bigger colonial force and administration than Sierra Leone, and the latter's reliance on allies remained central to colonial policy.[349] Added to this problem, Sierra Leone was not a sought-after posting. A British officer, perhaps with some degree of overstatement, commented of the DCs that, 'the sort of officers, who came out in 1910 were all half dead with drink, when they started and got worse when [after] they arrived'.[350]

In Sierra Leone, given the small size of the colonial government and small number of policemen, the colonial administration had a difficult time controlling what would later become the protectorate. British power was far more precarious than it was in most other parts of the continent, and by 1912 Sierra Leone had the smallest percentage of the GDP (4.43%) going to defence of all the West African colonies.[351]

---

[348] Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 31.

[349] *Ibid*.

[350] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule', 398.

[351] At the same time, the Gold Coast estimates were 6.35%, Southern Nigeria 5.78%, and Northern Nigeria 20.59%. Co 267/554/40718. Protectorate – Native Unrest Troops.

The Sierra Leonean government was acutely aware that in the case of an uprising they would be greatly outnumbered. The Railway District would only have been able to get 250 soldiers to the district area with any kind of speed, and could only muster 50 reserves. In the event of any serious uprising, it would require calling on soldiers from other colonies, which could take over a week.[352]

But over time, pre-existing forms of power and authority were drawn into and reshaped by the protectorate. In 1903 everything west of the Moa River was Liberian territory. The British remained stationed in Kailaun, and battled to control Kissi raids from both Liberia and what is now French Guinea. The history of the Kailaun region is a particularly illuminating example of how using violence as a mechanism to hide structural weakness was key to British policy, and finally resulted in the area being annexed by the British from Liberia in 1908.[353] Liberia is also a crucial example of a how violence was a performative act to show possible dissenters what would happen if they crossed the Empire.[354]

Ever since the creation of the border with Liberia, there had been difficulties controlling it. The almost continuous conflict in the northeastern portion of Liberia frequently spilled over into Sierra Leone. This conflict over the Liberian border

---

[352] *Ibid.*

[353] Berry, 'Hegemony on a Shoestring'; Samuel B. Ngovo, 'The Bandi of Northwestern Liberia: A Study of Change and Continuity in Bandi Society to 1964' (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2011); Andreas Massing, 'A Segmentary Society between Colonial Frontiers: The Kissi of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, 1892–1913', *Liberian Studies Journal* 9, no. 1 (1981): 1–13.

[354] Alpha Bah, 'The Nineteenth Century Partition of Kissiland and the Contemporary Possibilities for Reunification', *Liberian Studies Journal* XII, no. 1 (1987): 38–55.

between Liberia, France and England is far too complicated to adequately describe in this section. But relevant here is the fact that, after the split of the Luawa chiefdom described earlier in the chapter, the new leader Pa (or sometimes Fa) Bundu found his chiefdom Luawa split between Liberia and Sierra Leone, with himself on the Liberian side.[355]

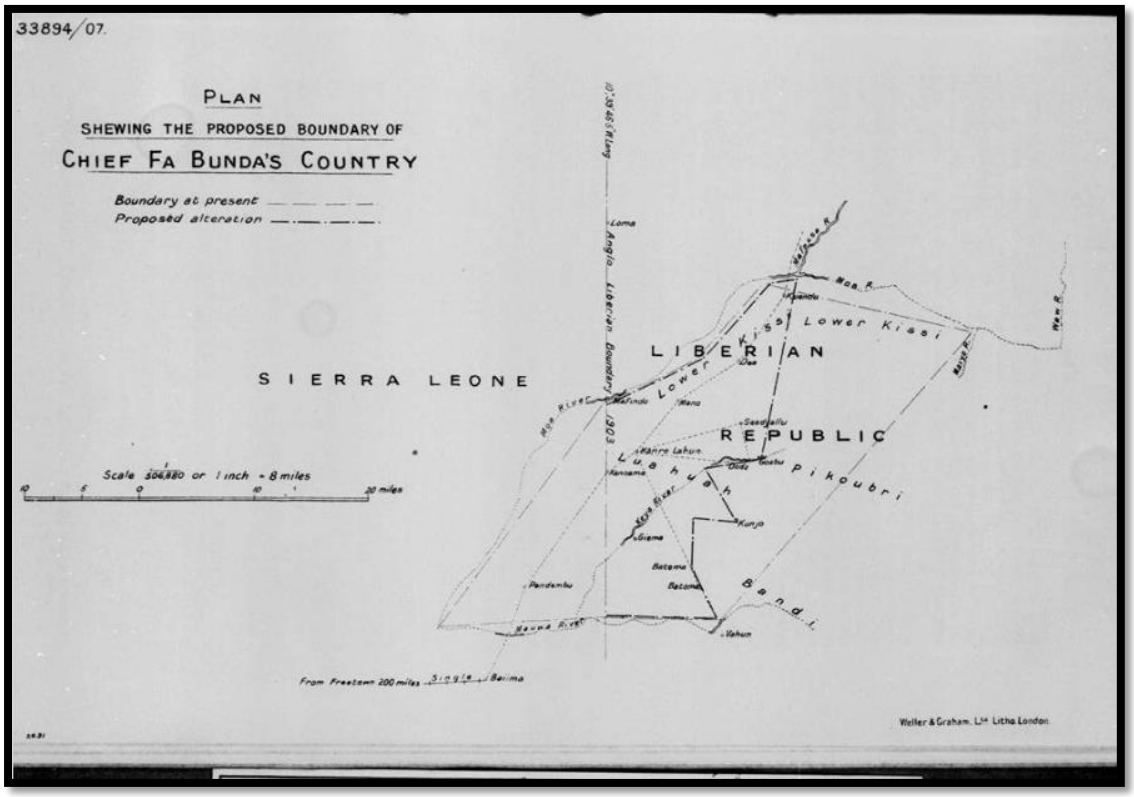
Chiefs who were enemies of Fa Bundu had for some time encouraged their fighting men to conduct raids into the British protectorate, burn villages, plunder farms and carry off slaves.[356] However, he remained a staunch ally of the British. Consequently in 1904, the British requested the Liberian government to allow a punitive expedition into the Kailaun District not only to stop the raiding that was spilling over into Sierra Leone, but also to aid Fa Bundu.

FA BUNDO'S TERRITORY 1907

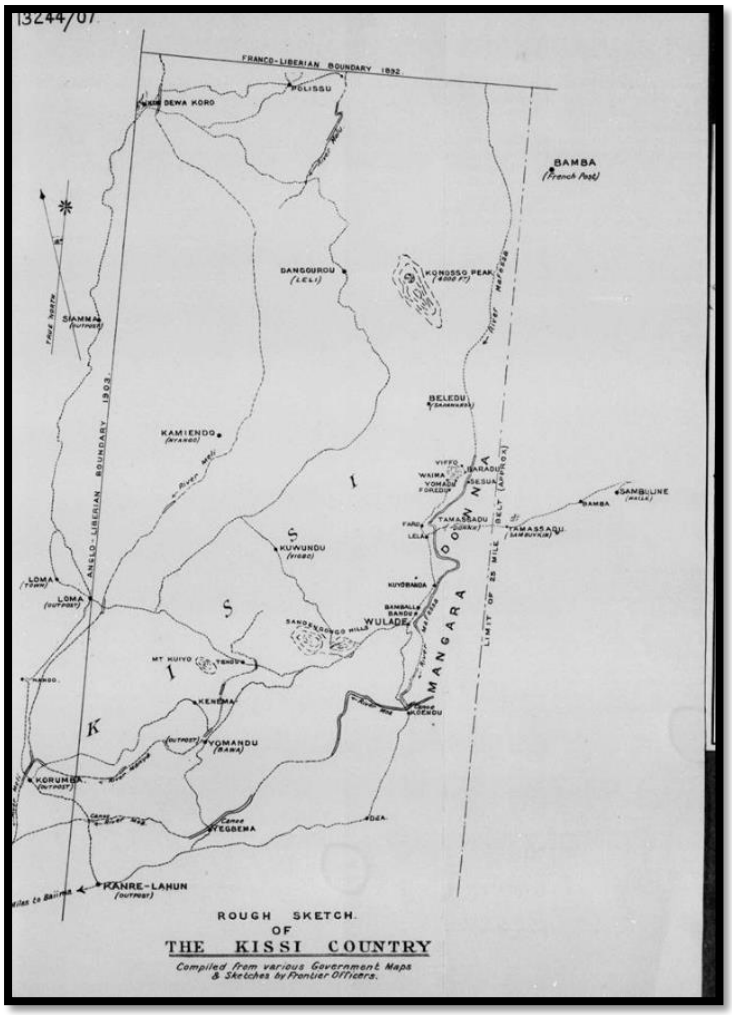
[355] Condos, *The Insecurity State*; McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

[356] CO 276/482/ 31142, 20 August 1905. 'Kissi Field Operation – Special Report on Operations of the Kissi Field Force, 1905'. Major C.E. Palmer.

CO 879/Africa (West) Conf. Colonial Office, May 1909, ‘Sierra Leone Further Correspondence [190 and 1908] Relating to Liberia’.



KISSI FIELD OPERATION



CO 879/Africa (West) Conf. Colonial Office, May 1909. 'Sierra Leone Further Correspondence [1907 and 1908] Relating to Liberia'

The Liberian Government gave permission for the expedition that began in late March 1905. Much of the final report of this expedition is either crossed out, or

'omit' is written on the side. I have underlined the censored parts in the quotations below.[357]

Next the British, 'Burnt the town after taking some rice and burning much more which I was unable to carry'.[358] The rest of the operation from the 30th of March to the 2 April 1905 and, 'some 18 villages, many exceeding 60 houses each were burnt in the neighbourhood. More rice was obtained than could be either eaten or transported – it was therefore destroyed in large quantities'.[359] Palmer explains why this tactic was adopted:

> The policy of destruction was adopted as the best means of bringing home to the Kissis the penalties of raiding British territory, and was, moreover, particularly desirable in this neighbourhood as being Kafura headquarters and to a large extent his private property, many of the towns being peoples entirely by his slaves and forming his base of supply and source of wealth.[360]

'[H]e followed Kafura eastward. Having destroyed everything within a day's march of Sufedu'. On 3 April 1904 they left Sufedu, 'destroying all towns on the way'. This indiscriminate destruction of the Liberian countryside continued, and on 8 April it would seem that after a skirmish, Palmer estimated that between 70 to 80 Kissis

---

[357] In some cases it seems that sections were omitted as there is to much detail however, in various cases it is clear that the information omitted was removed for more nefarious purposes. CO 276/482/ 31142. 20 August 1905 Kissi Field Operation. Special Report on h Operations of the Kissi Field Force 1905. Major C.E Palmer

[358] *Ibid.*

[359] *Ibid.*

[360] *Ibid.*

'were put out of Action of which naturally the greater would never recover from their wounds'.

> On the 9th 10th and 11th minor operations in the neighbourhood of Sangbaori were carried out; towns destroyed and supplies collected. On the 12th Yigbo having still failed to put in an appearance, I decided to march direct on his capital Kuwundu, which was on that day, destroyed with but little opposition.[361]

Chief Yigbo, the ruler in the region whose capital Kuwundu had been burnt down, provided a clear example of what happened if the British questioned your loyalty. It was felt that he was not making an adequate effort in hunting down the rogue chiefs and delivering them to the British. The burning down of his capital was necessary, according to Palmer, because it was a 'fulfilment of my promise to treat him as an active enemy if he would not show himself to be an active friend'.[362]

The second phase of the operation, which began on 25 April 1905, was principally against chief Fassalokkah and the other rebel chiefs. The soldiers settled at Kundewakoro, and 'two raids were made from here. One of two Companies under Captain Le Mesurier operated from the 10 April to 14 April 1904. This party met with opposition of a feeble description'. Even though they were met with almost no resistance from the local population they still, 'destroyed some six towns which had been the source from which chief Fassalokkah had drawn his fighting strength'.[363] The

---

[361] *Ibid.*

[362] *Ibid.*

[363] *Ibid.*

raiding continued from 16 until 22 May 1905, and after this most of the remaining fighters fled into the French territory.

The Kissi Field Force finally came to an end on 28 June 1905. The violence they displayed was also performative. Palmer proudly declared after the Kissis were defeated that the British were, 'leaving the Northern Kissis to digest the lesson administered to them and releasing a few prisoners with instructions as to how to guide the chiefs to a safer method of government'.[364] However, Governor Probyn complained to the Secretary of State:

> Permanent peace however, cannot be relied upon until the Liberian Government organises a force sufficient to control the wild tribes in the hinterland of Liberia. I respectfully beg to wage that such steps as may be practicable, be taken so that there may be no risk of the Sierra Leone Government having to again incur the heavy expense in restoring order in the territories of the republic.[365]

Unsurprisingly the decimation of the Kailaun region and the destruction of the villages of Chief Kafura and Chief Fassalokkah, did not lend itself to the creation of 'safer methods of government', and less than two years later another group of disgruntled chiefs began raiding the area. In 1907, Lieutenant F.J. Bill had the '[h]onour to report that in accordance with instructions received, I (Lieutenant F.J.

[364] *Ibid*.

[365] CO 276/482/ 31142, 29 August 1905. 'Kissi Operations'. Governor Probyn to the Right Honourable Alfred Lyttleton, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Bill) left Wulande at 6am on the 2nd instant with Lieutenant Chamly and 60 men out of 'C' Company to proceed to Fuinde and burn it'.[366]

Probyn's point that the Liberian northeastern region would remain unstable, proved correct. Up until 1907 it seemed that Britain would respect the original borders with Liberia. However, the arrival of Major William D. Lomax and Acting Commissioner John W. Cooper, sent by the Liberian government to stabilise the area, caused a civil war in the region. By 1908 the situation became so bad that the British began a process of annexation that would be completed in 1915.[367]

While this second boundary commission was taking place, the situation in Kailaun (previously Kanre-Lahun) 'remained explosive'.[368] In 1911 a 'neutral zone' was established, where 'certain towns … have been claimed by both Sierra Leone and Liberia, and it has been agreed to recognise these disputes as belonging to neither side pending the demarcation of the boundary'.[369]

The confusion regarding the violence in the neutral zone is clearly shown in Governor Merewether's angry letter to M.Y.A. Parks, the acting British Consular

---

[366] CO 879/Africa (West) Conf. Colonial Office, May 1909. 'Sierra Leone Further Correspondence [1907 and 1908] Relating to Liberia',

[367] *Ibid.*

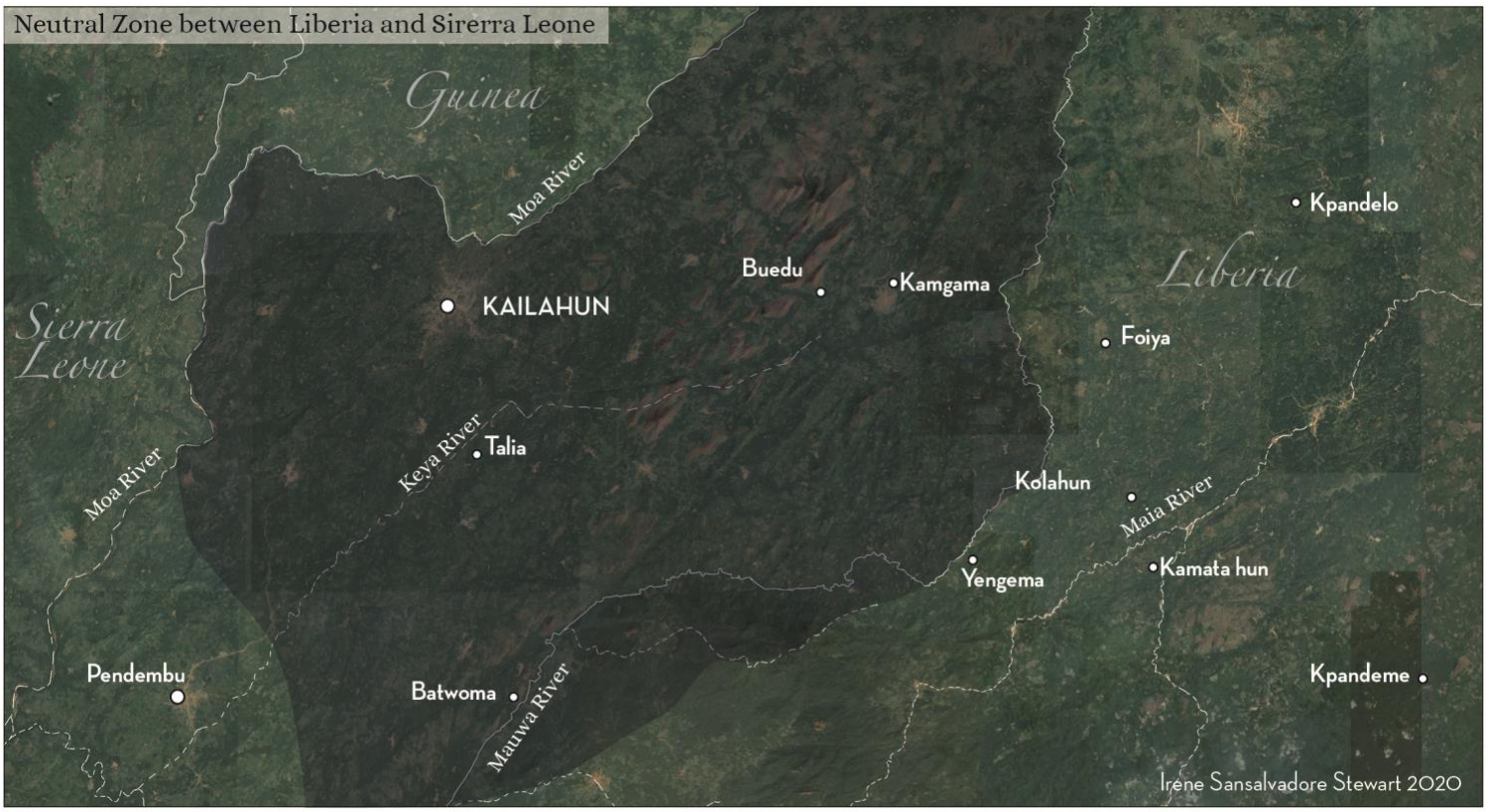
[368] Harrison Akingbade, 'The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland', *The Journal of Negro History* 79, no. 3 (1994): 277–96, 291.

[369] CO/267/539/8654, 20 March 1912. 'Liberian Boundary. Burning of Towns'. Governor Merewether to the Right Honourable L.V. Hardcourt M.P.

General in Monrovia, after the Liberian government complained that British troops had attacked a Liberian town:

> I should esteem it a favour if you would point out that the Liberian subjects in question were troops in the pay of the Government who committed an unprovoked attack on a town in the Kunyo Chiefdom, which the Liberian Government agreed to regard provisionally as British Territory. The attack appears to have been made with the convenience, if not by the direction of Colonel Lomax and Mr Cooper, and [the] place where the Liberians were killed was in British territory. The perpetration of such wanton outrages by persons believed to be acting under the control of the Liberian Government cannot fail to affect unfavourably the relations between the two governments.[370]

THE NEUTRAL ZONE BETWEEN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE



[370] CO/267/538/2987, 29 January 1912. 'Liberian Boundary. Attack on Behlu, Kunyo Chiefdoms'. From Governor Merewether to Consular General Monrovia.

The ‘wanton outrages’ of Lomax and Cooper finally came to a head between the end of 1910 and October 1911. Lomax, Cooper, and their ally Chief Mambu, called the chiefs resisting Liberian rule to a meeting, where eight were arrested and their towns destroyed by Cooper and Mambu.[371] The British and Liberians were unable and unwilling to intervene, allowing Lomax, Cooper and their allied chiefs to devastate the region:

> The State of Tangeo is a deplorable one … 53 villages burnt, many of the people killed and over a hundred captured and sold as slaves. Not a single village was spared, and Liberian Troops even burnt the frontier villages on the Sierra Leonean side.[372]

Several months later, information surfaced that suggested the arrested chiefs were executed. Several witnesses suggested that Lomax shot them one by one, cut their hearts out of their bodies ‘with a big country knife … He then cut off the private parts and put them on his Gbenya chest’.[373]

This incident proved to be a step too far, and under threat of a British invasion of Liberia, the government arrested Lomax and Cooper and sent them for trial in Monrovia.[374] However, chief Mambu remained the paramount chief, and there is evidence that he continued to sell the people he captured in his raids into Sierra Leone. It was not until 1915, when the final delimitation was signed, that the situation

---

[371] *Ibid.*

[372] CO/267/348/17792/26 May 1913. ‘Report on Anglo-Liberia Boundary Commission, 25 February to 30 April 1913’.

[373] *Ibid.*

[374] Both were later acquitted, to the fury of the British.

in the region began to calm down. The Anglo-Liberian border saw the British exchange part of the Mano River territory, and give the Liberian government 4 000 pounds in compensation for the eastern district of what is now Kailaun.[375] Whether or not the British always had designs on the Kailaun region is difficult to say, although

> [t]he British authorities took over the Kanre-Lahun District, an area of extraordinary wealth and dense population; in return for this valuable and most needed area, Liberia received a piece of country lying between the Morro and Mano Rivers, which had formerly been a part of the Colony of Sierra Leone; this territory is almost without population, densely forested, and practically worthless.[376]

This form of militarised patronage did not end after colonisation. After the arrival of Lomax and Cooper, Chief Mambu, who wished to become a paramount chief, 'induced the District Commissioner (Cooper) by giving him two daughters as wives'. In return Cooper, with the aid of Lomax, 'sent Liberian troops to assist Mambu'.[377] Mambu also secured Cole, a notorious slave dealer, as an ally, giving him two of his daughters – Marca and Diendi – as wives, as well as ivory, money and cattle'.[378] This relationship is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Although these incidents occurred in Liberia, they had ramifications in Sierra Leone. The Liberian case is also a very important example of what can happen when the political centre is unable to control the periphery. It was not only the Liberian

---

[375] Akingbade, 'The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland'.

[376] Frederick Starr, *Liberia: Description, History, Problems* (Chicago, 1913), 169.

[377] CO/267/348/17792/26 May 1913. 'Report on Anglo-Liberia Boundary Commission, 25 February to 30 April 1913'.

[378] *Ibid.*

border that remained difficult to control; in 1912 there was another disturbance relating to the payment of the hut tax in the northeastern regions of Konno on the border with Guinea, as well as the human leopard murders in the Sherbro and Imperri districts in the south.[379]

Once again the case of the Liberian border is an illuminating study of how governments were drawn into local conflicts and played off against each other. Some have argued that the annexation of Liberia took place contrary to British wishes, but that they were drawn in by the geopolitics of the region. As indicated earlier, it seems as though nobody in Freetown was aware of the fact that the boundary carved Kailondo's Luawa chiefdom in two. Cardew wrote to London, explaining that 'a large number of his district compromising perhaps the most important part falls within Liberian territory … [he] venture[d] to suggest that if practicable a readjustment be made of the frontier … so as to include the Kailaun district'.[380] There was also already a British barracks at Kailaun. Most importantly, Fa Bundu, one of Britain's greatest allies in the east, found that his capital was now part of Liberia.

Without the protection of the British, raiders began to take advantage of this fact, and opponents of Kailondo and his successor Fa Bundu, began a campaign to reunite the Luawa chiefdom under British jurisdiction. Fa Bundu wrote to the district commissioner at Panguma:

---

[379]BNA CO 267/544/628/12/13, 21 November 1912. 'Sandoh Chiefdom Disturbances'. From the District Commissioner in the Kenema District to the Honourable Colonial Secretary; Starr, *Liberia: Description, History, Problems*.

[380] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule, 282.

> May your rule extend over all my country where thousands are desirous of being as they were during the past ten years loyal British subjects. We … give our country to the English Government not with the American (Liberians) or with the French. I am quite sure that if England will not take my country I will not let Liberians sit down in my country I will drive them (out).[381]

In an example of the way treaties were deployed to remind the British of their duties as an ally and protector of Luawa, and added to that the fact that they now resided in Liberian territory, this was 'quite contrary to arrangement(s) made by Alldridge'.[382] And in another example of the way that local political structures used British law to their own ends, Fabundeh provided the British with a petition about returning to British control signed by twenty sub-chiefs on the Liberian side of the border.[383]

Once again a British system of governance was used to force the British to annex Luawa. In 1900, Fa Bundu increased the force of his campaign and paid hut tax to get the British to allow him to be part of British jurisdiction in Sierra Leone. The district commissioner, who was not keeping track of who was paying tax and who was not, accepted the money and 'thus managed to foist on a reluctant Freetown some

---

[381] *Ibid.*, 286.

[382] *Ibid.*

[383] *Ibid.* For a more detailed overview about how legality was interpreted by local political structures, see Hogg, ''Our Country Customs".

sort of responsibility for the eastern part of Luawa'.[384] In an unprecedented occurrence, once the mistake had been found out, the British returned the taxes.[385]

Even though the British were reluctant to annex the territory, the politics of the region created a proxy war between Britain and Liberia fought through allies. Many of the punitive expeditions described earlier were justified in order to protect their ally Fabundeh. Although never overtly stated, the Kissi expedition discussed in the previous section was heavily influenced by the British support for Fabundeh. Chief Kafula, the victim of British obliteration during the Kissi expedition, was the most dangerous of Fa Bundu's enemies, but it was the arrival of Lomax and Cooper that showed the full extent of British support for Fabundeh.

McCall argues that British annexation of the eastern part of Liberia has always been regarded as a power struggle between Britain, France and Liberia. But if you look more closely, 'the achievement [of Fa Bundu] must rank as one of the most remarkable incidents during the European partition of West Africa; [it is] possible it was unique.'[386] The final delimitation, he argues, was 'satisfactory to nobody but Fabundeh and the Luawa'.[387] Although McCall may be overstating the extent to which the British were forced into the annexation, it certainly shows how local leaders manipulated British strategies to further their own ends.

---

[384] McCall, 'Kailondo's Luawa and British Rule'.

[385] *Ibid.*

[386] *Ibid* .290

[387] *Ibid.*

ANNEXED TERRITORY



CONCLUSION

The Hut Tax War has often been seen as the 'end' of pre-colonial Sierra Leone and the start of colonial domination. However, even extreme levels of colonial violence did not represent a complete rupture from the pre-colonial past. The economic and administrative weakness of the colonial state led to the co-option of existing power structures which, as a result, left a deep mark in the nature of the new state in Sierra Leone. As in many other parts of the empire, weakness and violence went hand in

hand. The prevalence of punitive expeditions and the almost continuous burning down of towns in fact revealed the fragility of colonial control.

But colonial power was not only expressed and directed in a top-down manner. The rulers of pre-existing polities were able to manipulate the resources provided by colonial rule to entrench or expand their power, or challenge that of their rivals. The evolution of the colonial state was as a result profoundly shaped by the interplay of coercion and co-option from below as well as above. This co-option would deeply shape British polices on slavery.

CHAPTER 4: 'NO SEMBLANCE OF SCANDAL': COLONIAL RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC SLAVERY, 1880–1930

The Hut Tax War showed what happened when the British believed that violence could prop up the power of empire without the support of local political structures. As John Darwin observes,

> … the dominant factor was the need to impose a colonial pax as quickly as possible and at minimum cost. With few sources of revenue and heavy military outgoings, the British in the interior were eager to settle with the emirs and chiefs they had defeated or overawed. There was no time to replace them or to reconstruct their conquered polities in the image of the Coast. It was easier and cheaper to restore the old regimes on condition of loyalty, and exert British paramountcy directly through a cadre of 'Residents' backed up by the threat of force.[388]

In Sierra Leone administrators confronted a conundrum; the alliances that underpinned British power would be under threat if effective measures were taken to eradicate all forms of slavery. In this chapter, I examine the consequences of this 'easier and cheaper' mechanism of control. The chapter looks at the consequences of this strategy in relation to the continuation of slavery in the protectorate – which remained legal until 1928. I show how the British, in order to maintain control in the protectorate, ignored and sometimes entrenched slavery further.

From the late nineteenth century anti-slavery was back on the international agenda which was increasingly against the 'legal status of slavery'. The government in Sierra Leone had to perform the difficult balancing act of developing a legal

[388] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 293.

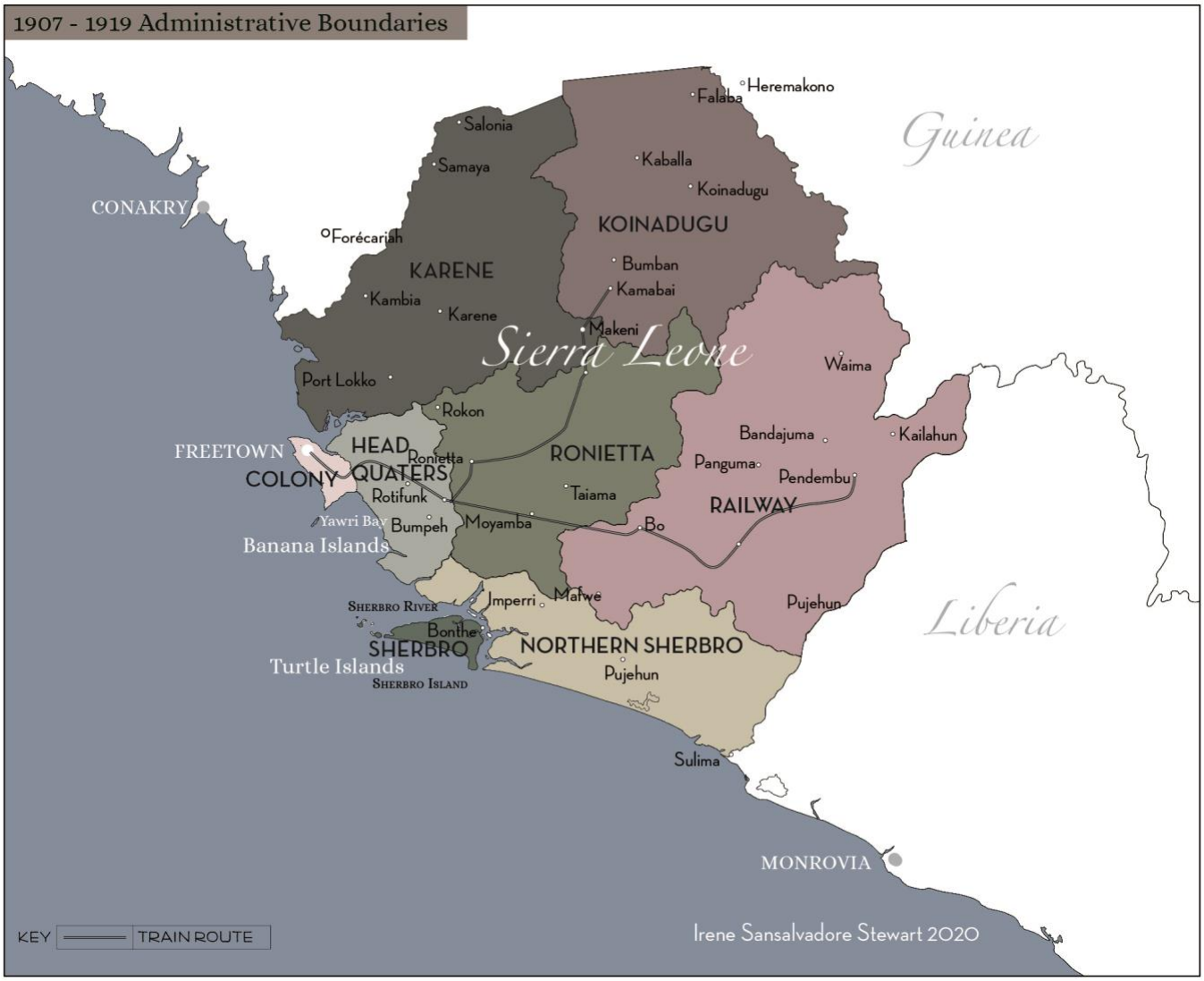
framework based on older patterns of political authority without it looking too much like slavery.

The argument that slaves were well treated was used as a poor disguise for the fact that not only was slavery still legal, but that there was also an active trade in slaves during this period. In order to justify this contradiction, the British used the idea that domestic slavery was a benign if backward institution that would slowly fade away as a result of modernisation and colonisation. The British asserted that there was not a 'semblance of scandal'[389] attached to the legal status of slavery. However, in 1926 this contradiction could no longer be sustained, and the government was forced to abolish slavery in the protectorate.

This contradiction brings to light an important dilemma of the colonial project. On the one hand there was increased backlash against slavery, and on the other, slavery underpinned the social structures in Sierra Leone. The consequence was that, during this period, British attempts to juggle indirect rule with growing forms of abolition led to the blending of slavery and other servile relationships, which further muddied the waters.

[389] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate', 1928.

ADMINISTRATIVE MAP EARLY 20TH CENTURY SIERRA LEONE



ANTI-SLAVERY AND IMPERIALISM 1880–1926

The history of slavery in twentieth century Sierra Leone is located in the larger context of the anti-slavery movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which culminated in the 1926 League of Nations Convention on Slavery. The convention defined slavery as, 'the status or condition of a person over whom any

or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised' – a definition that remains in use to this day.[390]

The convention committed to 'abolishing slavery in all its forms'. The fact that abolition was used to justify colonial expansion from the 1880s added to the potential embarrassment for colonial powers to be seen as facilitating its survival. David Livingston's descriptions of his journeys through communities decimated by the slave trade had shocked the British public.[391] British public opinion was persuaded that colonisation and the 'civilising' powers of Europe were the only way that Africans would stop enslaving each other. The consequence was that abolition became part of the moral justification for colonialism.[392]

The Anti-Slavery Society supported the carving up of Africa.[393] 'As good citizens, the anti-slavery movement started from the view that British law and British civilisation were coeval with justice and liberty. From the outset they assumed that the extension of that influence was a force for good.'[394]

---

[390] League of Nations Slavery Convention. Article (1). 25 September 1926, Geneva.

[391] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate', 1928.

[392] James Heartfield, *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1838–1956: A History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

[393] Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, 'Conditions Analogous to Slavery: Imperialism and Free Labour Ideology in Africa', in *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 107–50.

[394] *Ibid.*

The Brussels Act of 1890 helped to frame the scramble for Africa, which was cloaked in the language of anti-slavery.[395] Frederick Lugard, the governor of Nigeria and the architect of indirect rule, argued that the Brussels Act was the 'Magna Carta of the African slave trade'.[396] He describes the process: '… the nations assembled at Brussels in 1889 … to declare their Mandate in the name of God Almighty, as trustees for protecting effectively the aboriginal populations of Africa, and ensuring to that vast continent the benefits of peace and civilisation'.[397]

Lugard defended the necessity of violence in the process of colonisation by arguing that 'you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs'.[398] He also commented on the defeat of the Fulani in Nigeria as follows: 'slave raiding [had been] put an end to. A system founded on the tyrannical and bestial misuse of force had been crushed by force – the only method which could be understood by the people'.[399]

In some ways he was correct. The Magna Carta had as little impact on the poor in thirteenth century Britain as legislation had on slavery in Africa. It was added in at the end of the agenda, noting that it was a crime against humanity under international law, but allowed almost no scope for effective implementation of anti-

---

[395] *Ibid.*

[396] Sir Frederick D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 361–362.

[397] *Ibid.*

[398] *Ibid.*, 362.

[399] *Ibid.*, 361–362.

slavery measures. Nonetheless it formed part of the moral justification of colonialism which the British and others did not want to be stripped away in public.[400]

After the end of the First World War, the Convention of St. Germain-en-Laye of 1919 also included anti-slavery clauses intended to entrench the laws ratified by the Berlin and Brussels Acts in 1885 and 1890.[401] The need to stamp out slavery was used to justify the mandate system, and Britain's right to administer old German colonies.

> The Signatory Powers exercising sovereign rights or authority in African territories will continue to watch over the preservation of the native population and to supervise the improvement or their moral and material well-being. They will in particular endeavour to secure the complete suppression of slavery in all its forms, and of the slave trade by land and sea.[402]

The Convention of St. Germain-en-Laye was the next important piece of international legislation regarding anti-slavery after the Berlin and Brussels Acts, and brought the agenda back into the spotlight after the First World War. The most important piece of legislation in relation to slavery in Sierra Leone was the League of Nations Convention on Slavery in 1926. As Miers shows, the pressure from organisations such as the Anti-Slavery Society, plus the exposure of cases of slave trade in the Middle East and Abyssinia (Ethiopia), kept the commitment to attack

---

[400] *Ibid.*

[401] Kevin Grant, *A Civilized Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884–1926* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).

[402] *Ibid.*

'slavery in all its forms' on the agenda.[403] John Harris, the head of the Anti-Slavery Society, realised that the League of Nations could not ignore slavery as easily as governments could. The Anti-Slavery Society organised around these issues, and forced them into the forefront of the League's mandate.[404]

Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, the league's delegate from New Zealand in 1922, stood up and asked what the League was doing about slavery. As a result of Steel–Maitland's question, the League decided to create the Temporary Slavery Committee (TAC). The committee was to include independent individuals who would collect evidence on slavery, and develop a framework for the abolition of slavery in all its forms. The members of the TAC included Frederick Lugard of Britain, Maurice Delfosse of France, Alfredo Fereire d'Andrada of Portugal, Albert Gohr of Belgium, and Commandant Roncalgli of Italy. .[405]

Miers also adds that 'The only non-European member of the committee Dantès Louis Bellegarde

---

[403] Kevin Grant, 'Human Rights and Sovereign Abolitions of Slavery, c. 1885–1956', in *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire, and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950*, eds. Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 80–102.

[404] Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira, 2003).

[405] *Ibid.*

from Haiti, he became the nearest thing to a slave voice on the commission'.[406] Women were excluded because, 'it was undesirable, even if these indignant ladies could produce a candidate who had any genuine practical experience with slavery'.[407]

The Slavery Convention, although hampered and diluted by various European governments, especially on the issue of forced labour, was a milestone in the development of human rights and international law. It was the first time there was general acceptance that 'there should be general standards of human rights in the workplace and that the infringement of government on the rights of its own people are matters of international concern'.[408]

SLAVERY IN SIERRA LEONE

Ironically, Britain led the abolitionist charge as the 'traditional leaders of the anti-slavery movement – and the lone crusaders fighting a righteous cause in an immoral world'.[409] But in the newly created British protectorates and their colonies, they faced actual problems of how to govern societies in which forms of slavery underpinned the political structures that the British sought to co-opt.

The British government, having justified colonisation as a means of advancing abolition, faced a fundamental contradiction, which created what has been

---

[406] *Ibid.*, 104.

[407] *Ibid.*, 105.

[408] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 115.

[409] Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 15.

described as 'chaotic pluralism'.[410] London communicated policies to the colonies, which were implemented or ignored by local colonial administrative structures in accordance with the realities they faced. In the case of slavery in Sierra Leone, this pluralism was mediated by constant fear of scandal or discovery, which shaped how far Freetown, often with the implicit support of London, could flout abolitionist sentiment.[411]

In the late nineteenth century, Freetown officially avoided any interaction with questions of slavery in the interior. However, some British officials were committed to interrupting the transportation of slaves. In several reports of operations into the interior, slaves were rescued and sent home or taken to Freetown.[412]

In January 1889 Captain Crawford set free hundreds of slaves of which 'a large proportion of the women and children were slaves who were captured in the raid last year (1888)'.[413] Later that year, Lieutenant Lendy heard of slave dealing at Foulah Town close to Robari. Lendy and his men confronted the slave dealer, 'who denied the presence of any slaves in the place, but on a search being made in the

---

[410] *Ibid.*, 3.

[411] Darwin, *The Empire Project*; Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*; John Darwin, 'Globalism and Imperialism: The Global Context of British Power, 1830–1960', in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, ed. Shigeru Akita (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 43–65.

[412] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

[413] In BNA. CO 267/375/3025, 8 January 1889. 'Sulymah Affair'. Governor J.S. Hay to the Right Honourable Lord Knutsford. The actual number of slaves rescued is difficult to say with certainty. Crawford reports that 668 people were captured – 70 men, 376 women and 222 children.

neighbourhood, eighty-three men women and children were found … with heavy chains around their necks. The unfortunate people were at once released'.[414]

Lieutenant Lendy, who was leading the expedition, flogged the men involved in the sale of the enslaved persons and 'on the captives being asked where they would like to go they all elected to go to Robari and will have settled there under the protection of the garrison'.[415] During an expedition led by Captain Lendy in October of the same year, ten more slaves were rescued from Foulah Town from a different slave dealer, bringing the total of rescued slaves to 400.[416]

After another operation at Tambi, Captain Ellis sent a detailed report on the rescue of 50 slaves, and expressed his growing concern at the number of enslaved people being sold as a result of the conflict in the north. His report states:

> We liberated at Tambi some 45 or 50 slaves, all women and children, and in a very emaciated condition … Most of these slaves were recognised and claimed as relatives or friends by men of the Native Contingent and, on being offered the alternative of being conveyed to Sierra Leone, or placed in charge of the Native Contingent in order to be returned to their homes, selected the latter. Three of them, however, wished to go to Sierra Leone, and I accordingly brought them down with me.[417]

---

[414] BNA. CO 267/376/6828, 4 April 1889. 'Release of Slaves at Fulah Town Reports'. Governor J,H. Hay to the Right Honourable Lord Knutsford.

[415] *Ibid.*

[416] SLNA Minute Paper 5585/1889, 28 October 1889. 'From the Police's Capture of Slaves at Fulah Town Captain Buck Report'.

[417] BNA. CO 267/397/10481, 24 May 1892. 'Operations Against Tambi'. From the Official Comdg, Troops, West Africa and Late Expedition to Tambi to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for War, London.

The protection of the garrison was of importance because by law all a slave had to do was to touch a British flagpole in a police station and he or she would be free. On the surface it would seem as though Freetown was fulfilling its commitment to abolition in the interior. However, as the rest of the chapter shows, Britain was not as dedicated to the cause as they would have had the international community believe. Furthermore ambiguity of the Frontier Force's role in abolition is fundamental to understanding the tensions and conflicts that marked Britain's relationship to slavery in Sierra Leone. Many members of the Frontier Force were previously enslaved, and this fact was used in support of accusations that they abused chiefs in the protectorate. Chalmers in 1899 surmised that:

> It must happen that a former slave finds himself in a position to use the authority of government against persons of the class he used to belong, and even might chance, against his former master himself.[418]

The Frontier Force was given an impossible mandate by the government to stop the slave trade without 'interfering with the domestic trade'. It was only possible in very rare cases to separate the two. Some slave traders dressed up the slaves in nice clothes and unchained them while going through the main towns to hide the fact that they were to be traded at Kunka.[419]

However, even in these early phases there was tension between abolitionist sentiment and a growing belief that 'rash' interference in African institutions would create more harm than good. It was argued that with the arrival of civilisation and

---

[418] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 14.

[419] Anne Phillips, *The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa* (London: James Currey and Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1989).

economic development these 'backward institutions' would finally fade away. It was not only in Sierra Leone that a conservationist ethic emerged. Frederick Lugard, four pages after he states that the Brussels Act was 'the Magna Carta' of anti-slavery legislation,[420] writes:

> The temporary continuance of domestic slavery has certain advantages as a form of labour-contract between a more advanced and a very primitive people, where the conception of labour as a saleable commodity (but without the sale of the labourer himself) has not yet arisen, and currency with which to pay wages is unknown, or exists only in a very primitive form.[421]

All four governors from 1880-1900, namely Sir Samuel Rowe, Sir James Hay, Francis Fleming and Frederic Cardew, went on tours to the interior during which chiefs repeatedly told them that the 'domestic institution' should not be interfered with.

After the rescue of slaves by both Ellis and Lendy, there was a concern in Freetown that these interventions would upset the chiefs. In an earlier case a dispatch from the governor to the secretary of state makes it clear why the British were wary of charging slave traders in Freetown:

> As your lordship is aware active jurisdiction has never been exercised over this part of the country and had the offenders been taken to Freetown, not only might the point of jurisdiction have been raised, but the case would have opened up the very delicate question of slavery even in its domestic form, which I conceive would not be politic to do.[422]

---

[420]Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner.

[421] Lugard, *The Dual Mandate*, 365.

[422] BNA. CO 267/376/6847, 4 April 1889. 'Chiefs Implicated in the Slave Trade'. Governor Hay to the Secretary of State the Right Honourable Knutsford.

In addition, as Hay suggests in his letter above, the chiefs were very wary of the British because 'the people are already sensitive as to the presence of the constabulary along the new road, the only difficulty with which I have had to contend being their fear that their domestic slaves will leave them'. [423]

During military operations in the 1890s Colonel Ellis, leading the frontier police force, stated that slaves were being traded at Kunka. The response given by the acting governor at the time, W.H. Quayley Jones, was:

> You are doubtless aware that the portion of the country we are now in, although within the sphere of British influence forms no part of her majesties dominions and is not even a protectorate, and therefore Her Majesty's government have no right to interfere with slavery or any other institution of the country.[424]

T.J. Alldridge, as a travelling commissioner, defended the stress on jurisdiction in his memoirs by arguing, 'in those days there was no Protectorate; the chiefs were the absolute rulers of the country. I really had no power to interfere with their country customs, and slavery was then one of their customs'.[425] It was also crucial for Alldridge not to interfere with 'country customs' as he was collecting treaties signed by chiefs that would form the basis for the borders of the protectorate.

---

[423] *Ibid.*

[424] BNA. CO 267/397/89210481, 24 May 1892. 'Operations Against Tambi'. Acting Governor Quale Jones to Colonel Ellis.

[425] Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony*.

The lack of interest in engaging with country customs was illustrated in the case of Reverend Boston.

Only a year after the signing of the Brussels Convention ,Reverend Nathan Boston, a graduate from Durham ordained in 1880, was sent to run the CMS mission in Bullom.[426] In 1891 he sent some slave traders to Freetown to be charged for slave trading and they were later convicted. In 1892 he supplied the government with a report showing that slavery was still actively being carried out on the Bullom coast. His letters were ignored. His actions angered some of the chiefs in the area and they signed a petition stating that he was interfering with their customs and their domestic slaves. Reverend Boston finally received a response explaining that there was some confusion over the jurisdiction of Bullom and the government would respond when it was cleared up. A response came a few months later telling him he had been fired as Justice of the Peace.[427]

It was only in 1893 when evidence emerged that slaves were being traded in Kauffu Bullom, which was under British jurisdiction, that the government made the first attempt to distinguish in law the difference between domestic slaves and slaves being transported.[428]

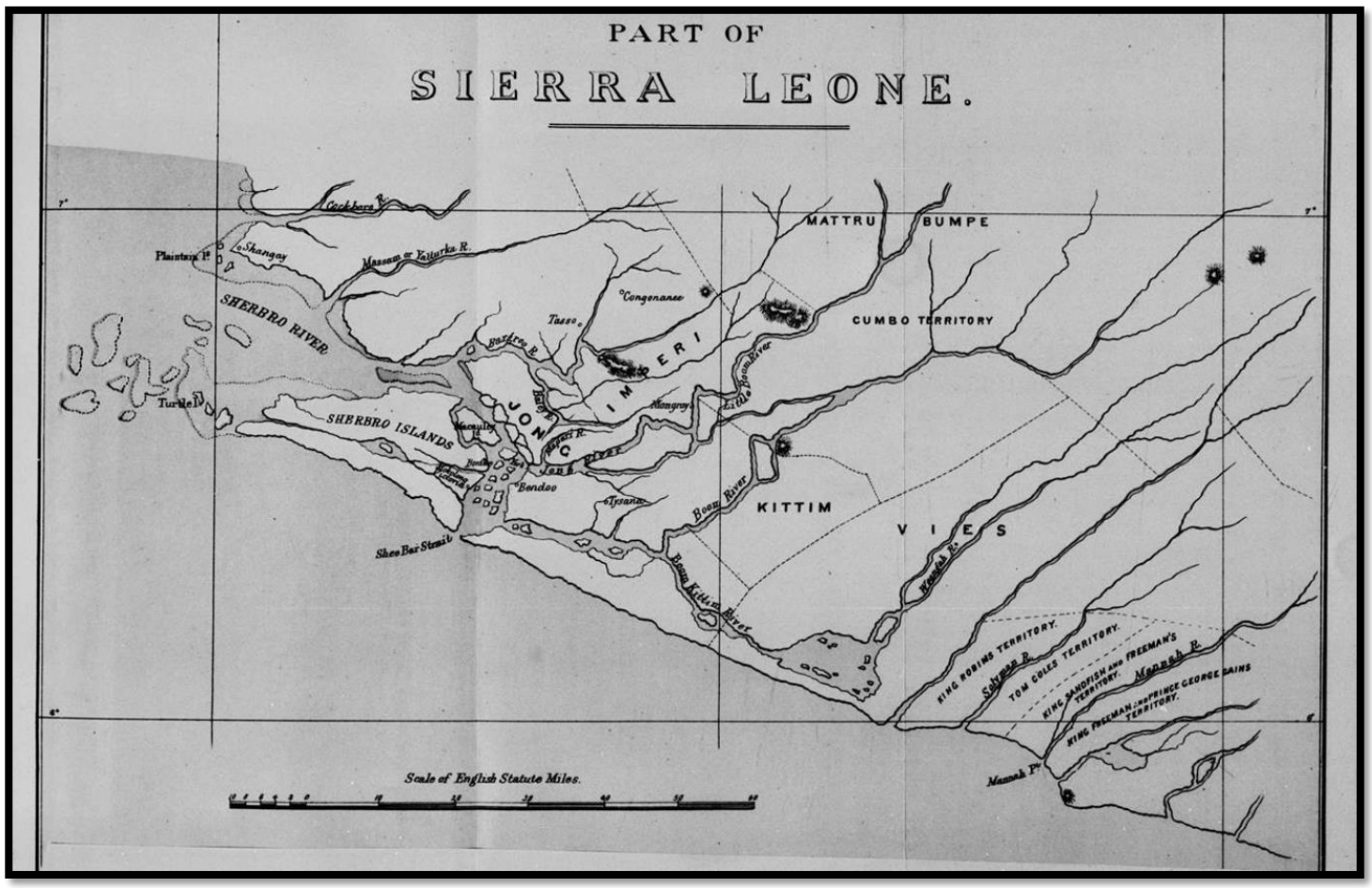
---

[426] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[427] [BNA. CO 267/403/15083, 2 September 1893. 'Removal of a JP'. Queen's Advocate to the Marquis of Rippon.

[428] *Ibid*.

MAP SHOWING THE KAFFU BULLOM SHORE



There was a discussion in the legislature as to whether 'the free passage of such captives and their captors is to be allowed through the ¼ mile on the Bullom Shore and the council was of the position that it was not'.[429] The policy decided on, on 13 of August 1893, was as follows:

> The police are on no account to enter the house or yard of anyone to search for slaves as they have no right to interfere excepting where slaves are being actually transported as above indicated.
>
> The police should also distinctly understand that excepting in the cases referred to in the first paragraph of these instructions they have no right to interfere in any slave questions in places where they are stationed.[430]

The legislation shows that the governors were more concerned about angering the chiefs by interfering with slavery than they were with slavery itself. This was made even clearer by an addendum to the new legislation, which was added after the chiefs sent a petition voicing their anger at the new legislation. After this petition the law was reformulated to add, 'The police should distinctly understand that generally they are not allowed to interfere with the domestic institution of the places where they are stationed. The instructions of the 13th of April 1893 are hereby cancelled'.[431] Part of the reason that James Parkes, the head of Native Affairs, was stopping the Frontier Police Force from interfering, was because 'complaints have been made mainly in

---

[429] BNA, CO 267/400/1560, 9 January 1893. 'Overland Slave Trade'. J.C.E Parkes to the Honourable Colonial Secretary.

[430] *Ibid.*

[431]. BNA, CO 267/402/17259.11, October 1893. 'Instructions to Police Regarding Overland Slave Traffic'.

cases in which the police have deliberately made it their business to interfere with genuine domestic slaves and in many cases persuaded them to run away'.[432]

J.C.E. Parkes, the head of the department for Native Affairs, justified the legislation by stating that, 'I am [not] advocating slavery. The idea I wish to convey is that domestic slavery of Western Africa is so peculiar that it is best to leave it alone'. (A note written on the document stated: 'Quite right.')[433] The fact, noted above, that Reverend Boston who, as Justice of the Peace, had reported the trade was fired, underscored the reluctance of the administration to get embroiled in this issue.[434]

The key problem for the British was not the fact that slaves were being traded, but that the trade was going through the Colony – an area that was under British legal jurisdiction. Up until 1896 the British regularly used the limits of the protectorate's jurisdiction to evade confronting the slave trade.

Governor Fleming finally tried to address the question of how domestic slavery would be dealt with in the interior after the embarrassment of Reverend Boston (who had taken the case of his removal from office to court) as well as many cases of slave trading.[435] The policy seemed to have become one of non-interference

---

[432] BNA, CO 267/400/1560, 9 January 1893. 'Overland Slave Trade'. J.C.E. Parkes to the Honourable Colonial Secretary.

[433] *Ibid.*

[434] BNA, CO 267/403/15083, 2 September 1893. 'Removal of a JP'. Queen's Advocate to the Marquis of Rippon.

[435] *Ibid.*

with native customs beyond what was required to maintain control in the protectorate, all the while stopping egregious and flagrant cases of slave trading.[436]

The question of domestic slavery became more pressing after the decision in 1895 to create a protectorate in the interior. This was a consequence of the anti-slavery clauses in the Brussels Act, which required colonial powers to deal with the slave trade on annexation of a territory.[437]

After the announcement of the protectorate in 1896, slave raiding and trading in the protectorate was banned. The new laws also allowed slaves to redeem themselves and members of their family by paying £4 for an adult and £2 for a child in cash.[438] In practice the implementation of redemption made it harder for slaves to gain their freedom, since the onus shifted from the government to the slaves themselves.

The chiefs also benefitted from the introduction of redemption. Prior to the laws, chiefs would get nothing if their slaves were freed; now they were compensated. J.C.E. Parkes outlined how the redemption policy benefitted the chiefs. When asked whether they felt their power had been diminished by the newly introduced slavery laws, he answered, 'No: on the contrary they feel better off because they get a remuneration for any slave that is freed'.[439]

---

[436] Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*.

[437] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

[438] *Ibid.*

[439] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 44.

In 1901 the Protectorate ordinance made it clear that although slaves could not be traded, their masters' heirs could still inherit them.[440] The Protectorate Court Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1903 added that no slave cases would be 'entertained by any of the courts established or recognised by this ordinance for the administration of justice in the protectorate'.[441] The 1903 legislation blocked slaves from recourse to any court, and prescribed that all slave matters should be adjudicated by chiefs, masters, and district commissioners. 'Slavery is thus reduced to a quasi-contractual basis and the owner can neither bring action based on an assertion of slavery nor take the law into his own hands.'[442] The former Attorney General Mr Greenwood continued, 'I soon learnt on touring the Protectorate that a large proportion of the palavers which District Commissioners hear in their executive capacity are concerned with the claims for or in respect of slaves'.[443] After 1896 native courts were set up in the protectorate. They could hear:

> All civil cases arising exclusively between natives other than a case involving a question of title to land between two or more Paramount-Chiefs or of a debt claimed by the holder of a store license.
>
> All criminal cases arising exclusively between natives other than cases of murder, culpable homicide, rape, pretended witchcraft, slave raiding, dealing in slaves, cannibalism, Robbery with violence, or inflicting grievous bodily harm.[444]

---

[440] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner'.

[441] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protectorate'.

[442] *Ibid*.

[443] *Ibid.*

[444] *Ibid.*, 400.

In addition to the native courts, there were also district commissioner courts, which heard cases arising between natives and non-natives; the court of the chief and district commissioner heard minor criminal cases pertaining to natives.[445] The richest material on slavery resides in the records of the district commissioner's cases.

Circuit courts were created in 1903 to deal with civil cases exceeding £50, and serious criminal cases. The circuit court was a travelling court, which was presided over by a Supreme Court judge.[446] In 1905 it also became illegal for chiefs to harbour any person who left another person's chiefdom without authority. This law would have made it significantly more difficult.[447] In 1907 redemption certificates were introduced. Slaves wishing to redeem themselves had to pay a specified amount in the presence of a district commissioner.

BENIGN SLAVERY

A key strategy that the British used to justify the continued existence of slavery was to argue that domestic slavery was an inherently benign institution. In this depiction real slavery was associated with plantation slavery in the Americas.[448] In Harrison

---

[445] C. Braithwaite-Wallis, 'In the Court of the Native Chiefs in Mendiland', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 4, no. 16 (1905): 397–409.

[446] Henry M. Joko Smart, 'Sierra Leone Family Law' (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1973).

[447] *Ibid.*, 12.

[448] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate'.

Rankin's *White Man's Grave,* a stark contrast is drawn between the Atlantic slave trade and domestic slavery. He comments on the Atlantic slave trade: 'Every view of the sea or export trade exhibits the white man as the party deserving censure. He originated it; he promoted it and he alone is author of whatever misery and death results'. He describes the terrible conditions of people who were sold to slavers on the coast, and states that 'death thins out the cargoes in various modes; Suicide destroys many, and many are thrown overboard at the close of the voyage'.[449] However his description of domestic slavery is far more benign:

> … [N]o distinction was perceptible between the treatment and comfort of the bondsmen and the free, I have even mistaken a slave boy for one of the king's own children, from seeing them associate and play together on equal terms. The state of dependency is much similar to that of patriarchal times, when excepting in inheritance, household slaves were considered members of the family. The extreme mental degradation, mental and moral which we accustomed to attribute to slaves, is not perceived[450]

However, although slavery in Sierra Leone was not the same as plantation slavery, it was far from benign or mild. There are numerous examples of how harsh slavery in Sierra Leone could be. In 1893, the slaves who had been rescued by Reverend Boston explained that they had run away because they had 'received most

[449] F. Harrison Rankin, *The White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone, in 1834.* Two volumes (London: Richard Bentley, 1836).

[450] *Ibid*., 77.

cruel treatment'[451] and 'were on several occasions stocked and chained by the neck'.[452] From 1 to 8 November 1894, eleven slaves escaped to the police barracks at Kikonkeh as a result of mistreatment.[453] There is another case in 1907 where a woman came forward and charged that her master – whom she referred to as 'husband', 'had killed her child due to mistreatment'. The judgement was: 'Should she wish to at once leave her husband she shall be allowed to do so by repaying £2 pounds redemption money for herself and four children'.[454]

The most frequently used reason for the 'mildness' of domestic slavery was that there were very few cases of people redeeming themselves and their families. But the redemption fee was high. Frederick Migeod, a colonial civil servant and explorer, argued during a tour of the protectorate that a redemption fee of £4 was more than a slave could earn in a lifetime. In one case a man was forced to pay £16 to redeem his whole family. There are also many cases where the redemption was denied to some members of the family, leaving people with no choice but to leave family behind and in slavery.[455]

---

[451] SLNA. Minute Paper, 2386/1893, 10 May 1892. 'Complaint Against Boindee of Slave Dealing and Ill Treatment – From Mormadu, Tambah and Other Bullom'.

[452] *Ibid.*

[453] SLNA CO Minute Paper 534/1894, 17 November 1894. 'Escaped Slaves (10) From Kikonkeh – Forward'. From the Inspector General of Police to the Sub-Department of Native Affairs.

[454] SLNA Decree Book, Koinadugu. September 1907.

[455] Migeod, *A View of Sierra Leone*.

Redemption meant that families and individuals sometimes had to make terrible decisions. In a case in Koinadugu, a man named Yataba came to redeem his wife who had been abducted and sold during the Sofa wars. He was allowed to redeem his wife, and although he offered £10 for her children (it is unclear whether they were Yataba's children) his request was denied. Yataba and his wife Kuba were forced to leave without them. Even more heartbreaking was that two years later, Abdullah, the woman's former owner, changed his mind. Yataba and his wife could however not be found, and the children were never reunited with their mother.[456]

A woman called Keddo reported to the district that she and her sister had been sold into 'French Country' during the Sofa Wars. Keddo was given in marriage to a man named Seddo, with whom she had a child. After the death of her 'husband', she was given her freedom, but her child had to be returned to Seddo's family.[457]

The other problem with the notion of benign slavery was that even if a particular master treated a slave well, this did not mean that they would always be safe. Slavery was an inheritable status and there was always a chance that you or your children would be sold. This was the case especially after the death of owners.

It seems that 'country custom' dictated that after a slave owner died, the slaves were required to be handed back to their previous owner. Many of the cases we encounter are cases of people trying to reclaim slaves after the deaths of the owners that the slaves had originally been sold to. District Commissioner Addison recorded that, 'if a man takes a domestic to be [his] wife and does not pay for her, her children

[456] SLNA Decree Book, Koinadugu 1904; August 1903–September 1908.

[457] SLNA Decree Book, Koinadugu 1904; 1 July 1907.

are domestics, and when the man dies, the women and children should go back to their original masters.'[458] Inheritance cases are some of the best examples we have of the transfer of slaves, and is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

The other problem with the redemption fee was that the fee could only be accumulated if a slave was able to find work elsewhere with the permission of his owner. In some cases even if the slaves had found the money, the district commissioner would find a way to block the slave's manumission.[459]

In one case a man called Momo (word unclear) argued that his aunt had paid for his redemption. Unfortunately the redemption had not been done in the presence of the district commissioner. However, his aunt had subsequently died and now another man, he described, 'wishes to claim me as his domestic'. District Commissioner Addison's settlement was that Momo had no right to be party to any redemption not undertaken in the presence of the district commissioner. 'He acknowledged that he is a domestic. If he wishes to redeem himself he must pay £4 to me, the redemption will be carried out in accordance with the ordinance'.[460]

Shadle explained why district commissioners would sometimes be hesitant to manumit, since ' to deny masters these slaves, many administrators concluded, would alienate the very men they wished to win over'.[461]

---

[458] SLNA Intel Diary, Shaingay, 27 June 1908.

[459] Migeod, *A View of Sierra Leone*.

[460] SLNA. Intel Diary, Shaingay, 20 September 1909.

[461] Shadle, *"Girl Cases"*, 44.

The return of enslaved men who had gone to East Africa as carriers during the First World War was often cited as an example by officials of the 'mildness' of domestic slavery. The men were paid £30 or £40 when they returned. However, there were very few cases of these men redeeming themselves and their families. As the governor explained, 'I am glad to say that there was no sign of any general desire for redemption although many thousands of carriers had gone to East Africa. The question is one of status rather than actual servitude'.[462] However, this may not have been the case, as any money earned by a slave had to be given to their owners, which means that the men would have been unable to free themselves and their families.[463]

THE SLAVE TRADE UP TO 1928

The British declaration that slave raiding and trading had ended in 1896 was far from the truth. Between 1901 and 1926 there were numerous cases of slave dealing which need to be separated into two categories. The first category was 'classic' slave trading. In these cases it was clear that an enslaved person had been sold. The second category involved the transfers of a person under the guise of other kinds of rights-in-persons that were central to the way society was structured. The consequence of the transfer of people in these forms was that slavery and other forms of dependency become even more intertwined.

[462] BNA. CO 267/588/5716, 10 November 1920. 'Domestic Slavery'.

[463] Northcote, *Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone*.

There was slave trading with the Fula in the north, by the chiefs.[464] The previous chapter, which examined in depth the border war between Sierra Leone and Liberia, provided evidence of abduction and enslavement as late as 1910, when people were deceived by a Liberian captain named Cooper (who features in the next chapter), who told the Bandi people (a group from Liberia) that:

> … peace had been proclaimed. The chiefs believed him and went to Grima, accompanied by crowds of followers taking rice, ivory, cattle etc. as presents for Cooper. When the people reached Grima, Cooper surrounded the town with soldiers and made them all prisoners: nine of these chiefs were murdered. Mambu (an ally of Cooper) gave some of them as slaves to his friends and sold the remainder.
>
> All the old men and women were left to die of starvation: many died in Grima – one old man was flogged to death by Cooper: All the children were separated from their parents and sold into separate parts of the country – some being brought into the Sierra Leone Protectorate.[465]

This incident is also one of the only cases in the archive where we can trace what happened to the victims after they were sold into slavery. A file that was not despatched to the colonial office in England, reveals what happened to them. They were taken across the border and sold in the protectorate in southeastern Sierra Leone where there developed, in the words of Lieutenant Cowrie of the Frontier Police Force, a large-scale 'open market for slaves'[466]

Mr Twe, a Liberian district commissioner in the area bordering Sierra Leone's eastern frontier, informed Lieutenant Cowrie that at least 2 000 slaves had been taken

---

[464] SNA. Intel Book, Koinadugu District, 1904.

[465] BNA, CO 267/548/17792, 26 May 1913. 'Liberian Boundary Commission. Report on Anglo-Liberian Boundary Commission'.

[466] SLNA. C.S.O. Conf. C195, 1915. From Secretariat 11.19.1913.

from Liberia into Sierra Leone. He also believed that some had been taken as far as Freetown. Indeed, two of the children listed as missing were found to have died in Freetown.[467] Lieutenant Cowrie describes how a man called Cole went to Kailaun to collect slaves:

> Cole was at Koilaun (Kailaun) and said that the government of Sierra Leone had sent him there to look at the country and say, 'How do' to the people. When Cooper made all the Gbandi's prisoners … Mamdou and Cooper told each Chief to give over one boy or girl to Cole: Cole said he would take them to school and train them in Sierra Leone. Cole took 30 of us to Baiima: we were all tied together with rope until we reached Kannawana. Cole untied us and said we did not know that country: 10 ran away before we reach Baima, we slept at Baima in one of the chief's houses. We went by train to Bo. We were locked up at night at a house in Bo. There were 19 of us the next day we went by train to Cole's farm at Kangehum.

The children were given strong medicine and told if they ran away the medicine would kill them. It seems as though one child who ran away did die. One of the girls was given to a Temne man as a wife. The families of the abducted people also told Commissioner Twe that if they had had the resources, they would have been able to redeem their children on the Liberian side of the border. But the families were too scared to cross the border because the 'chiefs were too powerful'. Cowrie also describes the complicity of the chiefs of Pedembu and Baima in the trade:

> The chiefs of these two places also aided in the traffic by providing houses in which to lock the slaves pending their removal by train … that Momo Fo had taken 120 and sent them to his farm in the Gallinas district of the Protectorate.[468]

[467] SLNA C.S.O. Conf. C195, 1915. From Secretariat 11.19.1913. Letter from Lieutenant Cowrie.

[468] *Ibid.*

The chiefs were free to act in this fashion because of the complicity of certain government officials. Commissioner Twe also told Cowrie that while some British officials returned the children to their parents, several government employees refused on the grounds that the slaves were 'domestics' and had not been traded. They also refused to return the enslaved women to their families on the grounds that payments were for bridewealth and that the girls had been 'bought as wives'.[469]

The trade across the border with Liberia also shows continuity in the composition of the people traded, since 'a majority of the slaves were women and children'.[470]

Even more disturbing was a letter sent by Cole on behalf of Chief Masasquoi to Chief Mambo, who complained that the children he had bought were no good and that he wanted replacements. He wrote, 'please send the boys to the secretary at Gbonibi he will send them on to Chief Massaquoi'.[471] The fact that the slaves were sent to the secretary strongly suggests that government officials were implicated in the trade of these slaves.

A particular form of slave dealing that continued was handing over people in lieu of debt. In 1915 the district commissioner of the Railway District – in this case the chief – was very unpopular, and the British were looking for any reason to depose her and deport her son.

---

[469] *Ibid*.

[470] SLNA C.S.O. Conf. C195, 1915. From Secretariat 11.19.1913.

[471] C.S.O. Conf. C195, 1915. From Secretariat 11.19.1913. Letter from Lieutenant Cowrie.

The district commissioner rushed to the area after he was informed that Madam Fangwa, the chief of Wondo, was about to put two older women through a trial by poison ordeal. He did not manage to arrive in time to save the old women, one of whom subsequently died. When he finally arrived he discovered that a girl named Nyale had been pledged in lieu of a 7 pound fine (about 800 pounds in today's standard). The father had been unable to pay owing to their poverty, and his daughter had been given in 'lieu of the fine'. Madam Fangwa admitted that 'the girl was being kept by her pending the settlement of a case in her court. The chief had admitted that in the first instance the girl was taken from her parents and through to her without their consent'.[472] The district commissioner subsequently complained that he regretted to say,

> … that this was not the only case of slave dealing under similar circumstances, which came to my notice. One man applied to me to have his aunt restored to him from Madam Fangwa's keeping. The chief produced the woman from her house and explained she had five years ago paid a debt for the woman's husband where the latter [was] about to sell his wife in lieu of payment, and that ever since she had lived with her and not with her people.[473]

There was no question by the commissioner as to whether this was a case of slave trading, however it is possible that decisive action was primarily the consequence of having had a desire to depose Madam Fangwa and her son.

There is evidence to suggest that the trade over the border with Liberia continued well into the 1920s. Kathleen Simon also suggests that there was a trade in

---

[472] S.N.A. C.S.O Conf. C.89 1914. 'Report on the Unsatisfactory State of the Wando Chiefdom Under Madam Fangwa'. From the District Commissioner, Railway District.

[473] *Ibid.*

slaves between Sierra Leone and Liberia well into the 1930s.[474] She mentions in her book that, in 1924 at a provincial commissioners conference, a British commissioner (name not given), stated:

> We are of the opinion that on the Liberian Frontier the importation of slaves is not diminishing. We are also of the opinion that masters or owners of slaves thus introducing slaves into the Protectorate should be considered as traffickers of slaves, for in practice this most frequently occurs, and though we are aware of this fact it is obviously most difficult to trace, follow up and prove, as such traffickers have means of covering up their tracks and the purpose for which they enter this territory.[475]

Although there is clear evidence of an active trade across the Liberian border, many of the questions about trafficking in slaves were difficult for the British to disentangle. The difference between 'slave-dealing proper' and people 'subject to familial and tribal relationships' was increasingly blurred.[476] This was especially true in cases of redemption.

The redemption fee was used as a new way of trading in slaves. Slaves would be redeemed by a person, only to become the slaves of the redeemer. The redemption fees were often used as pretence for bridewealth payments; slave women would be redeemed to become the wife of the man who redeemed her. Captain Stanley, in 1924, argued that 'young girls would be redeemed in large numbers for the purpose of

---

[474] Migeod, *A View of Sierra Leone*, 93.

[475] Report of Provincial Commissioners' Conference held in April 1924. Quoted in Kathleen Simon, *Slavery* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 93.

[476] *Ibid*.; CO 267/580/7779. 5 February 1919. Redemption of Domestic Slaves. Governor Wilkinson to Secretary of State Viscount Milner.

cohabitation, as being a cheap form of marriage by which dowry is avoided'.[477] Lieutenant Cowrie illustrates how cases of bridewealth covered up cases of what was essentially slave dealing:

> A typical case of the existing method of slave dealing in the Mende country. The word wife is deployed as a blind, there being no marriage, as native custom requires. If a case so clearly proved as this one elaborate cannot secure a conviction it is a step towards legalising slavery under this form of alias.[478]

Yet it was not only redemption that confused bridewealth from slave dealings; marriage, bridewealth and slavery were, as pointed out previously, very difficult for colonial officials to untangle. In one case a woman demanded the return of an enslaved woman whom her mother had given to a man named Lingo. After Lingo's and her own mother's death, she wanted the woman, Majeh (now in her 40s), her daughter Koma, and grandchildren to be returned. The basis of her claim was that Majeh had been given to Lingo as a 'domestic', not as a wife, because Lingo gave 'nothing for Majeh and as Majeh belonged to her mother, they (presumably Lingo's family) should at death have been returned to her mother'. The man with whom Majeh had been living for years in Freetown responded that Majeh had been 'paid for as a wife' because seven country clothes and an iron pot had been given. He also argued that if he had known that Majeh was a slave, he would have given the

---

[477] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate'.

[478] S.N.A. C.S.O. Conf. C.132. 'Slave Dealing by Paramount Chief Madam Fangwa's Son Johannes and Asking Advice as to His Right in Connection with Trial of the Case'. From the District Commissioner, Railway District, 28 June 1914.

woman's mother another domestic, as that was the custom for receiving an enslaved woman.

In the end it was decided that Majeh had not been paid for as a wife, but paid for as a slave. Thus in the settlement she, her daughters and grandchildren were taken from their husbands in Freetown and given to a woman whom none of them had ever met before.[479]

There is evidence to suggest that district commissioners refused to allow slaves to be redeemed because, as Governor Wilkinson argued, there had been cases where masters used redemption to 'obtain possession of women for immoral purposes'.[480] He described that people were 'driving bargains', and that 'creoles and other settlers take advantage of the law by driving bargains with slaves and so securing themselves a supply of cheap labour or cheap concubines by a way that the law certainly never contemplated'.[481]

The problem occurred when a slave was 'redeemed' but then became indebted to the person who had paid the redemption fee. The District Commissioner lamented that, 'it is no use explaining to the slave that freedom is an absolute; the debt of the redemption money remains as a debt of honour or moral obligation that it would be

---

[479] SLNA. Intel Diary, Shaingay, 9 September 1909.

[480] BNA CO 267/580/7779, 5 February 1919. 'Redemption of Domestic Slaves'. Governor Wilkinson to Secretary of State Viscount Milner.

[481] *Ibid*.

disgraceful to evade'.[482] Wilkinson explains how people were using the redemption clause:

> It is taken for granted by all the chiefs and people that any slave can redeem himself or be redeemed by his friends or relatives for the sum of £4; and no exception is ever taken by owners which is in full accordance with native custom. It will be understood also that private arrangements may often be made by which slaves agree with a man to work for him for a definite time. If he will redeem them. Technically of course they are free men from the moment of redemption; but the obligation remains as a debt of honour and is observed strictly though the only sanctions [that] are a man's own conscious and public opinion.[483]

Another legal mechanism through which slaves could be transferred was inheritance. In 1916 there was a dispute over who should rightfully inherit 110 slaves. The case is complicated and seems to trace the inheritance dispute over decades. Muri Luseni asked Marri Yendu that on the occasion of his death, Marri Yendu should look after the property as the children of Muri Luseni were too young.

History repeated itself years later when the sons of Muri Luseni were then asked to look after Marri Yendu's 'wives, children and property', as his sons were too young. The case was further complicated because Marri Yendu was a wealthy man and,

> it was highly probably that during his lifetime he added not inconsiderably to the property by his own efforts … Before his death he became a man of considerable importance in the country: that property – consisting almost entirely of slaves – must be mixed up with the property now in dispute.[484]

---

[482] *Ibid*.

[483] *Ibid.*

[484] Intel Diary, Karene District, 1913. N.A.s 40/1916 & B.52/1916. 'Bubu of Kerife vs Luseni of Korifa. Claims to Certain Slaves and Bush'.

When Marri Yendu died, the 'property' went to Muri Luseni's son Abdulai. Ten years later when Abdulai passed away, the 'property went to his children. And has remained with them since'.[485] The children of Marri Yendu were arguing that these slaves belonged to them. The continuous references to these enslaved people as 'the property' was made more disturbing by the resolution of the dispute. In the end it was deemed that the most 'equitable arrangement' was that the sons of Marri Yendu should,

> [r]eceive a value of certain proportion of the slaves. Leseni should pay to Bubu's (Marri Yendu's son) family the sum of 70 pounds … the sum value being taken as the value of one fourth of slaves; Luseni was to retain the slaves but that if any of them up to the number of one fourth voluntarily sat down (went to live with) Bubu, the latter was to pay back: two pounds ten shillings for each one.[486]

This decades long and multi-generational 'property dispute' is extraordinary for several reasons. The case is an excellent example of how inherited slaves could be confused with traded slaves because a monetary value was placed on how much the slaves were worth. It meant that not only had people been transferred from one family to another; another family could have enough rights of ownership to deserve being compensated for the loss of the slaves. Added to this, another financial transaction of two pounds would have been necessary if any slave decided to go to the other family.

This was not the only instance of an inheritance dispute involving domestic slaves. In another case a woman argued that after her husband had died, eleven of her

---

[485] *Ibid*.

[486] SNA Intel Diary, Karene District, 1913. N.A.s 40/1916 & B.52/1916. 'Bubu of Kerife vs Luseni of Korifa. Claims to Certain Slaves and Bush'. Other examples of inheritance cases can be found in Intel Diary Ronietta, 1904.

domestics had been given to the sons of her deceased husband. She asserted that they 'had not been dutiful sons, and that according to native law they are entitled to nothing, that herself and her children are entitled to all property and domestics'.[487]

District Commissioner Addison stated that he 'enquired into the case very carefully, constantly referring to the chiefs on points relative to native law'. In his investigation he found that the sons had in fact not been dutiful, awarded the case in favour of the woman, and ordered that the domestics and the 'property' should be returned to her.[488] The scale of the problem untangling slave inheritance cases from slave trading cases was described by the district commissioner in a rebuke to the chiefs. He told them that,

> This appears to me absolutely illegal. It is not even a case of inheritance of slaves but certainly comes under the heading slave dealing. I have informed the people that this sort of thing is what drives the government to declaring every[one] in the country free.[489]

THE END OF SLAVERY IN SIERRA LEONE

Despite the fact that suppressing slavery was something of an afterthought in the 1919 treaty, it was made clear to the government in Sierra Leone that they could not put off abolition indefinitely. The governor wrote:

> I cannot help feeling that the questions such of those of slavery and forced labour should be taken up with a view to final settlement. The war may have justified the postponement of intervention; but now that the war is coming to an end, I think steps should be taken for extinction of slavery within a reasonable time … I feel that the

[487] SLNA. Intel Diary, Shaingay, 1904–1907.

[488] SLNA. Intel Diary, Shaingay,1904–1907 – another example of domestic slaves being inherited.

[489] SLNA. Native Affairs, Sengbeh, 12/1920. 'Lesani vs Regent Chief'.

> choice lies between abolishing it, or having its abolition sooner or later forced upon the Colony's Government.[490]

His major concern was that Sierra Leone's 'mild form of domestic slavery' would be lumped together with other countries, particularly Ethiopia, in the League of Nations investigation. He complained that the commission should really concentrate on more grave abuses, like slave raiding and slavery proper – especially in Abyssinia.[491]

Realising that the process of abolition needed to be rapidly sped up, the executive council legislated that: 'All persons born or brought into the Protectorate are hereby declared free', and '[a]ll persons treated as slaves or held in any manner of servitude shall be and become free on the death of their master or owner'.[492] Wilkinson argued in relation to the date for the abolition of slavery: 'I should probably favour making the guillotine date 1 January 1929. I say this because this would involve least breach of (my) faith with the chiefs'.[493]

However, even after the 1924 legislation, the government was still nervous. After a temporary slavery committee was set up, the league requested information on slavery in all the signatory countries. In correspondence debating how Sierra Leone

---

[490] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate', 9.

[491] *Ibid.*

[492] *Sierra Leone Government Gazette*. 'Ordinance to Amend the Protectorate Ordinance'.

[493] SLNA C.S.O C.F/40/27. 'Domestic Slavery – Abolition of the Legal Status'.

should respond to the foreign office's request for information, the major focus was on the question of slavery in Liberia.

They were very aware of the scandal and embarrassment that discovery may provoke, especially since it seemed that many of the slaves in Liberia were coming across the border to Sierra Leone:

> It would be a most awkward position for us if the Slavery Commission put pressure on the Liberian Government not to abolish the worst forms of slavery which apparently exist but to put down the much less bad – though undesirable – custom of pawning human beings for debt, and it afterwards came out that pawning for debt was in existence in Oyo Province and was defended rather than discouraged by the Nigerian Government.[494]

While they used Nigeria as an example of pawning entrenched by British officials, it cannot have been far from their minds that in their own colony not only was pawning still legal but so was 'the legal status of slavery'. The following interchange between officials about how to respond to the foreign office, shows how aware Freetown was of the balancing act they were performing – and that it could not continue much longer. An official remarks on the question of pawning in Liberia, and one can imagine that conditions in Sierra Leone were not far from his mind:

> [T]he Convention of 10th September 1919 replacing the Berlin and Brussels Acts binds his Majesty's Government to endeavour to secure the complete suppression of the slave trade in all its forms – Liberia as [a] state which owed its origins to the liberation of slaves could hardly maintain that it was not morally bound to do its best to supress slavery in its own borders.

A debate then followed as to whether the government should alert the foreign office and Lugard to the problem. The main issue was whether or not this would bring

---

[494] *Ibid.*

unwanted attention to Freetown; 'lest we make trouble for ourselves'.[495] An official suggested that,

> Sir Frederick Lugard is of course aware of the existence of that pawning in Nigeria, we might suggest to the Foreign Office that in the letter to him or memorandum that it is admitted that the practice still exists in Nigeria but that all possible steps are taken to discourage it with a view to its eventual abolition.[496]

There was another suggestion that Freetown should ask London to block the investigation into Liberia, but 'it could look very bad if British representatives were instructed to try and get its consideration forced down now. Especially as our representative is an ex governor of Nigeria'.[497] The government in Freetown suggested,

> Concentrate on trying to induce the Liberian Government to put down the 'pawning' of women in the coast strip (which is the only part of Liberia which the Liberian Government can effectively control), and it should be made to appear to the Liberian Government that the reforms which it is desired to institute are to apply not only to Liberia but the whole of West Africa'.[498]

Even during this period the British were still collapsing slavery into other forms of dependency. After the 1924 legislation, rumours started spreading amongst slaves that they had been freed, and they subsequently downed tools and refused to work. After a slave threatened his master with a gun, things became incredibly tense,

---

[495] *Ibid.*

[496] BNA. CO 267/607. 30 March 1925. Abolition of Domestic Slavery. Minutes.

[497] *Ibid*

[498] *Ibid.*

and the district commissioner had to intervene. He describes that, on his arrival in Karene, 'all the slaves asked me to make them free, as others in Karene had obtained their freedom. This I refused to do, except in the ordinary way, and to tell them that all the Karene people had not been made free, and they had been misled'. He continued to explain to the crowd,

> [t]hat if all slaves were made free at once, they would have great difficulty warding off starvation, whereas at present they are now fed by their masters, and are also able to work a few days for themselves. There are also a large number of old men and women who are doing no work at all, and are kept entirely by their masters.[499]

Sierra Leone was not mentioned in the Temporary Slavery Commission. But embarrassingly for the British, just as the 1926 treaty was to be signed, the supreme court of Sierra Leone gave a judgement which allowed slaves to be recaptured by their masters with reasonable amounts of force.[500]

A group of slaves in the north of Sierra Leone mistakenly thought that slavery in the country had been abolished and that they were free. They ran away and set up a freed slave village in a town called Pampanko, which consisted of hundreds of slaves – both male and female. Their owners, including a man named N'Fa Nonko, came to reclaim all the slaves who had fled. Both the slaves and their owners were armed, and there was a fight during which a slave named Yerman was killed. The others were

---

[499] SLNA. NA/13/1926, 13 May 1916. The District Commissioner, Koinadugu District, to the Honourable Commissioner of the Northern Provinces.

[500] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate'.

returned to their owners, and many were jailed and flogged.[501] Sabu Konte, who had run away several times, finally fled to Pampanko. He described what happened when the owners came to reclaim them:

> We were attacked early in the morning by N'Fa Nonko's men. They were armed with guns and swords. The slaves and the men from N'fa Nonko fought. The slaves also had guns. Many people were wounded. Some of the slaves were caught and some escaped. One of the men who was shot was named Yerman. I saw him shot. He was one of the attackers and a slave named Laiba shot him. Laiba escaped. I was captured and taken to Nai Fai to Na'Fa Nonko and I was flogged. I was at Nai Fa in stocks for three days. Then I was taken to Karina.[502]

After that several of the slaves and the owner were committed to trial for charges of assault and the murder of Laiba. Originally found guilty in the circuit court, the defendants appealed. In July 1927 the original circuit court appeal was overturned, and the defendant N'fa Nonko and Silla Salla were acquitted of assault and conspiracy. The judgement read:

> Here then we have the clearest possible recognition of a slave who is owned much as chattel can be owned, and it must logically result that there is a right to follow and regain by use of any lawful means the rights of ownership and possession of the property of which he has been deprived by the absconding slave.
>
> I am of the opinion therefore that the re-taking in this instance was lawful and no assault was committed from which it follows of course that there has been no conspiracy and both convictions must be quashed.[503]

---

[501] SLNA C.S.O. C.F/40/27. 'Domestic Slavery – Abolition of the Legal Status. Deposition of Kabindi, Monday 13 December 1926'.

[502] SLNA C.S.O C.F/40/27. 'Domestic Slavery – Abolition of the Legal Status. Deposition of Sabu Konte, 13 December 1926'.

[503] Supreme Court Judgement, Rex vs Salla Sila, and Rex vs N'fa Nonko S Sawrey Cookson J.

Once again the issue came down to what kind of jurisdiction Britain held over the protectorate, and whether pre-existing laws that were contrary to the 'fundamental principles of British laws' should be enforced. The acting solicitor general argued that, while it was true that in the case of 'a conquered or ceded territory, the old laws continue until it is changed', no old laws could remain legal, 'which are contrary to the fundamental principle for English law'. Slavery, he continued, was

> … a system contrary to the general policy of the law. The Temporary Slavery Commission of the League of Nations went so far as to express the view that the legality of the status of slavery is not recognised in any Christian State (Mother Country, Colonial Dependencies and Mandated Territory).[504]

News of the supreme court judgement finally broke in the United Kingdom after John Simon, a well know abolitionist, wrote a letter to *The Times* that,

> News has just reached this country of a decision by a majority of judges in the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone, which must greatly perturb all who would fain believe that the exercise of British jurisdiction is inconsistent with the upholding of slavery. The dispute did not involve the refinements of forced labour but raised the simple issue whether, in the British Protectorate of Sierra Leone, the body of one man can belong so absolutely to another that the owner can forcible recapture the creature when he has runaway ... this decision represents the present law in the Sierra Leone protectorate, is it tolerable it should remain so?[505]

London resounded swiftly and the Secretary of State for the Colonies sent a telegram to the governor stating that, the 'Decision of Full Court has given rise to a good deal

---

[504] SLNA C.S.O. C.F/40/27, 5 April 1927. Acting Solicitor General, Crown Law Office Chambers, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

[505] *The Times*, 22 August 1927. 'Native Status in Sierra Leone Protectorate', by John Simons to the Editor of *The Times*.

of comment in this country. The judgement reveals deficiencies in the Sierra Leone laws, which I should find impossible to defend. I regard this matter as one in which speedy action is necessary'.[506] The abolition of slavery was then moved forward to January 1928.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argued that indirect rule entrenched slavery and dependency. Importantly, the recognition of slavery by British law in the protectorate 'lent a legitimacy and regularity to the category of 'slave' within the legal system'.[507]

In the face of the growing international calls for the abolition of slavery, the British in Sierra Leone did everything in their power to hide the fact that slavery was not only still legal, but that slaves were still being traded, and that some colonial officials were actively colluding with the trade. This chapter highlighted the continuation of pre-colonial patterns of political authority, slavery, and exchange into the colonial period. The next chapter analyses in greater detail how these continuities intersected with the evolving system of colonial rule in the colony, with a focus on the interplay between patriarchy, domestic slavery, and the attempts by colonial officials to control women.

But as the international community became more antagonistic, any notion that slavery would dissolve through modernisation was no longer sustainable. After the

---

[506] SLNA C.S.O. C.F./40/27. Secretary of State to Acting Governor, 30 August 1927.

[507] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate', 120.

inevitable scandal broke, the British finally had to make haste to be seen to abolish slavery.

CHAPTER 5: 'FOUNDED ON PURCHASE': MARRIAGE AND SLAVERY, 1880–1930

Pre-colonial political and economic systems rested on the control of people, which was in turn shaped by a comprehensive system of rights-in-persons. Marriage and slavery both represented points on the wider continuum of rights-in-persons that underpin societies. They also shared in common a central concern about control over the sexual and reproductive labour of women for both political and economic purposes. The establishment of British colonial control, and the implementation of indirect rule, entrenched these systems in the legal framework of the protectorate. Exercising control over people and patriarchal power thus continued to be central to political authority.

However, in this chapter I show that the category of 'wife' and 'slave' within the household was neither fixed nor static. In fact, tensions over marriage and slavery can also be viewed as a part of the 'crisis' of patriarchy and masculinity. In the first part of the chapter I show how an attempt by both colonial officials and chiefs to stop women from running away from their husbands was integral to the development of marriage laws in Sierra Leone. I show how gendered patterns of patron-client relationships within the household were challenged by women attempting to use new social and economic contexts to their own advantage. Questions of marriage, slavery, abduction, and seduction were deeply contested during this period, and illustrate how existing assumptions about the nature of the household were being increasingly challenged by young women. The arrival of 'non-natives' in the form of the Frontier Police Force, government officials, and traders from Freetown, created further complications and challenges for the existing hierarchies.

ABDUCTION OF WIVES AND SLAVES

On 25 May 1894, Captain Tarbet wrote a letter to Governor Cardew describing another failed attempt to arrest Chief Bai Bureh. Tarbet wrote: 'On leaving the town a slave woman ran out and joined us, an attempt was made to recapture her, over 500 men with guns and cutlasses followed us on each flank'.[508] On 31 May 1894, Bai Bureh wrote to the governor and lamented that the frontier police had 'spoiled his goods and carried away a good number of [his] wives'.[509]

Five years later, the question of the number of women who left with the Frontier Police Force that day was resolved, when Governor Cardew, intent on showing that Bai Bureh was of low character, described the same instance and noted that three women made an attempted escape, and that two were killed in the process.[510] Although Cardew's 1899 letter explains the initial discrepancy in numbers, the mystery of whether these women were wives or slaves, abducted, or fled, still remained.

The problem of runaway women, whether enslaved or free, was a key source of conflict throughout the history of Sierra Leone. However, during the period from 1880 until the abolition of slavery, the question of whether these women were slaves

---

[508] BNA. CO 267/409/11731. 6 July 1894. Chief Bai Bureh. From Governor Cardew to the Right Honourable Marquis of Rippon.

[509] *Ibid*.

[510] BNA CO 267/445/ 4892. Bai Bureh's Antecedents. From Governor Cardew to the Right Honourable Chamberlain.

or wives, abducted, or free, became increasing confused. It was in these circumstances that questions of marriage in Sierra Leone were debated.

During the Chalmers Commission no less than 30 people of the approximately 260 giving evidence, directly stated that the cause of the Hut Tax War was the fact that the Frontier Police Force had taken away their wives and slaves. Although the number seemed small, given that most people giving evidence just gave a quick account of the destruction of their property, houses, and trade goods, this number is significant.

The evidence of Frontier Police brutality in the interior, and their treatment of wives, makes for grim reading. And while there are several instances where the attack and rape of women by the Frontier Police Force clearly took place, a closer examination of the evidence suggests a more complex reality. In many cases incidents that were presented as theft and abduction of wives, were in fact examples of women – both free and enslaved – running away from their husbands.

In the evidence to the Chalmers Commission, many witnesses stated that their power was being undermined by the loss of their slaves and wives. They blamed the Frontier Police for taking their wives and slaves to Freetown. J.C.E. Parkes, the Head of the Native Affairs Department, who firmly believed that the hut tax and not slavery had caused the rebellion, stated that although the slave owners and chiefs were not happy with the arrival of the soldiers, the 'slaves welcomed them'.[511] Thus, the problem with paying tax to fund the Frontier Police Force was 'that they take our

[511] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 50.

wives and our slaves from us'.[512] The issue is related in detail by Nancy Tucker: 'The wives of the Chiefs would go to the policemen and tell them that they were slaves. They were immediately sent to Freetown by the police: that displeased the people a great deal and they complained'.[513] Momo Grama, chief of Moyamba, explicitly stated that the police were taking wives to Freetown:

> [O]ur wives have been taken by the Frontier Police and brought to Freetown, and many of them have stayed there and the labourer boys that return to the country would take their masters' wives; the very slaves who had gone as labourers under the policemen; and whenever we wished to oppose that the policemen used to stand against us.[514]

The language of abduction was used to describe the act of women leaving with soldiers. In a correspondence titled 'Detention of Daughter by Police', a man (name not clear) complained that a slave girl named Yaboah who was ill-treated and about to be sold by her owner, was advised by the Captain of the Police Force 'to find her way to Freetown. She escaped and 'hid in the bush' while her husband and owner searched for her. She was seen fleeing to the barracks. The men attempted to take her by force, but were dissuaded from doing so by the captain.

She was so frightened that her husband would 'finish her', that she persuaded a boy (possibly a lover) to take her to Rotifunk.[515] Yaboah was lucky, but this was not always the case. During the Chalmers Commission a missionary, Mr Trice, told how:

---

[512] *Ibid.*, 79.

[513] *Ibid.*

[514] *Ibid.*, 242.

[515] S.N.A. NA/595/1894, 1 December 1894. 'Detention of his Daughter by the Police at Rotifunk'.

> At Robeth a woman came running in with her little child while we were at breakfast one Sunday morning. She seemed very frightened. I asked her what was the matter and she said her master wanted to sell her. I said we must not interfere, but showed her the road to Rokon; she would not go and took up residence in the house. At last we persuaded her to leave and she was taken afterwards and sold.[516]

In several cases wives robbed their husbands before leaving. For example, Bai Sherri wrote to the district commissioner and complained about the disappearance of some of his wives who had robbed him and stolen a canoe before fleeing. Although some of the pages of the document are water-damaged, it seems clear that the wives loaded the stolen goods into the canoe and fled. He eventually gave up all hope of the return of his wives, but demanded that the district commissioner find his canoe. The district commissioner returned the canoe a month later.[517]

An even more dramatic plea to stop women leaving with the police was made by Momolu Massaqoi. He was the chief, described in the previous chapter, who was unhappy with the quality of the enslaved boys he had received from Liberia, and lamented, in language that would have impressed Walter Scott:

> O, you good Englishmen, god bless you, you do not know the wrongs here. You do not know the number of tears your countrymen have shed here. You do not know the multitude of maids whose hearts have been made to break who would that they could blow the wrong in trumpets beyond the sea which all England might hear and know the folly of these country men.[518]

---

[516] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 127.

[517] SLNA NA 1894. Department of Native Affairs, 29 March 1894.

[518] BNA CO/67/451/10926, 1 May 1899. From Momolu Massaqoi to the Dean of Chester.

Madam Yokko wrote to officials describing the extent of the problem of runaway women. She explained that many of the women are 'deserting their husbands' and 'taking advantage' by forming relationships with soldiers to get to freedom. But she also states that, 'These police are coming and taking people by force and because they work for the government'.[519] It is likely that both comments have some basis in reality. After the loss of his wives and canoe, who also left with soldiers, Bai Sherbro complained to the colonial officials that,

> Your people take my children (unclear) and take them to Sierra Leone that is a great trouble to me; you know that the slaves, freeman and wives are all running [away from] Sierra Leone. Oh my friend, you know you must not take the people.[520]

The complaints by chiefs illustrate how important slaves, women, and other forms of rights-in-persons were to power and position. As I showed in Chapter 2, the loss of wives and slaves had serious consequences, in part because of the loss of labour needed for crop production, but also because daughters provided a source of bridewealth payments. The inability to control his wives and slaves also diminished the status of a man and undermined patriarchal principles and power. The complaints made to the Chalmers Commission stressed that the loss of wives and female slaves was seen not only as an economic problem but an attack on patriarchal power and masculinity. J.C.E. Parkes commented to the commission on 'the changing attitude of … wives and children and domestics (slaves), who will not now obey them, as the

[519] SLNA NA 357/1897. Madam Yoko, 26 October 1897. 'Application to Prevent their Domestics Running Away to Freetown'.

[520] SLNA NA 1894. Department of Native Affairs, 29 March 1894.

Chiefs and Headmen have not now the power of punishment that they had before'.[521] In his final report he wrote that witnesses had 'constantly reiterated and never lost an opportunity of stating, that slavery has been put a stop to, which means to them loss of authority, loss of social status, loss of property, and loss of wives'.[522]

A critical way in which the economic and political power of chiefs was undermined was through a shift in the nature of women palavers. Prior to the arrival of the Frontier Police Force, women damage cases were a useful way to access wealth and find people to sell into slavery. As described in Chapter 1, a women palaver was a way in which chiefs controlled sexual access to their wives and daughters. 'Prostitute decoys' used to entrap men and created a 'nefarious system of extortion'.[523] Chalmers describes how they,

> … allowed chiefs [to] make use of their numerous wives (I knew one who had six hundred) as decoys for the iniquitous purpose of extortion, and the victims are heavily mulcted if they have any possessions, and if not they may be sold into slavery.[524]

The evidence from this period suggests the adulterous relationships used by chiefs to entrap men, were now being used by women to aid them in a bid for freedom. The issue of women damage cases, and their relationship to generational and

[521] Chalmers, 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner', 57.

[522] *Ibid*., 107.

[523] *Ibid*.

[524] *Ibid*., 92.

gendered struggles within the household, are discussed at length in subsequent chapters.

Within this context, the colonial government began to grapple with formulating and legislating marriages that would be acceptable under British law without impacting on polygamy and native marriage, especially in instances where men were married under Christian marriages ordinance, but also had other wives under native law. The detailed description that follows below shows how these tensions and anxieties played out in government.

The laws also once again show the tensions in the colonial office between morality and expediency. The colonial secretary of Sierra Leone, George Basil Haddon-Smith, in conversation with Reginald Lawrence Antrobus, the assistant colonial secretary, aptly summed up the problem faced by the colonial office. He complains that 'we are bound in the interest of morality to run the risk of disturbance which would apparently be incurred if we insisted upon the proposed amendment [of the 1905 Marriage Ordinance]'.[525] The governor made this point even clearer by stating that the implementation was ill-advised, since the district commissioners were unanimous after many discussions, 'that such interference with the native law and custom would be strongly resented and would cause the greatest amount of unrest and difficulty'.[526]

---

[525] CO 267/479/27838, 5 August 1905. 'Marriage Ordinance. Minutes. The Amendment of the 1905 Native Marriage Act'.

[526] H.F. Morris, 'The Development of Statutory Marriage Law in Twentieth Century British Colonial Africa', *Journal of African Law* 23, no. 1 (1979): 37–64, 48.

The fist discussion of marriage and its definition came in 1901, and was promulgated after one of Nancy Tucker's slave girls ran off with a postman. The commissioner writes to Cardew:

> A case came to my notice of a Sierra Leone postman taking away from Moyamba and bringing into the Colony a girl belonging to Madam Nancy Tucker. Cases of this nature are, I am sure, of frequent occurrence among the police and other native government servants and formed an important item of the Sir Chalmers charges against the Frontier Police Force. Cases of this sort are very difficult to finds out and not easy to deal with where the women goes willingly to he whose offence in the eyes of the Chief is not having paid the price of this Woman. [In] this particular instance I have directed the District Commissioner to investigate.[527]

A later dispatch shows that this was a fairly frequent problem, and that:

> The Protectorate is greatly increased by women and girls leaving their owners, guardians, husbands and fathers in order to follow soldiers, police or other government officials who regularly promise comfort and comparative luxury to the women who live with them. The natives especially the Mendis resent this not so much for feelings of morality, as for from the loss of their property, which the running away of women entails.

On the 14th of August [1901], a report on the matter was written by Dr Hood, who recommended that the accused postman should pay 'Nancy Tucker how many pounds, so that girl should become his wife in accordance with the country custom'. However, J.C.E. Parkes argued that, 'the less we have to do with these arrangements in which money is paid in the connection with the transfer of any individual, whether wife of not, the better. Our actions may be misconstrued'.[528]

---

[527] BNA CO267/447/22898. 26 August 1899. Domestic Slavery Abduction of Girls in the Protectorate. From Acting Governor to Right Honorable Chamberlain

[528] Ibid.

The proposed plan was that, 'any person who coaxes or entices away any servant from the service of his or her master or mistress shall be liable on prosecution in the Court of the District Commissioner and Chiefs [which can impose a] fine not exceeding three pounds'. However, this proposal was rejected because forcing the abductor to pay a fine for the abducted girls was, 'very near to sanctioning the purchase of human beings'. This correspondence acknowledged the delicate line between slavery and marriage and stated that, 'if no action is taken in the matters, it will practically be sanctioning abducting and creating general discontent in the protectorate'.[529]

They argued that these abductions were part of the women palaver, which the law had permitted under the proclamation for the protectorate. But this incident prompted a proposed marriage ordinance written in 1901, which stated:

> Whoever shall unlawfully take or cause to be taken any unmarried girl under the age of 18 years out of the possession and against the will of her father or mother or any other person having the lawful care or charge of her shall be guilty of an offence.
>
> Whoever shall by force take away or detain against her will any women of any age, with intent to marry or carnally know or cause her to be married or carnally known by any other person shall be guilty of an offence.[530]

This wording suggests that the British administration was not primarily concerned about the effects on the women, but with ensuring that men, 'whether

---

[529] BNA CO267/448/35107. 18 December 1899. Abduction of Girls in the Protectorate. From Governor Cardew to the Right Honorable Chamberlain

[530] *Ibid.*

soldier or other person before he takes away a girl will come to an arrangement with her parents or guardian'.[531]

The nature of colonial rule was not homogenous, and conflict between Freetown and London often shaped and reshaped the way policy was implemented. Besides the tensions over the issue of slavery, another source of conflict between the colonial office and Freetown was marriage. The debate about marriage legislation was further complicated by changes in staff in both the colonial office in London and in Freetown. The opinion of individual officials in both places influenced where the balance of morality and expediency was located.

The development of the marriage laws in Sierra Leone was intimately connected to the broader development of statutory marriage laws in British Africa. Morris argues that all marriage legislation has its origins in the 1884 Gold Coast/Lagos Marriage Ordinance, which 'was to proliferate to all British Territories between the Sahara and the Zambesi',[532] and became 'the blueprint to which they [the British] automatically turned'.[533] The 1884 ordinance managed the relationship between customary and Christian marriages. The two most important sections in the ordinance for Sierra Leone were the clauses regarding contracting customary and Christian marriages at the same time, and questions of succession. In the former case the legislation proclaims that:

---

[531] *Ibid.*

[532] Morris, 'The Development of Statutory Marriage Laws', 37. Morris does point out that the Gambia was the only colony that did not implement the ordinance.

[533] *Ibid.*

> (37) Any person who is married under this ordinance or whose marriage before the commencement of this Ordinance is declared by this Ordinance to be valid and shall be incapable during the continuance of such marriage of contracting a valid marriage under any native law or custom, but same as aforesaid, nothing in this Ordinance contained shall affect the validity of any marriage contracted under or in accordance with any native law or custom, or in any manner apply to marriage so contracted.
>
> (42.7) Any person who contracts a marriage under the provision of this Ordinance being at the time married in accordance with native law or custom to any person other than the person with whom such marriage is contracted shall be guilty of bigamy.
>
> (42.8) Any person who having contracted a marriage under this Ordinance shall during the continuance of such marriage, contract a marriage in accordance to native law or custom, shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction thereof before the supreme court.[534]

The differences between the four sets of marriage laws – the Protectorate Marriage Ordinance of 1903 – in 1905, 1906, 1907 and 1910, are indicative of the different perspectives that existed within colonial administration. More importantly, they show the disjuncture between the moralistic assumptions about marriage as defined by Hyde vs Hyde (the 'voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others'[535]) and the realities of marriage, as well as the limited degree of colonial control in Sierra Leone. The shifts in the legislation also show how the colonial office variously misunderstood and misrepresented the laws, customs, and intricacies of the marriage practices of the people they ruled.

Before 1903, laws pertaining to marriage only applied in the colony where marriage after the publication of banns, and performed by a minister, was legalised in 1859. Sir Charles Anthony King-Harman grew concerned that Christian marriages in

[534] Gold Coast Colony, 'An Ordinance for the Regulation the Laws of Marriage (No.14)', 19 November 1884.

[535] Quoted in CO 267/479/27838, 5 August 1905. 'Marriage Ordinance, Minutes'.

the protectorate were not legal under common law, as the colony did not have legal jurisdiction in the protectorate.[536]

The Protectorate Marriage Ordinance of 1903 was enacted on the lines of the Gold Coast Ordinance, and sent to the colonial office. When the colonial office received the 1903 ordinance, they were shocked to discover that, although bigamy had been made illegal, all sub-sections – 37, 42.7 and 42.8 – that prohibited the marriage by Christian law in conjunction with customary law, had been taken out.[537]

In response to the colonial office's demand for an explanation, King-Harman replied that the Legislation Council had rejected the 1884 ordinance since these subsections 'constituted a legal recognition of native marriage'.[538]

The colonial office remained divided for the better part of a decade on the question of whether native marriage could be considered sufficiently 'legal' for it to constitute a legal offence to be married under both ordinances, or, as the governor argued, that 'what is called a native marriage is not a marriage under the eyes of English Law'.[539]

The latter camp, which consisted of the Sierra Leone legal officers, as well as Chief Justice Philip Crampton Smyly, argued that for a man to engage in polygamy

---

[536] Morris, 'The Development of Statutory Marriage Laws'.

[537] *Ibid.*

[538] *Ibid.*

[539] BNA CO 267/479/27838. 5 August 1905. 'Marriage Ordinance, Minutes'.

while married under Christian law would ‘not only merely be inconsistent but would degrade the whole concept of Christian marriage’.[540] Smyly contended

> … to make it no offence subsequently to marry by native law and custom. It is true that by English law such second marriage may be Concubinage ... It may be that white men will be unable to get native concubines if subsequent native marriage is made bigamy. This argument does not appeal to me. Dissoluble (actual text) [it would] debase the idea of civilised marriage – which is the union of one man and one woman for life to the exclusion of all others – to allow the Governor to have his way.[541]

They argued that although the crime would not constitute bigamy, it should be considered a penal offence. The secretary of state who fell into the former camp told the governor unequivocally that if ‘the Ordinance could not be amended it must be appealed’.[542]

The opinion of the secretary of state did not end the debate, and in 1905 a new governor, Leslie Probyn, replaced King-Harman. There was an interesting shift in the 1905 marriage ordinance where a caveat on the bigamy laws stated that, 'for the purposes of this section a marriage made in accordance with native law and custom shall not be deemed a marriage’.[543] Nevertheless, it was stipulated in subsection 21 that if a person contracted a Christian marriage with a person already married under customary law or the reverse, they could not be charged with bigamy but still would be breaking the law.

---

[540] Quoted in Morris, ‘The Development of Statutory Marriage Laws’, 51.

[541] BNA CO 267/479/27838, 5 August 1905. ‘Marriage Ordinance, Minutes’.

[542] Morris, ‘The Development of Statutory Marriage Laws’.

[543] Sierra Leone, *Government Gazette*, ‘Christian Marriage Ordinance, 1906’, Freetown.

It seems as though Freetown had capitulated to London on these issues, but an important shift took place at the end of 1905. Lord Elgin, who had replaced Lyttleton as the secretary of state, and held the exact opposite opinion to the previous secretary of state, was of the opinion that the

> proposal to condemn a man as a bigamist for entering into a connection which is not a marriage in the eye of the British Law. I don't think that is a satisfactory position and I certainly share the opinion that to class these connections, where the women are bought and sold, alongside a Christian marriage is degrading to Christian marriage; though if it were possible to punish it as immorality it might be desirable to do so.[544]

Thus the amendment to the 1905 ordinance restated that a 'marriage made in accordance with native law and customs shall not be deemed to be a marriage'. But sub-section 21 had been completely removed, making a marriage under both Christian and customary law legal.[545]

The question of whether native marriage was considered legal under English common law was revisited when the question of civil marriage was brought up. In the backpapers to the civil marriage ordinance, a civil marriage could only be contracted 'amongst non-natives' and 'the policy … to entirely ignore marriages by native law and custom for all purposes' was adopted by the civil marriage court.[546]

The debate over marriage legislation is important to understanding the differences between the different levels of colonial administration. However, as is often the case, the relationship between law and practice is complex. The way in

---

[544] Quoted in Morris, 'The Development of Statutory Marriage Laws', 51.

[545] *Ibid.*

[546] *Ibid.*

which the law was enforced was informed by the realities of colonial rule and the administrators' concern that they would lose support of the structures which they relied on to prop up the government.

However, these long debates within government had very little impact on women on the ground. The marriage laws did not stop women from leaving en masse. In some instances they crossed the borders to escape British jurisdiction: 'West African detachments which come to the district make themselves unpopular by taking the female domestics as wives'.[547] In 1905 an administrator in Koinadugu on the French border stated that he 'and the French administrators' had received numerous complaints; 'in respect to the desertion of husbands by their wives, in such cases the wives have crossed the Frontier thus putting them out of the jurisdiction of the native courts'.[548] Colonel Warren argued that in many cases women were not leaving with the police for 'immoral' purposes but simply to get away from their husbands, for it has been proved in many instances that on arriving in Freetown they at once went to reside with their relatives, many of whom were in the city.[549] In defence of his soldiers, he also pointed out that:

> Many of the chiefs have numerous wives. Some of them are very young and a few of them – say four or five are generally elected as favourites. The majority are neglected, either by not having attention paid to them or not being liberally supplied with either food or clothing. The chiefs who possess such a large number of whom the term wives,

---

[547] CO 267/541/22985, 23 July 1912. 'WAFF Soldiers and the Wives of Chiefs'. Acting Governor Haddon-Smith to the Right Honourable L.V. Harcourt.

[548] SLNA, Intel Book, Koinadugu District, 1904.

[549] CO 267/541/22985, 23 July 1912. 'WAFF Soldiers and the Wives of Chiefs'. Acting Governor Haddon-Smith to the Right Honourable L.V. Harcourt.

> deserve little, if any sympathy, when one or two of the neglected ones decamp with a view to obtaining freedom or bettering their condition.[550]

Three years later the situation in the Karene district had not improved. The exasperated district commissioner at Karene wrote to the colonial secretary in Freetown that soldiers continued to take people's wives, and that 'further steps needed to be taken to put a stop to these everlasting complaints'.[551] He complained that in the previous few days there had been many complaints, but he could only 'convict' in two cases. He continued that 'the other two cases fell through for want of evidence, although in my mind there was no doubt as to the guilt of the soldiers'.[552]

By 1916 the problem of women abandoning their husbands for soldiers was becoming so serious that, 'Paramount Chief Brima Sanda had to leave his town Royema, on account of the soldiers taking his wives'. The commissioner warned that, 'if this sort of thing continues other chiefs living at the outpost station will soon follow his example'.[553] Another example of how frustrated chiefs were becoming was reflected in one of the chiefs asking permission to 'catch any man he finds in his town tonight'.[554] The commissioner responded that, although he could not grant the

---

[550] *Ibid*.

[551] SLNA. D.C /K 108/1916, 14 September 1916. District Commissioner, Karene District. 'Complaint Against Soldiers of the West African Regiment Taking Wives of Natives'.

[552] S.LNA. D.C /K 108/ 1916. 14 September. District Commissioner, Karene District. 'Complaint Against Soldiers of the West African Regiment Taking Wives of Natives.

[553] *Ibid*.

[554] *Ibid*.

chief the right to arrest any man in uniform out after dark, the man was 'quite justified in arresting any person he finds not in uniform'.[555] There is also some evidence that the soldiers were being charged under section 101 of the Protectorate Ordinance Act, or Power of the District Commissioner, which read:

> The District Commissioner shall have power and authority to settle any matter within his district, which have their origins in Porro law, Native Rites or customs, land disputes or any other dispute which if not promptly settled might lead to breeches of the peace and any disregard or defiance of any such settlement shall be deemed to be an offence.

Women were not only flouting the attempts to keep them in their place; they also did not use the legal structures set up by the colonial government to have their grievances heard.

DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS AND THE COURTS.

As previously discussed, marriage and slavery, although similar in some ways, also had important differences which were ignored, especially when bridewealth payments were regarded as 'purchases' akin to trading slaves. The transfer of bridewealth goods in a context of marriage negotiations between kinship groups conferred a very different status to a wife as opposed to an enslaved woman and her children.

The confusion over whether 'native marriage' was merely a state 'where women are bought and sold'[556] was not only based on an English sense of morality

---

[555] *Ibid.*

[556] CO 267/479/27838, 5 August 1905. 'Marriage Ordinance, Minutes'.

and misunderstanding, but was also part of the difficulty of codifying customary law that could be used in a colonial court. Burrill shows the difficulty of accurately recording pre-colonial customs in an effort to create practices that would resemble the 'contractual obligations' of pre-colonial society, but 'would not resemble any exchange in persons or slavery'.[557] Burrill uses the sub-heading 'Marriage and Chaos' to describe the reconfiguration of familial relationships in early twentieth century Mali. She notes that,

> … everyday social transformations that accompanied the transitions had a significant impact on gender forms of authority in marriage and the family. Many women and former slaves were in a position to test the reconfigurations of labour and bondedness in the new provincial tribunals.[558]

Although the provincial systems of tribunals did not exist in the same way in Sierra Leone as in Mali, the district commissioners would often have to adjudicate such cases. In order to resolve disputes, they had to use their own judgement and were often influenced by their own misconceptions of the way customary practices worked. Their own failure to understand the intricacies of marriage practices further added to the confusion between slave trading, pawning, and legitimate marriage.

The confusion created by the legislation about the status of native marriage as well as its ambiguous relationship to slavery, often played out in the courts. But the transcripts of these cases are very ambiguous and it is often extremely difficult to unpick the actual nature of the relationship between the complainant and the

---

[557] Morris, 'The Development of Statutory Marriage Laws', 192.

Burrill, *States of Marriage*, 238.

defendant. In the few criminal cases of slave trading that can be accessed, it is possible to see how women tested the boundaries that the new court system provided. But as Rossi has argued, the cases that landed up in court were the exceptional ones.[559]

A woman's case had to be decided against the standards of a criminal case of slave trading, which was exceedingly difficult even in cases where the evidence was clear. In the case of Rex vs Lamina, a man argued in his own defence that, '[t]he woman Bome was my late father's slave and she ran away after the death of my father, which led me to seize the children.'[560] Bome gave evidence that the defendant Lamina had 'demanded her two children'.[561] However, before she could be seized, she got away, but had clearly notified the court messengers because Allie Bangura, a messenger, was sent to arrest Lamina as well as to retrieve the children. Fairtlough sentenced Lamina to six months' hard labour.

Although he was found guilty, a sentence of six months was extremely light considering that a young man in the next sitting received twelve months for stealing a lamp. Another important dimension is that the fathers of Bome's children were not Lamina's deceased father; one was a man named Santiggi, and the other was a frontier policeman. But regardless of the parentage of the children, Lamina still felt that he was the owner of the children.[562]

---

[559] Burrill and Roberts, 'Domestic Violence , Colonial Courts', 12.

[560] SLNA. Court Record Book, 'Criminal Cases, Moyamba District, Rex vs Lamina, August 1902–April 1903'.

[561] *Ibid.*

[562] *Ibid.*

These cases provide glimpses of the ways in which women used both the categories of wife and slave, often in relation to children, to challenge patriarchal power. Parents also realised that in cases of pawning they could recover their children by reporting people as slave dealers. A case that I will discuss at length, shows the complicated overlaps between different understandings of 'slave', and 'free' in the charged context of a criminal trial in which a woman was desperately trying to get her daughter back. In this case there were three trials all relating to a woman called Mammie and the 'ownership of herself and her ten children'. The first trial relates to Mammie, and the second and third to her daughters.

There are several inconsistencies which will make the cases seem confusing to the reader. This is intentional so that the contradictions and confusions of the 'original transcript' can be made clear.

First to be sworn in was Mammie. She introduced herself and stated that she lived in Makarankay (in the Southern Province) and that she was the wife of Tugton. She had gone with Kungoe (the defendant) to Bonkonka (location unclear). She then stated, 'I was his domestic. I was his domestic slave. At Bonkonka we planted rice for Kungoe [with] Jamikan Kai, Seha (her children)'.[563] She continued to explain the work she did for Kungoe, which included 'brushing' the farm, weeding rice and driving away birds. She stated that the work was done the year before. She also stated that she had not only worked on Kungoe's farm but also Nyangba's. 'When the slave palaver happened we went to (unclear) Alimani Amsmara. I was present when we had finish

[563] SLNA. Moyamba Circuit Court, December 1906–April 1907.

with work one evening after (ink smudged over the word) came Kungoe called me and Yaniykan called me to Bai Sally's veranda.

Kungoe told Mammie that Yainkan must 'live with Nyangba, she must find wood for Nyangba, wash for him, fetch water [for him]'. She went on say that Nyangba was present while Kungoe informed her of the fate of her daughter, and he 'looked pleased'.

She was then asked by Bai Sally what her thoughts were on the arrangement, to which she replied, 'I do not agree to be separated from my daughter and that she would go Santiggi Suri [a sub chief or messenger for Alimani Amsmara who was a witness in the second trial]'. She then left her daughter on the veranda.

Nyangwa also referred to as (Nyangwa or Nyangba- used as spelt in the document) was then allowed to question the witnesses. He asked what was said when Yainkan was given over, to which Mammie repeated what she had said in her statement. Later in the case she was recalled and asked how she had come to be Kungoe's domestic slave, and she responded, 'Kungoe took me from Makarankay and Alimani Amarra decided I belong to Kungoe'.[564]

Yainkain, Mammie's daughter, was the second witness. She also confirmed that her family lived in Makarankay. She stated that Kungoe had 'carried' her, her mother and siblings from Makarankay, and told them they were his slaves.

Yainkain then stated that she and her family had been bought by Kungoe the previous year from Alimani Amarra [Rex vs Alimani Amarra was the case that was

[564] *Ibid.*

tried afterwards]. Yainkain claimed that she had seen the money. From this point onwards the transcript gets confused. The quote below should provide a sense of it:

> Kungoe took money from Nyagwa. I saw the money. I was on Alimani Amarra's Piazza, I, Bai Sally and his wife, Alimani Amara was present – Kungoe, I saw Nyagba give it to Kungoe. I saw the Money in Kungoe's hands it was silver money.

The evidence would suggest that she might be collapsing two different cases together, which would account for the descriptions of both Nyagba and Alimani Amarra receiving money. In the next part of her statement she seems to separate the two cases, and says, 'Alimani Amarra delivered us to Kungoe and Kungoe to Bonkonko ', and corroborates her mother's description of the work they did on the farm. She later also confirmed that her mother had not agreed and that Mammie had said, 'I was her child that [my] father was Jugborro and that she was afraid'. She then goes on to give evidence of the night she was 'sold':

> Bai Sally, his wife, Nyangba, I went x Mammie we all went to Bai Sally's Piazza. There Kungoe took me and gave me to Nyangba and said that I must find wood for his mother, get water, wash clothes and weed the rice etc. I said must I continue to stay with Kungoe if I find wood for Nyangba's mother? Kungoe said no (three words crossed out unclear) then told me to get up and go to Nyangba's place. I went there, Kungoe took me there to Nyangba place. I went there, Nyangba went with us and Kungoe delivered me to Nyangba.[565]

The evidence suggests that she then lived and worked for Nyagwa and his mother for a long time. One day when she was fetching palm oil from her father in Makarankay, she attempted to escape. Unfortunately Nyagwa followed her and

[565] SLNA. Moyamba Circuit Court, 'Rex vs Alimani Amarra, December 1906–April 1907'.

brought her back. She subsequently ran away again to Santiggi Suri who refused to send her back.[566]

Nyagwa then questioned her and asked, 'Do you know I have four wives?' To which she replied that she did. His followed up by asking, 'If all the wives washed clothes how could there be any left for you?' She countered that 'I used to wash clothes and do everything like the wives, I used to eat with them'. This line of questioning continued and she was asked, 'How were you treated differently from the wives?', to which she responded: 'He used to buy clothes for them but not for me. He wanted to make me one of his wives but I did not agree'. Yainkain was then recalled from the witness stand.

The next witness was Bai Sally's wife, Faingray. She confirmed that the transfer had taken place on the veranda, and that Yainkain was given to Nyangba's mother. In her statement she also notes that Nyangba and Kungoe were brothers and had the same mother. She states that Yainkain lived with Nyangba and his four wives and children (pikinins). Another point to note is that when she was questioned by the court, she stated that she had no idea how Mammie and her children came to be in 'Kungoe's hands'.[567]

Following Faingray's evidence, neither Kungoe nor Nygba mounted a defence, or it was not transcribed. However, they were unanimously found guilty by all the chiefs, and A. Hudson signed at the bottom of the transcript.[568]

---

[566] *Ibid.*

[567] *Ibid.*

[568] *Ibid.*

At first glance it seems as though this case was a victory for Mammie. However, there seems to have been an appeal on the basis that Mammie was not in fact a slave but a relative of Kungoe's. She was recalled to the stand. She stated that she remembered that Kungoe had come to her two years earlier and told her that 'she was his slave. He did not talk about family he did not say that he was my brother. I am sure of that'.[569]

The court then found her guilty of perjury. Both Kungoe and Nyaqba's cases were overturned, and Mammie was initially sentenced to three months' imprisonment, but this was reduced to three days.

The second case then commenced against Alimani Amarra. The first witness was Santiggi Suri, who had helped Yainkain when she escaped. He confirmed that he was Santiggi to Alimani Amarra, and that he knew both the chief and Kungoe. He had gone to complain (brought a case against Kungoe in the Native Court) on Mammie's behalf in the palaver against Kungoe (this presumably pertains to the first case).

In this case there was a palaver between Pa Runka (another sub-chief Variations between Pa Renka/ Pa Runka/ Pa Ranka) and Kungoe over who had the 'right' to Mammie and her ten children. The evidence suggests that Mammie had been living with Pa Runka as he was told to bring the family to the court 'after I said nothing about it for me to bring the claim and not Pa Runka'.[570]

A second confusion occurs between Santiggi and Pa Runka as to who had the 'right' to bring the palaver of Mammie and her children to court. The evidence

---

[569] *Ibid.*

[570] *Ibid.*

suggests that Pa Runka was asked to bring the case as he had less 'right' than Santiggi Suri, and therefore Kungoe would win the case.

Yanke (relationship to defendant unclear, but present during the palaver) is then called to the stand. She corroborated Santiggi Suri's story that Pa Runka paid the summons, and that they were then brought before the Alimani. She lso corroborated that Santiggi argued that it was not Pa Runka's place to bring the summons. He explained that,

> all the people were called to his veranda Alimani was standing on his veranda, Mammie and the pikin (children), told her to sit down, they sat down. Alimani called Jendoh to him and told her to sit down by him and she sat down on his mat. He then gave Mammie and the rest to Kungoe, to take them.[571]

Pa Runka was next to take the stand. He stated that he did not know about the Palaver, and argued that Santiggi Suri should have been the person to bring the case to the native court. Alimani Asmara did not agree, and ruled on the case because Pa Runka was the complainant. He said, 'I had no right in the palaver and Alimani then took the people and gave them to Kungoe'. He then said to Jenoh that she belonged to him. Afterwards Pa Runka complained and argued that the case was not finished, and that Kungoe should not be allowed to take Mammie away.

In the questions put to Pa Runka, we are given a glimpse into Mammie's background. He is questioned about the reason why he told the district commissioner that Mammie had been caught during the war.[572]

---

[571] *Ibid.*

[572] *Ibid.*

The statement adds another layer of complexity, as the previous day Mammie had been found guilty of perjury for not disclosing that Kungoe was her 'brother'.[573] Jenoh was then called to the stand. She confirmed that she was Mammie's daughter, although it seems that she had a different father to Yainkain. She states that, 'Alimani told me to be his domestic slave because Kungoe had said I was a slave, Alimani took me I knew I was his slave'. [574]

She continued that she had then complained that she was tired and wanted to visit her family, and while the request to visit her father was denied, she was allowed to visit her mother. Alimani then allowed her to go to Santiggi Suri, but not for long, so she went and did not come back. She was then questioned by the Alimani and asked if she had been taken as a wife, and she responded, 'You said so but you have not since given me anything'.[575]

Once again the defence of Kungoe and Alimani Amarra is not recorded, so we do not know what they said. However, it was convincing enough for all the chiefs to find both defendants not guilty. The Supreme Court judge signed at the bottom of the record, but is not recorded as a judgement.

This court case is extraordinary for several reasons; firstly, it is one of the only examples where we have the testimony of three victims. It also gives us a snapshot of how enslaved women understood their status, and an insight into relationships of power and the tensions within households and society.

---

[573] *Ibid.*

[574] *Ibid.*

[575] *Ibid.*

These cases also provide glimpses of the ways that women used both the categories of wife and slave, often in relation to children, to challenge patriarchal power. Parents also realised that in cases of pawning they could recover their children by reporting people as slave dealers. In the case of Mammie, the case was thrown out on the basis that Kungoe claimed he was her brother, and the exchange between them in court shows how these categories mattered. Kungoe said to her, 'I never said you were my slave', to which Mammie responded, 'You said I am'. Throughout the case to prove her daughter had been sold, she repeated, 'I was his domestic slave'. When questioned about what was said when her daughter was exchanged for 'silver money', she responded, 'What they generally say when they hand over a slave'.[576]

Although women tested the new limits of patriarchal power within the courts, they rarely achieved positive outcomes. It was judged that Mammie had 'misled the court' by not mentioning that Kungoe was her brother. All the cases against Kungoe and the various others charged in the case, were found not guilty. These are examples of women being failed by criminal courts run by the government, but there is also evidence that the chances of favourable outcomes for women were equally poor in native courts.

Enslaved women did not often receive favourable judgements. But in some cases the enslaved women were at least asked for their opinions. For example, a soldier named Kumba, a complainant, argued that his sister Kambi and her three children and been given to a relative's uncle. Kambi later ran away and went to Chief Dusi Suri. The case was very confusing, with various parties claiming true ownership

[576] SLNA. Court Record Book, 'Criminal Cases, Moyamba District. Rex vs Lamina, August 1902–April 1903'.

of the woman and her children. The exasperated district commissioner asked Kambi where she wished to stay, to which she responded, 'Chief Dusi Suri'. Partly as a result, the commissioner decided not to 'reverse the present state of affairs' and ruled that 'the custody of the slave Kambi and her children will therefore continue to remain with Dusi Suri'.[577]

In another case, District Commsioner Addison also seemed to have given up untangling a complicated web of 'country custom'. His decision read:

1. That Jakala a woman whom Bormla Jalla states is his wife, shall be allowed to reside with Chief Kamla Sowiem this being her wishes and she being a free women of age.
2. That Bormla Jalla shall be allowed the custody of the children of the marriage and that dowry shall be refunded to Bormla Jalla by the man who marries Jakala.
3. That Kouta a women whom Bormla Jalla states is a slave purchased by him many years ago states was paid to him on account of a debt due to his father many years ago, shall be freed by the government, and shall be allowed to reside with Chief Kamla Sowie, such being her wish, and she being a woman of age.
4. That Fatuma a woman Bormla Jalla states is a slave redeemed by him for the Lokkos shall be allowed to reside with Bormla Jalla such being her wishes and she being an old woman.

We also get insights into how people understood their own status in their testimonies of what would have made them a slave or free. In several cases dealing with slave trading, women explained that they were not wives but slaves, because 'He used to buy clothes for the wives but not for me'.[578] Another young man explained that

[577] SLNA. Intel Book, Koinadugu District, 1904. Sgd W.B. Stanley, 13 April 1913.

[578] .SLNA. Court Record Book, 'Criminal Cases, Moyamba

he was a slave because, 'I cut palm kernels for him and his wife not for myself, I have never cut palm kernels for myself'.[579]

The confusion created by the legislation about the status of native marriage, as well as its ambiguous relationship to slavery, often played out in the courts. But the transcripts of these cases are very ambiguous and it is often extremely difficult to unpick the actual nature of the relationships between the complainants and the defendants. In one case a woman named Miatta turned to the district commissioner for help after the chief had ruled against her and taken her four children away and returned them to their uncle. District Commissioner Addison made a decision on the case based not on country custom but the welfare of Miatta and her children:

1. They are too young to take away from their mother.
2. He is a dirty filthy looking man not capable of taking care of himself, let alone two children.
3. He wanted his pound of flesh. The baby was at her mother's breast.
4. He has not (as he said) the slightest intention of looking after the two eldest, until they are able to do so themselves. The girl he wanted to keep until to sell as a wife as soon as she was old enough. The boy to work for him.[580]

By the 1920s the language of bridewealth versus the purchase of slaves becomes confused, especially since both transactions were increasingly monetised. In some previous cases, the goods given were what separated slave dealing from paying a dowry. In 1921 a woman named Mantene was a 'wife' to Paramount Chief Balla,

[579] SLNA. Court Record Book,, Moyamba Circuit Court, 1907, 'Rex vs Va Just, Banie'.

[580] SLNA, Intel Diary, Shaingay, 2 August 1908.

however after his death she became a ‘slave’. She was the daughter of a slave, Kenko. Kenko was given to another slave, Komba, as ‘a wife’, and Komba and Kenko were freed by Chief Balla. The chief then also took Mantene as a wife.

After the chief’s death, Mantene ran away and went to her mother. As Komba had been freed, it was decided that this was a dowry case and not a case of slave trading. Therefore, until her husband was refunded, i.e. until the cow and the country cloth had been returned, she had to return to her husband. Matene was therefore ordered to return to her husband. If she refused to return, she would have to hand over her three-year-old daughter. However, the story had a happy ending. Her mother’s husband paid the refund and the extra £2.10 for the child. Further complicating the matter, though, was that the money paid for the child was the same amount paid as redemption fee for an enslaved child.[581]

In order to bring together the many complicated threads that brought marriage, slavery, and women running away, into the changing context and development of indirect rule, one needs to view these tensions within the moral economy of the household. Burrill and Roberts argue that the concept of moral economy is a good explanatory mechanism for these tensions and conflicts, because it is a ‘useful way of understanding the meaning of protest resistance and seemingly disorderly struggle in context of unequal power distribution’.[582]

They argue that a time of socio-political change created increasing levels of ‘stress’ within households. Women used the new mechanisms introduced by the

---

[581] SLNA, Native Affairs, Kayka, 133, 1936, 2

[582] Burrill, *States of Marriage*, 35.

colonial state (often to the horror of colonial officials who wanted to create as little conflict as possible) to 'gain control of their lives'.[583]

The women's 'struggles did not necessarily challenge the gendered nature of power in the household' on a macro political level, but they certainly used the new context to force changes in their own lives and to 'implicitly invoke the concept of morals as a mechanism of showing that their husbands and masters had not upheld their obligations'.[584]

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argued that anxiety about the control over women had a profound effect on the development of marriage laws. However, contestation within households increased during this period, with women accessing the courts and running away to test the boundaries of the patriarchal structures that constrained them. This chapter shows how the terms 'slave' and 'wife' were not neutral categories; in a similar fashion the terms that were used to conceptualise social structure cannot be read as an accurate representation of social relationships or social process.

CHAPTER 6: MARRIAGE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM; POST-SLAVERY, 1930-1945

[583] Burrill and Roberts, 'Domestic Violence , Colonial Courts, 12.

[584] *Ibid.*

This chapter looks at how marriage and gender shaped post-abolition society in Sierra Leone from 1928 until the outbreak of the Second World War. After the official date of abolition on 1 January 1928, *The Daily Mail* published an article with the headline: '220 000 Freed Slaves: Marriage to Solve the Problem'.[585] The article elaborated on this statement by saying that 'many who have married into their master's families, will automatically remain and will continue the communal life existing in the Protectorate'.[586]

The government was concerned that the 'problem' of slaves leaving masters en masse would lead to social disruption and unrest. However, abolition went ahead with a 'calm bordering on indifference'.[587] This newspaper article seems to suggest that although the legal definition of slavery had been abolished, existing power structures and the status quo would remain unchanged. Many slaves 'sat down with their former masters as clients or cousins … They had little choice, not only were they bound by economic ties to their former masters but also by political and family ties'.[588] It seemed as though marriage had indeed 'solved' the problem.

The surprisingly smooth transition from slavery to freedom in Sierra Leone can be explained in part by the concept of the 'slow death for slavery'. As in many parts of the continent, collusion between chiefly power and the colonial government meant that there was continuity in the structures of political authority that existed

---

[585] *The Daily Mail*, '220 000 Freed Slaves: Marriage to Solve the Problem', 2 January 1928.

[586] *Ibid.*

[587] SLNA C.S.O. C.F./40/27. 'Domestic Slavery – Abolition of the Legal Status'.

[588] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West* Africa, 253.

before abolition. Consequently, the lack of real structural changes after abolition meant that rural societies continued to rely on various types of servile relationships and labour.[589]

The idea that rural life would carry on as before was used as an excuse for inaction by the British. The governor argued in 1936 that, because '[n]o case came to light of any former slaves experiencing difficulty in obtaining a livelihood as a result of his emancipation … no assistance was offered by this government either by way of loans or by settlement in special villages'.[590]

All of the major ethnographers and contemporary writers in the 1930s, 1940s and '50s seem to concur that very little had changed for the slaves. Merran McCulloch, Kenneth Little, J.S. Fenton, and Roy Lewis generally paint a picture of a rural population getting on with their lives, untouched by any changes.[591]

To analyse if and why this was the case, the first part of this chapter provides an overview of the socioeconomic conditions and broader political processes that previously enslaved people who were caught up after the abolition of slavery. Of particular importance was the dramatic effect that the Great Depression had on colonial policy in Sierra Leone. Not only did the new economic conditions limit the abilities of freed slaves to create independent lives for themselves, but collusion

---

[589] Cooper, Holt, Scott, 'Conditions Analogous to Slavery.

[590] CO 323/1360/4, 9 January 1936. 'Slavery Training of Children of Sierra Leone. Police Commissioner's Report on Training'.

[591] Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone*; Roy Lewis, *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954); Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*; Merran McCulloch, *The Peoples of Sierra Leone Protectorate* (Ethnographic Survey of Africa: Western Africa) (International African Institute, 1950).

between the government and established chiefly power ensured that the lives of formerly enslaved people changed very little.

As I have shown in previous chapters, the distinction between marriage and slavery as different expressions of patriarchal control over female labour had become increasingly blurred in the early twentieth century. After the abolition of slavery, women in general found themselves increasingly marginalised from the agricultural economy.

SIERRA LEONE AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Unfortunately for previously enslaved people, abolition took place just as the Great Depression set in. The Sierra Leone economy also experienced a downturn. The price for agricultural export produce collapsed. In 1928 the value of palm oil was £17.10 per ton, and by 1934 this had dropped to £6 pounds.[592]

The recession also saw a reduction in the funding for government departments. Its expenditure went from £878 078 in 1928, to £587 754 in 1935. During this period funding for social services dropped from £180 474 to £152 812; and general administration declined from £266 000 in 1928 to £172 785 in 1934.

One of the key areas where there were major cuts was the Department of Agriculture. In the 1920s, the department had been tasked with increasing agricultural output, and was particularly badly hit by funding cuts. In 1925 the department had a

[592] M.J.M. Sibanda, 'Colonial Policy and Development in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1896–1939' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1978).

budget of £38 686, and by 1935 this had been reduced to £13 996 – where it remained until 1941.

There were also mass retrenchments of staff. In 1930, Public Works retrenched 30 European staff and 61 African staff. Staff cuts were also significant in the Department of Agriculture, and Gilbert Sekgoma argues that the significance of these cuts 'cannot be over emphasised'.[593] The retrenchment of staff and the slashing of funding were of particular importance to freed slaves since a major focus of agricultural intervention had been swamp rice cultivation, which freed slaves had turned to after abolition.

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF ABOLITION

There is a major problem in trying to piece together the lives of previously enslaved people after abolition as they disappear from the archives and secondary sources. This is partially a consequence of previously enslaved people being lumped together with the peasantry, in official records as well as in academic scholarship.

The archival records only mention former slaves in passing, and even then only men are referred to. There are no records of the exact number of ex-slaves who left their former masters and joined the army. The evidence is particularly thin when trying to distinguish the plight of formerly enslaved women from free women. After abolition formerly enslaved members of society, both men and women, seem to disappear from the records. According to a government official in Freetown:

---

[593] Gilbert A. Sekgoma, 'The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone: A Study of the Impact of Some Aspects of Colonial And Post-Colonial Governments' Economic Policies, 1929–1982' (Dalhousie University, 1987), 105.

> A few under 5% left their chiefdoms and trace of them has been lost. 80% of slaves were at once, and easily absorbed into the ranks of the freeborn … a few female ex-slaves left husbands with whom they no longer desired to live.[594]

The commissioner of police noted that, 'Since Ordinance 24 of 1927 came into force many released Protectorate natives have come to Freetown so that the supply of cheap labour far exceeds the demand'.[595] There is also evidence that some ex-slaves turned to swamp rice cultivation, and that some former slaves went to work in the mines.[596] Grace mentions in passing that he uncovered cases of women leaving their husbands on account of being 'slaves rather than wives'.[597] We also know that some of the previously enslaved joined the Idara revolt in 1931 – an uprising in the protectorate after the arrival of a Muslim cleric from Guinea. In a petition to the government, several chiefs in Kambia stated that the main supporters of the rebellion consisted of 'Muslim idlers and recently liberated domestic slaves who had settled with him'.[598]

However, through meticulous archival research it is possible to show that slavery in Sierra Leone suffered a spasmodic, juddering death rather than a slow one.

---

[594] SLNA C.S.O. C.F. 40/27. 'Domestic Slavery and Abolition of the Legal Status', 13 January 1929.

[595] *Ibid.*

[596] Sibanda, 'Colonial Policy and Development'.

[597] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West* Africa, 250. Grace mentions that he found reference to this in the provincial archives in Bo. Unfortunately, Bo's archive was destroyed during the civil war, plus any remaining historical material left.

[598] BNA CO 267/633, 'Native Disturbances at Kambia'.

Larger political and economic processes also often hindered the abilities of slaves to become economically autonomous. This was even truer for women whose labour was not as much in demand in the factories or in the mines as that of men.[599] The increasing importance and centrality of indirect rule meant that the British were always wary of directly challenging the structures of political authority, which was central to the power of loyal chiefs.[600]

The way the British finessed the situation that required them to abolish an institution central to maintaining their power and authority, was to emphasise the abolition of the legal definition of slavery rather than its substance.[601] The logic of this position is explained by an official, who stated: '[W]hat the bill has done is to make it impossible for a court to do what the court of appeal did a few weeks ago – namely to recognise that a man is a slave'.[602]

The consequence of the 'legal abolition of slavery' meant that the British could declare the problem of slavery solved without implementing major measures to aid ex-slaves in gaining financial independence.

---

[599] Trevor R. Getz, *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Towards Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, and Oxford: James Currey, 2004).

[600] Matthew Lange, *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[601] Frederick Cooper, Rebecca Scott, and Thomas Holt, 'Introduction', in *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1–32.

[602] 'Slavery Ended in Sierra Leone: New Law in Force', *The Times*, 2.1.1928.

In a similar fashion to Nigeria, the colonial government in practice aided chiefs to keep the formerly enslaved with their former masters.[603] This illustrates the colonial government's strategy of sustaining, wherever possible, previous patterns of political authority, partly expressed through wealth in people and power relations within households and kinship structures, in order to retain a key prop to its own power.

The British papered over the contradiction by means of tendentious explanations of why ex-slaves could not leave their former masters. For example, a member of the British parliament was concerned that 'excessive sums have been demanded by chiefs as 'shake hands' from ex-slaves wishing to leave their chiefdoms, in such cases the native is virtually refused permission to depart'.[604] The response of the government of Sierra Leone that the law, 'which allowed chiefs to control people is applicable to every native whether slave or free'.[605] What this quote illustrates is that the structural problem of people being unable to leave their chiefdom was acceptable as long as the legislation which applied to free persons was similarly constrained.

---

[603] Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[604] SLNA C.S.O C.F/40/27. 'Domestic Slavery – Abolition of the Legal Status'.

[605] *Ibid.*

As in many other parts of the continent, vagrancy laws also limited the abilities of ex-slaves to leave their masters.[606] If members of the rural population arrived in Freetown, they were only allowed to be unemployed for two weeks before they were returned to their chiefdoms. Only six years after the official abolition, the vagrancy law, which had previously only applied to Freetown, was extended to the protectorate and:

> Any Native belonging … to one chiefdom who remains in any part of another chiefdom for more than 21 days … shall be deemed an idle and disorderly person and shall be liable on summary conviction by a Native court. If convicted in the Native court, they would be repatriated 'to the chiefdom to which he properly belongs'.[607]

New arrivals in areas were known as strangers, and they had to find a host to vouch for them. They also required the host to pay a certain amount to the chief. If a person had a 'stranger' staying with them without informing and paying the chief, it was considered a criminal offence.[608] If one looks at court returns in the 1950s, especially in the southeast diamond field areas, many of the cases relate to strangers. In the court returns in Kono in the late 1950s, 'strangers' found guilty of being there

---

[606] Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery*; Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labour and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980).

[607] CO 267/648/14. 'Protectorate Vagrancy Ordinance, Gazette, Colony of Sierra Leone, No. 17 of 1934'.

[608] Dorjahn and Fyfe, 'Landlord and Stranger'.

without permission were routinely imprisoned for three months. Those found guilty of harbouring strangers were fined two or three pounds.[609]

The 'stranger' laws were not only applicable to young men. Young women strangers similarly had to be signed for by their hosts, who were obliged to pay a five-shilling deposit to the Native Treasury. This deposit was returned to the hosts once the husband or a representative of the husband had come for the wife.[610] In a case in the southwest, a woman who ran away from her husband was jailed. [611]

Female mobility was highly controlled and, according to Kenneth Little, 'every woman, young or old, must have [a] caretaker; wives must not be allowed to stay away from their husbands or their parents for more than a month; if a wife does stay away, it is the duty of her husband to see that she returns'.[612]

These were not the only obstacles placed in the way of the previously enslaved leaving their previous masters, that blocked their mobility. There were also conditions of forced labour introduced in the protectorate, which meant that paramount chiefs were still able to exact tributary labour from their clients in very similar ways to what had been done previously. The Forced Labour Ordinance of 1932 stated that: 'Recognised chiefs may continue to enjoy the personal services of those subject to

---

[609] SLNA. C.C.P. Office, 'Secret Native Court Returns, Moyamba'.

[610] Kenneth L. Little, 'Social Change and Social Class in the Sierra Leone Protectorate', *American Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2017): 10–21.

[611] Kenema Provincial Archives, Code 32, Cons 01, Box 37, Loc 037.

[612] Kenneth L. Little, 'The Changing Position of Women in the Sierra Leone Protectorate', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 18, no. 1 (1948): 1–17.

their jurisdiction [with] regards to the following matters and in accordance with the native law and custom'.[613] The chiefs were allowed free labour for the following purposes: firstly, '[t]he clearing planting and maintenance of their farms and the reaping and storing of the crops grown thereon'; secondly, '[t]he building and repair of their houses, offices and compound'; and thirdly, '[t]he transport of themselves and their stores'.[614]

Provisions were made to stop abuse of the caveat stipulated in the allowances granted by 'Native Law and Custom'. For example, written permission was needed to allow chiefs to extract labour, men were allowed to work eight-hour days six days a week, and '[n]o man shall be compelled to perform any work or render any service which will entail his removal from the place of his habitual residence'.[615] The Forced Labour Ordinance of 1932 once again illustrated how collusion between the government and the traditional authorities maintained previous usages of tributary servile labour. One chief described the difference as semantic: 'It is not forced labour, it is communal labour'.[616]

---

[613] *Sierra Leone Government Gazette*, 'A Bill Entitled The Ordinance to Give Statutory Effect to the Convention Forced or Compulsory Labour which was Adopted by the International Labour Conference at Geneva on the 28th day of June, 1930, and Confirmed and Approved by His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council on the 12th day of May 1931, Freetown'.

[614] *Ibid.*

[615] *Ibid.*

[616] SLNA, Cox Commission Evidence, vol. 4, Kambia. Evidence Chief Yumkella.

Often, men have been seen as the only victims of forced labour practice. However, this was not the case. In the document sent to the League of Nations regarding the forced labour of women, there is a list of what women were required to do under communal labour laws. These 'lighter cultural operations' included: keeping streets and the village clean, weeding and reaping crops, preparing walls to be white-washed, as well as white-washing walls. Women were also required to cook food for the men who had been recruited by the government for building projects.

Once again the language of kinship was used to hide the fact that women were indeed victims of forced labour practices. The dispatch sent to the League states:

> [I]n effect there is no compulsory labour for women in Sierra Leone except in as far as, in conformity with tribal customs respected by His Majesty's Government of Great Britain, women may be called upon by their native chiefs to perform duties by recognised custom, they invariably perform.[617]

Yet it was not only in relation to labour that kinship was used to shield continued forms of dependency from the prying eyes of the international community. The response from Freetown to requests by the League of Nations for information of both forced marriage and forced labour was less than a page, significantly shorter than most reports sent by the other colonies. In relation to forced marriage, the government dismissed the query. The document stated that, 'as a rule in cases where parents are reluctant to refund the bride-price and bring pressure to bear on the woman to return to her husband'. According the governor this was not an instance of forced marriage,

---

[617] Correspondence, 1926 to 1928. 'Employment of Women on Compulsory Labour in the Colonies, Protectorates and Mandated Territories. Enclosure'.

but ‘is merely [a case of] upholding the sanctity of marriage and is not at all the same thing as forcing an unmarried girl on a husband she does not care for’.[618]

However, it was not only the colonial government who used the idea of fictive kinship to explain the shift from slave labour to free labour.

FICTIVE KINSHIP

The idea that forced labour was communal labour was not the first instance in which a type of ‘fictive kinship’ was used to describe how the language of authority shifted from one of slavery to one of kinship. As shown in Chapter 3, slavery and other forms of servile relationship had always overlapped. However, now that slavery had been abolished, the line between legal and illegal became increasingly blurred. In interviews conducted in the 1980s, Fanthorpe observes that it was ‘quite probable that I met former slaves and descendants of slaves. Indeed, in informal conversations with senior men, I heard many further references to slavery’. However, he goes on to say the problem was that the word used to mean slave was ambiguous:

> The word commonly used by informants when referring to an explicit slave of the pre-colonial era (i.e. a person put to work after being captured and/or bought) was bawali. But this word came from the stem wali: the word for ‘work’. The construction ‘worker’ fbawali or wali (woi) was equally applied to an adult (invariably male) person who had been fostered by a patron or one otherwise voluntarily attached to such a man; a person who ‘worked for’ that patron rather than his immediate senior kinsman in the hope of gaining the former’s help in finding urban employment, land, a wife, etc.[619]

---

[618] ‘Correspondence Relating to the Welfare of Women in Tropical Africa 1935–37’. Dispatch from the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 December 1936.

[619] Fanthorpe, ‘Settlements and Networks’, 248.

Fanthorpe's experiences in the 1980s mirror the difficulties experienced by earlier scholars in understanding the position of the previously enslaved after 1930. These reformulated relationships were often expressed through 'fictive kinship'. Fictive kinship, Orlando Patterson argues, was a mechanism to express authority and patriarchy, and the loyalty owed between master and owner or patron and client. He argued that fictive kinship expressed,

> Powers, and obligations of the status he or she has been ascribed. Fictive kin ties that are quasi-filial are essentially expressive: they use the language of kinship as a means of expressing an authority relation between master and slave, and a state of loyalty to the kinsmen of the master.[620]

Grace argues that the legal abolition of slavery had almost no impact on the lives of slaves themselves, because '[e]ven if the name slave was no longer acceptable those who had been slaves continued to lead the same sort of lives as they had done before'.[621] A Vai Chief in the 1950s argued, 'we don't have slaves we have cousins'.[622] This kind of 'fictive kinship' was used to explain how slaves were no longer slaves but still dependants.[623] Even colonial officials seemingly accepted these new kinship terms, commenting, 'the chiefs seem rather to give them land to farm elsewhere in the

---

[620] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[621] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

[622] Lewis, *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait*.

[623] Christine Whyte, ''Freedom But Nothing Else': The Legacies of Slavery and Abolition in Post-Slavery Sierra Leone, 1928–1956', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2015), 231–250.

chiefdom; they would become in a way dependants of the chief; patrons and clients'.[624]

But while there are no full-scale studies of lineage slavery in Sierra Leone, it is clear that slaves continued to be seen as a distinct group. After the abolition of slavery, descendants of ex-slaves (writing in the 1970s) reported:

> In many parts of the Protectorate it is still remembered who were slaves and whose parents were slaves. Near Pepel those of servile origins are obliged to perform more menial tasks, like butchering the sacrifices, for the secret societies. There are separate villages or parts of town for those of slave origin. Near Makeni, for example, there is a separate village for those of Limba descent who had originally come to the areas as slaves.[625]

There are also references to people being called 'domestics' as late as 1944. Carrie Hargreaves, an African American social worker who moved to Sierra Leone, has this to say regarding household structures:

> The domestics of the household are also granted equal rights because they help cultivate the soil; therefore they become a part of the family unit. The Temne tribe especially is to be commended for their strong household utility. They consider it a great evil to sell their domestics and separate them from the land of which they are a part. Domestics of the household, have not only the security of land holding, but are also offered opportunities for advancement, and as long as they work satisfactorily for their masters they are allowed to work for themselves and are given pay for their labour.[626]

James Thayer argues that, in the 1950s, a wealthy former slave who returned from the mines was unable to buy property in the 'free' part of the village despite the

---

[624] SLNA C.S.O. C.F./40/27. 'Domestic Slavery – Abolition of the Legal Status'.

[625] Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*.

[626] *Ibid.*

sizeable wealth he had accumulated in the mines.[627] A significant amount of literature has been written on how this affected young men. Even less has been written on how the legislative transformation from slavery to freedom affected women.

However, what it does show is that these identities had become much more complicated than a linear discussion of post-slavery would indicate. This may be a consequence of the mere abolition of legal slavery, and shows that one needs to be careful in the reading of archives.

One of the most disturbing pieces of evidence suggests that women were still being abducted in a way that is reminiscent of practices prevalent in the nineteenth century. In a letter submitted to the Cox Commission in 1955, a man states that Chief 'Bai Kafari is responsible for many people moving from Matotoka, because he is always raiding people's houses in search of women. This is well known in Tane and the neighbouring chiefdoms'.[628] Another dimension of control over women was expressed in custody battles. There are numerous examples, running through to the 1980s, of disputes over female girl children whom the fathers want returned to them because they want to marry them to someone else.[629]

POST-SLAVERY AND GENDER IN SIERRA LEONE

[627] James Steel Thayer, 'Remnants of Slavery on the Guinea Coast' (n.d.).

[628]SLNA, Ministry of the Interior. CE/P3/2. 'Letters Submitted, Tonkolli, pf 4. Yamba Kagbo'.

[629] *Ibid.*

There is only one official mention in the archives of the policy regarding formerly enslaved women. In the file on the abolition of slavery in the archives in Sierra Leone (not in the official correspondence located in the archives in the United Kingdom), an official reports:

> 1) By Native law a person who married a slave woman did not thereby free her. For the marriage to be a lawful one it was necessary for him to first redeem her and then also pay dowry to her parents who he was also ultimately expected to redeem.
>
> 2) Provided, therefore the requirements of native law were fulfilled, the question does not arise as the marriage is on the same footing any other marriage.
>
> 3) As regards Concubinage as distinct from marriage, the native law is that the children take the status of the mother. If therefore a slave woman is living in Concubinage with a man, whether that man was her master or not, her children by her become free on the coming into force of the ordinance. (There is a question mark in the document relating to this paragraph.)[630]

Concubinage as in Nigeria or Mali was rare, which meant that most formerly enslaved women fell in the first two categories; they were not concubines but 'slave wives'.[631] The title 'slave wife' differed from concubinage because, although the woman was a slave, the marriage was considered legitimate because the act of marriage was seen as an act of emancipation. In Fenton's *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*, he suggests that 'something was paid to the former master'.[632]

As shown in the previous chapter, by the time of abolition, the confusion between redemption, bridewealth and slave trading was so profound that it was easier

[630]SLNA C.S.O C.F 40/27. 'Domestic Slavery and Abolition of the Legal Status, 13 January 1929'.

[631] *Ibid.*

[632] Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*.

for former slave wives to be considered immediately emancipated at the moment of marriage, rather than try and untangle the intricacies of each individual case.[633]

In many ways this 'conceptual fuzziness' post-emancipation placed formerly enslaved women at a disadvantage. Much of the literature on the position of former slaves focuses on concubines in Nigeria, Mali and Niger.[634] The difference is that 'concubine' is an official status under Islam, and thus could be identified as slave status. The consequence of this was that if you could prove you were a former slave, you would retain custody of your children. However, in the case of Sierra Leone, the fact that the marriage was viewed as legitimate meant that the father would retain custody of the children.[635]

In the post-slavery literature, the fact that many 'slave wives' became wives, would suggest that, as in other parts of Africa, the legal abolition of slavery had very little impact on the position of women.

The way that gender is conceptualised in the historiography fits into the broader paradigm of 'post-slavery'. This suggests that, given the unchanging power structures, women were emancipated into dependence, and thus real changes for ex-

---

[633] *Ibid*.

[634] Marie Rodet, 'Under the Guise of Guardianship and Marriage: Mobilizing Juvenile and Female Labor in the Aftermath of Slavery in Kayes, French Soudan, 1900–1939.', in *Trafficking in Slavery's Wake: Law and the Experience of Women and Children in Africa*, eds. Richard L. Roberts and Benjamin N. Lawrance (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012).

[635] Cooper, Holt, and Scott, 'Conditions Analogous to Slavery'.

slaves were negligible.[636] We see evidence of this from the 1930s–1960s in cases of women running away. The hunts for the women would involve fully-fledged investigations involving chiefs and district commissioners. In many instances, district commissioners colluded with husbands to fetch the runaway wives, just as they had previously done with runaway slaves. There are hundreds of cases of men writing to district commissioners requesting them to fetch their wives who had run off with other men.

In one case a husband wrote to the district commissioner complaining that his late father had died, and 'therefore his late father's wife and children should belong to him'.[637] The district commissioner concurred with this decision and ruled that, unless the dowry was refunded, the woman was to return to her dead husband's family. In a note from 1952, after a woman ran away from her husband, the acting district commissioner of Kabala wrote: 'I have managed to catch her again, and have settled this case as she agreed to return to her husband. The son of the headman, Lahai Mara of Kombile helped in catching the women'.[638] Another example of district commissioners forcing women to return to their husbands was in 1956, where the commissioner reported:

> I understand the Sumalia Kamara has taken the wife of Balla Mara away. As Balla Mara now wishes to summon for the return of dowry, please send one of your

[636] Gorvie, *Old and New in Sierra Leone*.

[637] SLNA, Sierra Leone, vol 1. CF/451/18. Koinadugu District, 'Mango Chiefdom Court Appeals'.

[638] *Ibid.*

> messengers to bring Sumalia Kamara and the woman to the Native Administration Court, so that this case may be decided as quickly as possible.[639]

When men were liberated from slavery in patriarchal societies, a freed male slave could take on the 'rightful marriage of masculinity and patriarchal authority in the family'.[640] Pamela Scully aptly argues that, 'Women, in contrast, were liberated into dependence. What was to change for women was that they would be dependents of the right person, their husband, or father, rather than the wrong one, their master'.[641]

A freed woman was still considered a minor under the control of either her father or her husband.[642] In Sierra Leone women were not allowed to appear in court, and were legally under the control of their husbands. Husbands were also responsible and liable for any wrongdoing by their wives.[643] Of crucial importance for women, both slaves and free, is that they were unable to vote until 1951 in both the colony and the protectorate. After 1951 Sierra Leone had qualified franchise, which required that

---

[639] *Ibid.*

[640] Pamela Scully, 'Gender Family and the Ending of Cape Slavery 1823-1838', in *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, ed. Pamela Scully, Sue Peabody, and Diane Paton (London: Duke University Press, 2005), 37–55, 44. [Pam Scully, *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998)

[641] Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (London: Duke University Press, 2005).

[642] BNA CO 1032/265 Gen. 174/252/01. 'Suffrage Arrangements in Colonial Territories; Universal Adult Suffrage in the Commonwealth'.

[643] Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*.

the enfranchised were either landowners or tax payers. Given that women in the protectorate did not pay tax, almost no women were able to vote; and universal franchise in Sierra Leone was only introduced in 1962.[644] Even the ability of women to vote was discussed in relationship to marriage. When the problem of female enfranchisement arose in 1954, it was suggested that:

> A possible solution to the problem is to allow on the register only one wife for each married man. This would give a large number the vote while avoiding the difficulties that arise from some men having a number of wives. Moreover, this would make it possible to maintain the principle of basing the register on the tax list. However, it would entail several difficulties; it would not be easy to check claims by men who are not in fact married; it might lead to domestic strife; and perhaps more importantly it would not necessarily lead to the enfranchisement of women who are best qualified to have an opinion.[645]

Not only were women legal dependants, in some ways the abolition of slavery resulted in a greater reliance on female labour. As in the historiography of post-slavery in the rest of Africa where labour demands by colonial governments increased, tasks previously allocated to just slaves began to encompass larger portions of the population.[646] This was of particular importance in relation to female labour.

Marie Rodet argues that '[f]ormer forms of bondage were transformed in order to acquire and control new labour'.[647] Once again these forms of bondage can be

---

[644] BNA, Secret General Department, 174/252/01. 'Suffrage Arrangements in Colonial Territories, 1960–1962'.

[645] *Ibid*.

[646] Pamela Scully and Kerry Ward, 'Gender and Coerced Labor', in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Vol 4: AD 1804–AD 2016*, eds. David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, Seymour Drescher, and David Richardson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 562–82.

[647] Rodet, 'Under the Guise of Guardianship and Marriage'.

explained by the moral economy of households, showing that just because a woman was no longer legally a slave, it did not mean she was no longer subject to performing the duties of wife, daughter or mother. Slave and wife became not exclusive but overlapping identities. Interlocking bonds informed by the pre-existing ideas of slavery gender roles, indebtedness, and protection existed within patriarchal systems of identity and belonging. In a brief reference in 1944 by the Anti-Slavery Society to a girl of about twelve years, who had been sold into slavery for eight bushels of husk rice at Pamro, the following is noted:[648]

> The secretary of Protectorate affairs a Mr L.W. Wilson responded that the girl Yah Moloh who was pledged to one Karamoko Golee and the 'Elders reported that it is not true that the girl Ya Nkulo was pledged to Fakuli. The girl is a distant cousin of Fakuli. She is betrothed to him and has been taken into his house where he has two other wives. Kakuli did give Lansana, Ya Nkulo's Father, four bushels of rice but as a gift to his prospective father in law'.[649]

The fact that a young girl having been handed over for a bushel of rice may have been a consequence of the harsh rice quotas introduced during the Second World War, did not seem to be of any consequence to the British. This is, however, not to suggest that adopting the language of kinship did not bring any change. It is quite likely that it represented a step along a much longer process of assimilation. But on the basis of the existing evidence, it is very difficult to establish the extent to which it was being used as a smokescreen to fool the colonial government, or led to an actual shift in dependency. Most likely elements of both dynamics were involved.

---

[648] SLNA. S.P.A 515/4. 'Miscellaneous Matters'. Samu Chiefdom. O. Wyndam to The Colonial Secretary, 9 May 1944.

[649] SLNA. S.P.A 515/4. 'Miscellaneous Matters – Samu Chiefdom', 12 August 1944.

GENDER AND THE CASH ECONOMY

From the 1930s there was an increasing focus on a cash economy. One of the consequences of changes that affected women, was that British ideas of wage labour and family structures, that come with 'civilised' modern life, meant that women – both previously enslaved and free – were increasingly marginalised from the agricultural economy. In some ways 'marriage' and notions of correct family relationships increased the 'problems' for women.

After the abolition of slavery, and in the face of a continuously modernising agricultural sector, women found themselves increasingly marginalised from cash crop production. This process had two main drivers. The first came from above; British officials had very specific ideas about the correct roles that women and men were meant to play in society. Men were expected to go out and earn money, while women's place was in the home.[650] This Victorian notion of the family had damaging effects on the position of women in Sierra Leone. The British vision for developing the agricultural sector was that it should be a male affair. In 1919 the Najala Agricultural College opened to train people to assist in the development of the sector. The college trained teachers and agricultural advisors, but only 'catered to men'. The consequence, according to Ojukutu-Macauley, was that 'expertise and, therefore, leadership in agricultural activities became associated with men. This policy

[650] Josephine Beoku-Betts, 'Agricultural Development in Sierra Leone: Implications for Rural Women in the Aftermath of the Women's Decade', *Africa Today* 37, no. 1 (1990), 19–35.

contributed to constructing the colonial idea of the African farmer as a male and perpetuating the myth of the invisible female'.[651]

The idea that women would perform agricultural labour was seen as backward and unproductive. The acting governor observed that, '[s]o far as local consumption is concerned, owing to [the] abundance of women's labour which costs nothing and which will take some time to induce these people to replace altogether by more up to date methods, I think'.[652] He continued to suggest that, '[o]ne realises the difficulty brought about by the abundance of women labour, but if a standard quality product is to be produced for export, this is only likely to be assured by the establishment of mills'.[653]

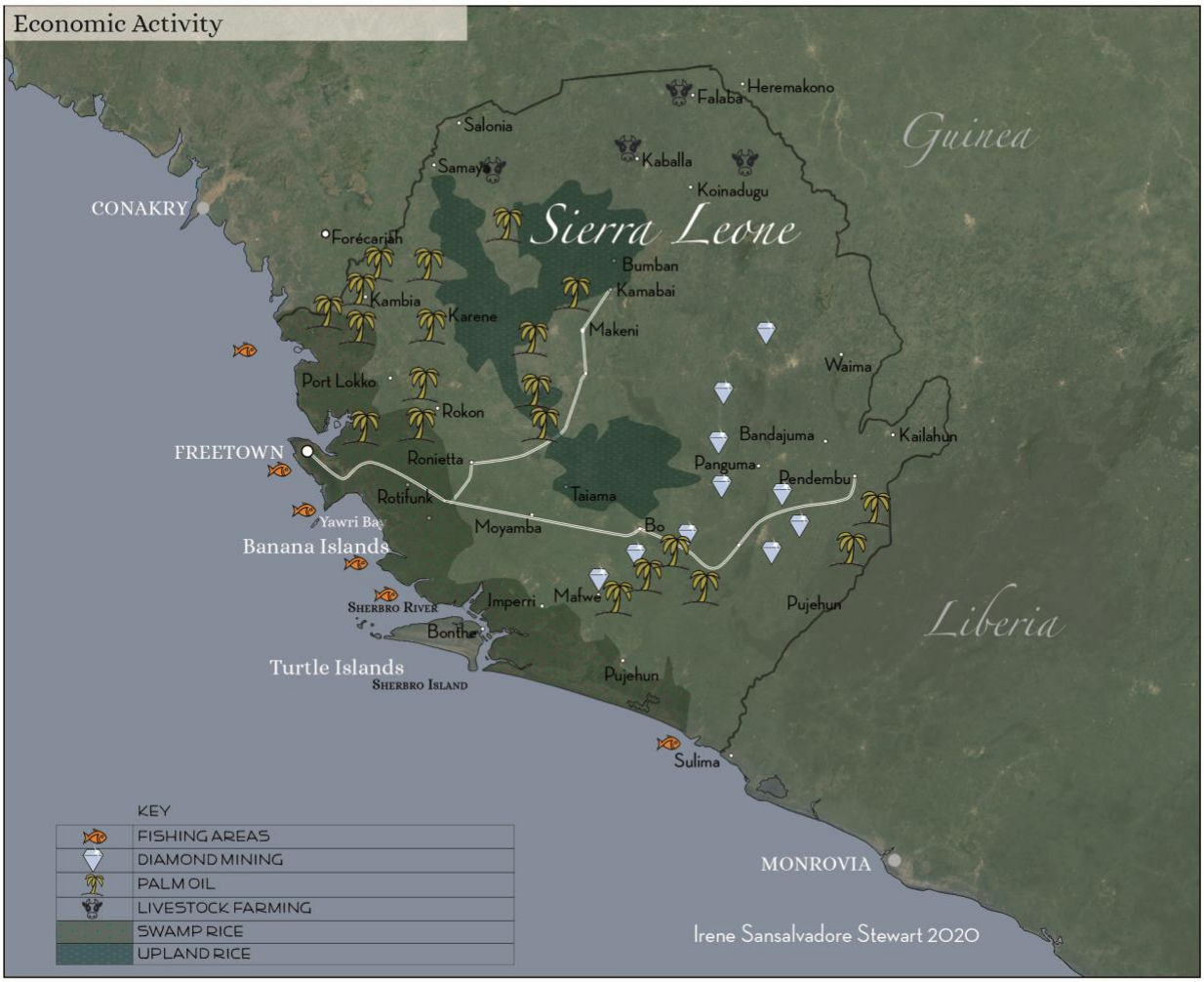
---

[651] Ojukutu-Macauley, 'Women Power and Change', 153.

[652] BNA CO 276/641/14, 17 July 1933. Rice Growing Schemes. From the Acting Governor to the Secretary of State.

[653] *Ibid.*

AGRICULTURAL SECTOR SIERRA LEONE



However, the British notion of how the family and the 'household' should be constituted was radically different from that in Sierra Leonean societies. In Sierra Leone, as in much of the rest of Africa, women were the primary producers of agricultural goods. The importance of female labour in agriculture was crucial. Ojukutu-Macauley accurately points out that in the census of 1931, women made up the bulk of farmers.[654] The importance of female labour also increased as more young men left for the mines.

[654] Ojukutu-Macauley, 'Women Power and Change.

Women were responsible for harvesting, weeding, and general maintenance after the men had cleared the bush. Women were also responsible for vegetable gardens to grow food for the family. In some cases these vegetable gardens became part of a wider network of vegetable sales that reached all the way to Freetown.[655]

In a polygamous household, each wife with her retainers, children and – prior to 1927 – slaves, had her own plot of land to cultivate upland rice. All of these households were headed and supervised by senior wives. There were strict generational hierarchies amongst the wives, with the first wife usually holding the most power.[656]

Women were also able to raise money for themselves by intercropping in between the upland rice. Women controlled and kept the revenue from secondary crops like yams, maize, and cassava, which were intercropped with the rice.[657] Rosen observed that, 'each woman retains exclusive rights over her crops, and her status as a woman is to some extent measured by her success as a gardener'.[658] With the proceeds from these crops the women could buy 'dried fish or palm oil, or more usually, they

---

[655] Northcote, *Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone*.

[656] Lewis, *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait*; Carrie G. Hargrave, *African Primitive Life: As I Saw It in Sierra Leone, British West Africa* (Wilmington, N.C.: Wilmington Printing Company, 1944); Gorvie, *Old and New in Sierra Leone*.

[657] Beoku-Betts, 'Agricultural Development in Sierra Leone'.

[658] David M. Rosen, 'Diamond, Diggers, and Chiefs: The Politics of Fragmentation in a West African Society' (PhD diss., University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL, 1973).

buy gifts of cloth for themselves, their cowives, and children'.[659] Women also had exclusive access to the lands that they had planted in the previous year.

After the 1930s there was a shift, and high-yielding forms of cash crops, specifically swamp rice, became a new policy target. This change in emphasis had a detrimental effect on the relationship of women to agricultural production. Men had access to mechanised farming, and tractors allowed for increased production and acreage. Yet the same luxury was not afforded to women, and 'significantly increased female labour input by 50 per cent (with the increased labour required for weeding, harvesting and post-harvesting operations)'.[660]

Mechanisation also pushed women out of other forms of agricultural labour that had given them economic independence. The introduction of the cotton gin, as well as a mechanised form of palm oil extraction marginalised women from the formal economy, as only men were allowed to operate the new machines.[661]

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION AND THE SOLIDIFICATION OF CHIEFLY RULE

The protectorate was about to go through a fundamental restructuring, which further entrenched the rights of chiefs and enforced the political status quo. Native administration as a formalised system was implemented relatively late in Sierra Leone – in 1937. This was due to 'poor communication and the relative isolation of the

[659] *Ibid*.

[660] Beoku-Betts, 'Agricultural Development in Sierra Leone'.

[661] Ojukutu-Macauley, 'Women Power and Change'.

protectorate'.[662] It also became clear after the deposition of Chief Bai Sherbro, as well as the Idara revolt in the north, that the system was not working in its current form.[663] There was an argument that the system of indirect rule that had been implemented in Sierra Leone (discussed in Chapter 2) was too 'indirect' and needed to be brought closer to the Nigerian model created by Frederick Lugard.[664]

J.S. Fenton, a senior district commissioner, was sent to Nigeria to assess whether a system of indirect rule would work in the protectorate.[665] He was asked to compile a document on native law in Sierra Leone, which was published in 1932 and released as a book in 1948.[666] This document became the basis of the colonial government's understanding of customary law in the protectorate.

Not surprisingly, given Fenton's visit to Nigeria, the new Sierra Leonean system of indirect rule was closely modelled on the Nigerian system. It was, at first, rolled out in selected districts, but by the end of the colonial period, most of the protectorate had been reorganised along these lines.[667]

---

[662] SLNA. Ministry of the Interior CE/M/6, 'Aide Memoire'.

[663] The Idara revolt took place in the north in 1933 against the British, and was led by a Muslim cleric from Guinea. For a more detailed account, see Rashid, 'Patterns of Rural Protest'.

[664] R.D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938-1948* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1982).

[665] *Ibid.*; Richard Fanthorpe, 'Neither Citizen nor Subject? 'Lumpen' Agency and the Legacy of Native Administration in Sierra Leone', *African Affairs* 100, no. 400 (2001): 363–86.

[666] Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*.

[667] *Ibid.*

It began to be implemented from 1937, was a more formalised system than the previous one, and took the bureaucratisation of customary law further than the earlier protectorate ordinances.[668]

Native Administration also solidified boundaries between chiefdoms. They were broken up into tribal authorities, which consisted of a paramount chief who acted on the advice of those he appointed, and included section chiefs, traditional authority holders, and other representatives. In theory these positions were supposed to be elected, but in many instances supporters of the paramount chief were appointed to the councils.[669] The establishment if this new reformed system of native administration was the first step that would led to the traditional authorities capturing central government in Freetown in the period leading up to decolonisation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter shows how, after the abolition of slavery, the lives of those who had been previously enslaved saw very little structural changes. The colonial government assumed that rural ways of life would continue much as before.

Consequently, previously enslaved people received no economic help from the government, and the government colluded with chiefly authorities to make sure that ex-slaves were unable to leave their ex-masters. The British also placated the chiefs by making provisions for forced or communal labour to be allowed to continue. The

---

[668] Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British African Territories: Part IV: A General Survey of Systems of Native Administration* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951).

[669] *Ibid.*

abolition of slavery had very little impact on the lives of males, and it had even less of a transformative effect on the lives of female slaves. An enduring moral economy of the household meant that female slaves remained subjugated and under the control of men. However, to a much greater extent than before, this subordination was not expressed through the idiom of slavery but through the terminology of fictive kinship, which portrayed them as junior wives, or daughters. At the same time, it must be recognised that while these shifts were not representative of the fundamental transition that the term abolition might conjure, they did represent a step along the long path of assimilation that had been such an important, if varied, form of incorporation for slaves in the region over many centuries. But while these processes afforded female slaves an element of social mobility, women were being increasingly marginalised by the process of modernisation in the agricultural economy. As a result the power, status, and economic opportunities that their previous centrality in farming had afforded them, were increasingly threatened.

CHAPTER 7: THE 'HONEY TRAP' ELEMENT: 'MODERNISATION' AND THE HOUSEHOLD AFTER 1945

We find that men with multiple wives were more likely to be accusers. This result is consistent with the 'honey trap' perspective.[670]

The previous chapter showed how the 'slow death of slavery' affected gender relationships after the 1928 abolition of slavery. The lack of any material assistance or social support for 'freed slaves' meant there were very few visible changes in their lives or in their positions in both the household and wider society.

But the outbreak of the Second World War, during which the strategic importance of Freetown as a harbour was established, saw increased funding for both the colony and the protectorate, and set in motion important processes of change. The increased number of workers who were needed to aid the war effort raised levels of urbanisation. London, for the first time, became much more interventionist in the colony that it had previously mostly ignored.

The shift in the relationship between London and Freetown did not end after the war. Clement Atlee's post-war Labour government initiated a new form of interventionist colonialism, or 'New Imperialism', which also had an important impact on the political economy of Sierra Leone. These policy shifts played a part in stimulating the rise of mass-based nationalist movements elsewhere in Africa. But Sierra Leone followed a different path, with the older traditional authorities becoming increasingly powerful in the central government.

---

[670] Esther Mokuwa et al., 'Peasant Grievance and Insurgency in Sierra Leone: Judicial Serfdom as a Driver of Conflict', *African Affairs* 110, no. 440 (2011): 339–66.

The second part of the chapter focuses on how modernisation impacted on ordinary people – especially young men and women. While the established patriarchal structures sought to maintain the status quo, the expectations of young people shifted and they grew increasingly frustrated with the expanding power of the chiefs. It also analyses how ideas about and the status of marriage shifted in these decades through a discussion of the continued prevalence of women damage cases. The struggles show that the nature of the post-colonial society was not simply determined from on-high, but was also shaped by grassroots struggles, which sharpened gender and generational cleavages.

SIERRA LEONE AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Prior to 1939 Sierra Leone was a colony of little importance to Britain, but this changed after the outbreak of the war. The position of Freetown harbour made it the best naval port 'between Gibraltar and Cape Town'.[671] From Freetown, the navy could police important South Atlantic routes, both to the Indian Ocean and to South America. The port also became important for American troops going to the front. Freetown therefore became a key point of movement for wartime supplies and men, and a key point where refuelling and restocking of naval ships could take place.[672]

---

[671] Sekgoma, 'The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone', 149.

[672] *Ibid.*; Allen M. Howard, 'Freetown and World War II: Strategic Militarization, Accommodation, and Resistance', in *Africa and World War II*, eds. Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn Brown, Timothy Parsons, Ahmad Sikainga (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 183–99.

Allen Howard provides evidence that Freetown became a key bunkering sight, and described a day in 1941 when over 50 ships arrived at the harbour. All these ships needed to take on large enough supplies of coal to either return home, or for continued journeys across the Atlantic. He concluded that: 'No other African port matched its role in assembling convoys, and its militarisation exceeded that of other capitals in colonial Africa outside the war zones'.[673] By 1941 Sierra Leone's economy had been substantially reorganised towards supporting the British war effort. By 1941, 88 percent of its trade was going to Britain, and by 1944 this had gone up to 90 percent.[674]

The importance of the harbour had far-reaching consequences for both the colony and the protectorate. Freetown's new importance resulted in key areas that had long been neglected, being deemed 'essential services' to the war effort.

The increase in public expenditure was staggering. In 1937 the total government expenditure was £919 265, which jumped to £1 588 008 by 1943. The biggest increases for the same dates were for 'general administration', which went from £200 097 to £515 671 to meet the costs of 'expanded employment by the central administration and public corporations, such as the Port Authorities, Water Utilities and war related services'. Social Services went from £260 001 to £327 384, due to increased heath facilities required for soldiers and those employed for the war

---

[673] Andrew Stewart, 'The Second World War and the 'Quiet Colony of Sierra Leone'', in *An Imperial World at War: Aspects of the British Empire's War Experience, 1939–1945*, eds. Ashley Jackson, Yasmin Khan, and Gajendra Singh, (2016), 185.

[674] Howard, 'Freetown and World War II'.

effort.[675] All these investments meant that the number of people employed was greatly increased:

> [By] the first half of 1940, an average of about 10,000 people were formally employed in the Colony (mainly in and around Freetown) by firms, the military, and the civil authorities. Between August and December 1940, the number rose from 15,500 to 25,700, an increase of two-and-a-half times; by November 1942, it had climbed to over 50,000.[676]

In 1943, 24 percent of the men had left agriculture and migrated to mines in search of other forms of wage labour. However, it was not just men who were drawn into the wartime economy. Women also played a significant role, though mainly through the informal economy, and importantly in the food markets. This was particularly true for many Temne market women who used these new opportunities to leave the rural areas.

Prostitution was one space in the informal economy where women could find work. The numbers of prostitutes in Freetown during the war is not recorded, but there is evidence to suggest that the number of women involved in prostitution dramatically increased. The Patterson Report, commissioned in 1943, was mainly focused on public health, but also provides some insights into how prostitution functioned. While some women operated on their own, many worked in brothels that employed touts to bring the women to soldiers, and sailors from the dock to the women.

---

[675] Sekgoma, 'The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone', 164.

[676] *Ibid.*

Many of the young offenders arrested during this period were touts that would take soldiers to the brothels. Not only did they 'extract a fee for guiding the sailors to the satisfaction of his desires, but on the return journey to the water front, if the sailor was incapably drunk, he picked his pockets and so added to his gains'.[677]

In a police raid on the waterfront (date not given) where 200 touts were arrested, only 24 were from the colony, and the rest from the protectorate. Of the 200 arrested, 26 were juvenile offenders, and all except two were from the protectorate. This is further evidence that the business of prostitution was embedded in networks that stretched far beyond the boundaries of the colony.[678]

In these years the protectorate finally saw increased funding channelled into agricultural production. The budget for 'Economic Services' increased from £165 016 to £439 595 from 1937 to 1943. This funding was used to develop roads to Freetown to improve the transport of food, and the Swamp Rice Development Scheme was built to increase production. Increased funding for agriculture was mainly applied to feed military personnel and also to provide food to restock passing ships. The Patterson Report states:

> The [Colony] may, by possession of a great natural harbour, have brought in war-time a great accession of trade and prosperity, but ultimately it must rely for its food on the soil and labour of the protectorate … unless those hands are busy in the season, there will be no rice in Freetown.[679]

---

[677] BNA, FCO 141. 14304. SF 3528. 'The Patterson Report', 1943.

[678] *Ibid.*

[679] *Ibid*.

There was a marked increase in food production between 1937 and 1943. The tonnage of rice transported to Freetown by railway increased from 3 285 tons to 12 512 tons.[680] The consequence of this increased demand on supplies was that draconian measures were placed on farmers in rural areas to meet the demand for agricultural produce, especially rice. In order to increase the level of production, quotas were introduced. Famers were made to sell a certain amount of their crops to the government, and also to fill the quotas of family members who had left for urban areas. The pressure was so great that farmers had to purchase rice on the black market to fill their quotas.[681] Government agents were reported to have terrorised communities who struggled to meet their quotas, and in some cases took all their harvest, which resulted in serious cases of malnutrition.[682] These pressures were particularly harshly felt by young men and women, who were forced to cover the quotas for those who had left.

Sierra Leone's diamonds were sold to purchase war goods and produce war equipment. The colony's iron ore was also an essential resource in the war effort. Although the modernisation of Sierra Leone had been the consequence of its strategic position in the war, the new wave of development did not come to an end with the conclusion of the war. In the wake of the Second World War there was a major restructuring of both the colony and the protectorate.[683]

---

[680] Howard, 'Freetown and World War II'.

[681] Sekgoma, 'The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone'.

[682] Rashid, 'Patterns of Rural Protest'.

[683] Sekgoma, 'The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone'.

NEW IMPERIALISM AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By the end of the 1930s it was generally accepted in West Africa that native administration based on indirect rule was not working. In 1938, Lord Malcolm Hailey, who had previously been a governor in India, was commissioned to do extensive research on the colonies in Africa. His subsequent book, *An African Survey*, advocated a much more interventionist approach in governing Africa.[684] Britain's economy had been shattered by the war, which had cost 'one quarter of its national wealth and 1 billion pounds of its foreign assets. The British debt stood at 3,7 billion pounds, and its industrial base was largely crippled by wartime mobilisation'.[685] Great Britain's position as a world power was waning.

By the late 1940s Britain had lost most of its colonies in Asia, and saw its relationship with its African colonies as a means to regain its former power and position. The new Labour government thought that by putting more resources into the colonies, they could become economic assets. In October 1948 Ernest Bevin, the new Labour Party's foreign secretary, contended that, 'if we only pushed on and developed Africa we could have the US dependant on us in five years … The US is very barren of essential materials, and in Africa we have them all'.[686]

---

[684] Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State.*

[685] Timothy H. Parsons, 'The Unintended Consequences of Bureaucratic 'Modernization' in Post-World War II British Africa', in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 412–34, 418.

[686] Quoted in Parsons, 'The Unintended Consequences of Bureaucratic 'Modernization', 194 [.

The metropole was inclined to make an attempt at much more direct interventions on the periphery of the empire.[687] To achieve this goal, the Department of Colonial Development and Welfare (established in 1941), set aside £5 million to invest in social services and develop infrastructure and agriculture in Sierra Leone.[688]

The total capital expenditure needed for the new development plan was £5 million; £2 030 000 would be a loan – £2 million from a load from the Colonial Development Department, and £30 000 would have to be raised locally. The money would mainly be spent to expand the development of cash crops. Gilbert Sekgoma gave the following breakdown of how the money would be spent:

> Out of the projected capital expenditure, about two-thirds was to be devoted to the improvement of transport facilities (i.e. railways £1.25 million, roads and bridges £0.8 million, deep-water quay £1.35 million, Lungi airport £0.17 million and inland waterways £0.02).[689]

In line with British policy in the rest of Africa, there was an attempt by the colonial government in Freetown to move away from indirect rule. The consequence was another significant overhaul in the structure of the protectorate only seven years after the previous restructuring of native administration. Part of London's plan was to implement policy that would make government in the rural areas more democratic.

The protectorate underwent a reorganisation after 1945. Three provinces were established, which were administered from Bo by a chief commissioner. Each of the districts had a provincial commissioner who was in charge of reorganising and

---

[687] Nicholas J. White, *Decolonisation: The British Experience since 1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

[688] *Ibid.*

[689] Sekgoma, 'The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone',

implementing the post-war development agenda for the protectorate. Although this system was not dissimilar to the reorganisation in 1937, the implementation of the district councils and the Protectorate Assembly were to have major impacts on late colonial and post-colonial Sierra Leone society.[690]

The attempt to establish new local and more democratic systems came in the form of district councils. The councils were slowly meant to replace the system of native administration. The idea was to 'widen the basis of local consultation' for the development plans for the protectorate.[691] In each of the twelve districts, the council was tasked with advising the governor or district commissioner on '[m]atters affecting the welfare of the people [and] to suggest, where any such advice or recommendations involved expenditure, [and] the source or sources from which the funds necessary to meet such expenditure can be derived'.[692] The councils were meant to be separate from native administration to create a less elite space for consultation. They were structured to mimic county councils in the United Kingdom with a view to later giving them the same status as local government.[693]

Another important change was that central government took greater control of the diamond areas. Diamonds had first been discovered in the 1930s, and their impact

---

[690] *Ibid*.

[691] Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, 203.

[692] 'Protectorate Ordinance of 1946', Freetown, Sierra Leone. Quoted in *ibid*., 203.

[693] *Ibid.*

on the social makeup of Sierra Leone intensified in the 1950s, as increasing numbers of young men were drawn away from farming to the mines.[694]

The Consolidated African Selection Trust (CAST) was given exclusive rights to prospect for diamonds in eastern Sierra Leone in 1932. In 1935, after extensive deposits were found, a subsidiary of CAST, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), was granted monopoly and exclusive rights to 'prospect for, produce and market diamonds throughout the Colony' for 99 years.[695] In return, the SLST paid the colonial government £55 835 for the rights and paid £7 000 a year into the Protectorate Mining Benefits Fund, which had been set up in 1933 for development projects in the interior.[696] However, the SLST had exemptions on all 'rents, taxes, royalties, export duties, charges or impositions, except a tax on profits which would not exceed 27 ½ per cent of the Trust's net profit'.[697]

With increased demands for funding for development projects, the colonial government needed to broaden its sources of revenue, and in 1948 it increased the amount that the SLST was taxed to 45 percent of its profits – and in 1953 this was raised to 60 percent.[698]

---

[694] Alpha M. Lavalie, 'The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone: British Colonial Policy, Nationalism and Independence, 1945–1961' (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989).

[695] Diana Frost, *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2012), 35.

[696] *Ibid.*

[697] *Ibid.*, 35.

[698] *Ibid.*,35.

To protect the SLST's monopoly, a dedicated Mobile Mines Police Force was created by the SLST, since Sierra Leone did not have a functional police force. This became the 'dominant element' of the police in the colony of Sierra Leone. In return for the increase in taxation, police from Freetown were deployed to protect the trust area.[699]

Even with the added security, the size of the SLST monopoly meant that incidents of illicit diamond mining increased rapidly. Any diamond found was the property of the SLST, and any individual not in the employ of the company found to be mining diamonds could be arrested. The only way an individual was able to sell a diamond was to sell it to a person willing to sell it outside the country.[700]

However, the size of the trust area meant that even with the increased police presence, as the annual report for the provinces of 1956 noted, '[t]he enforcement of law and order in Kono District became steadily more difficult throughout the year owing to the vast numbers of intruders'.[701] The report continues:

> The police found themselves pre-occupied with these problems, and other police work suffered. Out of 1,229 convictions in the Magistrate's Court 950 were for illicit mining and possession of diamonds, and 96 for other offences under the Minerals Ordinance or the Diamond Protection Ordinance.[702]

---

[699] David Clive King, 'Diamond Mining Settlements in Central Kono District, Sierra Leone' (School of Oriental and African Studies, 1979).

[700] Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[701] SLNA. 'Report of the Administration of the Provinces for the Year 1956, Freetown, Sierra Leone', 14.

[702] *Ibid*.

But there was a disconnect between the politics of the Labour government in London and the socio-political realities of Sierra Leone. Its failure to provide adequate funds and appropriate personnel meant there was little local capacity to implement these new developmental policies. In consequence, officials had little alternative but to turn to the organisational capacity and leadership of the chiefs.

In 1956 the SLST was given £1 570 000 as compensation for relinquishing all its mining rights outside Kono. The trust retained rights in central Kono, the most lucrative diamond area. Even though Britain had benefited hugely from the SLST monopoly, the UK government refused to pay the loan on behalf of the Sierra Leone government. The consequences of being landed with this large debt were severe, and development projects suffered. Alpha Lavalie cites a journalist who laments: 'Sierra Leone was financially ridiculed, economically robbed and politically belittled'.[703]

New Imperialism, or 'Developmental Colonialism', also sat uneasily with the reality that, after a war which was fought to stop 'dictatorship, authoritarianism',[704] the British nonetheless intended to retain its African colonies.[705]

New Imperialism was intended to consolidate the power of empire, but its more corrosive interventionist policies contributed to the rise of nationalist movements that hastened the decolonisation of Sub-Saharan Africa, that began with Ghana in 1957. Increased intervention required more taxes and a larger civil service; and new infrastructure projects required a bigger labour force. Developmental

---

[703] King, 'Diamond Mining Settlements', 250.

[704] Lavalie, 'The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone', 32.

[705] John Hatch, *A History of Postwar Africa* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965).

projects in the rural areas often operated with little understanding of existing farming systems, and invoked resistance from local farmers who defended longstanding and well-tested forms of production and ways of living.

In addition, the number of Africans being educated was increasing to fill positions in the expanding workforce and bureaucracy. Soldiers returning from the Second World War also contributed to a new mix of expectations and ideas.

Frederick Cooper describes the position of many of these men on their return: 'having joined other subjects of the British empire in a war for freedom that was not truly theirs; on their return, many sought to live in cities, facing difficult urban labour markets, housing shortages, and inflation'.[706]

In Sierra Leone about 12 000 men returned after active service in the Far East, particularly in India and Myanmar. The reason for many of the West African troops being sent to these areas was because they were used to rainforest conditions. The Sierra Leonean men who were part of the combat troops became known as the 'Burma Boys'. Of particular importance was that these men were trained in guerrilla tactics fighting in the forests in the Far East. Many of them were unemployed when they returned, despite attempts to create employment for them. It was assumed they would return to farming, but many of them joined the diamond rush in the mid-1950s:

> … [after] having been exposed to a more western lifestyle, a money economy and to the discipline and organisation of the army. The ex-servicemen became urbanised and were easily attracted to the cash earnings of the diamond fields. The diamond fields

[706] Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.

> also offered a break from the traditional way of life, not only for the ex-servicemen, but for other dissatisfied young men.[707]

In many African countries these diverse groups were mobilised by the nationalist leaders, like Kwame Krumah and Jomo Kenyatta, to create mass-based movements to challenge British rule. However, Sierra Leone diverged quite dramatically from the processes of decolonisation in Ghana, Nigeria, and other British colonies. Unlike Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party (CCP), and the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon under the leadership of Nnamdi Azikiwe, the SLPP never made any attempt to mobilise a mass-based nationalist movement. In Sierra Leone after 1945, the older traditional elites and their offspring expanded their power in Freetown.

There is a rich debate over the reasons why this happened. Some stress that the animosity of the Creole elite in Freetown towards political parties from the protectorate, made an alliance with a larger educated elite impossible. Others have argued that modernisation came too late to Sierra Leone for a stratum of educated young civil servants and leaders who formed the backbone of other movements, to develop.[708]

The low education levels in the protectorate provide the explanation for why there was such a limited elite class in the protectorate. Out of a school-going population of 370 000, there were only 15 046 children in primary schools in 1937.

---

[707] King, 'Diamond Mining Settlements', 54.

[708] King, 'Diamond Mining Settlements'.

This number only increased to 17 357 by 1949.[709] Although the numbers continued to increase throughout the 1950s, by 1963 the school-going population only represented 24 percent of the potential school-going population.[710]

THE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE, 1948-1961

Prior to the end of the Second World War, the colony and the protectorate had been politically separate entities, with the latter being governed through a policy of indirect rule. The colony, however, was governed by a legislative and executive council. The legislative council acted as advisory to the executive council.

The executive council was, in turn, the advisory board to the governor, and was ostensibly the decision-making body of the government. The legislative council consisted of both official and unofficial members. The governor of Sierra Leone appointed the official members to the council. They usually held high government positions or were government officials. Those who were not employees of the state, but were private citizens, were also nominated by the governor to represent the interests of particular communities. It was not believed that ordinary people could be trusted to vote. An Intelligence report commented:

> So long as some part of the population, either through lack of numbers or lack of political education, is not able effectively to exercise the right to vote, it remains the special duty of the Governor and of the official members of the legislature to see that

[709] 'Report of the Sierra Leone Protectorate for the Years 1949 and 1950', Freetown, Sierra Leone.

[710] Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-1967,* 268.

> its interests are not overlooked, and the Governor will continue, if necessary, to nominate unofficial members specially to represent it on the legislative bodies.[711]

As shown in the previous chapters, Freetown was able to legislate policy for the protectorate. It was only after 1923 that there was any kind of 'native' representation in Freetown. This state of affairs changed significantly after the Second World War.[712]

The changes did not take place because Britain was interested in the political inclusion of the protectorate to broaden democracy. As Lavalie suggests, 'the protectorate was better placed to serve Britain's economic interests than the colony, since all the country's minerals and agricultural products were obtained from there'.[713] British officials believed that in the run-up to decolonisation, the old protectorate elites would be much better partners in securing metropolitan economic interests in both agriculture and mining than the Krio elite in the colony.

The Protectorate Assembly was created to begin the process of political integration of the colony and protectorate. In the legislative council there were only three representatives from the protectorate. The assembly was seen as a bridge towards the protectorate joining the legislative council.[714]

There were 42 seats in the assembly, half of which were reserved for paramount chiefs, who were 'elected to the Assembly by Native Administrations and

---

[711] Information Services Agency of the British Government Reference Division, 'The Road to Self Government: Consitutional Development in the British Colonial Territories' (Great Britian, 1955).

[712] *Ibid*.

[713] Lavalie, 'The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone', 75.

[714] Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State.*

District Councils over which Chiefs exercised much influence'.[715] The other seats were filled by officials in government departments, two members who represented the business interests of the European and Creole interests, two 'educated Protectorate Africans selected by Native Administration', and one missionary.[716] The colonial authorities' collusion with elites to dominate political spaces was inadvertently revealed by Chief Julius Gulama, who enthusiastically declared:

> Our fathers and grandfathers who are now buried never did they dream that such a meeting would take place. Whoever thought that the Limba man and the Kono and all the tribes of the Protectorate could meet like this today, without exchanging swords? Whoever thought that all these tribes would meet together in one place and sit together in common? All these things have just been possible because of the treaty entered into by our grandfathers with the Government. Our fathers and grandfathers lying now in their graves will rejoice that such a meeting has taken place today.[717]

As noted above, after 1945 there was a realisation that the political gap between the colony and protectorate could not continue, and that the protectorate needed to be included more actively in the politics of the colony. In 1947 a new constitution, introduced by Governor Stevenson, initiated the integration of the colony and protectorate. But as the annual report in 1950 noted, the

> [a]ssembly was still an aristocratic body. Not until 1949 were any members elected other than Paramount Chiefs, and to many ordinary citizens, the meeting of the

---

[715] *Ibid*., 155.

[716] *Ibid*., 155.

[717]Protectorate Assembly, Proceedings of First Meeting at Bo, 23rd to 26th July, 1946 (Freetown, 1946), 1-2. Quoted in Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, 156.

> Assembly meant little more than a social event for chiefs. Some of their resolutions and speeches showed a selfish and reactionary spirit.[718]

Cartwright contends that dissolving the assembly was a 'sign' of how the interests of the elites and traditional authorities would come to dominate the politics of Sierra Leone.[719] He observes, in contrast, that in both Nigeria and Ghana by the 1950s, 'provisions for a chiefs-dominated legislature was rendered obsolete and replaced'.[720]

The Stevenson Constitution was adopted in 1951, and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) under its leader Milton Margai came to power after the election in the same year. A government report states that this 'marked a major advance towards self-government'.[721]

But as universal suffrage had not been introduced in Sierra Leone, the SLPP came to power on the basis of only 5 000 voters. Lavalie points out:

> In the 1951 elections for example, 2,438 persons voted in the three single-member constituencies given to Freetown in that year, and a further 869 were registered as entitled to do so out of a population of about 70,000. In the Protectorate elections were quite new and decisions were generally left to a small circle of elders 'hanging heads'.[722]

---

[718] 'Annual Report on the Sierra Leone Protectorate for the Year 1948', Freetown, Sierra Leone.

[719] Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State.*

[720] Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-1967.*

[721] *Ibid*., 32.

[722] Information Services Agency of the British Government Reference Division, 'The Road to Self Government: Consitutional Development in the British Colonial Territories'.

Of the fourteen candidates who were elected, eight were paramount chiefs. The others included Milton Margai, the leader of the SLPP, who came from a ruling family of the lower Banta chiefdom, which had been in power since 1896. His brother George was paramount chief at the time.[723]

Others included Margai's brother, Albert Margai, who would take over the government after Milton's untimely death in 1964, and Sianka Stevens, who eventually formed the breakaway African People's Congress (APC). He dissolved the constitution and turned Sierra Leone into a one-party state in 1978.[724]

By 1953 the new members of the legislative council had been granted certain limited rights to make policy decisions. However, important departments such as finance, defence, and foreign affairs remained firmly under British control until two years before independence. In 1958, the attorney general – an expatriate position – and his powers over the judiciary, was taken over by Margai. The position of minister of justice was only occupied by a Sierra Leonean in 1961. From 1959–60, the ministries of finance, foreign affairs and defence all reverted to Freetown.[725] The chiefs remained central to the political importance of the SLPP:

> Up to the time of his death on April 28, 1964, Milton Margai continued to conciliate the leaders within the SLPP and the opposition parties, while allowing the chiefs to

[723] Lavalie, 'The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone, 11.

[724] Daron Acemoglu et al., 'Indirect Rule and State Weakness in Africa: Sierra Leone in Comparative Perspective', in *NBER Africa Project* (2013): 1–32..

[725] David Harris, *Sierra Leone: A Political History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

> coerce opposition supporters at the local level. He made no attempt to develop mass support for the SLPP, but continued to rely on the chiefs and other 'big men'.[726]

Control of the Sierra Leone polity was facilitated by the continued strength of the chiefs. As long as the chiefs retained their hold over their people, their legitimacy helped to legitimatise a central government associated with them.[727]

This was partially because most of the educated elite from the protectorate had close familial relationships with traditional leadership. As Cartwright points out, 'their high traditional status was matched by their high status in the 'modern' sector of society'.[728]

The reason why the educated elite and the protectorate elite were so interlinked was shaped by the fact that educational opportunities for commoner protectorate children were limited by the 'deliberate British policy of training the [existing] ruling class for new responsibilities'.[729]

The fact that the SLPP was deeply entwined with the old leadership also had consequences for their mechanisms of recruitment. Instead of creating a mass base, they recruited 'big men' in the protectorate as their representatives in the rural areas.[730]

---

[726] Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, 167.

[727] Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-1967,* 267.

[728] *Ibid*., 260.

[729] *Ibid.*

[730] *Ibid*.

Effectively, this meant that the paramount chiefs would play vital roles in the establishment and maintenance of national political power.

Thus, while the checks and balances on chiefly power were diminishing in the protectorate, the old elite became more and more powerful in central government. The salaries of traditional leaders increased dramatically. The 'basic stipend' paid to paramount chiefs in 1949 was £23 070, but by 1956 this had increased to £63 664.[731]

However, the increasing power of the old traditional elites did not go unchallenged. Although several chiefs had been deposed at the behest of their people in the 1930s and 1940s, the instances of violent opposition seem to have increased in the 1950s, and:

> In 1955, the relatively tranquil process of decolonization in Sierra Leone was rudely interrupted by two violent events – a workers' strike in Freetown and a peasant insurrection in the northern region. While the workers' strike had erupted over pay and conditions of service in Freetown, the peasant insurrection was directed against the excessive colonial taxation and the pecuniary demands of paramount chiefs in Port Loko, Kambia, Tonko Limba and Bombali districts.[732]

THE YOUNG MEN ARE CONSCIOUS

However, the 1955 revolt was not the only instance of people violently expressing their grievances against the corruption of the chiefs. In the 1950s-60s there were many instances of skirmishes between young men and the colonial government. There were two that occurred in the chiefdom of Boama in 1948 against chiefly malpractice, when

---

[731] 'Report on the Administration of the Provinces for the Year 1948', Freetown, Sierra Leone.

[732] Ismail O.D. Rashid, 'Decolonization and Popular Contestation in Sierra Leone: The Peasant War of 1955–1956', *Afrika Zamani* 17 (2009): 115–44, 116.

a group of young men tried to violently depose the chief. However, the two major instances of major unrest in the protectorate were in Kailaun and the Lauwa chiefdom (discussed in Chapter 3).

In 1949 a commission of enquiry was launched into the conduct of the malpractices and abuses of power by Paramount Chief S.K. Banya. Anger amongst the local people began to surface because the enquiry took so long. It was described by an official as, 'long-drawn out and so voluminous that the inquiry lasted for five months'.[733]

The government eventually decided that Chief Banya should be deposed. However, the decision came too late 'to prevent an outbreak of rioting involving about 5,000 people'.[734] The annual report of the protectorate commented that 'the extent and violence of the rioting, which spread from Kailaun to outlying towns and villages in the chiefdom with casualties and considerable damage to property, made it necessary to summon police help from Freetown.[735]

Another moment of unrest in the Luawa chiefdom took place in the late 1950s. The key issue that young men were protesting over was the high cost of bridewealth. A group of 'concerned young men numbering about 400 came to Kailaun in the East of the Country to protest the high cost of bridewealth, [and] they were asked to return

[733] SLNA. C.S.O Conf. 12795. 'Disturbances in Kailaun'.

[734] 'Report on the Sierra Leone Protectorate for the Years 1949 and 1950', Freetown, Sierra Leone.

[735] 'Report on the Sierra Leone Protectorate for the Years 1949 and 1950', Freetown, Sierra Leone.

on the 29 June to put their case to the Chiefdom Committee with the instruction not to come in large numbers. In spite of this about 400 people turned up'.[736]

It seems as if there was going to be a serious clash when a certain member of the crowd refused to let a member of the district commissioner's office through.

> Instead of treating this evidence of hostile intent and calling out additional police to disperse the crowd-action which [would] have changed the whole character of the protest … Mr Bah brought an influential member of the Tribal Authorities to speak to them.[737]

This conciliatory action stopped a tense situation from becoming violent, as the ringleaders apologised, and the protest remained peaceful.

The largest of the uprisings took place, as in 1956, against increasing taxation as well as against the 1954 legislation that shifted from hut tax to poll tax on all men of marriageable age. On 25 November 1956, around 7 000 'peasant protestors' marched to the provincial commissioner to protest against the paramount chief's five-shilling levy placed on people in order to pay for his new house. But after an agreement was made for a second meeting, the government blockaded the town and arrested 73 people. This had a domino effect, and people started protesting abuses by chiefs all over the north. A state of emergency was later put into place in the northern provinces:

> In the course of rather more than two hours, three rioters were killed. The Police suffered six casualties from stones. Its aftermath was even more serious. The police made a concentrated effort to arrest those responsible. Three plain-clothes policemen succeeded in penetrating the gang early in February, but are believed to have been betrayed or discovered, and on the 25th of February they disappeared. In spite of

[736] EPNA, Code 32 Cons: 01 Box 4 Loc: 004 CL/NA/13. 'Women Damage and Dowry Law, Luawa Chiefdom'.

[737] *Ibid.*

> intensive search operations they were never seen again and it is to be presumed they were murdered.[738]

By the end of the rebellion in February 1956, 1 437 people were arrested for their part in the disturbances. Of the prisoners, '631 were arrested for arson, six for possessing weapons, 146 for malicious damage, 123 for unlawful assembly, 71 for larceny, and 230 for other offences'.[739]

There is vast literature on the cause of African 'peasant' uprisings in the 1950s, which cannot be discussed in detail in this context. My focus is rather on the generational and gendered forms of conflict that took place during this period.[740] Part of what is significant from that perspective, is that key participants were discontented young men who had been marginalised from the formal economy.[741]

Of particular importance was the return of soldiers from the war who were largely excluded from national level politics. However, they played an important role in local politics, and 'were in most cases avowedly hostile to traditional authority, resisting demands of the chiefs for forced labour and extra-tax'.[742]

---

[738] 'Report on the Sierra Leone Protectorate for the Years 1949 and 1950', Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1956.

[739] *Ibid.*

[740] For an historiographical account of peasant uprising, see Rashid, 'Decolonization and Popular Contestation'.

[741] Paul Richards, 'To Fight or to Farm? Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)', *African Affairs* 104, no. 417 (2005): 571–90.

[742] Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 54.

In the 1950 Kailaun disturbances, the protests against Chief Kai Tungi were predominantly led by ex-servicemen. Kai Tungi, realising the danger, suggested in the protectorate assembly that,

> [b]ecause of the destitute conditions in which many of the ex-Burma boys find themselves today owing to lack of employment since their demobilization, and because of their troubles and agitations in Chiefdoms, I move that this Assembly consider the advisability of organising such ex-soldiers into a labour battalion.[743]

But his suggestions were ignored and never debated in the legislative council. Consequently, after two years of unrest by the ex-soldiers, he was deposed.

Many people who had found paid work in Freetown during the war were forced to return to the protectorate afterwards. Increased levels of education in a context of high levels of unemployment also added to growing levels of discontent. A district commissioner illustrated how young men were leaving the rural areas and going to the cities. He commented that:

> the increasing number of 'dead-end kids' – boys who had just left school and have neither the education for clerical jobs nor the desire to remain on the land. To them the bright lights of Bo, Makeni and Port Loko were a dangerous attraction.[744]

District commissioners also noted the issue of the high cost of bridewealth. The commissioner of the Northern Provinces observed with some sarcasm that:

> The District Commissioner Kabala, also reported that the high dowry being demanded by Yalunka fathers was driving young men out of the district. Some of them

[743] Lavalie, 'The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone'.

[744] SLNA, 'Provincial and District Annual Reports, South Easter Provinces, 12 April 1947'.

> presumably drifted into the urban areas, where love hovered with less confined wings.[745]

Women palavers, which have been a common theme in this thesis, remained a mechanism of controlling the labour of both young men and women. Wealthy, older men married many women so that they could use them 'as bait to gain access to cheap labour from fellow villagers'.[746] These chiefs would levy huge fines on young men caught having affairs with their wives or daughters. As the young men were often unable to pay these fines, they would have to work off the debt through labour.[747]

In order to stop the men leaving to go work on the mines, women damage cases and high bride prices tried to trap the men into staying. Arthur Crosby, a missionary writing on the evils of polygamy in Sierra Leone, gives the following example:

> Aruna has a wife Jeneba, with whom a young man had been cohabiting for years. This young man arranged to go away to Blama, but on the eve of his departure was taken to court on a charge of adultery with Jeneba. As he had nothing wherewith to pay, he had to stay where he was. In other words he had become a serf.[748]

Although this pattern had played a role in Sierra Leone throughout history, as shown in the thesis, it was becoming a growing cause for concern by the 1940s and

---

[745] *Ibid.*

[746] Lavalie, 'The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone.

[747] Mokuwa et al., 'Peasant Grievance and Insurgency in Sierra Leone', 361.

[748] Kenneth H. Crosby, 'Polygamy in Mende Country', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 10, no. 3 (1937): 249–64, 253.

1950s. Throughout the period leading up to 1959, there had been complaints about the high costs of the bride price. In 1948 the district commissioner lamented that,

> [i]n Kono district an attempt was made to get the council assent to some regulation and reduction of dowry paid in the district, but without success. Compared with the other districts these dowries are enormous, and sometimes amount to £70 or more. The anti-social effects of this are obvious from the large number of woman palavers, which arise in Kono.[749]

Chiefs, according to Roy Lewis, were marrying all the women in the area to the extent that '[s]ome had upwards of 300 wives, and it has been known for a chief to express a desire for a woman he encountered in the bush, only to be told he had been married to her for some time'.[750] Chiefs had so many wives that one chief 'made his wives embroider serial numbers on their lappa (clothes) and another put them in regular uniforms'.[751]

This means of identification sounds bit far-fetched. But the fact that chiefs had hundreds of wives and were unable to keep track of them all is mentioned in other ethnographic works of the period. Arthur Crosby, [J.S. Fenton], Max Gorvie, Kenneth Little, and Merran McCulloch all mention the fact that powerful chiefs had a multitude of wives.[752]

---

[749] SLNA, 'Provincial and District Annual Reports South Easter Provinces, 12 April 1947'.

[750] Lewis, *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait*. 69

[751] *Ibid*.

[752] Gorvie, *Old and New in Sierra Leone*; Fenton, *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*; Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone*; Lewis, *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait*; McCulloch, *The Peoples of Sierra Leone Protectorate*.

Kenneth Little argues, 'The departure of wives' may represent quite a serious loss in gross capital'. Their spokesmen pointed out, 'Chiefs do not get wives for nothing'.[753] Lewis also makes the connection between the shift of importance from slaves to wives when he states that, 'the natives who placed much value on human traffic for their wealth – in some parts of the Protectorate wealth nowadays is counted by the number of wives'.[754]'

The document that gives us the key to these court returns is an explanation by the district commissioner to the colonial office trying to understand and regulate women damages. As in many instances of colonial officials grappling with native law, issues arose as to how to define claims relating to different categories of women who were eligible for high payments of women damage, and which were not. They eventually determined that the greater the level of control a husband had over his wife, the higher amount of damages could be claimed.[755]

It was decided that certain women were essentially 'prostitutes' who were used by the chiefs to lure and entrap young men into paying high fines for adulterous relationships. The importance of this approach was explained as follows, its necessity being to:

> a) Protect legitimate marriages, as no man likes his wife to be tampered with and b) Put a stop to abuses much as one person being able to claim repeated dowry amounts

[753] Little, 'The Changing Position of Women', 12.

[754] Gorvie, *Old and New in Sierra Leone,* 51.

[755] Lewis, *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait*.

> … of a women who is his wife in name only and who is nothing other than a prostitute in fact.[756]

They proceed, in the letter below, to explain how these different types of cases should be dealt with and how this should translate into particular levels of compensation. The different levels are spelled out:

> A proper native marriage must be proceeded (protected) and damage of a women who is under her husband's control is a serious matter, on a first case the man may be charged award a maximum 5 pound compensation and in subsequent cases in violating the same women and same lover the court may increase the compensation at its own discretion of the seduction by a wealthy lover or a poor man. In addition to actual sexual intercourse then the fine can be increased to 10 pounds.
>
> ([I]n the case of a woman whose husband has neglected her for 6 months or who is not under her husband's control of 6 months it is not right that a husband should be allowed to claim compensation for this) in first case 10 shillings and in all further cases no compensation rewarded unless it became clear that the women had been taken under control again.[757]

Although the Luawa disturbance, described earlier in the chapter, was relatively small, it sheds light on the tensions over marriage in the late 1950s. The charts below are compiled from the native court returns from three regions in the south and southeast of Sierra Leone. Native court returns are a record of all the civil and criminal cases that came before the native court during a particular year. They are receipts of the case, and the information given is the case number, the litigants, what the case is about, and the verdict of the trial. There were usually over 1 000 cases in a year, but given that the record is incomplete, it is difficult to say exactly what

[756] Code 32 Cons: 01 Box 4 Loc: 004 CL/NA/13. 'Women Damage and Dowry Law, Luawa Chiefdom'.

[757] *Ibid.*

percentage of cases are women damage or bride price related. The charts above show a breakdown of all the cases relating to women.

We have relatively incomplete records, as they only cover the years 1960–62, and only for three districts. The most complete set of records we have is for the Barri chiefdom in Pujehun, where there are over 1 000 receipts, of which 468 are women damage cases. In the Moyamba districts there were 267 cases, and in Kono 137 cases.[758]

The most telling evidence that husbands were extracting revenue from their wives' lovers is the number of cases, especially in Pujehun, where one man had damage cases for several of his wives against several different men. For example, in the April cases for Soro Gbena, Mohamed Sheriff is in court with cases against seven different men for women damage of between £1 and £3. All the men were found guilty.[759]

There are also cases where a plaintiff charged a male defendant and more rarely, the wife, with several different crimes to make the case more lucrative. For example, Moses Frickinger charged one Abu Koroma with repeated women damage for £50, and his wife, Madam Massah, with deserting her home and husband for £40. Although Moses won the case, the amount was reduced to £5 and £6 respectively.[760]

---

[758]. SLNA, Sierra Leone Government. C.C.P. Office-Secret. 'Native Court Returns, Pujehun, Moyamba and Kono'.

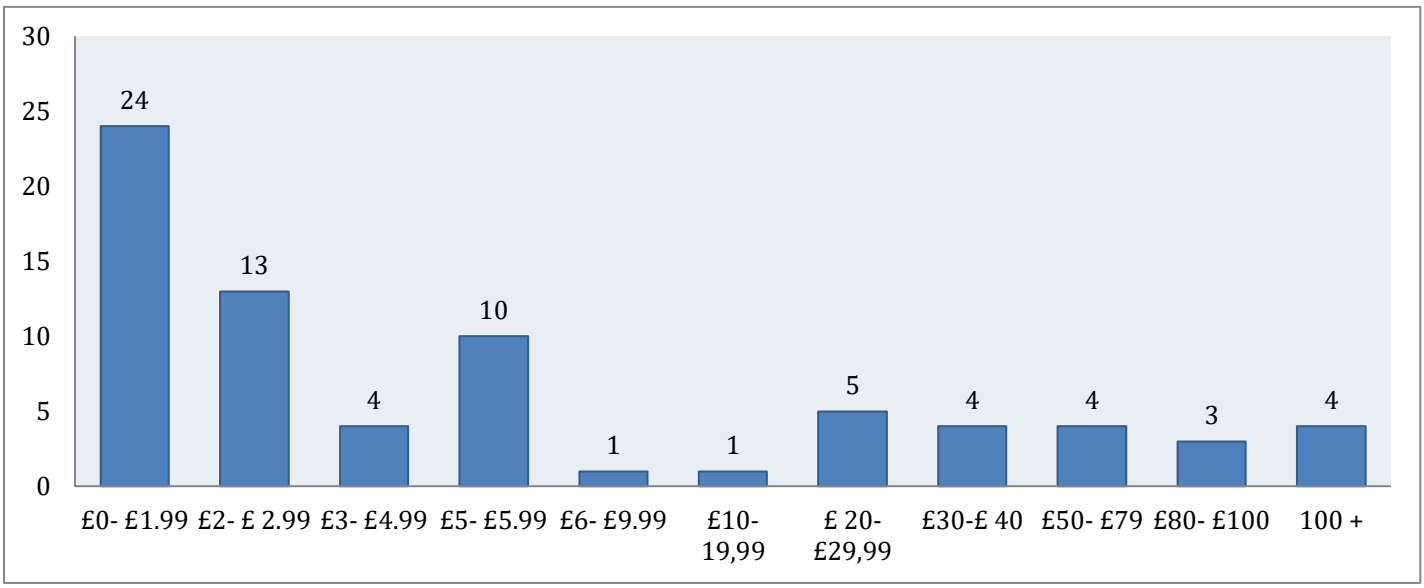
[759] SLNA, Sierra Leone Government. C.C.P. Office-Secret. 'Native Court Returns, Pujehun'.

[760] SLNA, Sierra Leone Government. C.C.P Office-Secret. 'Native Court Returns, Moyamba'.

In some cases women damage was tried in criminal court. In January 1960, the Native Court of Barri found Bockari Koroma guilty of 'seducing married wife Miatta Kanneh of Jojoima and desert[ing] with her to Kondowahun'.[761] Bokari Koroma was found guilty and fined £2.10.

The lower fines would suggest that these were women damage cases rather than divorce cases. In Kono, the evidence suggests that most of the cases were against men having affairs with wives.

FINES GIVEN IN WOMEN DAMAGE CASES – KONO



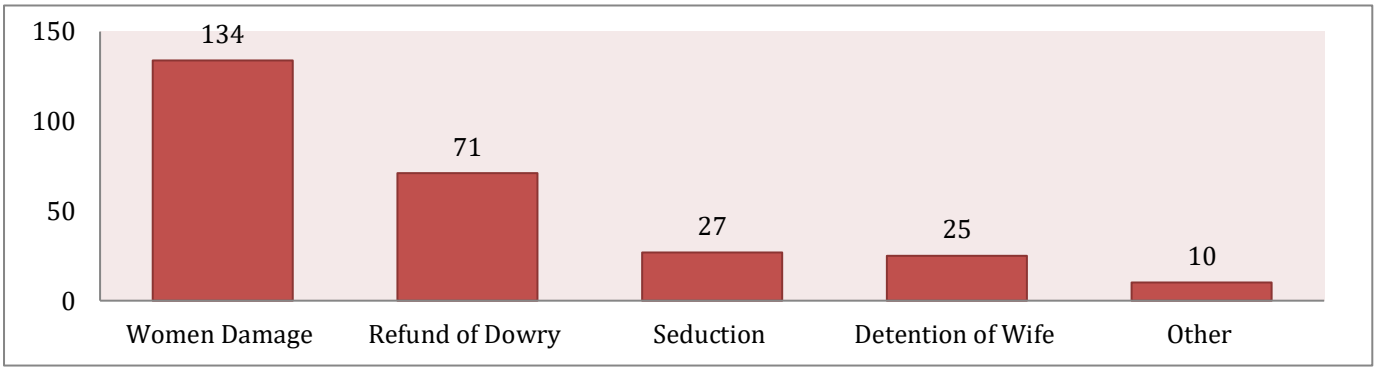
There are also several cases of fathers trying to accumulate as much money as possible through the bride price of their daughters by making three or four men pay a dowry. Women were also not spared from being charged in civil cases. This mainly happened in cases with the same plaintiff and multiple defendants. Women are

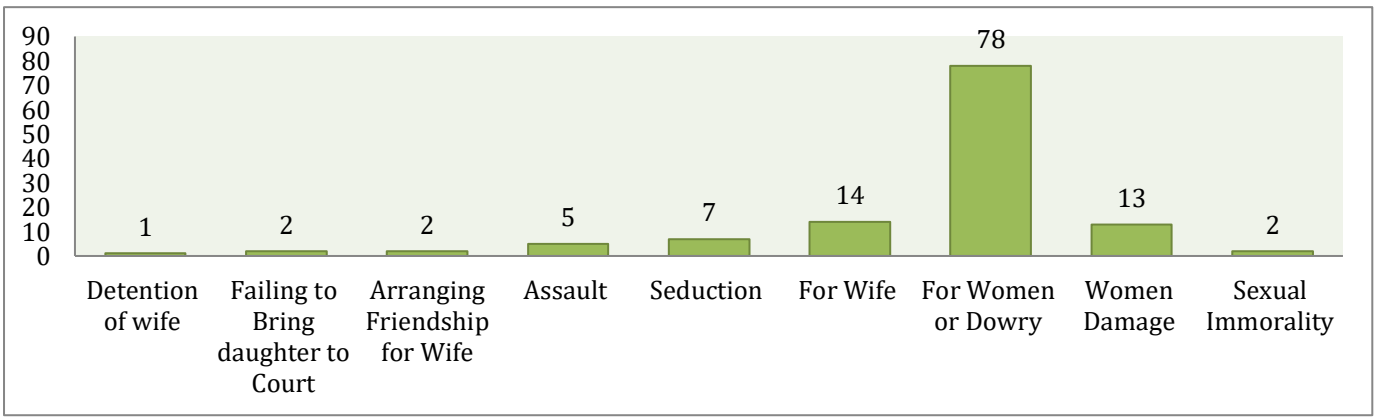
[761] SLNA, Sierra Leone Government. C.C.P Office-Secret. 'Native Court Returns, Pujehun, Moyamba'.

charged with breach of native marriage laws, which usually commanded a fine of 50 shillings, while the lover was charged with women damage, which ranged from 40 shillings to £20.

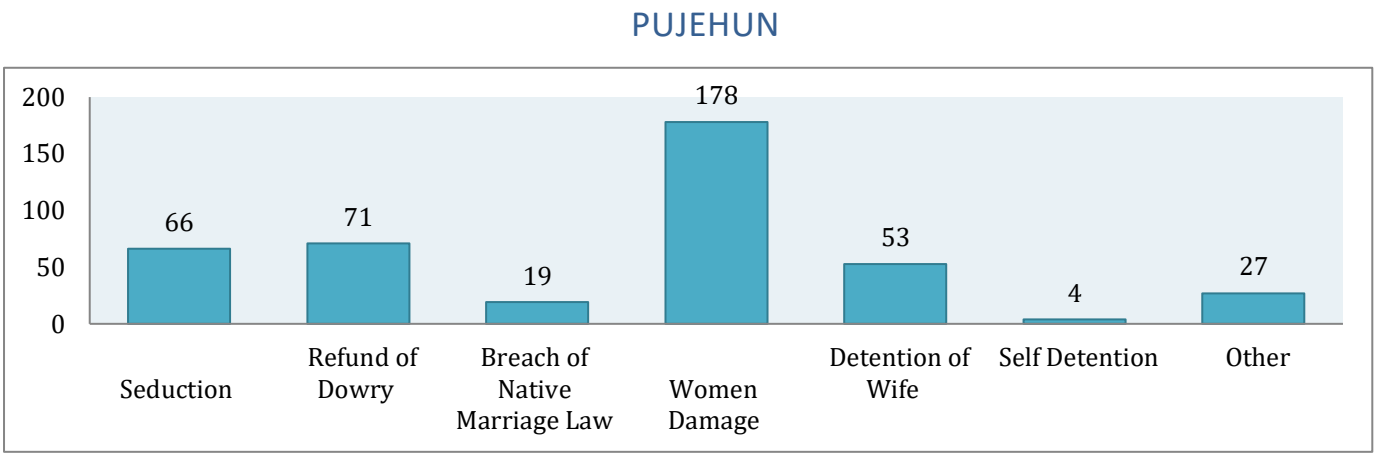
COURT RETURNS MOYAMBA, PUJEHUN, KONO: CASES RELATING TO WOMEN DAMAGE, 1960–62

MOYAMBA





KONO



The return of soldiers and men who had access to increased opportunities, meant that patience for this kind of malpractice by chiefs was wearing thin. The abuses of chiefs was aptly summed up by a commissioner who argued that, '[s]ome chiefdoms are cluttered up with Alamanis, Kaprs and Santigis, who invariably pay the paramount chiefs large sums to secure a title; and having secured it, these men have to recoup themselves at the expense of the peasant'.[762] The consequence, as one official noted, was that:

> The 'youngmen' have become conscious that the 'big men' have been getting too big and they have now protested violently. The awakening of the youngmen – a term which includes all active adult males who are not in a position of some authority – is natural and laudable.[763]

The increasing difficulty for young men to form relationships with women and to marry without becoming victims of patriarchs who were centralising their control

[762] BNA/FCO 141/14339/S.F. 9326/6. 'Chiefdom Tax Disturbance, 1955. Extract from the Minutes of the Executive Council Meeting No. 4. of 1956, Held at Government House on Monday 3rd of February 1956'.

[763] BNA/FCO 141/14339/S.F. 9326/6. 'Chiefdom Tax Disturbance, 1955'. R. de Z. Hall to C.G. Eastwood Esq, CMG, 13 January 1956.

over young women, was profoundly corrosive for the social fabric of the society. It created enduring anger and conflict.

Abu Banguma, giving evidence after having been imprisoned for burning down a house during the 1955 uprising, said: 'This Chiefdom is a very hard chiefdom and there are many slaves here today'.[764] The situation seemed no different in the south where, in an anonymous letter, a person stated,

> it has been said that slavery had been abolished but this kind of taxation has brought slavery in Kaffu Bullom which is being forgotten in this committee about 20 young men who have sold themselves owing to inability of (to pay) money. We are slaves while slavery had been abolished but still slavery is existing here because of the heavy taxation brought by the government.[765]

Paul Richards refers to chiefs marrying many women to control male labour as 'the honey trap element'.[766] However, on closer inspection in the context of the post-war world, this depiction fails to paint a complete picture of the complicated and changing nature of patriarchal control over young men and women. On the surface, it may seem as though women damage cases were symptomatic of the continued existence of the lineage mode of production in which women's sexuality was being weaponised to stop both men and women entering the modernising economy. Levels of control over young men and women remained central to the political economy. But they were not symptomatic of unchanging household dynamics; they were rather the product of tensions within it. Young men and women's expectations shifted, while

---

[764] Esther Mokuwa et al., 'Peasant Grievance and Insurgency in Sierra Leone

[765] SLNA, 'Commission of Enquiry. P/7. Letters Submitted, Port Lokko'.

[766] Esther Mokuwa et al., 'Peasant Grievance and Insurgency in Sierra Leone

patriarchs attempted to shore up power and pursue possibilities for accumulation, in part, through control over people.

In Little's ethnographic account of the changing position of women in the protectorate after the Second World War, he comments on the paradoxical position of women. 'On the one hand, there is obviously no doubt that they are subject to a great deal of male control', but:

> If the apparent situation of social separation and female inferiority were the real one there would be no doubt as to the subservient role of the women. The real facts of the matter however are not such as to justify the idea either that women are merely slaves, or that male superiority is only a sham as to the subservient relationship.[767]

If one looks more closely at the women damage cases, they also point to a different explanation. Many of the cases were for dowry refunds, which means that the bridewealth was refunded after a divorce case. In a case, for example, in which a man demanded an enormous £477 in women damages, it may have been a divorce rather than a 'damage' case.[768] In another case a father repaid a substantial dowry of £108 for his daughter.[769]

There was also a case in the criminal court of Barri of a father and two brothers being charged with trespassing and assault for going to a neighbouring chiefdom to rescue their daughter and sister from an unhappy marriage.[770]

---

[767] Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone*.

[768] SLNA, Sierra Leone Government. C.C.P. Office-Secret. 'Native Court Returns, Pujehun'.

[769] *Ibid.*

[770]. SLNA, Sierra Leone Government. C.C.P. Office-Secret. 'Native Court Returns, Moyamba'.

Another helpful indicator is how much of the original bridewealth was refunded. In the majority of cases, about half of the dowry was returned. This would suggest that the women had been married for some time before the civil case took place, which means that they had 'worked off' some of the original sum given.

However, there are many cases where the full dowry was refunded, which suggests that the marriage ended very soon after it began. This may suggest that the daughter was unhappy, or that the marriage never took place and that the family refunded a dowry because the girl had refused to go through with the marriage.

There are several cases called 'detention of wife' or 'abduction of wife'. On the surface it seems that a woman was detained against her will. However, in an instance in the records where the term is used, it was to refer to a woman running away from her husband who beat her, to hide at her uncle's.[771] In most of the cases where a description of 'detention of wife' is employed, it seems that the wife was either living with a lover or had gone back to her family.[772]

The number of women damage cases also shows that women were using adultery as a mechanism for creating more independent lives. Many women went to live with 'friends' to escape from a husband. After the Second World War, many women developed friendships with soldiers, and these adulterous relationships also sometimes enabled women to draw on the labour of their lovers to help them with their farms.[773]

---

[771] *Ibid.*

[772] Smart, 'Sierra Leone Family Law'.

[773] SLNA, 'Inquests into Protectorate – Various'.

These cases show that women and young men were not passive, but were also using women damage cases and the courts to challenge the status quo and to struggle against controls that the colonial government and the chiefs sought to enforce on them.

CONCLUSION: MARRIAGE, SLAVERY, AND THE CIVIL WAR

In 1991, the RUF, with backing from Charles Taylor, the President of Liberia, invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia. By 1992 all confidence in the APC government had been lost, and a coup took place led by the 25-year-old army commander, Valentine Strasser, who set up the National Provincial Revolutionary Council (NPRC). In 1996 a second military coup took place, led by his deputy president, Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio. An election was held, which was won by Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP. But in 1997, another coup by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which consisted of former members of the Sierra Leone army with the backing of the RUF, took control of the central government. At this point, military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forced the AFRC junta government out of power, and reinstalled Kabbah in 1998. Increased levels of violence saw the RUF launch an attack called 'Operation No Living Thing' on Freetown, during which 7 000 people were brutally killed. In 2000, a combined operation by the British and United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) forces managed to take control, and the war was finally declared over in 2002.[774]

The civil war in Sierra Leone has been seen as uniquely brutal by a number of commentators. The RUF was described as 'one of the most violent armed groups of

[774] David Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005).

modern times'.[775] Extreme violence was inflicted on civilians, including widespread amputation of hands and limbs, and the use of torture. Graphic images of these practices were widely distributed.

The Economist declared that Sierra Leone was not just going through a civil war: 'It is witnessing the implosion of a state and its people. Children kill their parents, cannibal gangs roam the countryside; chaos rules, barbarism flourishes'.[776] Another distinguishing feature of the conflict was the youth of most of the rebels. Most of the recruited members of the various rebel groups were very young men. The civil war became synonymous with the use of child soldiers, both male and female. Observers found the rage and brutality that these young people meted out to civilians – especially to the older generation – difficult to comprehend and explain. As David Keen observed, the '[c]ivil war [had] seen repeated attempts to humiliate traditional chiefs and local 'big men' by teenage fighters lacking status or adequate employment within their own communities'.[777]

At the end of eleven years of war, 70 000 civilians had died, and 2-6 million people had been displaced. A report commissioned by UNAMSIL and the Physicians for Human Rights concluded that between '215,000–257,000 women and girls in

---

[775] Kieran Mitton, *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in the Sierra Leone Civil War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

[776] *The Economist*, 'The Darkest Corner of Africa', 7 January 1999.

[777] Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 294.

Sierra Leone … may have been affected by sexual violence'.[778] Thousands of girls and women were abducted during the war:

> No one knows exactly how many, and all numbers must be regarded as estimates. It is believed that there could have been from ten thousand to twenty thousand women in the RUF. Not all abducted girls were fighters, however; many more were so-called bush wives, through forced marriage, domestic workers or slaves, and most were never counted or registered in any post war program.[779]

Lack of popular support for the rebel movement, the role of diamonds, and the motives of external actors like Charles Taylor and ECOMOG and Executive Outcomes, have led to a rich debate about the causes of the civil war. There are three strands of scholars that have tried to grapple with how and why the civil war happened. The first stresses state failure. The second maintains that the war was primarily fought for economic reasons. The third argues that both of these bodies of literature do not deal with the deep socio-structural issues in Sierra Leone prior to the war.

The debate around collapse was initiated by Robert Kaplan, who describes Sierra Leone as,

> a place where the Western Enlightenment has not penetrated and where there has always been mass poverty, people find liberation in violence ... Physical aggression is part of being human. Only when people attain a certain economic, educational, and cultural standard is this trait tranquillized.[780]

---

[778] Physicians for Human Rights/UNAMSIL, *War-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-Based Assessment*, *Human Rights*, 2002.

[779] Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers*, 243.

[780] Robert Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet', *The Atlantic*, 1994.

Paul Richards describes Kaplan's argument (and others like it) as the 'New Barbarism Thesis'. This body of literature explains the conflicts that emerged in the 1990s as products 'of social breakdown caused by population pressure and environmental collapse'.[781] Or, as Paul Richards puts it, 'Mathus-with-guns'.[782]

Kaplan's argument draws on a long tradition of racist writing on Africa, going back to the Mau Mau and beyond, arguing that African societies could not cope with change and so reverted to barbarism. Although Kaplan's views are clearly incorrect, it did provide a springboard for research that viewed the civil war as a product of collapse.

The idea of collapse and state failure as causes of the civil war, was not limited to Kaplan. Many analysts in the 1990s wished to know why 'political order gave way to political conflict in late-century Africa'.[783] Several scholars argued that the end of the cold war, and intensified processes of democratisation and globalisation, led to the subsequent state collapse in countries in the developing world – including Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the old Yugoslavia, and Mozambique – to name a few.[784]

---

[781] Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (London: The International African Institute with James Currey, 1996).

[782] *Ibid*.

[783] Robert M. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[784] Mary Kaldor, 'In Defence of New Wars', *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–16.

A linked argument posits that the civil war was not a political war but the outcome of the 'resource curse'.[785] It suggested that any political objective in the conflict was secondary to the aim of securing control over the diamond industry. In this view, 'New Wars', like the conflict in Sierra Leone, were fought for economic reasons and not political ones.[786]

The third body of work argues that both the work on state collapse and the resource curse failed to understand the deeper causes of the civil war. It suggests that generational tensions rooted in an enduring lineage mode of production, crystallised in the period leading up to the war, and that young men developed a form of class identity and consciousness.

The arrival of the RUF from Liberia turned unmarried and disenfranchised young men into politicised peasant insurgents wanting to overthrow the chiefs who controlled the means of production and reproduction.[787] Carola Lentz describes this argument as follows:

> As a result when the young men's exit options in the urban economy and the diamond fields came under pressure the local exploitation by chiefs intensified and the youths protest took on the form anger at class oppression rather than ethnic hatred.[788]

---

[785] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War', Policy Research Working Paper, no. 2355 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000).

[786] *Ibid.*

[787] Mokuwa et al., 'Peasant Grievances and Insugency in Sierra Leone; Krijn Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone* (New York: Cambridge University Press, and London: International African Institute, 2011).

[788] Carola Lentz, *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 213.

Central to the argument was the fact that young men who were not able to command the resources to marry, contributed to the creation of a deep generational cleavage and resentment, which fuelled the civil war and the violence that went with it. Richards and Jean-Pierre Chauveau argue that ten percent of soldiers during the conflict joined the war to find a wife: 'Denied state resources, rural chiefs intensified control over marriage and reproduction to a point where many young people felt they no longer had any stake in society. Respect for hierarchical authority failed, and rural class conflict erupted'.[789] Richards argues:

> Agrarian tensions, upon which the Mano River conflicts fed, reflect institutionalised abuses deeply rooted in an era of domestic slavery. These abuses took on new life under indirect rule. Failure to introduce agrarian reforms in the post-colony undermined interclass and intergeneration cohesion in the countryside to a point where agents of rebellion found much pliant material with which to work up insurgency.[790]

The analysis offered by Richards et al. provides important insights into the socio-structural cleavages and tensions in Sierra Leone prior to the outbreak of war, and provided an important launch pad for this thesis. But such an approach also has significant weaknesses and silences that my work sets out to transcend. Firstly, the argument relies on a structuralist Marxist analysis of 'lineage mode of production' to explain the tensions around generational dynamics and gender. The focus on cleavage and crisis obscures a much longer process of struggle, and focuses on men's

---

[789] Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Paul Richards, 'West African Insurgencies in Comparative Perspective: Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone Compared', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8, no. 4 (2008): 515–52.

[790] Richards, 'To Fight or to Farm?', 573.

contestation over control of women at the expense of women's struggles for agency in the context of patriarchy.

Their approach, in the main, operates on an enduring 'ethnographic present' that prevails from the era of domestic slavery (no dates given) 'until the outbreak of the war'. By researching a longer time period and taking a more dynamic approach, I have been able to show that, while relationships around gender, generation and slavery were deeply rooted, they have also been reshaped by ongoing struggles moulded by changing political and economic contexts. As noted above, another significant omission is the absence of discussion about women's roles within key contestations. Women are largely portrayed as pawns used by the patriarchy to control the labour of young men, and not as sentient historical actors with agency in their own right. The significance of the changing nature of slavery in the context of gender, generational and household dynamics, has also been glossed over in much of the analyses.

But the actions and choices of relatively powerless slaves, youths, and women did have important impacts on trajectories of social transformation, and patron-client relationships were more dynamic than some analysts have imagined.

SUMMATION

My thesis does not set out to recast the explanation of the civil war. It takes one strand of the literature dealing with gender, generation, and slavery, and shows how our understanding of these issues in the twentieth century can be deepened and made more dynamic. By adopting for this approach, I contend that a much fuller understanding of key aspects of the war will be achieved.

Drawing on research on the changing historical context, and on more than a century of ethnographic material, I suggest that there are three foundational issues for the study of gender, generation, and slavery in Sierra Leone over time. Historically, low population levels forged societies with high levels of population mobility in which political power rested on patron-client relations and networks.

Power was articulated through the control of people, with the emphasis on accumulating women as both wives and slaves for productive and reproductive purposes. Slavery became a key 'institution for private and revenue producing wealth'.[791] Patriarchal power was in large part predicated on increasing the number of female dependants and slaves.

Political networks based on patron-client relationships, often created and cemented by marriage, were in many instances fundamental to the operation and accumulation of power. The position of wives and slave wives was also vital to the creation of alliances between families and dynasties.

The household is a particularly useful vantage point from which to examine processes of change. Most importantly, it provides a unit of study that can provide insights into the complicated and changing relationships between gender, marriage and slavery.

Analysing historical change in the household in this way shows that slavery never existed in isolation from other forms of dependant relationships. Different forms of subordinate relationships merged together to form the position of an

[791] Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500–1800*, 16.

individual within a household. This perspective is particularly important in relation to the position of slave wives within the household.

A more historical analysis suggests that reifying kinship as the key underlying structure of society can be misleading, since the language of kinship was often used to mask social cleavages. For example, fundamental to the distribution and nature of power was the role played by clients and slaves who were not kin, though may over time have been incorporated into kinship systems.

After the opening up of the Atlantic slave trade, these key social institutions were not destroyed, but shifted and adapted to the new context. The mechanisms used to acquire dependants became more violent and, in the nineteenth century, raiding for women and children became more central to statecraft. Initially, while male slaves were sold into the Atlantic trade, female slaves were kept on the continent and retained by leaders as wives or concubines, or given to 'loyal soldiers and subjects'. After the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, the shift to legitimate commerce did little to undermine the reliance that these societies placed on slave labour. But the importance of the control of male labour increased to meet the increased demand for production and export.

The nineteenth century also saw the abolition of the slave trade and the beginning of long and complicated attempts by the British administration to balance the needs of building a system of colonial rule, with public commitments to enforcing abolition. The colonial project in Sierra Leone began in a context of bold pronouncements about the immediate abolition of slavery. But these grand claims were not matched by action in Sierra Leone. There was rather an implicit acceptance of slavery by the colonial authorities. In some instances this attitude shaded into the

active involvement by some officials, and a tolerance of the substantial ongoing slave trade.

The tolerance of local political structures, both retaining and trading in slaves, was in part shaped by political and economic weakness in Britain. The colonial state's lack of power and resources meant that it had little alternative but to incorporate pre-existing forms of authority to maintain control. But this was not a one-way process, as British resources and power were also drawn on by traditional leaders to bolster their own power in relation to their subjects and rivals.

This balance of co-option from both above and below was far from stable, especially in the early period of colonial rule. Over time the balance of power shifted in favour of the British, but the colonial state was still weak without the resources required to create a state that could exercise systematic control over the whole colony and protectorate. Partially to compensate for, and also to camouflage these weaknesses, resistance and rebellion were often put down with extreme brutality.

However, weakness could not only be dealt with through violence. The Hut Tax War in 1898 illustrated to officials the dangers of overestimating their capacity for intervention and control. Cardew's belief that he could force through the policy of hut tax backfired badly. Chiefs felt that this interventionist form of administration was an attack on their autonomy and authority.

A continued policy of colonialism on the cheap meant that a reality of 'domination without hegemony' prevailed, which fundamentally underpinned the development of indirect rule. This policy required Britain to accommodate and collude with traditional authorities. A compromise with the chiefs also ensured accommodation within the social and ideological matrix that maintained patriarchal control of both women and slaves.

In order to placate the chiefs, domestic slavery remained legal. Indeed, the colonial administration went even further than turning a blind eye. It entrenched and in some cases actively participated in making sure that previous patterns of patriarchal power remained in place.

After the First World War, international pressure meant that Britain's hands-off policy regarding slavery in Sierra Leone was no longer tenable. In the face of a public scandal, the British finally abolished slavery in the colony in 1928. Although the 'legal abolition of slavery' was a major historical moment, it was not as transformative as one might expect. During this period, the implementation of a reformed native administration system, in1937, further entrenched the political power of the protectorate elite over their people. The fact that only the 'legal status of slavery' was abolished without any economic assistance or support for the 'free' slaves, meant that many previously enslaved people were not in a position to leave their masters. Herbert Cox notes in his report on the mass violence in the north in 1955:

> The imbroglio is worsened by the relics of slavery which in its domestic form was abolished only in 1927 when thousands of men, women and children were deprived of 'home' and the means of sustenance; they had freedom but nothing else and many returned to the houses and farms of their former proprietors. These people exchanged legal serfdom for economic serfdom.[792]

This was particularly true for enslaved women, who remained tied to their masters through bonds now articulated as marriage rather than slavery. The focus on

[792] Sir Herbet Cox, 'Report of the Commision of Enquiry into the Disturbances in the Provinces, November 1955–March 1956' (Freetown, 1956), 257.

female labour also became more important, both to replace the labour of the men who were leaving, and through women damage cases which were used as a means to stop men from leaving.

New forces and dynamics of change resulted in processes of modernisation and development being set in motion during and after the Second World War. The strategic location of Freetown meant that, for the first time, Freetown became important to the empire and started to receive higher levels of funding, especially for infrastructural development. But the new emphasis on development was not matched with adequate funding to implement it. Once again the British administration saved on costs by drawing on the existing capacity of the traditional elites, rather than building up an independent administratively capacitated state. The checks and balances on the chiefs were also further eroded, and controlling the movements and marriages of women continued to be central to power, into the post-colonial period. But these continuities should not be mistaken for absence of change.

Colonial power sustained servile relationships, but women – both enslaved and free – were not passive victims but active agents, to the extent that asymmetrical power relationships allowed. Women began to form independent relationships and to abscond with colonial soldiers – a pattern which would remain a threat to patriarchal power up until decolonisation and beyond. To a degree, the arrival of agents of colonial control, such as soldiers and police from the outside, posed a threat to the patriarchal power which colonial policy was committed to maintaining. In this period there is evidence of increased instability and conflict within the household, as women/slaves began to take advantage of shifting socioeconomic conditions.

Archival evidence suggests that the incidences of abduction that so enraged chiefs and elders meant different things at different times, and to different people.

Initially, it seems clear that the idea of abduction was about women being forcibly removed from their homes in times of conflict. However, over time abduction also came to represent female agency in leaving their husbands. On closer examination, many of the chiefs' complaints about the abduction of wives turn out to have been instances of women who had voluntarily left with soldiers. As late as the 1960s, men charged with 'abduction' were often new partners whom women had chosen to live with.

This is not to deny that, in some cases, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were abducted with brutal violence. However, as the twentieth century progressed, the use of the word seemed to shift in meaning, referring mainly to the erosion of control over women.

Consequently, although intersections of marriage and slavery had continued to be reproduced through various social institutions, they never went uncontested or unchallenged, either in 1880 or in 1990.

EPILOGUE: FORCED MARRIAGE OR CONJUGAL SLAVERY?

On 10 March 2004, the new court, specially built for the SCSL, opened its doors and began a trial that lasted for nine years. Thirteen individuals from the Civil Defence Force (CDF), the RUF, the AFRC, plus Charles Taylor (the first head of state to be convicted for war crimes since Nuremberg), were indicted for war crimes. It was during these nine years that international laws began grappling with how to explain and, more importantly, 'define' what had happened to the tens of thousands of women who had been abducted and handed over to soldiers as wives.

In the trial for the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) (2005–2008), the prosecution argued that the abduction of women who were forced to 'marry' soldiers should be viewed as a separate crime to the other gender-based atrocities committed during the war. They argued that 'forced marriage' should be charged in terms of Roman statute, as 'other inhumane acts'. The final judgement read:

> The Prosecution evidence in the present case does not point to even one instance of a woman or girl having had a bogus marriage forced upon her in circumstances which did not amount to sexual slavery … The evidence showed that the relationship of the perpetrators to their 'wives' was one of ownership and involved the exercise of control by the perpetrator over the victim. Similarly, the Trial Chamber is satisfied that the use of the term 'wife' by the perpetrator in reference to the victim is indicative of the intent of the perpetrator to exercise ownership over the victim, and not an intent to assume a marital or quasi-marital status with the victim in the sense of establishing mutual obligations inherent in a husband wife relationship.[793]

At the conclusion of the trial, the judge rejected the suggestion that forced marriage should fall under 'other inhumane acts', and concluded that it should be

[793] Special Court for Sierra Leone, 'The Prosecutor vs Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu (the AFRC Accused), SCSL-04-16-T', 196.

subsumed under the crime of sexual slavery. However, the original judgement was overturned on appeal. The court of appeal decided that, while forced marriage shared 'certain elements of sexual slavery', it did not constitute a predominately sexual crime, and imposition of the term 'marriage' meant that other obligations were involved, such as exclusivity, food preparation, and forced labour.[794]

On 2 March 2009, Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon, and Augustine Gbao, senior military officers of the RUF, were found guilty of the crime of 'forced marriage' under 'other inhumane acts', and 'sentenced to between 25 and 52 years in prison'.[795]

The third judgement under the definition of forced marriage was given in the trial of the previous president of Liberia, Charles Taylor. The trial chamber of the SCSL went back to its initial point of view, and the judges argued that forced marriages were a specific form of sexual slavery, with additional elements. The prosecution countered that these 'forced conjugal associations' (FCAs) were nothing like marriage, as under international law for something to be defined as a marriage there needed to be consent:

> The trial chamber considered that part of the confusion created by the prosecution was its presentation as the conceptualisation of a new crime. In light of the above consideration, the Trial Chamber considered that conjugal slavery is better conceptualised as a distinctive form of the crime of sexual slavery, with [an] additional component described by the appeals chamber. However, the Court is of the view that this additional component, which relates to forced conjugal labour, is simply a

[794] Special Court for Sierra Leone, AFRC Appeal Judgement. SCSL-2004-16-A (n.d.).

[795] James M. Clark, 'Forced Marriage: The Evolution of a New International Criminal Norm', *Aberdeen Student Law Review* 3 (2012): 3–27.

> descriptive component of a distinct form of sexual slavery. It is not a definitional element of a new crime.[796]

Complex legal debates about forced marriage under international law continue.[797] Given the history of the intersections of marriage and slavery in Sierra Leone, it is unsurprising that they would affect legal inquiries into the crimes committed. As I have shown in this thesis, terms like 'abduction', 'wife', 'marriage', and 'slave' are deeply shaped by historical processes. They remain contentious and much debated, and this is expected to continue in the future.

[796] Special Court for Sierra Leone, Trial Chamber Two, 'Prosecutor vs Charles Ghankay Taylor SCSL-03-01-T', 2012.

[797] In the literature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acemoglu, Daron, Isaías N. Chaves, Philip Osafo-Kwaako, and James A. Robinson. 'Indirect Rule and State Weakness in Africa: Sierra Leone in Comparative Perspective'. In *NBER Africa Project*, 1–32, 2013. doi:10.3386/w20092.

Ajayi, J.F. Ade, and E.J. Alagoa. 'Black Africa: The Historians' Perspective'. *Daedalus* 103, no. 2 (1974): 125–34.

Akingbade, Harrsion. 'The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland'. *The Journal of Negro History* 79, no. 3 (1994): 277–96.

Akpan, Monday B. ''Native Administration' and Gola Bandi Resistance in North-Western Liberia 1905–1919'. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 11, no. 3/4 (1983): 142–64.

Ali, Kecia. *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Alldridge, T.J. *A Transformed Colony: Sierra Leone, As it Was and As it Is; It's Progress, Peoples, Natives, Customs and Undeveloped Wealth*. London: Seeley & Co. Limited, 1910.

———. *The Sherbro and its Hinterland*. London and New York: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1901. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

Andah, B.W. 'The Peoples of Upper Guinea (between the Ivory Coast and the Casamance)'. In *General History of Africa*, *Volume III. Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, edited by I. Hrbek and M. El Fasi, 530–58. California: Heinemann and UNESCO, 1988. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

Anderson, Richard P. *Abolition in Sierra Leone. Re-Building Lives and Identities in*

Nineteenth-Century West Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Bah, Alpha. 'The Nineteenth Century Partition of Kissiland and the Contemporary Possibilities for Reunifictaion'. *Liberian Studies Journal* XII, no. 1 (1987): 38–55.

Bates, Robert M. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. doi:10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2.

Bayart, Jean-Francois. 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion'. *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 217–67.

Beard, Mary. *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome*. New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015.

Bélair, Karine. 'Unearthing the Customary Law Foundations of 'Forced Marriages' During Sierra Leone's Civil War: The Possible Impact of International Criminal Law on Customary Marriage and Women's Rights in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone'. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15, no. 3 (2006): 552–607.

Beoku-Betts, Josephine A.. 'Agricultural Development, Household and Gender Differentiation in Rural Sierra Leone: A Study of the Eastern Integrated Agricultural Development Project Area'. PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1990.

———. 'Agricultural Development in Sierra Leone: Implications for Rural Women in the Aftermath of the Women's Decade'. *Africa Today* 37, no. 1 (1990). https://search.proquest.com/docview/197472268/E71277FB0E754101PQ/1?accountid=14888.

Berman, Bruce, and John Lonsdale. *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*. Oxford: James Currey, 1992.

Bernault, Florence. 'Suitcases and the Poetics of Oddities : Writing History from

Disorderly Archives'. *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 269–77. doi:10.1017/hia.2015.5.

Berry, Sara. 'Hegemony on a Shoestring: Indirect Rule and Acsess to Agricultural Land'. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62, no. 3 (1992): 327–55.

Bledsoe, Caroline. 'Transformations in Sub-Saharan African Marriage and Fertilty' 510 (2018): 115–25.

Bledsoe, Caroline H. *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society*. Stanford: Stanford Univeristy Press, 1980.

Bozzoli, Belinda. 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1983): 139–71. doi:10.1080/03057078308708055.

Braithwaite-Wallis, C. 'In the Court of the Native Chiefs in Mendiland'. *Journal of the Royal African Society* 4, no. 16 (1905): 397–409.

Brooks, George E. 'Ecological Perspectives on Mande Population Movements, Commercial Networks, and Settlement Patterns from the Atlantic Wet Phase (Ca. 5500–2500 B.C.) to the Present'. *History in Africa* 16 (1989): 23–40.

Brooks, James F. *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Brown, Heather A. *Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012.

Brown, Vincent. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008. doi:10.1353/jer.0.0078.

Burchill, Richard. 'Stories of Oppression and Empowerment'. In *Slavery, Migration and Contemporary Bondage in Africa*, edited by Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran, 251–76. London: Africa World Press, 2013.

Burns, Kathryn. *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

Burrill, Emily S. *States of Marriage: Gender, Justice, and Rights in Colonial Mali*. Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015.

Burrill, Emily S., and Richard L. Roberts. 'Domestic Violence, Colonial Courts, and the End of Slavery in French Soudan, 1905–12'. In *Domestic Violence and the Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, edited by Emily S. Burrill, Richard L. Roberts, and Elizabeth Thornberry, 33–53. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014.

Carpenter, Nathan. 'Ransom as Political Strategy: Captivity beyond Commercial Transaction on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries'. *Journal of West African History* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1–18.

Carr, Edward H. *What Is History?* New York: Vintage, 1961.

Cartwright, John R. *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947–1967*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970.

Chauveau, Jean-Pierre, and Paul Richards. 'West African Insurgencies in Comparative Perspective: Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone Compared'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8, no. 4 (2008): 515–52. doi:10.1111/j.1471-0366.2008.00179.x.

Clarence-Smith, W.G. 'For Braudel: A Note on the 'Ecole Des Annales' and the Historiography of Africa'. *History in Africa* 4 (1977): 275–81.

Clark, James M. 'Forced Marriage: The Evolution of a New International Criminal Norm'. *Aberdeen Student Law Review* 3 (2012): 3–27.

Clarke, Kamari M. *Fictions of Justice: The International Criminal Court and Challenges of Legal Pluralism in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. doi:10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2.

Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 'Greed and Grievance'. Policy Research Working Paper, no. 2355. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000. www.worldbank.org/research/conflict.

Condos, Mark. *The Insecurity State: Punjab and the Making of Colonial Power in British India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Coontz, Stephanie. *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage*. London: Viking Penguin, 2005.

Cooper, Barbara M. 'Women and Gender'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, edited by John Parker and Richard Reid. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

———. 'Women's Worth and Wedding Gift Exchange in Maradi, Niger, 1907–1989'. *Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 121–40.

Cooper, Frederick. *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

———. *From Slaves to Squatters. Plantation Labour and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980.

———. 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies'. *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 01 (1979): 103–25. doi:10.1017/S0021853700016741.

Cooper, Frederick, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott. 'Conditions Analogous to Slavery: Imperialism and Free Labour Ideology in Africa'. In *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*, 107–50. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

———. 'Introduction'. In *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*, 1–32. Chapel Hill: University of

North Carolina Press, 2000.

Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. ‘Research on an African Mode of Production’. In *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, edited by David Seddon, 261–88. London: Frank Cass and Co. Limited, 1978.

———. *African Women: A Modern History*. Translated by Beth Gillan Raps. Oxford: Westview Press, 1997.

Coulter, Chris. *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women’s Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*. London: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Cox, Sir Herbert. ‘Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Disturbances in the Provinces, November 1955–March 1956’. Freetown, 1956.

Crooks, John J. *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone: Western Africa*. London: Frank Class and Co. Limited, 1903.

Crosby, K.H. ‘Polygamy in Mende Country’. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 10, no. 3 (1937): 249–64.

Crowder, Michael. *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*. 3rd ed. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1973.

Darwin, John. ‘Globalism and Imperialism: The Global Context of British Power, 1830–1960’. In *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, edited by Shigeru Akita, 43–65. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

———. *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. doi:10.1192/bjp.112.483.211-a.

Davidson, Julia O'Connell. ‘New Slavery, Old Binaries: Human Trafficking and the Borders of 'Freedom'’. *Global Networks* 10, no. 2 (2010): 244–61.

Day, Lynda R. *Gender and Power in Sierra Leone: Women Chiefs of the Last Two*

Centuries. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

———. ‘Nyarroh of Bandasuma , 1885–1914: A Re-Interpretation of Female Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone’. *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 3 (2007): 415–37.

DeCorse, Christopher R. ‘Fortified Towns of the Koinadugu Plateau: Northern Sierra Leone in the Pre-Atlantic and Atlantic Worlds’. In *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by J. Cameron Monroe and Akinwumi Ogundiran. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Delius, Peter. *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, The Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Transvaal.* Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1983.

Diggins, Jennifer. *Coastal Sierra Leone: Materiality and the Unseen in Maritime West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Dorjahn, V.R., and Christopher Fyfe. ‘Landlord and Stranger: Change in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone’. *The Journal of African History* 3, no. 3 (1962): 391–97. doi:10.1017/S0021853700003315.

Enria, Luisa. *The Politics of Work in a Post-Conflict State: Youth, Labour and Violence in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey, 2018. doi:10.1017/9781787442924.003.

Everill, Bronwen. *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia*. Houndmills, Bassingstoke, Hamphire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Fanthorpe, Richard. ‘Neither Citizen nor Subject? 'Lumpen' Agency and the Legacy of Native Administration in Sierra Leone’. *African Affairs* 100, no. 400 (2001): 363–86. doi:10.1093/afraf/100.400.363.

Fenton, J.S. *Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone*. Freetown: Government Printer, 1948.

Ferme, Mariane C. *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.

———. *Out of War: Violence, Trauma, and the Political Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019. doi:10.1525/california/9780520294370.001.0001.

———. 'Consent, Custom, and the Law in Debates around Forced Marriage at the Special Court for Sierra Leone'. In *Marriage by Force: Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa*, edited by Annie Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance, and Richard L. Roberts, 225–40. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth, and Eugene D. Genovese. 'The Political Crisis of Social History: A Marxian Perspective'. *Journal of Social History* 10, no. 2, 10th Anniversary Issue: Social History Today and Tomorrow (1976): 205–20.

Frankema, Ewout. 'Colonial Taxation and Government Spending in British Africa, 1880–1940: Maximizing Revenue or Minimizing Effort?' *Explorations in Economic History* 48, no. 1 (2011): 136–49. doi:10.1016/j.eeh.2010.10.002.

Frost, Diana. *From Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Econamy in Sierra Leone*. Suffolk: James Currey, 2012.

Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence and the Archive*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Fyfe, Christopher. *A History of Sierra Leone*. Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1962.

Fyle, C. Magbaily. 'Almamy Suluku of Sierra Leone c. 1820–1906: The Dynamics of Political Leadership in Pre-Colonial Sierra Leone'. London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1979.

Gardner, Leigh A. *Taxing Colonial Africa: The Political Economy of British*

Imperialism. Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2012.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordon, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1976.

Getz, Trevor R. *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Towards Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004.

Glymph, Thavolia. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Godelier, Maurice. 'The Object and Method of Economic Anthropology'. In *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, edited by David Seddon, 49–126. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978.

Goody, Jack. *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa*. Tiptee, Essex: The Anchor Press Limited, 1971.

Gorvie, Max. *Old and New in Sierra Leone*. Africa's Own Library, Volume 3, no. 9. London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1945.

Grace, John. *Domestic Slavery in West Africa: With Particular Reference to the Sierra Leone Protectorate 1896–1927*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

Grant, Kevin. *A Civilized Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884–1926*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005.

———. 'Human Rights and Sovereign Abolitions of Slavery, c. 1885–1956'. In *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950*, edited by Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann, 80–102. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Green, Toby. *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–*

1589. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Hailey, Lord. *Native Administration in the British African Territories : Part IV: A General Survey of Systems of Native Administration*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951.

Hargrave, Carrie G. *African Primitive Life: As I Saw It in Sierra Leone, British West Africa*. Wilmington, NC: Wilmington Printing Company, 1944.

Hargreaves, J.D. 'The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate and the Insurrection of 1898'. *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, no. 1 (1956): 56–80.

Harneit-Sievers, Axel. *Constructions of Belonging: Igbo Communities and the Nigerian State in the Twentieth Century*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006.

Harris, David. *Sierra Leone: A Political History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Hartmann, Heidi I. 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union'. *Capital & Class* 3, no. 2 (1979): 1–33.

Hatch, John. *A History of Postwar Africa*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1965.

Hawthorne, Walter. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformation along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400–1900*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

Haywood, Captain A.H.W. *Through Timbuctu and Across the Great Sahara: An Account of an Adventurous Journey of Exploration from Sierra Leone to the Source of the Niger, Following its Course to the Bend at Gao and Thence Across the Great Sahara to Algiers*. London: Seeley Service & Co. Limited, 1912.

Heartfield, James. *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1838–1956: A History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2017.

Herbst, Jeffrey. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and*

Control. Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press, 2000.

Hollins, N.C. 'A Short HIstory of the Luawa Chiefdom'. *Sierra Leone Studies* XIV (1929): 10–27.

Holton, Robert. 'Max Weber and the Interpretative Tradition'. In *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, edited by Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin, 27–38. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003.

Howard, Allen M. 'Freetown and World War II: Strategic Militarization, Accommodation, and Resistance'. In *Africa and World War II*, edited by Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, Timothy H. Parsons, and Ahmad A. Sikainga, 183–99. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

———. 'Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone'. *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 1 (2006): 23–49.

———. 'Re-Marking on the Past: Spatial Structures and Dynamics in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain: 1860–1920'. In *The Spatial Factor in African History: The Relationship of the Social, Material and Perceptual*, edited by Allen M. Howard and Richard M. Shain, 291–349. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Howard, Allen M., and David E. Skinner. 'Network Building and Political Power in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1800–65'. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 54, no. 2 (1984): 2–28.

Iliffe, John. *Africans: The History of a Continent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Isichei, Elizabeth. *A History of African Societies to 1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Knörr, Jacqueline, and Wilson Trajano Filho. 'Introduction'. In *Powerful Presence of the Past: Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast*, edited by

Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Joas, Hans. *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2013.

Jones, Adam. 'The Kquoja Kingdom: A Forest State in Seventeenth Century West Africa'. *Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde* 29 (1983): 23–43.

Kaifala, Joseph. *Free Slaves, Freetown, and the Sierra Leonean Civil War*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017.

Kaldor, Mary. 'In Defence of New Wars'. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–16.

Kaplan, Robert. 'The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet'. *The Atlantic*, 1994.

Keen, David. *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey, 2005.

Kelly, Duncan. 'Karl Marx and Historical Sociology'. In *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, edited by Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin, 11–26. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003.

Kilson, Martin. *Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Klein, Martin A. *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Kopytoff, Igor. 'The Internal Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture'. In *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, edited by Igor Kopytoff, 4–84. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.

———. ‘The Cultural Context of African Abolition’. In *The End of Slavery in Africa*, edited by Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, 485–503. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

Kup, Peter. *A History of Sierra Leone: 1400–1789*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Lange, Matthew. *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Lentz, Carola. *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Lewis, Roy. *Sierra Leone: A Modern Portrait*. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1954.

Little, K. L. ‘Social Change and Social Class in the Sierra Leone Protectorate’ 54, no. 1 (2017): 10–21.

Little, Kenneth L. ‘The Changing Position of Women in the Sierra Leone Protectorate’. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 18, no. 1 (1948): 1–17.

———. *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition*. New York: Routledge and London: Kegan Paul, 1951.

Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Lovejoy, Paul E., and Jan S. Hogendorn. *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Nothern Nigeria 1897–1936*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Lovejoy, Paul E., and Suzanne Schwarz. ‘Sierra Leone in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’. In *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in*

Sierra Leone, 1–28. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2015.

Lugard, Sir Frederick D. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922.

MacCormack, Carol P (Hoffer). 'Bundu: Political Implications of Female Solidarity in a Secret Society'. In *Being Female: Reproduction, Power and Change*, edited by Dana Raphael, 155–63. The Hague and Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1975.

———. 'Control of Land, Labor, and Capital in Rural Southern Sierra Leone'. In *Women and Work in Africa*, edited by Edna G. Bay, 35–53. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982.

———. 'Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Delears: Sherbro Coast and Hinterland'. In *Women and Slavery in Africa*, edited by Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, 271–94. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997.

———. 'Wono: Institutionalized Dependancy in Sherbro Descent Groups'. In *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, 181–204. London: The Univeristy of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

Marx, Karl. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte'. *Die Revolution*, 1852. doi:10.2307/j.ctt18fs6hn.5.

Massing, Andreas. 'A Segmentary Society between Colonial Frontiers: The Kissi of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, 1892–1913'. *Liberian Studies Journal* 9, no. 1 (1981): 1–13.

McCann, J. C. 'Climate and Causation in African History'. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 2–3 (1999): 261–79. doi:10.2307/220342.

McCulloch, Merran. *The Peoples of Sierra Leone Protectorate (Ethnographic Survey of Africa: Western Africa)*. International African Institute, 1950.

McGowan, Winston. 'The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade Between Sierra

Leone and its Hinterland, 1787–1821'. *The Journal of African History* 31, no. 1 (1990): 25–41.

Meillassoux, Claude. The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold (London: Athlone Press, 1975).

———. 'Kinship Relations and Relations of Production'. In *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, edited by David Seddon, 289–330. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978.

Miers, Suzanne. *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira, 2003.

Miers, Suzanne and Richard Roberts, eds. *The End of Slavery in Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

Mibenge, Chiseche S. *Sex and International Tribunals: The Erasure of Gender from the War Narrative*. Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Migeod, Frederick W.H. *A View of Sierra Leone*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Limited, 1926.

Miller, Pavla. 'Gender and the Patriarchy in Historical Sociology'. In *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, edited by Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin, 337–45. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003.

Misevich, Philip. 'The Mende and Sherbro Diaspora in Nineteenth-Century Southern Sierra Leone'. In *The Rise and Demise of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Atlantic World*, 248–65. University of Rochester Press, 2016.

Mitton, Kieran. *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in the Sierra Leone Civil War*. Oxford and New York:: Oxford University Press, 2015. doi:10.1093/acprof.

Mokuwa, Esther, Maarten Voors, Erwin Bulte, and Paul Richards. 'Peasant Grievance

and Insugency in Sierra Leone: Judicial Serfdom as a Driver of Conflict'. *African Affairs* 110, no. 440 (2011): 339–66.

Morris, H.F. 'The Development of Statutory Marriage Law in Twentieth Century British Colonial Africa'. *Journal of African Law* 23, no. 1 (1979): 37–64.

Mouser, Bruce L. 'Rebellion, Marronage and Jihād: Strategies of Resistance to Slavery on the Sierra Leone Coast, c.1783–1796'. *Journal of African History* 48, no. 1 (2007): 27–44.

———. 'Landlords-Strangers: A Process of Accommodation and Assimilation'. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no. 3 (1975): 425–40.

Murphy, William P. 'Patrimonial Logic of Centrifugal Forces in the Political History of the Upper Guinea Coast'. In *The Powerful Presence of the Past: Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast*, edited by Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho, 27–54. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Murphy, William P., and Caroline H. Bledsoe. 'Kinship and Territory in the History of the Kpelle Chiefdom (Liberia)'. In *African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, edited by Igor Kopytoff. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Northcote, Thomas W. *Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone: Part 1: Law and Custom of the Timne and Other Tribes*. London: Harrison and Sons, 1916.

Nyerges, A. Endre. 'The Ecology of Wealth-in-People: Agriculture, Settlement, and Society on the Perpetual Frontier'. *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 4 (1992): 860–81.

Ojukutu-Macauley, Sylvia. 'Clapping With One: The Search for a Gendered 'Province of Freedom' in the Historiography of Sierra Leone'. In *Paradoxes of History and Memory in Post-Colonial Sierra Leone*, edited by Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley and

Ismail Rashid, 37–58. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013.Orwell, George. *A Collection of Essays*. New York: Mariner Books, 1970.

Osborn, Emily Lynn. *Our New Husbands Are Here: Households, Gender, and Politics in West African State from the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2011.

Osborne, Myles and Kent, Susan K. *Africans and Britons in the Age of Empires , 1660–1980*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Parsons, Timothy H. 'The Unintended Consequences of Bureaucratic 'Modernization' in Post-World War II British Africa'. In *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, edited by Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, 412–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1982. doi:10.2307/485077.

———. *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture.* New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Pearce, R.D. *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938–1948*. London: Frank Cass and Co. Limited, 1982.

Peters, Krijn. *War and the Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone*. New York: Cambridge University Press, and London: International African Institute, 2011.

Phillips, Anne. *The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa*. London: James Currey and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Pitcher, Anne, Mary H. Moran, and Michael Johnson. 'Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa'. *African Studies Review* 52, no. 1 (2009): 125–56.

Rankin, F. Harrison. *The White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone, in 1834.* Two Volumes. London: Richard Bentley, 1836.

Rashid, Ismail O.D. ‘'Do Dady Nor Lef Me Make Dem Carry Me’: Slave Resistance and Emancipation in Sierra Leone, 1894–1928’. *Slavery & Abolition* 19, no. 2 (1998): 208–31. doi:10.1080/01440399808575247.

———. ‘Decolonization and Popular Contestation in Sierra Leone: The Peasant War of 1955–1956.’ *Afroka Zamani* 17 (2009): 115–44.

Reid, Richard J. *Warfare in African History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Richards, Paul. *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*. London: The International African Institute with James Currey, 1996.

———. ‘To Fight or to Farm? Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)’. *African Affairs* 104, no. 417 (2005): 571–90.

Rodet, Marie. ‘Under the Giuse of Guardianship and Marriage: Mobilizing Juvenile and Female Labor in the Aftermath of Slavery in Kayes, French Soudan 1900–1939'. In *Traffickng in Slavery’s Wake: Law and the Experience of Women and Children in Africa*, edited by Richard L. Roberts and Benjamin N. Lawrance. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012.

Rodney, Walter. *History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545–1800*. Oxford : Oxford University Press , 1970.

Sanchez-Eppler, Karen. ‘Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition’. *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988): 28–59.

Schneider, David M. *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984.

Scully, Pamela. *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823–1853* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998.

Scully, Pamela, Sue Peabody, and Diana Paton, eds. *Gender and Slave Emancipation*

in the Atlantic World. London: Duke University Press, 2005.

Scully, Pamela, and Kerry Ward. 'Gender and Coerced Labor'. In *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Vol. 4: AD 1804–AD 2016*, edited by David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, Seymour Drescher, and David Richardson, 562–82. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Seddon, David, ed. *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978.

Sellers, Patricia V. 'Wartime Female Slavery: Enslavement?' *Cornell International Law Journal* 44 (2011): 115–42.

Shadle, Brett L. *'Girl Cases': Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya 1890–1970*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006.

Shaw, Rosalind. *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Siddle, D.J. 'War-Towns in Sierra Leone: A Study in Social Change'. *Journal of the International African Institute* 38, no. 1 (1968): 47–56.

Simon, Kathleen. *Slavery*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930.

Sinha, Manisha. *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. New Haven and London: Yale Univeristy Press, 2016.

Smith, Robert S. *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa*. 2nd edition. London: James Currey, 1989.

Starr, Frederick. *Liberia: Description, History, Problems*. Chicago, 1913.

Stewart, Andrew. 'The Second World War and the 'Quiet Colony of Sierra Leone''. In *An Imperial World at War: Aspects of the British Empire's War Expierence, 1939–1945*, edited by Ashley Jackson, Yasmin Khan, and Gajendra Singh, 2016.

Stoler, Ann L. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common*

Sense. Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press, 2009.

Stone, Linda. *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction*. 4th edition. Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 2010.

Strobel, Margaret. 'Slavery and Reproductive Labor in Mombasa'. In *Women and Slavery in Africa*, edited by Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997.

Thayer, James S. 'Remnants of Slavery on the Guinea Coast', n.d.

Thomas, Lynn M. *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction and the State in Kenya*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.

Thomas, Martin. *Violence and Colonial Order: Police Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Thornton, John K. *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500–1800*. London: UCL Press, 1999.

Toledano, Ehud R. *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.

Turay, E.D.A, and Arthur Abraham. 'The Sierra Leone Army: A Century of History'. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1987.

Vansina, Jan. *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.

Vaughan, Megan. 'Household Units and Historical Process in Southern Malawi'. *Review of African Political Economy* 12, no. 34 (1985): 35–45.

———. 'Which Family? Problems in the Reconstruction of the History of the Family as an Economic and Cultural Unit'. *Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983): 275–83.

Vergette, E. Dudley. *Certain Marriage Customs of Some of the Tribes in the*

Protectorate of Sierra Leone. Freetown: Government Printing Office, Sierra Leone, 1919.

White, Elaine F. 'Creole Women Traders in Sierra Leone: An Economic and Social History, 1792–1945'. PhD diss., Boston University, 1978.

White, Nicholas J. *Decolonisation: The British Experience since 1945*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Whyte, Christine. ''Freedom But Nothing Else': The Legacies of Slavery and Abolition in Post-Slavery Sierra Leone, 1928–1956.' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2015): 231–250..

Wolf, Eric R. *Europe and the People Without History.* 2nd edition. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Wright, Marcia. *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life-Stories from East/Central Africa*. London: James Currey, 1993.

Zilfi, Madeline C. *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design Of Difference*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

ARCHIVES

In the United Kingdom

British National Archives

CO 267 Series

CO 879 - Colonial Office Confidential Print

CO 554- Colonial Office West Africa Correspondence

Co 141- Foreign And Commonwealth Office And Predecessors: Records Of Former Colonial Administrations: Migrated Archives

CO 1018- Lord Hailey

WO- War Office

British Library

Church Mission Society Archives Birmingham

School of Oriental and African Studies Archive

School of Oriental and African Studies Library

In Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone Eastern Provincial Archive Kenema

Sierra Leone National Archive, Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone - -

Government Minute Papers

- District Commissioner Letterbooks
- Ministry of the Interior and Development.
- Colonial Office Confidential
- Native Affairs Papers
- Intel Diaries
- Circuit Court Records
- Criminal Court Records

Sierra Leone Special Court

Bangura, Zainab H., and Christiana T. Solomon. 'Expert Report on the Phenomenon of 'Forced Marriage' in the Context of the Conflcit in Sierra Leoen and, More

Specifically, in the Context of the Trials Against the RUF and AFRC Accused Only (2005)

Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL-2004-16-TL Joint Defence Disclosure of Export Report on Forced Marriage by Dr. Dorte Thorsen (2006).

Special Court for Sierra Leone. AFRC Appeal Judgement. SCSL-2004-16-A (n.d.).

———. SCSL-2004-16-TL Joint Defence Disclosure of Export Report on Forced Marriage by Dr Dorte Thorsen (2006).

———. The Prosecutor vs Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu (the AFRC Accused), SCSL-04-16-T, (n.d.).

Special Court for Sierra Leone Trial, Chamber Two. 'Prosecutor vs Charles Ghankay Taylor SCSL-03-01-T', 2012.

Government Publications and Reports

Chalmers, Sir David P. 'Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner and Correspondence on the Subject of the Insurrection in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1898: Part 2: Documents and Evidence'. Vol. C.9391. London, 1899.

Human Rights Watch. 'We'll Kill You If You Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict', 2003.

House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. 'Correspondence Relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protecorate', 1928.

———. [C.3918] 1884. Sierra Leone. Further correspondence respecting the disturbances in the neighbourhood of British Sherbro, in April and May 1883

———. [C.5740] 1889. Further correspondence relating to disturbances in the native territories adjacent to Sierra Leone. Chalmers,

———. [C.4642] 1886. Sierra Leone. Correspondence respecting disturbances in the native territories adjacent to Sierra Leone.

——. Report of Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in the Provinces (November, 1955 to March, 1956). Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone, 1956.

Information Services Agency of the British Government Reference Division. 'The Road to Self Government: Consitutional Development in the British Colonial Territories'. Great Britian, 1955.

Human Rights Watch. 'We'll Kill You If You Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict', 2003.

Physicians for Human Rights/UNAMSIL. 'War-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-Based Assessment'. Physicians for Human Rights, 2002.

War Office. 'Military Report on Sierra Leone on the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone'. Vol. 1, 1933.

Dissertations and Thessis

Beoku-Betts, Josephine A.. 'Agricultural Development, Household and Gender Differentiation in Rural Sierra Leone: A Study of the Eastern Integrated Agricultural Development Project Area'. PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1990.

Fanthorpe, Richard. 'Settlements and Networks in Birwa Limba Chiefdoms, Northern Sierra Leone'. Univerisity College London, 1994.

Hogg, Trina L. ''Our Country Customs': Diplomacy, Legality, and Violence One the Sierra Leone Frontier 1861–1896'. PhD diss., New York Univeristy, 2013.

Howard, Allen M. 'Big Men, Traders, and Chiefs: Power, Commerce and Spatial Change in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1865–1895'. PhD diss., University of

Wisconsin, 1972.

Joko Smart, Henry M. ‘Sierra Leone Family Law’. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1973.

King, David C. ‘Diamond Mining Settlements in Central Kono District, Sierra Leone’. School of Oriental and African Studies, 1979.

Langworthy, Emily-Ann. ‘The Establishment of British Rule in the Sierra Leone Protectorate: 1896–1924’. PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1974.

Lavalie, Alpha M. ‘The Transfer of Power in Sierra Leone: British Colonial Policy, Nationalism and Independence 1945–1961’. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989.

Lipschutz, Mark R. ‘Northeast Sierra Leone after 1884: Response to the Samorian Invasions and British Colonialism’. PhD diss., Univeristy of California, Los Angeles, 1973.

McCall, Malcom. ‘Kailondo’s Luawa and British Rule: WIth Special Reference to the Period 1880–1930’. PhD diss., York Univeristy, 1974.

Misevich, Philip R. ‘On the Frontier of 'Freedom': Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s’. PhD diss., Emory Univeristy, 2009.

Ngovo, Samuel B. ‘The Bandi of Northwestern Liberia: A Study of Change and Continuity in Bandi Society to 1964’. PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2011.

Ojukutu-Macauley, Sylvia. ‘Women Power and Change in Northwestern Sierra Leone 1896–1993’. PhD diss., Howard University, 1997.

Rashid, Ismail O.D. ‘Patterns of Rural Protest: Chiefs, Slaves and Peasants in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1896–1956’. PhD diss., McGill Univeristy, 1998.

Rosen, David M. ‘Diamond, Diggers, and Chiefs: The Politics of Fragmentation in a West African Society’. PhD diss., University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, 1973.

Sekgoma, Gilbert A. ‘The History of Mining and Agriculture in Sierra Leone: A Study of the Impact of Some Aspects of Colonial And Post-Colonial Governments’ Economic Policies, 1929–1982’. Dalhousie University, 1987.

Sibanda, M.J.M. ‘Colonial Policy and Development in Northwestern Sierra Leone 1896–1939’. PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1978.