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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this essay was done while I was teaching History for the Peace Corps at the Sierra Leone Grammar School in Freetown, Sierra Leone (1962-1963). I would like to thank A. K. Hyde, Issa Sheriff, Joseph Koroma, Moses Sesay, Robert Bangura, and Louis Flower for helping me. Also I would like to thank all the people I interviewed for their cooperation. The judgments and mistakes in the essay are mine.

A. S. A.

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This essay discusses the problems of slavery which was the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone which was established 1808 and the Adjacent Protectorate of Sierra Leone established in 1808. The Colony and Protectorate were given independence by Great Britain on 27 April 1961, the new state being called Sierra Leone.

The Crown Colony of Sierra Leone was established as a place where slavery and racial discrimination was not recognized by law. The earlier Province of Freedom settled in 1787 was composed of European and African settlers.

## CHAPTER I.

### I. Problems Relating to Slavery in the Colony.

Every prospective settler had to sign a contract which included a clause that he would not own or trade in slaves or himself to the other settlers for the protection and preservation of their common freedom. Although the settlers swore allegiance of the English Crown, they were in fact self-governing. On 14 May, 1787 the first Governor, Richard Weaver, was elected.

The new settlement was disliked by the slave traders in the area. They viewed Granville Town as a commercial rival. Some of the settlers had moved outside Granville Town and become slave traders. The Freetown rulers also disliked Granville Town because it became a haven for runaway slaves. On December 6 1787, King Jimmy, encouraged by local slave traders destroyed Granville Town.

News of the destruction of Granville Town eventually reached London. Granville Sharp had been organizing the L. C. F. S. History of Sierra Leone, p. 16

This essay discusses the problems of slavery within the<sup>1</sup> Crown Colony of Sierra Leone which was established 1808 and the adjacent Protectorate of Sierra Leone established in 1896. The Colony and Protectorate were given independence by Great Britain on 27 April 1961, the new state being called Sierra Leone.

The Crown Colony of Sierra Leone was established as a place where<sup>"</sup> slavery and racial discrimination was not recognized by law. The earlier Province of Freedom settled in 1787 was composed of European and African settlers. "Every prospective settler had to sign a contract which included a clause where each binds and obliges himself or herself to the other settlers for the Protection and Preservation of their common Freedom."<sup>1</sup> Although the settlers swore allegiance of the English Crown, they were in fact self-governing. On 14 May, 1787 the first Governor, Richard Weaver, was elected.

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News of the destruction of Granville Town eventually reached London. Granville Sharp had been organizing the

St. George's Bay Company to finance the Province of Freedom. When the news of the destruction reached Sharp he asked the British Government to continue its support of the settlement. No reply was received. Then Sharp turned to wealthy men in London for support of the Province of Freedom. However, these men needed some guarantee for a return on their money. The right of self-government was surrendered to a London board so that the settlement could continue. Sharp was opposed to this but was unable to convince the shareholders otherwise.

The Sierra Leone Company, as it was now known, was allowed the right to incorporate by the Parliament on 6 June 1791. It was not until 5 July 1799 that the Charter of Incorporation was finally drawn up. During the interim period there was some question about the legality of the London-appointed Governor to rule. In the interim the London directors issued a declaration that, "the civil, military, personal and commercial rights and duties of blacks and whites should be the same and that it was illegal for anyone to deal or traffic in the buying or selling of slaves."

The Royal Charter that was finally issued in 1799 authorized the London directors to appoint a Governor and Council to rule the settlement. The Governor and the Council were authorized to make laws so long as they were acceptable to

the London Board and were not repugnant to the laws of England. Since in 1772, as a result of the Somerset Case, slavery had been declared illegal in England, slavery was also illegal in Sierra Leone.

On 1 January 1808, Sierra Leone became a Crown Colony. The new Colony was to be the base from which the British Navy enforced the abolition of the slave trade. A Vice-Admiralty Court was established at Freetown where captured slave ships could be tried.

With the establishment of the Freetown settlement the slave trade in the Sierra Leone River area was doomed. When the British Parliament made the slave trade illegal for all British citizens in 1807 many of the slave traders near Freetown moved away. Even though many of the European and American states made the slave trade illegal, the slave trade continued and increased.

The British Navy from 1807 to 1816 stopped all ships that engaged in the slave trade regardless of their nationality. Slave trading was dealt with as piracy until the Louis judgment of 1816. In the Louis case, it was ruled that the British Navy could not stop non-British ships unless a treaty had been signed giving permission.

From 1816 to 1862 the British entered into a number of treaties with the other European and American nations that were either engaged in the slave trade or possessed areas where slavery was still allowed. These reciprocal search



treaties allowed the British Navy to search suspicious ships that might be engaged in the slave trade. "From 1825 to 1865, the British liberated 130,000 slaves, while during this same period over 1,800,000 slaves landed alive in the New World."<sup>3</sup> The majority of these 130,000 slaves were liberated at Freetown. They were settled in the outlying areas of the city, in villages such as Regent, Gloucester, and Kent.

These people were known as Liberated Africans or recaptives. After the 1860's the African population of the Colony that descended from the recaptives or other African settlers such as the Maroons and Nova Scotians were called Creoles. The Creoles distinguished themselves socially from the African people who migrated from the hinterland and were called natives or aborigines. Later the term Creoles meant any African who had become educated and had adopted the European style of living.

With the success of the northern states in the United States Civil War one of the chief markets for slaves was destroyed. In 1870 Cuba abolished slavery and in 1888 Brazil, thus the Atlantic slave trade was ended. For the Sierra Leone area - it was ended by the 1860's. The event that ended the Atlantic slave trade was the abolition of slavery in the New World. The legal abolition of the slave trade had little effect upon the Atlantic slave trade.

3. J.D. Fage, Introduction to the History of West Africa, p. 104.



The passage of the Slave Felony Act in Great Britain in 1811 strengthened the power of the Colony over slave traders. This law gave the Colony jurisdiction over the foreign slave traders residing on British soil. Thus the Colony could stop slave trading within its borders. However a problem remained of what to do with slave traders outside the Colony.

Between 1824 and 1827 treaties of friendship were signed with the chiefs along the coast between present-day Liberia and Guinea. In these treaties the chiefs agreed to give up the slave trade. Most of these treaties were only obeyed as long as the British Navy was around. Once they went away the slave trade usually began again. Since most of these treaties were only those of alliance and not of cession the amount of British control over the territory was slight. The treaties had no effect upon African slavery but were only concerned with the Atlantic slave trade.

A problem that plagued the Colony was what to do with the runaway slave from the area outside the Colony. This question was faced immediately upon the establishment of the Province of Freedom in 1787. The fact that Temne slaves escaped to Granville Town was one of the reasons that King Jimmy burned the town in 1789.

The Sierra Leone Company faced the same problem. "The directors laid down a general rule that runaways ought not to be given up to their masters but agreed that prudence

and circumstances determine how strictly it be enforced. The memory of the destruction of Granville Town in 1789 was too fresh. According to country custom, the fugitive slave was the property of the master who sheltered him.

It was clear that slavery was illegal in the settlement because English law applied there. Thus within the territory of the Crown Colony the fugitive slave was free. Under the Labor Ordinance of 1825 he was required to hire himself out for work if he had no job.

A problem concerning runaway slaves arose when the British began to negotiate treaties of friendship with the neighboring tribes. In 1831 a treaty was signed with the Port Loko Chiefs in which they agreed to end the slave trade. Also the treaty provided that the Colony would return fugitive slaves and that the Chiefs would return runaway debtors. In spite of the fugitive slave clauses the treaty was approved by the British Secretary of State for the Colonies. In 1836 the treaty was renewed by Governor H. D. Campbell.

The treaty this time was not allowed by the Secretary of State due to the efforts of an Englishman, Magnus Smith. Smith, "as champion of the oppressed, brought to England witnesses to Campbell's having restored runaway slaves to the masters under the 1836 treaty. Governor J. Jeremie

4. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 53

5. Ibid., p. 207

negotiated a new treaty in 1841 in which the Alikali of Port Loko agreed to give up the slave trade in return for annual payments by the British.

So by 1841 the principle had been established that the British would not return fugitive slaves that escaped to Freetown. This was the final recognition that once a slave reached soil where British law was in effect the slave was free. The exodus of slaves from the Sierra Leone hinterland continued. Now the slave was assured of protection from his former master when he crossed the borders of the Colony.

A new problem arose in the Colony when the British Navy began to enforce the British law of 1808 that prohibited the Atlantic slave trade. As a result the Colony was flooded with liberated slaves from the captured slave ships. In February 1808 Frederick Parker of the British Navy brought in two ships with 167 slaves on board. The two ships were condemned and the slaves were freed. However, the problem arose of what to do with the slaves. Governor Thomas Ludlam apprenticed the slaves to various masters for \$20 each.

Governor Thomas P. Thompson, the first Royal Governor denounced these apprenticeships in despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He criticized the employees of the Sierra Leone Company, "for hypocritically pretending to seek the abolition of the slave trade while they bought

and sold slaves in Freetown itself."<sup>6</sup> The apprenticeship system continued with the new arrivals now being registered.

A Captured Negro Department was created (it was renamed the Liberated Africans Department in 1822) to take care of the recaptives as they were freed from the condemned slave ships that came to Freetown. The problem of the recaptives became more acute as the British Navy became more efficient. The apprenticeship system was liable to abuse. Later the investigations of 1830, 1842, and 1855 showed that in some cases the recaptive's apprenticeship amounted to being sold to a new master.

The most energetic solution for the recaptive problem occurred under Governor Charles MacCarthy (1814-1824), by settling them in villages outside Freetown where they were taught Christianity and English by missionaries. Rev. William Johnson of the Church Missionary Society was probably the most famous, serving in Regent from 1816-1823. But all this cost money and during Governor MacCarthy's office over £ 100,000 was spent on public works in Freetown. With MacCarthy's death in the Gold Coast the entire scheme was reduced.

The apprenticeship system was at its best a method to help the recaptive to adjust to a new life. At its worst the recaptives, " remained drudges, virtually domestic slaves,

6. Ibid., p. 106

to masters and mistresses who treated them hardily, even cruelly."<sup>7</sup> In 1830 a full investigation of the Liberated African Department was conducted. In 1831 three people were hanged for selling recaptives back into slavery.

In 1841 Dr. Richard Madden was sent out by the Parliament to visit the British West Africa Settlements. His mission was, "to report on their advantages and disadvantages more especially with an eye to their usefulness, real or potential, for purposes of stopping the slave trade and prompting other trade." He was also to investigate the, "prospects of fostering free immigration from West Africa to the West Indies."<sup>8</sup>

According to Dr. Madden's report on Sierra Leone the poorest people in the Colony sought apprentices. These apprentices were used as cheap labor. Dr. Madden charged that recaptive children under 12 years were being apprenticed soon after arrival. The conditions of these apprentices were so bad that he recommended immediate ending of the system.

The Governor, Colonel Richard Doherty, was able to convince the Colonial Office that Dr. Madden was, "a very careless, inaccurate and superficial reporter."<sup>9</sup> The Parliament appointed a Select Committee to investigate the

7. Ibid., pp. 182-183

8. G.E. Metcalfe, Maclean of the Gold Coast, p. 253

9. Ibid., p. 281



possibilities of West Africa as a source of labor for the British West Indies. The freeing of the slaves in 1833 had created a labor shortage on the sugar islands. The Committee collected more information on the apprenticeship system in Sierra Leone, and pointed out that abuses were occurring. The Select Committee recommended that the emigration of the recaptives<sup>10</sup> to the West Indies would solve the problem. Between 1840 and 1850 14,725 emigrants left for the West Indies, while during this same period 17,103 slaves were freed at Freetown.

In 1847 the apprenticeship system, "so long felt offensively close to slavery,"<sup>10</sup> was abolished. The schooling of the apprentices was turned over the Church Missionary Society. By the 1850's the question of slavery or its analogous forms among the recaptives was no longer a problem. The Atlantic slave trade had ended, there were no more recaptives being brought to Freetown, with only 740 people being emancipated between 1851 and 1855.

When the supply of household servants from the recaptive source ceased, abuses began to occur in the ward system. The ward system in Sierra Leone was a system of adoption of children that is still practiced today. "It was an old established custom for children to be sent to the Colony

10. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 251

from up country to be 'raised,' to live in a household and learn 'white man fashion.' " <sup>11</sup>

With the ending of the Atlantic slave the supply of apprentices ended. As a result the Sierra Leoneans began to use wards in place of newly landed recaptives. The reason they did this according to Fyfe is that the recaptive prosperity was built upon cheap apprentice labor. Fyfe argues that, "recaptive prosperity had been built up on unpaid apprentice labour." <sup>12</sup> This is overemphasizing a single factor as it could be better argued that recaptive prosperity was built up as the result of cheap trade goods being introduced into the Colony with the capture of prizes by the British Navy.

During the 1850's, a petty slave trade in children developed. Fula or Mandingo traders would bring in children from the Protectorate, who were used as household drudges. When they grew old enough to realize they were free, they decoyed out of the Colony and sold for cattle

Governor A. W. Kennedy began to attack the internal slave trade vigorously. Soon after the Governor had arrived in the Colony, two Mandingoes were convicted of slave dealing. They were imprisoned for three years. In February 1853 Governor Kennedy reported to the Colonial Office that he

11. Ibid., p. 270

12. Ibid., p. 270



had rescued 32 children, "principally females between the  
 ages of five and seventeen years."<sup>13</sup> In March Kennedy  
 reported that nearly 100 people had fled the Colony, fear-  
 ing prosecution for slave dealing.

Assizes were held and in the first two sessions, 17  
 people were convicted of slave dealing. "During the trials,  
 it became clear that not only Muslims were implicated.  
 European shopkeepers had advanced traders goods to buy  
 slaves; Freetown householders had been their customers."<sup>14</sup>  
 When five recaptives and two Creoles were accused of slave  
 trading the Grand Jury rejected the bills, "though a clear  
 case was made out. . . Public opinion upheld the Grand Jury."<sup>15</sup>

Governor Kennedy wrote the Colonial Office - "Public  
 sympathy, I am pained to say, is altogether with the accused,  
 while witnesses who have assisted to remove this disgrace of  
 slave-dealing and slave holding from the Colony are execrated  
 and threatened with violence."<sup>16</sup>

As a result, Governor  
 Kennedy promulgated an Ordinance which abolished Grand  
 Juries and replaced them with petty jurors chosen by property  
 qualifications. Also he promulgated an ordinance which re-  
 quired, "anyone with an alien child in their household to

13. Cmd. 1680 of 1853, p. 18

14. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 271

15. Ibid., p. 271

16, Cmd. 1995 of 1855, p. 5

register it before the Police Magistrate, and report if it  
<sup>17</sup>  
 left the Colony or died."

Two petitions by the Freetown inhabitants protested the abolition of Grand Juries and the Alien Children Registration Act. The first petition to Governor Kennedy on 29 November 1853 called the Alien Children's Act, "unconstitutional and un-English and whilst your petitioners have been gratuitously extending the benefits of education and Christian knowledge and religion to the children of the native inhabitants of the surrounding neighborhood, they look upon this Act as one that will at once put a stop to the influx of the native children into the Colony."<sup>18</sup>

Governor Kennedy saw little value in this petition. He described the petitioners as follows, "a large proportion of whom cannot write, and I fear their religion and moral fitness for the training of children is of even a lower  
<sup>19</sup>  
 standard."

A second petition was sent to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies on 21 January 1854. This petition was signed by 551 signatures headed by John Izzidio, W.H. and I.B. Pratt, three recaptive merchants. This petition also protested the Grand Jury abolition and the Alien Children's Registration Act.

17. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 271

18. Cmd. 1995 of 1855, p. 18

19. Ibid., p. 19

What Governor Kennedy was calling slavery was merely, "that free African children of free African parents residing in the neighbouring territories are placed, in accordance with long usage, under the guardianship of their friends or connexions in the colony for the purpose of education and training in useful occupations."<sup>20</sup> While the petitioners were describing the ideal situation the fact is that abuses did occur. Thomas George Lawson, the Government Interpreter, collected over 100 statements of mostly children, who had been wards in Freetown. Of these 32 stated that they had been sold in Freetown. Lawson reported to Kennedy that the children were told by the masters that if the white people knew that the children were slaves, then the children would be sent to Jamaica.

Early in 1854 three more people were tried for slave-trading. "All were acquitted - one by a jury where nine were for, three against conviction." Governor Kennedy promulgated a new ordinance where only a two-thirds' majority was needed to convict. In the later years convictions were obtained. By October 1854, Governor Kennedy reported to the Colonial Office that over 800 alien children were registered.

In 1855 the act was amended to provide for the education of alien children. Every alien child under the age of 15 years was required to go to school. The guardian was required

20. Ibid., p. 32

21. C.Fyfe, op. cit., p. 272

to notify the police magistrate where the child was going to school. In 1869 the duties of the guardian were made more explicit. The guardian could not mistreat the child and had to adequately clothe, house and feed the child. Failure to do so could result in a fine not exceeding £ 20 and loss of the child. The schools were also required to keep registers of the alien children. The police were empowered to inspect the condition of the registered child once every 3 months.

The ward system has not been studied sufficiently to allow any final opinions.<sup>22</sup> In 1905, the Alien Childrens Registration Act was repealed because, "the registration of African Children. . . had become obsolete."<sup>23</sup> In 1926 the Legislative Council passed an ordinance to prevent cruelty to children.

With the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 and the ending of the apprenticeship system in the British West Indies in 1838, a labor shortage occurred on the West Indian sugar plantations. James Stephen at the Colonial Office proposed that the recaptives be encouraged to immigrate to the West Indies. Dr. Madden suggested the same in his report in 1842. "Agents went out from the West Indies to Freetown to recruit. Strict rules were made to ensure no one was coerced into going; the Governor was told

22. A. T. Porter, Creoledom, p. 64

23. C. O. 270/40, Sierra Leone Leg.Council Debates, 2 May 1905

neither to encourage or discourage emigration, of only to prevent foreign governments protesting that the ostensible<sup>24</sup> opponents of the slave trade were reviving it covertly."

The agents were successful, as between 1840 and 1850, 14,725 immigrants left for the West Indies.

The regulations concerning migration were drawn up in London. The regulations included the provision that, "headmen, delegated by the recaptive group; in the Colony, accompany the emigrants, to return and report whether conditions were as promised."<sup>25</sup> Interest waned in emigration after it was discovered that no cheap domestic labor existed in the West Indies. "The West Indian governments were told to guarantee free return passages to those who sought them after five years."<sup>26</sup> In 1844 West Indian agents were allowed to recruit on board of the captured slave ships.

In 1860 the Colony passed its first regulation concerning the emigration of people to the West Indies. The Ordinance provided for the appointment of an Emigration Officer who would issue certificates to the immigrants. The certificate cost one schilling. However, by this time emigration to the West Indies was very slight; however a few emigrated to other parts of the West African Coast.

24. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 219

25. Ibid., p. 224

26. Ibid., p. 225



As a result of the report of the 1865 Parliamentary Committee, the governments of the British settlements on the West Coast were consolidated under the Governor at Sierra Leone. After the Ashanti War in 1874 it was decided to separate Lagos and the Gold Coast from Sierra Leone. By this time the Creoles had settled all over the coast as businessmen and clerks. In 1875, the Administrator George French promulgated an ordinance to control recruiting in the settlement of Sierra Leone for the service of foreign states. A foreign state included, "any person or persons exercising or assuming to exercise the powers of Government over any country, colony, province or people beyond the limits of the said settlement."<sup>27</sup> The Governor was given the power to impose the conditions of recruitment. This ordinance was designed to keep some control over the emigration out of the Colony along the coast.

In 1882, the French firm, C.A. Verminck recruited 100 clerks for their stations on the Niger River. "By 1883 they had founded about twenty factories and were employing two steamers in the river."<sup>28</sup> With the establishment of the Congo Free State in 1885, there grew a demand for laborers. "After 1885 laborers were recruited regularly from the immigrants who flocked to Freetown from up country.

27. A. Montagu, op. cit., Volume VI, p.2

28. J.D. Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa,

Private contractors shipped them, but contracts were made  
<sup>29</sup>  
 before a magistrate."

Two Creoles were engaged in this, A.T. Porter and C.J.G. Barlatt. Porter shipped laborers to the Congo and to Fernando Po. In 1891 there were complaints of ill-treatment of the workers, in 1893 Porter was appointed Consular Agent for the Congo Free State.

In 1896 as a result of pressure from British anti-slavery societies, Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies announced that the recruiting would cease. Governor Cardew, "assumed that Chamberlain's prohibition  
<sup>30</sup>  
 only applied to labor for the Congo government." Thus Porter was allowed to send laborers to work on the Panama Canal. C.J.G. Barlett was allowed to send workers to the Congo for the Congo Railway, because the new regulations did not apply to a private company. Porter was accused of reviving the slave trade by the American Ambassador in London. Porter was relieved of his position as Consular Agent for the Congo Free State in 1896.

In 1896 the Legislative Council passed an ordinance "to control the engagement of persons within the Colony of Sierra Leone for service outside the limits thereof."  
<sup>31</sup>

29. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 504

30. Ibid., p. 547

31. Ordinance No. 19 of 1896



The ordinance which repealed the 1875 Ordinance was more specific about the conditions of service. The contract had to be in writing. It had to specify the nature of the service, the place where it would be performed, and pay and a proviso for return fare if so wished by the laborer. No contract could be for more than 3 years. The Police were to inspect the boat before it left.

Attorney-General P.C. Smyly stated the purpose of the ordinance in the Legislative Council, "it was essential in the interests of the people, that they should not be allowed to leave without some protection as to the nature of the work they were to be employed on and as to payment of their wages, and that they should be allowed to return to their place of engagement."<sup>32</sup>

Some resentment among the Mende concerning the Congo recruitment became evident during the Hut Tax Rebellion in 1898. "Captured Creoles awaiting death were mockingly told they were being sent to the Congo."<sup>33</sup> In 1913 the Ordinance was amended so that permission of the Chief was also required before recruiting would be allowed in the Protectorate.

32. Sierra Leone Legislative Council Debates, 10 July 1896,  
p. 169

33. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 572

General Comments.

The effect of the coming of the Europeans to Sierra Leone was to increase the number of Sierra Leoneans to be sold into slavery. The practice of slavery was already in existence when the Europeans came in the fifteenth century.

CHAPTER II.

II. Slave Trade and Slavery in the Protectorate.

A. General Comments.

B. Mende Tribe.

C. Temne Tribe.

D. Mandingo Tribe.

E. Susu Tribe.

F. Limba Tribe.

G. Loko Tribe.

There were four main ports, the North (Melakori and Boarclaw Rivers), the Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone), the Sherbro Island (Sherbro Island) and the (Loko and Moa Rivers). J.D. estimate at the end of the eighteenth century 3,000 slaves per year were taken from the area between the Cambia River and Sherbro Island. Because no large African states like Dahomey or Ashanti existed in Sierra Leone, a large export of slaves was not possible. During the eighteenth century the Fula established an Islamic State in the Futa Jallon whose main outlet to the sea was through the Northern Rivers area. The extent of their participation in the Atlantic slave trade is not known.

The presence of the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone in the middle of this area made the enforcement of the British slave trade treaties easier. By the 1820's the slave trade was ended in the Sierra Leone River area. By the 1830's the

A. General Comments.

The effect of the coming of the European to Sierra Leone was to increase the number of Sierra Leoneans to be sold into slavery. The institution of slavery was already in existence when the Europeans came in the fifteenth century. During the 390 years that the Atlantic-slave trade existed, it is unknown how many slaves from the Sierra Leone area were sold into slavery. There were four main ports, the Northern Rivers area (Melakori and Scarcies Rivers) the Sierra Leone River area (Freetown), the Sherbro Island area, and the Gallinas area (Mano and Moa Rivers).

J.D. Fage and C. Fyfe estimate at the end of the eighteenth century about 3,000 slaves per year were taken from the area between the Gambia River and Sherbro Island. Because no large African states like Dahomey or Ashanti existed in Sierra Leone, a large export of slaves was not possible. During the eighteenth century the Fula established an Islamic State in the Futa Jalon whose main outlet to the sea was through the Northern Rivers area. The extent of their participation in the Atlantic slave trade is not known.

The presence of the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone in the middle of this area made the enforcement of the British slave trade treaties easier. By the 1830's the slave trade was ended in the Sierra Leone River area. By the 1850's the

slave trade was ended in the adjacent areas. The bulk of Atlantic slave trade to the New World was ended as a result of the United States Civil War. An internal slave-trade continued from Sierra Leone to the Futa Jalon. This trade continued up to the time of the establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate in 1896.

Slavery in Africa has usually be referred to as "domestic slavery." It differed in many respects from the slavery practiced in the New World. The main difference was that African slavery was free of the racial connotations that accompanied New World slavery. The difference between master and slave in Africa was never as great as it was in the New World. In general, the African slave enjoyed more rights than his New World counterpart. African slavery has been described as milder and less offensive than New World slavery. Yet one must not forget that the American slave revolts were led by slaves whose conditions were quite mild. Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner lived lives that were very similar to the domestic slaves in Africa.<sup>1</sup> One can say that color prejudice did not exist in African Society but slavery is still a restriction upon an individual's freedom. Today, if one calls an ex-slave a "slave" in Sierra Leone the name-caller is liable to a fine. It is very difficult in Sierra Leone to get anyone to admit he was an ex-slave

1. M.L. Starkey, Striving to Make it my Home, Chp. 14

or that he is descended from slaves. No ex-slave has ever testified that he enjoyed African slavery.

Unfortunately the whole question of slavery was connected with the reasons for European conquest of Africa. The European saw the existence of slavery and slave trade within Africa as indication of African barbarism. The argument was especially used by the European after he had abolished slavery in his own country and colonies. So it is understandable for the defenders of Africa to point out that African slavery was just a feudal relationship that did not restrict the slave too much. In this defense the supposed African barbarism was seen as rather civilized. Yet one must remember that both Europeans and Africans were arguing within the racial framework. Each was attempting to uphold the virtues of his particular color.

What is needed is to discuss the question of African slavery outside the racial considerations. African slavery has seldom been described from the viewpoint of the slave. There is no information of the sort available but it can be hoped that some day an ex-slave or descendent will attempt to view slavery as the slave lived it. Present day descriptions of African slavery are reminiscent of the glorified descriptions of New World slavery. Yet there are two recorded slave revolts in Sierra Leone one in 1838 and the other in 1926. It would seem difficult to reconcile the

revolts with the mild pleasant descriptions of African slavery that persist.

It was estimated by J.C.E. Parkes, Secretary for Native Affairs that, "about half the whole population,"<sup>3</sup> of the Protectorate, were slaves. Parkes had estimated the total Protectorate population to be from 610,000 to 950,000. So the total number of people living in slavery in 1898 was estimated from 305,000 to 475,000.

In 1906 Governor L. Probyn reported to the Colonial Office that "the number of domestic slaves now in the Protectorate is relatively small. I have frequently endeavored to ascertain the proportion of domestic slaves to freemen, but have always been thwarted by the answer that 'in these days it is not possible to tell whether a man is a freeman or a slave'."<sup>4</sup> This tendency to underestimate the number of slaves was continued by Governor R.J. Wilkinson who wrote in 1922 "I think you will find that there are not<sup>5</sup> 100,000 domestics in Sierra Leone, perhaps not 50,000." However at the time Wilkinson was advocating a registration scheme and probably did not want the number to appear excessive to the cost-conscious people at the British Colonial Office.

3. Cmd. 9388 (Part I) and Cmd. 9391 (Part II) of 1899, (hereafter referred to as the Chalmer's Report), Part II, line 853, p. 43

4. C.O. 267/483, Despatch No. 42, I March 1906

5. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 22



In 1923 Commissioner for the Northern Province Captain W.B. Stanley prepared a minute for Governor A.R. Slater on slavery in the Protectorate. He estimated that; "15.5 per cent of the total population is under servitude either as slaves or slaves of the house - (slaves of the second and third generation): slaves of the fourth generation are ... to all intents and purpose free persons."<sup>6</sup> He estimated the number of slaves in the Protectorate to be 219,275 out of a population of 1,446,375.

When testimony concerning the causes of the Hut Tax Rebellion of 1898 was taken by the Royal Commissioner, Sir David Chalmers, some of it included descriptions of slavery in the Protectorate. Chalmers asked Parkes, "According to the view of the tribes in the Protectorate, every man is free by nature? Yes; slavery is an induced state."<sup>7</sup> Parkes described the ways a person might become a slave. "Persons who might have been sold for crime committed or for debt. Persons who might have been pawned or pledged. Persons who have been caught in war and sold."<sup>8</sup> The children of a slave

6. Cf., Appendix II., for W.B. Stanley's estimate of the total slave population of the Protectorate. This estimate is broken down according to tribes.

7. Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 857, p. 44

8. Ibid., Part II, line 855, p. 43



would also be treated as slaves. There were two classes of slaves: those born in the house of the master, (known as house slaves) and those not born in the master's house. The master, "cannot sell a slave born in the house - those not born in the house can be sold by their masters at any time."<sup>9</sup>

According to Parkes the most common complaints of ill-treatment were, "Mostly of having been flogged, in other cases of having their wives taken from them, and lastly having a Woolasu sold (i.e. a slave born in the house)."<sup>10</sup> Captain Sharpe, the District Commissioner of Karene District, stated that the fugitive slaves from French Guinea were complaining of ill-treatment and expected to obtain absolute freedom. Captain Birch of Koinadugu District, reported that he had freed three or four who came to him complaining of ill-treatment.

Conditions were changing and the internal slave trade was affected. According to Parkes, "the backbone of the thing was thoroughly broken"<sup>11</sup> by 1896. The presence of the Frontier Police established in 1890 decreased the amount of slave trading. Governor F. Cardew after making a trek in the hinterland issued a circular letter in 1894 which prohibited slave trading in the whole sphere of influence.

9. Ibid., Part II, line 768, p. 39

10. Ibid., Part II, line 1082, p. 54

11. Ibid., Part II, line 878, p. 44

Also the Hinterland was divided into five police districts with police stations established at the points where the slave trade was conducted.

Governor Cardew described the workings of the internal slave trade. "The slave-trade was principally carried on by the Susus and Fulas who used to come down from Futa Jallong to Freetown. There they would exchange their cattle for Manchester goods and guns, and powder and proceed up country, generally going to the town of some Chief who was engaged in slave-raiding around. They would exchange these goods for slaves and return with their slaves to Futa Jallong where they exchanged them for cattle, and then they began the round again."<sup>12</sup> Most of the internal slave trade was to Futa Jalon, located in present day Guinea.

The act that was most decisive against the internal slave trade, was the delimiting the French and English spheres in 1895. The interior trade which had used Freetown as its seaport began to use Conakry. This affected the internal slave trade because it became more expensive to bring cattle across the French-English border. Cattle were an essential part of the slave trade. The Sierra Leonean would trade slaves for cattle with the Fulas of Futa Jalon. The cattle trade was diverted to Conakry. Messengers of the Limba Chief Suluku of Bumban which was located on the

12. Ibid., Part II, line 8552, p. 44

road to Futa Jalon complained of the French duties, "those who used to come from Foota are presented by the French duties."<sup>13</sup> Sir Samuel Lewis believed that the decrease in hides being exported from Sierra Leone was due to the imposition of the French duties.

The presence of Freetown had always served as an attraction to the slave if his condition became too difficult. Things were made worse in the view of the masters when the Frontier Police were established in the Hinterland after 1890. At each police post was a flag pole from which the British flag flew. If a slave could touch the flag pole then he would be freed.<sup>14</sup> Thus the slave did not have to go to Freetown to gain his freedom. Thus the Chiefs and masters saw their authority being weakened and the slave saw his condition being improved.

The powers of the Frontier Police rested upon an ill-defined legal position. In most areas where they were located the local chief had signed an agreement with the British Government in which he agreed to end the slave trade. But no treaty ever stated that the Chief would abolish slavery.

On 15 April 1893, Gov. Fleming had issued instructions to the Frontier Police concerning they could only stop

13. Ibid., Part II, line 2139, p. 108

14. C. Fyfe, *op. cit.*, p. 553; Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 8555, p. 542 and line 1139, p. 57

slaves in transit. "The transit of slaves is to be understood to mean that slaves, either chained or in shackles." <sup>15</sup> This was the only way the Frontier Police could interfere with slavery. The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society stated, "It is almost incredible that paragraphs 3 and 4 <sup>16</sup> could have been framed by Frontier Officials!" But due to the ill-defined legal position of the Frontier Police the British had no choice but to refrain from interfering directly with the problem.

A slave could run away for two reasons. First he might want to improve his economic position by working in Freetown or beyond. Second, he might want to escape conditions that he did not enjoy. Probably most slaves left for both reasons. How many slaves fled because of ill-treatment and how many because they just did not like being slaves is unknown. Since the master knew that the slave could always run away to the Frontier Police Station, the cases of ill-treatment were probably small.

15. Anti-Slavery Reporter, May-June 1893, p. 141

16. "(3) 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.

(4) 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 the places where they are stationed." Anti-Slavery Reporter, May-June 1893, p. 141

According to Sir Samuel Lewis, "since the stopping of wars in the interior, say about 1890, large numbers of persons, many of whom must be slaves, have come from the Hinterland and pass through Sierra Leone by thousands to get employment in the Congo and other places out of Sierra Leone."<sup>17</sup>

Sir Samuel stated that when the slave returned to Sierra Leone he went back to his master. J.C.E. Parkes further elaborated upon this in reply to a question asked by Sir David Chalmers. "It was said that many slaves had run away to Freetown: did these runaways after an interval ever go back to their masters? - Not exactly. Suppose a slave runs away and goes to the Congo, he will perhaps come back and make his master a present, but he does not return to work for him."

<sup>18</sup> Usually the slave would stay for a short time during which he would either spend or invest his money then he would leave again.

The slave would not resume his old relationship with his master. The slave would return home with £20 to £30. "On his arrival there he has got really more than an average

<sup>19</sup> Sub=Chief." He usually would invest the money in farms and slaves. Then he might return to the Congo or Freetown, "After one or two journeys he is quite as big as the Chiefs

17. Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 2734, p. 149

18. Ibid., Part II, line 860, p. 44

19. Ibid., Part II, line 865, p. 44

themselves."<sup>20</sup> When the ex-slaves who worked for Sir Samuel Lewis returned home they always asked for a memorandum from Sir Samuel so that the Frontier Police, "could see they were free men."<sup>21</sup>

The returned slaves would also participate in the election of chiefs. According to Parkes anyone who had social status could participate in the election. What Parkes meant by social status is best seen by the answer he gave to Sir David Chalmers. "Social status is not confined to freemen, but also belongs to slaves?-. Certainly: slaves make as much show as the masters sometimes."<sup>22</sup> Parkes knew of only one instance where the slaves had rebelled and elected one of themselves as Chief.

20. Ibid., Part II, line 2739, p. 149

21. Ibid., Part II, line 539, p. 29

22. Ibid., Part II, line 540, p. 29



## B. Mende Tribe.

Slaves in the Mende Tribe served two purposes: first they were the agricultural laborers who kept the economy going and second they were the currency that was used in the barter economy. The main way of getting slaves was through the waging war - either among the Mende themselves or else with neighboring tribes.

At the coast slaves were exchanged for salt and up country the slave was exchanged for cattle. "A single slave was worth from three to six cows, a man, woman, or child were all considered as one 'head' of money. This was the equivalent, later in the century, i.e. 1890, to £ 3."<sup>23</sup> It is probable that the Mandingo, Fula, or Susu carried on the actual trading with the Hinterland.

The coastal slave trade was carried on by the Sherbro along with European agents in the Sherbro Island area. The Mende chiefs appear to have had little contact with European slave traders but instead acted as middleman. The actual conduct of the slave caravans seems to have been conducted by Muslim peoples such as the Mandingoes, Susu and Fula. The Mende appear to have remained in their own area relying on others to actually carry on the trade. The Mende were usually too busy fighting among themselves to engage in the slave trade itself.

It was in the early 1800's that the Mende began to penetrate to the coast but by this time the Atlantic slave trade was declining along the Sierra Leone coast. However, some of them did become slaves because some of the recaptives at Freetown were Mende. The most famous of the Mende recaptives were the slaves who seized the Spanish ship *Amistad* in 1839. They were eventually freed due to the eloquence of John Quincy Adams and returned to Sierra Leone in 1841.

There were two classes of slaves. First, the slave who was recently captured and enjoyed few rights and second, the "house slave" who enjoyed more rights. Prior to the ending of the Atlantic slave trade in the 1860's the slaves captured in war were soon sold and thus their lot was a rather difficult. But the house slave was a slave who might also be captured in war but joined the household of the master. The house slave would help farm the master's land and do the tasks within the master's compound.

The house slave could not be sold except for a serious offense, "such as adultery with the wife of a freeman."<sup>24</sup>

The slave also could farm a small plot of land for his own use. A slave might even own another slave. The descendants of slaves achieved more status and, "It was thought wrong to separate a slave from the land on which he had been born and brought up."<sup>25</sup>

24. *Ibid.*, p. 38

25. *Ibid.*, p. 38

If a freeman married a slave then the children were considered free.

By the time of the establishment of the Protectorate Mende slavery seems to have been fairly mild. "Probably the growing importance of agriculture in place of warfare itself helped to improve the slave's position by providing him with an economic role.<sup>26</sup> The ending of the internal slave trade also helped the position of the slave. For now he was no longer an item of commerce but instead a member of the household whose social status was lower than that of the other members. The essential difference between the freeman and the slave was that the slave could be sold. But with the ending of the Atlantic and internal slave trade this threat no longer had any reality. A freeman or slave could be pledged on security for a debt incurred by the head of the household.

From the time of the establishment of the Protectorate to 1926 the slaves were becoming absorbed into their respective families. Captain W. B. Stanley in 1923 noted that the Mende placed little emphasis upon the differences in status between a slave and a freeman. Stanley estimated that 15% of the Mende were slaves. He estimated the number to be 83,651 slaves out of a population of 557,674.

26. Ibid., p.39

### C. Temne Tribe.

Slaves of the Temne Tribe were divided into two classes, the house slave and the ordinary slave. The house slave was the one that was born in the house of the master while the ordinary slave was either captured in war or was a pawn who had not been redeemed.

The house slaves were treated, "like sons and might get land from their masters which their children would inherit, unless they were sold for misbehavior."<sup>27</sup> However, the slave's property still belonged to the master with the slave only having the right to use the farm land not to own it.

The slave who was allowed to work for himself was given free days in the week to do so. N. W. Thomas says the number of free days varied from one to three. "No master had the right to force a slave to work on his free day."<sup>28</sup>

A slave could be redeemed. In some places a slave could redeem himself but generally he could not. Usually redemption was done by his parents or friends. Also the master could free the slave.

In Temne slavery there was a spectrum of rights enjoyed by the slave. The "bought slave was superior to one captured in war, for the latter would never settle down."<sup>29</sup>

27. N.W. Thomas, Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone, Part I, p. 49

28. Ibid., p. 160

29. Ibid., p. 158

The new slave was put through a "seasoning" period in which he was taught the position of the slave. The new slave was stocked for four days. "Bread was sacrificed and he was sworn on it not to run away."<sup>30</sup> But the slave was not trusted for a year and it was two years before he was allowed to live in a slave village. The moving to the slave village meant that he now could farm some of his own land.

According to accounts of slavery in the Kholifa Chiefdom Northern Province only the troublesome slaves were stocked or put in chains. The rest of the newly captured slaves were put to work in neighboring slave villages. The house slaves were selected from the village slaves.

In the slave village the owners selected a headman. The headman reported all disputes to the master but the headman could not punish. "One slave could not punish another."<sup>31</sup> Each clan within the village would own a village. On Friday the slaves worked their own farms. "The slaves preferred the villages."<sup>32</sup> probably because there was less supervision by the masters. Around the town of Mabum, Kholifa Chiefdom, Northern Province, the Kabia's slaves lived at Makorie Lol, the Koroma's at Makaghaneh, the Con-teh's at Rochen Chenka, Lonka, and Gbla at Rokon Toro. The slaves were allowed to come into town.

30. Ibid., p. 158

31. Lamina Kabia, personal interview, 15 April 1963

32. Ibid.



The house slave lived with the master in his compound. The slave could not leave the household unless he had the permission of his master. No separate farming was allowed unless the master gave permission. The house slave was given separately rice and he ate by himself. Most house slaves kept a separate farm which they were allowed to work every Friday. "Friday was a day of rest for free men, a day of work for the slaves."<sup>33</sup>

The attitude of the master towards his slave was that the ownership of slaves was seen as enlarging the importance of the master. "Timinis buy and sell slaves more to enlarge their dignity."<sup>34</sup> Once the slave was added to the chief's household, the slave was gradually absorbed into the extended family. According to Thomas Lawson who had been the Chief of Kwaia, "A slave is only a slave in the first instance; the next generation are regarded as part of the family, and are intermarried in the family."<sup>35</sup>

As time passed the lot of the house slave improved. Lawson explained the gradual accretion of rights and privileges. "When you are bought you can be sold again; if you belong to the next generation, you cannot transfer your habitation without leave from your master; the third generation is absolutely free, but they must leave the

33. Amadu Koroma, personal interview, 15 April 1963

34. Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 1880, p. 98

35. Ibid., Part II, line 1892, p. 94



personal property to the master. Even if they were to die in Freetown, the Chief, would come and claim their property." Lawson noted that it was possible for a grandchild of a slave to become rich.

By 1923 Captain W. B. Stanley noted that the differences in status between the slave and the freeman were slight. He estimated that 20% of the Temne were slaves. This was 62,283 slaves out of a total Temne population of 311,418.

The Temne slave trade with the Europeans began to decline with the establishment of the Province of Freedom in 1787. Bunce Island had been the factory from which most of the slaves from the Temne country had been shipped. The fort was destroyed by pirates in 1720 and by the French during the American Revolution. In 1792 the owner of Bunce Island offered to sell the island to the Sierra Leone Company because of the decline of the slave trade. In 1824 the island was ceded to the Colony. By this time the timber trade had replaced the Atlantic slave trade for this area. By 1831 most of the timber had been cut and Port Loko lost its importance.

However, the Temne country was used as transit area that avoided the Colony for the internal and Atlantic slave trade. It was the connecting link between the slave ports

at the Gallinas and the Northern Rivers. Thus during the 1820's and 1830's the Temne fought with the Loko for the control of the country. The Temne had been earlier driven out of the Colony area by the Europeans. The control of Port Loko during this period vacillated between Temne and Loko control. 1830-1831.

During the Atlantic slave trade period Gumbu Smart, a former Loko slave, became a slave dealer, soon becoming an important chief in the Sierra Leone River area. In the European wars against the Temne for control of the peninsula Smart remained loyal to the British. With ending of the slave trade the Loko's declined in power. By 1831 the Temne were in control of the area.

The Temne like the Mende never did the actual slave dealing but only controlled the trade routes. The actual buying was done by the Susu, Fula, and Mandingos. The Temne country was ideally located, as it lay between the Mende country and the Susu country and points further inland. Any trader wanting to go to the Gallinas had to travel through the Temne country. After the Atlantic slave trade ended the Temne still enjoyed a good position because they lay between Futa Jalon and Freetown. Most of the trade routes had to travel through Temne country in order to reach the sea. Also the internal slave trade between the Mende country and the Susu, Fulas, and Mandingoes had to go through Temne country to avoid the Colony.

With the establishment of the Frontier Police stations in the Hinterland it became more difficult to keep slaves. All a slave had to do was to touch the British flag pole at the police station. Pa Nembana, the Chief of Kwaia stated that they had ended slave dealing during the time of Governor Hay (1888-1891).

It would seem that the early Mandingo penetration into Sierra Leone was that of adventurous individuals attempting to make themselves wealthy in the Atlantic slave trade. As a result of these activities they became involved with tribal politics and in some cases were elected chiefs.

In 1784 Bala Wodu, son of the Mandingo chief at Yankarong arrived in Freetown with fifty followers. In 1808 Bala Wodu was accused of slave dealing, and he was forced to leave by Governor Thomas Ludlam. In spite of this Mandingo traders continued to come to Freetown. They organized caravans to Freetown where they would trade cattle and rice for trade goods such as gunpowder and rifles. By the 1830's there were permanent Mandingo agents in Freetown who acted as landlords to the Mandingo farmers.

33. "Europeans tended to describe any Manding trader as a 'Mandingo'." C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 8. Cf. Captain T. Canby, Adventures of an African Slave.

#### D. Mandingo Tribe.

In the Mandingo Tribe slaves were primarily an article of commerce. The Mandingoes acted as the middlemen in the slave trade between the coast and the interior. During the time of the Atlantic slave trade the Mandingoes organized caravans to the coast. After the Atlantic trade had ended it was the Mandingoes who organized the internal slave trade to the Fula Chieftans in Futa Jalon.

It would seem that the early Mandingo penetration into Sierra Leone was that of adventurous individuals attempting to make themselves wealthy in the Atlantic slave trade. As a result of these activities they became involved with tribal politics and in some cases were elected chiefs.

In 1794 Dala Modu, son of the Mandingo chief at Wonkafong settled in Freetown with fifty followers. In 1806 Dala Modu was accused of slave dealing, and he was forced to move to Lungi by Governor Thomas Ludlam. In spite of this Mandingo traders continued to come to Freetown. They organized caravans to Freetown where they would trade cattle and rice for trade goods such as gunpowder and rifles. By the 1820's there were permanent Mandingo agents in Freetown who acted as landlords to the Mandingo stranger.

37. "Europeans tended to describe any Muslim trader as a 'Mandingo'." C. Fyfe, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Cf. Captain T. Canot, Adventures of an African Slaver

The final controversy over the abuses of the ward system began in the 1850's. Momodu Yeli, the Mandingo's headman, testified in a trial where two Mandingoes were sent to prison for three years for slave dealing. Some Mandingo traders would bring children to Freetown as household servants. When the children grew older they would take the children to Futa Jalon to be traded for cattle. As a result the Alien Children Registration Act was promulgated in 1853.

After the ending of the Atlantic slave trade, the Mandingoes took part in the slave trade to Futa Jalon. This internal slave trade lasted until the Protectorate was declared in 1896. The establishment of the Protectorate meant that customs were collected at the borders. The trade that was originally from Futa Jalon to Freetown was then diverted to Conakry. The duties for bringing cattle into Sierra Leone were too high so traders brought their cattle to Conakry.

The Fula people of Futa Jalon used the slaves to work farms and to look after cattle. The Protectorate area was the scene of many small fights between the various chiefdoms. As a result the captured prisoners were sold as slaves by the Mandingoes.

The internal slave trade was also a triangle trade. The three points were Freetown, the hinterland, and Futa

Jalon. Freetown supplied the trade goods - these goods included salt, cloth, guns and gunpowder. The Hinterland would supply the slaves. Futa Jalon would supply the cattle.

The Mandingo traders would accumulate one hundred or more slaves. The maximum number of people for a caravan would be four hundred. Until the journey to Futa Jalon began the slaves were kept in compounds. The slaves would be purchased from the neighboring areas with trade goods. In the hinterland a bushel of salt worth two schillings in Freetown would buy two slaves. These same two slaves would be worth ten cows in Futa Jalon. The ten cows if they survived the six week trip to Freetown would be worth £ 100. Thus the original investment of two schillings would be worth £ 100, gross, if everything went correctly.<sup>38</sup> "People who traded in slaves made great profits."

Two or three times a year the Mandingoes would go to Futa Jalon to trade. It was difficult to travel and up to three hundred armed men would be needed. There was always the danger of being robbed while crossing through a village. Sometimes a village would charge the value of a cow for a safe passage through the village area. The trip from Karina to Futa Jalon was about a month; the trip from Karina to Freetown was about ten days.

38. Tijan Sheriff, third-person interview, 16 June 1963



The Mandingoes had a reputation for being, "notoriously harsh slave masters ... the Mandingo people have always been slave traders prior to the British Protectorate and treat their slaves harshly."<sup>39</sup> The slave was an article of commerce. "The slave was like a cow to the owner; he could exchange it at anytime."<sup>40</sup> Unlike other tribes in Sierra Leone the slave did not live in the master's house but in separate areas. With the ending of the slave trade at the end of the nineteenth century, the Mandingo system of slavery changed.

The slave instead of becoming an article of commerce for the triangle trade between Freetown and Futa Jalon, now became valuable labor to be exploited for the owner's benefit. The slaves lived in separate villages. "A slave had no right to live in the same house with the master."<sup>41</sup> They would work five days for the master. Thursday and Friday were the slaves own work days. On the farms which the slaves worked was grown rice and other foodstuffs for the master.

The slaves in their village were governed by a head slave who was selected by the slave owner. There were two

39. Native Affairs Minute Paper, Karene District, Northern Province, Sierra Leone, No. 178/1926 (Hereafter referred to as N.A. 178/1926), paper 17, 13 December 1926

40. Alhaji Mustafa Fofana & Alhaji Suliman Fofana, personal interview, 31 March 1963

41. Foday Swandy Fofana, third-person interview, 18 June 1963

rules that guided the slave headman. First, he must follow all the commands of the master. Second, he must keep the slaves working. The slave headman had a drum which was used to assemble the slaves and to announce the time for working. The slave headman was in complete charge, any complaints or disputes were brought to him and decided by him. He had the power to administer corporeal punishment.

There was little possibility for a slave to redeem himself. "No slave was so bold as to ask for freedom. They were never set free and therefore it was impossible for a slave to be free. Men in those days could not live without slaves."<sup>42</sup> As far as Mandingo law and custom was concerned, redemption was not allowed. Ordinance No. 20 of 1896 provided for redemption but little was known of it. "In order for a slave to become free, he or she had to pay £ 4 for an adult and £ 2 for a child to his master. But in those days it was difficult for a slave to get that money. It was even difficult for some masters to get such an amount in one place."<sup>43</sup>

A slave could be punished in two ways. First, "all our slaves excluding the head were liable to flogging with leather whips if they committed any crime."<sup>44</sup> Second, "sometimes for a more serious offense such as trying to hide away, we used to stock them under the hot burning sun."<sup>45</sup>

42. Ibid.

43. Kemoh Kodogbo, third-person interview, 20 June 1963

44. Ibid.

45. Madam Cherinoh Kadaybah, third-person interview 24 June 1963

The stock was log with holes bore through it. The treatment of the slave varied according to the master's attitude.

By 1923 Captain W. B. Stanley estimated that 35% of the people classified as Mandingoes were slaves. It is doubtful if any of the slaves were Mandingoes, they were probably peoples of other tribes. He estimated that of the 8,705 people classified as Mandingoes 3,046 were slaves.

Captain W. B. Stanley wrote in 1923 that, "no tribe I am acquainted with is more addicted to slave-owning than the Mandingo . . . from a social point of view, they regard their domestic slaves as distinctly inferior to themselves."<sup>46</sup> The Mandingoes kept more distance from their slaves than any other tribe in the Protectorate. The slaves, ate, slept, and worked in separate areas under a system of segregation.

The establishment of the Protectorate did change the status of the slave from an article of commerce to a laborer. But there was no integration of the slave going on among the Mandingoes as there was among the other tribes. The status of a house slave was unknown. It would seem that the Mandingo slave had no way to advance his status in the Mandingo society.

This point was missed by Stanley when he noted, "the Mandingo . . . treats those in servitude under him with exceptional liberality and consideration. He sees that

46. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 44

they work for themselves on their own farm for at least three days in the week; he sees that all have decent clothes to wear on Fridays and holidays.<sup>47</sup> Obviously this type of paternalism was not sufficient for some Mandingo slaves. In 1926 they revolted against their masters.

47. Ibid., p. 44

ed the trade at Sherbro and the Searcies River area. When the Atlantic slave trade ended the Susu organized the internal slave trade. In the 1870's the Susu organized slave caravans between the Mende country and the Searcies River area. "The export of slaves to the Northern Rivers, virtually driven from the canoe route round the Colony peninsula, was reorganized through the Upper Niger country by Susu who took them overland to the Sokol, thence by canoe to the Sallom shore."<sup>48</sup> During the Hat Box Rebellion of 1898, some Susu bought prisoners of war from the Mende. "Only one man, Emmanuel Cole, from Wilberforce, who planted coffee at Sambuya escaped into the bush. His child Lemuel, enslaved, sold eventually to Susu, only returned to the Colony in 1938."<sup>49</sup>

The Susu slave dealers went through Teme country to Mende country. Then they would either go Sata Jalon themselves or beat Fula caravans from there in the Searcies River area. The Searcies River country was Susu country.

48. C. Fyfe, op. cit., pp. 395-400

49. Ibid., p. 374

E. Susu Tribe.

There is very little information about slavery in the Susu Tribe. The Susu like the Mandingoes were slave traders. During the time of the Atlantic slave trade they had organized the trade at Sherbro and the Scarcies Rivers area. When the Atlantic slave trade ended the Susu organized the internal slave trade to Futa Jalon. In the 1870's the Susu organized slave caravans between the Mende country and the Scarcies River area. "The export of slaves to the Northern Rivers, virtually driven from the canoe route round the Colony peninsula, was reorganized through the Upper Bagru country by Susu who took them overland to the Rokel, thence by canoe to the Bullom shore."<sup>48</sup> During the Hut Tax Rebellion of 1898, some Susu bought prisoners of war from the Mende. "Only one man, Emanuel Cole, from Wilberforce, who planted coffee at Sumbuya escaped into the bush. His child Lemuel, enslaved, sold eventually to Susu, only returned to the Colony in 1930."<sup>49</sup>

The Susu slave dealers went through Temne country to Mende country. Then they would either to go Futa Jalon themselves or meet Fula caravans from there in the Scarcies Rivers area. The Scarcies River country was Susu country.

48. C. Fyfe, op. cit., pp. 399-400

49. Ibid., p. 574

With the establishment of the Protectorate slave trading ended; "the people did not catch slaves for themselves, but to sell. Now they are unable to send slaves out of the country because of the customs; and some of these very people, Susus and Mandingoes, who sold slaves have now become traders."<sup>50</sup>

There<sup>51</sup> is one recorded slave revolt against the Susu. The revolt of Koranko slaves occurred in 1838 at Kukuna in the Upper Scarcies area. "They were commanded by Bilale, son of Susu chief and a Koranko slave woman, who led them out to join the Limba, long hostile to the Susu. He fortified a town and encouraged runaway slaves to join them. At intervals Susu chiefs tried to put down this growing power that threatened the foundations of slave-owning society, but Bilale and his Limba allies beat them off."<sup>51</sup>

In 1898, W.T.G. Lawson, a former Temne chief, testified to Sir David Chalmers about tribal rules for slaves. He stated that the "Susus have more the Portuguese system."<sup>52</sup> He unfortunately did not elaborate. Thomas noted that, "a house slave was so far one of the family that a thief could not be sold. (In 1916 he reported), the condition of slaves was not markedly different from that of the Temne."<sup>53</sup>

50. Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 8470, p. 534

51. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 283

52. Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 1885, p. 94

53. N.W. Thomas, op. cit., p. 161



### *P. Limba Tribe*

It would seem that the Susu slave system had made the transition from a purely commercial one to that of one where domestic slaves were absorbed into the family. In 1923 Captain W. B. Stanley estimated that 33% of the Susu were slaves. He estimated that the slave population was 17,738 out of a total Susu population of 53,753.

ern Sierra Leone, but were pushed aside by the Temne, Koranko, and Yalunka. During the time of the Atlantic slave trade, "the Limba area was regarded by the Yalunka and others as a source of slaves." In 1787 over 3,100 were sold into slavery by the Yalunka.

Bilali, who led a slave revolt against the Temne, relied upon Limba help against the Susu and Temne. "Perhaps because few western Limba were slave owners and because a fair proportion of the slaves belonging to the West-Temne of the Scarcies-Mallakori region were Limba seized in the east, the western Limba of Tonko seem to have actively aided and harboured escaped slaves. . . Bilali and his followers, who, whenever the Susu-Temne war broke out, were able to maintain their independence by withdrawing into Limba country."

54. "A Provisional History of the Limba, with special reference to Tonko Limba Chiefdom" *Sierra Leone Studies*, New Series No. 13, September 1959, p. 173

55. V.R. Dorjahn & A.S. Thibodeau, *op. cit.*, p. 178

### F. Limba Tribe.

There is very little information available about the Limba Tribe. The Limba entered what is now Sierra Leone in small groups together with some pagan Fula, after having been ejected from Futa Jalon in the course of wars there. During their early years they were defeated by other tribes. Formerly they occupied a large stretch of country in Northern Sierra Leone, but were pushed aside by the Temne, Koranko, and Yalunka. During the time of the Atlantic slave trade, "the Limba area was regarded by the Yalunka<sup>54</sup> and others as a source of slaves." In 1767 over 3,500 were sold into slavery by the Yalunka.

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54. "A Provisional History of the Limba, with special reference to tonko Limba Chiefdom" Sierra Leone Studies, New Series No. 12, December 1959, p. 275

55. V.R. Dorjahn & A.S. Tholley, op. cit., p. 276

The Tonko Limba chiefdom was settled according to Limba tradition by Limba migrants from Palaba. "Although these people were warriors, their initial aim was not for war affairs."<sup>56</sup> In the area around Tambi the Limba established the village of Dunkuya. During the tribal wars this was a hiding place of the Limba and until the tribal wars were over, war never reached there. Samory in the 1870's threatened the Tonko Limba but never attacked.

The Susu disliked the Limba because of their willingness to harbor escaped Limba slaves. In the 1880's Samory's rule in the Upper Scarcies area relaxed because he was engaged in wars in the interior. The Limba began to revolt and attacked Forekaria. Alimami Dauda of Forekaria requested aid from the Susu warrior Karimu who occupied Tambi. "His reason for doing this was that his slaves had escaped from him and settled in Tonka and Sela chiefdoms."<sup>57</sup>

The fighting continued between Karimu and the Limbas. The Frontier Police Force led by Inspector General A.M. Moore was unable to capture Tambi in May 1891. Major G.F. Browne led a second attack in March 1892 which only resulted in all the British officers becoming casualties. Finally in April 1892, with the aid of Bai Bureh and Colonel A.B. Ellis Tambi was taken. The Tonko Limba had successfully used the

56, Ibid., p. 277

57. Ibid., p. 280

British to defeat the Susu. There is no information on what happened to the escaped slaves.

The eastern Limba were ruled by Suluku of Bumban who came from Sangara in the Susu country. Suluku ruled the Biriwa chiefdom which lay across the Freetown-Falaba trade route. During the Samory wars the chiefdom had been settled by Mandingoes fleeing from Samory. Suluku was happy to have the Mandingoes settle in his chiefdom as they "acted as a buffer between the Lokos and the Limbas."<sup>58</sup> The Mandingoes traders were useful to Suluku because they could supply him with weapons.

In 1888 Suluku signed a treaty with the British. Although he was "allied with the Sofas, he feared them, suspecting they might conspire against him with his Muslim subjects."<sup>59</sup> During the Hut Tax Rebellion he remained loyal to the British probably because of the British expeditions against Samory in the 1890's.

Around 1892 Chief Suluku agreed to stop the Mandingoes from slave trading in his chiefdom. Suluku made the order effective once he had seen that the British were able to protect him against Samory. In 1893 the establishment of a Frontier Police station at Bumban convinced Suluku of the sincerity and power of the British intentions.

58. Alhaji Saccoh, personal interview, 5 April 1963

59. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 475

Suluku recognized superior power when he saw it.

Several of his messengers stated Suluku's position when they testified to David Chalmers in 1898. "A man who wishes to live long must behave well, but if you are headstrong you will not live long - you are told to do something by someone stronger than yourself - you must obey. We want to live long." <sup>60</sup> "Therefore Suluku ended the slave trade to Futa Jalon. Due to the high duty charged by the French on cattle it had become unprofitable.

There are no descriptions of Limba slavery available. Captain W. B. Stanley estimated in 1923 that 5% of the Limba were slaves. He estimated 5,600 to be slaves out of a population of 112,010. He noted that the Limba of the Wara-Wara chiefdoms in the Koinadugu District had few slaves. "On the other hand, in places where the Limba has lived in close contact with other tribes who are slave-owners, as for example, the Limba of Sella and Tanko chiefdoms in the Karene District, and more especially where they have also accepted the Mohammedan Faith, they have become slave-owners, but not to the extent of their neighbours." <sup>61</sup>

It would seem that the Limba profited little from the Atlantic and internal slave trade. Also it appears that they had a reputation for harboring runaway slaves. However, there are no descriptions of how the Limba slave was treated.

60. Chalmers's Report, Part II, line 2149, p. 108

61. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 43

G. Loko Tribe.

During the time of the Atlantic slave trade, the Loko Tribe appears not to have had much contact with the European slave traders and their agents. "The Lokos... were not united among themselves, and afforded easy access to the entrance and settlement of Mohammedan strangers among them, who, becoming powerful, at length established an authority which enabled them to compete with the native pagan chiefs." <sup>62</sup> In the late eighteenth century, "the Lokos invited a Mandingo from Kankan, Pa Sirey to come to their aid and bring his warriors. He was evidently promised that members of his family should rule as Kings of all Loko land alternatively with Sorie Kutu's family." <sup>63</sup> Sorie Kutu, the leading Loko warrior, had disappeared on a trip to Susu country and Pa Sirey became the chief of the Lokos.

"During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the slave traders carried off large numbers of Lokos as slaves and the Lokos developed their warlike characteristics more than ever as a means of self-defense." <sup>64</sup> Pa Sirey sold slaves to the traders at Kissy. The entire area was in

62. E. Hirst, "An Attempt at Reconstructing the History of the Loko People from about 1790 to the present day," Sierra Leone Studies, New Series No. 9 December 1957, p.30

63. Ibid., pp. 28-29

64. Ibid., p. 31



turmoil with the Temne, Loko, and Limba fighting among themselves using weapons gained from the slave traders on the coast.

The most prominent Loko slave trader was Gumbu Smart. He had been captured in the 1780's but, "proved himself so capable and intelligent that he was not sold but employed."<sup>65</sup> Smart was sent up country to buy slaves by the Europeans on Bunce Island. "He bought chiefly his own Loko countrymen, but instead of sending them to Bunce Island he trained them, as a private army of his own."<sup>66</sup> However Smart did not use his power to support the Lokos but instead allied himself with the Temne who allowed him to settle at Rokon. "Soon he was the most powerful chief in the country, independent of his employees at Bunce Island."<sup>67</sup> There is no information on the relationship between Pa Sirey and Gumbu Smart.<sup>68</sup>

As long as the Atlantic slave trade lasted Gumbu Smart remained the power to be dealt with in the Sierra Leone River area. Smart aided the British in their war against the Temne for the possession of the peninsula where the settlement of

65. C. Fyfe, op. cit., pp.65-66

66. C. Fyfe, A Short History of Sierra Leone, p. 25

67. C. Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone, p. 66

68. Pa Sirey and Gumbu Smart represent two ways that the Lokos could adapt to the growing European power in their area. Gumbu Smart joined the Europeans and became strong. Pa Sirey kept his distance and instead established a warrior training school at Malal. These warriors were trained probably in the traditional manner and were of little use once the British decided to support the Temne over the Loko. Cf. E. Hirst, op. cit., p. 32 concerning the training school.

Sierra Leone was located. By the 1820's the Atlantic slave trade from the Sierra Leone River area was on the decline with the timber trade replacing the slave trade. "It restored the Temne a means of getting European goods, scarce since the slave-traders left, and again provided chiefs with revenue from rents and customs."<sup>69</sup> Trade with the Europeans also meant "a ready supply of weapons that could be used against the enemies of the Temne.

The Lokos whose name had been associated with the slave trading activities of Gumbu Smart were now blamed by the British for the warfare in the Sierra Leone River area. "The Lokos, perhaps, a little unjustly, were regarded as the chief disturbers of the peace and the chief danger along the trade route between Timbo and Freetown."<sup>70</sup> British support shifted from the Loko to the Temne. Thus in 1825 the British supported the Temne in an argument with the Smart family. By the 1840's the Temne were the dominant power in the Port Loko region. The Loko remained dormant in their remnant chiefdom until the rise of Bai Bureh who led a revolt against the British in 1898. The Smart family remained at Mahera and rose to power during the Hut Tax Rebellion when they supported the British.

Different clans among the Loko would fight each other or they would fight other tribes. The captured prisoners

69. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 125

70. E. Hirst, op. cit., p. 32

would be sold to the Mandingoes. In the time of the Atlantic slave trade these slaves would be sent to the coast and then to the New World. In the time of the internal slave trade the slaves would probably end up in Futa Jalon.

If the slaves from a tribal war were kept they would be divided. The booty from such a war would be divided as follows. "If the number of slaves is up to one hundred, they are arranged in rows of four. Two rows are for the chief; the other two are for the warriors. The chief takes one of his two rows and divides it into two parts -- one part for the Mori man who gave the good magic for the expedition and other for the African witch doctor."<sup>71</sup>

The Loko slave lived in the household of the master. "The slaves and the children of household did many things in common, such as eating together."<sup>72</sup> The slave was soon absorbed into the extended family. "The children of the slave owner, the children of the slaves did the work in common and enjoyed the fruits of the harvest in common . . . The older slaves and master ate together."<sup>73</sup> The slaves were not given free days as they were considered part of the family.

A slave could be sold only if he had committed a serious crime. "If the slave committed adultery twice and the master

71. Pa Sheku Kanu, personal interview, 4 April 1963

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

paid the woman damage, on the third occasion the slave was sold . . . to another master in another area outside the chiefdom."<sup>74</sup>

In 1923 Captain W. B. Stanley noted that among the Loko,<sup>75</sup> "one finds very few persons in servitude amongst them." He estimated that 5% of the Loko were slaves. This would mean 2,252 slaves out of a total Loko population of 45,052. By 1923 most of the Loko slaves probably had been absorbed into the families of their respective masters.

74. Ibid.

75. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 43

### A. General Policy.

When the Protectorate was declared in 1896 the position of the master to his slave was improved because now the slave had to pay for his freedom. Previously all the slave had to do was to work for the white man.

## CHAPTER III.

The underlying hope of the British was that since

### III. British Policy Concerning Slavery, 1896-1922.

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of existing slavery is left to work itself, and in a decade

or two, will probably cease to exist; already in many parts

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between a freeman and a slave."

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# A. General Policy.

When the Protectorate was declared in 1896 the position of the master to his slave was improved because now the slave had to pay for his freedom. Previously all the slave had to do was to touch the flag pole of the Frontier Police station. The underlying hope of the British was that since slave trading had been abolished, slavery would die a natural death after a generation or so. This hope was reassured by the belief that Sierra Leonean slavery was rather mild, so that no one suffered under the system.

Governor L. Probyn in 1906 stated, "accurately," (according to Mr. Antrobus of the Colonial Office) the British policy towards slavery in the Protectorate. "Although the Government has not abolished existing slavery in the Protectorate, the policy has been to stand aloof from the system: in other words, the power of the Government is never used to back up the system of slavery. The system of existing slavery is left to work itself, and in a decade or two, will probably cease to exist; already in many parts of the Protectorate, it is very difficult to distinguish<sup>1</sup> between a freeman and a slave."

Some people confused the abolition of the slave trade with that of slavery. Lord Hailey makes this confusion in his book on native administration when he states that slavery was abolished in the Protectorate in 1896 when

1. C.O. 270/484, No. 140, 28 May 1906



2  
actually only the slave trade was abolished. The Colonial Office was probably happy to have such confusion reign as it kept the British public from asking embarrassing questions about slavery in the Protectorate.

When the Protectorate was declared, slave trading was abolished. General British policy towards Protectorate slavery from 1892 to 1926 was that of toleration. The reasons for this policy were that, first, the British believed that the growth of "civilization" in the Protectorate would cause the natural death of slavery. Second, the type of slavery in the Protectorate was not seen as harmful. Therefore prior to 1926 little was done to hasten slavery's end.

Redemption of slaves was encouraged, African law and custom were adapted to make slavery easier for the slave, and British law and administrative procedure were partially modified in favor of the slave. All the methods used were halfway due to the belief that slavery would eventually wither away. As will be seen later the pressure for more definite action against slavery came from the League of Nations. Total abolition was the result of a slave revolt in 1926.

2. Native Administration in the British African Territories,  
Part III, p. 299

## B. Redemption of Slaves.

Ordinance No. 20 of 1896 was promulgated on 15 September 1896 to define the territory of the Protectorate and to determine the way it would be administered. Section 30 provided that a slave might be redeemed upon the payment, "of such sum as may be fixed by the Governor (not exceeding, in the case of an adult, four pounds, and, in the case of a child, two pounds)". The Protectorate ordinance improved the position of the master for now the slave could no longer gain freedom by merely going to the Frontier Police station.

"The Chiefs were pleased that slaves should have to pay a certain amount to be free."<sup>3</sup> J.C.E. Parkes in 1898 had not heard of a single case of redemption, neither had Dr. T. Hood the District Commissioner of Ronietta District. In Ronietta District they merely ran away to Freetown. Sir Samuel Lewis observed in 1898 that, "the slaves do not seem to care about it."<sup>4</sup> In 1898 four pounds was a lot of money, especially in an economy where money was still an innovation.

It was not until 1907 that Governor L. Probyn and the government printed a redemption certificate.<sup>5</sup> The Governor also, "ordered that in all cases of redemption of slaves

3. Cmd. 9388 (Part II) and Cmd. 9391 (Part II) of 1899, (hereinafter referred to as the Chalmer's Report), Part II, line 795, p. 40
4. Chalmer's Report, Part II, line 2742, p. 149
5. Cf., Appendix II., a copy of a redemption certificate.

payment was to be made through the district commissioners."<sup>6</sup>

Between 1898 and 1920 no information was published by the British concerning redemption. The first information was revealed in the 1920 report for the Northern Province. For the Koinadugu District in the Northern Province there are complete returns from 1916 to 1923.<sup>7</sup> During this period a total of 154 slaves were redeemed. However, this district only redeemed 35 slaves out of a total of 619 for the Northern Province during a thirty month period reported by Captain Stanley for Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1926. In 1923 Captain Stanley reported that the yearly average of slaves being redeemed was 800.

In the case of Koinadugu District there were great variations in the number of slaves redeemed. The number varied from 4 in 1920 to 57 in 1919. In the 1921 report District Commissioner E. F. Sayers stated that the redemption almost always included a complete family of several adults and children. He also said that the redemptions were mostly in the Yalunka country or in the Koranko Chiefdom of Kamadugu. By 1923 D.C. H.C. Hodgson reported, "all work is paid for - there is no forced labour."<sup>8</sup> Whether the slave received these wages was not reported.

6. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 9

7. Cf., Appendix III., a list of slaves redeemed in Koinadugu District.

8. C.O. 270/53, Annual Report for 1923, Northern Province, p. 17

The principal problem of redemption was that of disguised slave dealing. As District Commissioner Sayers of Koinadugu District put it, "Shady intrigue enters into no small proportion of these transactions."<sup>9</sup> Redemption was seen by some as a way to purchase new servants. Captain Stanley stated that, "I have on more than one occasion as a District Commissioner had natives from another district apply to me for the return of their redemption money on the ground that the slaves they had redeemed would not consent to live with them or obey their orders."<sup>10</sup>

Most of redeeming was done by, "free-born relatives with a genuine interest in the persons they redeem."<sup>11</sup> A few number of redemptions was concerned with settling the status of a runaway slave. The main problem of the District Commissioner was to make sure the redemption was genuine and not disguised slave-buying. In Stanley's opinion, if unquestioned redemption were allowed, the rate of redemption would climb into the thousands. Young girls would be redeemed for wives and young children would be redeemed to be used as house servants and workers on the farms.

9. C.O. 270/48, Annual Report for 1920, Northern Province, Appendix C
10. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 40
11. Ibid., p. 39

12. C.O. 270/48, Annual Report for 1920, Northern Province, Appendix C

13. Ibid.

According to the British reports the chief reason for redemption was ill-treatment. The British explanation for the small number of redemptions out of a Protectorate population estimated to be nearly one and a half million was that most of the slaves lived in conditions that were tolerable, hence the lack of desire to be free. Only those that were ill-treated applied for redemption. According to District Commissioner Sayers, and ill-treated slave could obtain freedom with money, "advanced by friends, lovers, people of the same local origin, or rivals of the master who desire to thus deprive him of power and influence."<sup>12</sup>

Sayers was talking about the situation in Koinadugu District where many of the slaves were enslaved as a result of the Samory raids of the 1890's. The Fula masters in the area, "have a reputation of treating their slaves harshly,"<sup>13</sup> and Sayers was puzzled by the small number of redemptions requested in Koinadugu. When one sees that in 1928 when 7,000 slaves in this region left their masters, the only place in Sierra Leone where such as mass exodus occurred, it would seem that ill-treated slaves were not being redeemed. Thus Sayers judgment of the situation would seem to be inaccurate. However, until a full study of slavery in this area is done, one can only guess.

12. C.O. 270/49, Annual Report for 1920, Northern Province, Appendix C

13. Ibid.

According to the statements collected from people living in the Mabole Valley area it was very difficult to get the money to be redeemed. According to these people who remember the times prior to 1926, "no slave ever thought of redeeming himself or herself in our own village as it was difficult for him to get £ 4 for one person."<sup>14</sup> Kemoh Kodogbo, a trader in Heremakono, Guinea, where many of freed slaves settled, stated, "It was even difficult for some masters to get such amount in one place."<sup>15</sup> According to Kemoh Sorie, the village headman in Bonoya, who also owned slaves, "We should not have refused on such an amount, but we did not encourage that suggestion."<sup>16</sup>

Captain Stanley misread the facts when he stated that slaves were content under such a system and that the low number of redemptions proved that the system was mild. All the low number redemptions proved was that the most of the slaves could not afford redemption. If the slaves were so happy under the system why did Captain Stanley predict, "grave discontent and probably much emigration to French territory"<sup>17</sup> if immediate abolition were effected?

Captain Stanely also pointed out that out of the 7,000 Sierra Leoneans who served in the Cameroons and East Africa

14. Foday Swandy Fofana, third-person interview, 18 June 1963

15. Kemoh Kodogbo, third-person interview, 20 June 1963

16. Kemoh Sorie, third-person interview, 26 June 1963

17. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 41



during World War One, were slaves. When the war was over they were paid from £ 30 to £ 40 and, "scarcely any of them<sup>18</sup> redeemed themselves." Many of the returned slaves gave their masters presents, but they did not resume their old relationship. These returning slaves were acting exactly in the same way that the returnees from the Congo Free State had acted in the late nineteenth century. Captain Stanley should have read J.C.E. Parkes' testimony of 1898. Just because the returning slave did not redeem himself did not mean that he became a slave again.

By 1923 Captain Stanley had come to the conclusion that redemption was too slow. At the 800 per year rate it would take fifty years to end slavery, "which was obviously too long to wait."<sup>19</sup> Another solution would have to be found and this was to be a gradual abolition law which the Governor promulgated in April 1926.

18. Ibid., p. 42

19. Ibid., p. 42

### C. Bequest of Slaves.

The Protectorate Ordinance No. 20 of 1896 declared that, "All dealing in slaves is unlawful.-and...all bequests of slaves shall be absolutely void:" Section 36 stated in essence British policy. Slave trading was to be abolished, no slaves would be inherited at death. Once the masters died there would be no more slaves. But this policy never worked for one reason, failure of the British to prevent the passage of slaves to the heir.

District Commissioner, W. B. Stanley asked Attorney-General Greenwood about bequests in 1917. Mr. Greenwood replied, "A bequest is a disposition by will of property to some person who would otherwise not get that property, and is an artificial excrescence upon the customary law of inheritance. Therefore by the use of the word 'bequest' I think the Ordinance excludes devolution by inheritance."<sup>20</sup>

This was not the intention of the framers of the Protective Ordinance of 1896. Governor Cardew was no lawyer and probably saw the word 'bequest' as meaning no inheritance of slaves. If the British in 1917 had been interested in changing this section so as to prohibit inheritance of slaves, an amendment could have been proposed. During World War One the British could not be expected to do much about

Sierra Leonean slavery especially when this might cause dissatisfaction in the Protectorate, an area which supplied 7,000 men for the war effort. Until 1926 District Commissioners heard cases in which different heirs would dispute over the possession of the decedent's slaves. A complete study of these cases has not been done. There is one example of this type of case at the Pujehun District Office dated, November 1925. It concerned a dispute about the possession of ten slaves in which Brima Faike and Baimbu Kpalalpo of the Makpelli Chiefdom were the litigants. The District Commissioner decided to give Baimbu Kpalalpo the slaves.

The effect of this law was to make it very difficult for a slave to obtain his freedom. The prospective traveller, however, could appeal the decision to the District Commissioner. Permission to leave could be granted if it would aid the "welfare and prospects" of the traveller.

British policy in 1903 judging from the laws, was that the slave should stay with his master. While with his master the slave should earn the £4 necessary for redemption. The British Protectorate would bring prosperity for all, thus any slave who was capable of earning his redemption

21. Ibid.

22. Section 35, Ordinance No. 15 of 1905

#### D. Migration of Slaves.

Regulations were also made concerning the movements of peoples in the Protectorate. Section 51 of the Ordinance No. 16 of 1905 stated: "It shall be unlawful to harbour or assist any native who has left the Chiefdom to which he belongs without first notifying the Tribal Authorities and without complying with the native laws respecting journeys from or residence out of the territory which is subject to such Authority." The purpose of this law was to remove, "the principal cause of the interminable native wars which persistently retarded the development of the country."<sup>21</sup> The effect of this law was to make it more difficult for a slave to obtain his freedom. The prospective traveller, however, could appeal the decision to the District Commissioner. Permission to leave could be granted if it would aid the, "welfare and prospects,"<sup>22</sup> of the traveller.

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21. Ibid.,

22. Section 56, Ordinance No. 16 of 1905

money would not become a charge upon society when he gained his freedom.

No study has been made of the effects of this law upon slavery. Immigration to the Colony continued with and without the chiefs' permission. The city of Freetown grew in population fed by migrants from the Protectorate, therefore it is safe to conclude that people left their chiefdoms regardless of the Chief's permission. After the abolition of slavery in 1928 there was some question about the possibility of this migration law defeating the purpose of the slavery law. But little difficulty was seen by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, L.S. Amery, who had complete faith in the British District Commissioners' abilities to administer the migration law with justice.

was that of indirect rule. The British District Commissioner was in fact the ruler of the District but he was aided in his administration by the local rulers. The British were attempting to utilize as many of the local laws, customs, and administrative structures so as to rule over the Protectorate as efficiently and as cheaply as possible.

Since the British did not want to preserve slavery, they did everything short of abolition to hasten the withering away of this social institution. Yet they were

### E. Adaption of African Law and Custom.

The British policy as stated by Governor L. Probyn in 1906 was to guard the interests of the slaves during the transition from slavery to freely contracted labor. "In the interest of the slave, I think it is better to insist that the native laws and customs respecting their treatment are to be rigidly observed by the natives."<sup>23</sup>

The British hoped to preserve the elements of customary law that protected the rights of the slaves.

Earlier in 1905 the Protectorate Native Law Ordinance was enacted. The purpose of this law was to attempt to bridge the gap between British and Sierra Leonean tribal law; so as to make British administration of the Protectorate easier. The underlying philosophy of the Ordinance was that of indirect rule. The British District Commissioner was in fact the ruler of the District but he was aided in his administration by the local rulers. The British were attempting to utilize as many of the local laws, customs, and administrative structures so as to rule over the Protectorate as efficiently and as cheaply as possible.

Since the British did not want to preserve slavery, they did everything short of abolition to hasten the withering away of this social institution. Yet they were



aware that, "this system is the basis of the social and economic life of the Protectorate."<sup>24</sup> In the opinion of Mr. Antrobus of the Colonial Office, the system of slavery, "is not on the whole harsh towards the so-called slave, but secures for him and his family work and maintenance during his active life, and support and care during old age and sickness."<sup>25</sup>

The Government policy regarding the punishment of slaves by their masters is a good example of British attempts to incorporate African custom and law into the British administrative system. This regulation resulted after Governor Probyn visited the Soro Chiefdom in the Bandajuma District sometime in 1906. The Governor discovered a slave that had been stocked by the master without permission of the chief. "I found, after inquiring, that in olden days, no master could put a slave in stock without first obtaining the authority of the Chief...I insisted on the case being dealt with by the Chief. The Chief after consulting with his principal men, fined the master and, at my suggestion (the hearing having taken place in my presence) the fine was handed to the slave who promptly purchased his freedom therewith."<sup>26</sup>

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

The people of the Soro Chiefdom told the Governor that it was the custom in the older days for a Chief to intercede in case of a slave committing an offense. "This intercession meant that the Chief took custody of the slave with a view to seeing whether by firm but considerate treatment a reform could not be brought about in the man's character: it is said that this intercession almost invariably had good results and that when the slave was returned to his master, the relationship between the two was greatly improved." <sup>27</sup> Until a full study is done of Mende slavery, this custom of intercession ought to be considered suspect.

The effect of Governor Probyn's instruction about intercession certainly strengthened the position of the chief. Probyn also believed it would aid the position of the slaves. "The effect of the foregoing instructions will be that masters will fear to stock slaves without authority, and that they will probably treat the slaves with greater consideration in order to escape from having to pay the Chief's fee for hearing an application." <sup>28</sup>

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

## F. Forced Labor.

The problem of slavery was closely related to the problem of forced labor. Although the buying and selling of slaves had been prohibited in 1896, the rights of the existing slaves needed protection. The slave in the Protectorate lived in a system that was a combination of slavery and forced labor. To the British officials slavery, "is a reality, under an unfortunate and invidious name, an elaborate system of labour governed by native customs and precedents of long standing."<sup>29</sup> The British would tolerate this system, "until the time comes when longer and closer connexion with European methods and ideas has prepared the native mind to receive a system of labour based on contract."<sup>30</sup>

Ordinance No. 16 of 1905, the Protectorate Native Law Ordinance, attempted to alleviate the conditions of slavery and forced labor. Section 18 of the ordinance allowed the chief with the approval of the District Commissioner to, "commute the labour, which they are entitled to have supplied for the purpose of working their farms or buildings or repairing their compounds, to a fixed tithe or share of the crops harvested by the people or of the produce collected by the latter." Until the District records are fully examined it is unknown at what rate such commutations

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

occurred. The commutation agreements were to be recorded in the Decree Books at the District Office.

The purposes of commutation were several. First the commutation was seen as a way to allow a merchant to live in the Chiefdom yet excuse him from the customary duties owed to the chief. A chief had the right to ask for labor to work his farms, to maintain the roads, to maintain his house, and to provide carriers. Governor L. Probyn explained to the Legislative Council that commutation, "would tend to induce a more cordial feeling in the Protectorate between the parties concerned; the absence of such a feeling is obviously detrimental to trade and commerce." <sup>31</sup> On 23 May 1905 the Freetown Chamber of Commerce sent a petition to the Legislative Council favoring the commutation section. They favored paying a specified amount of money in place of the custom of presenting gifts for permission to reside in a chiefdom.

Second the Legislative Council did not want to weaken the power of the Chief who was essential to the administrative system of the Protectorate. Yet the Government wanted some check upon the chief's right to forced labor. Several sections were added that prevented the chief from abusing his right. Section 16 stated that a chief could not use labor on his own farm to such an extent it prevented

31. C.O. 270/40, Sierra Leone Legislative Council Debates of 1905, 23 February 1905, pp. 365-366

the laborers, "from having sufficient time to cultivate their own lands." Section 17 prevented abuses concerning labor for the chief's compound. The right to call out labor for the benefit of the whole chiefdom was reserved to the Governor.

Commutation was seen as a way to preserve the chief's power. In a changing society where a money economy was evolving, tithes would replace forced labor. Through commutation the British provided a way to make the transition from a barter to a money economy.

The Colonial Office early in 1906 told Governor Probyn to suspend all action under Section 18, "which relates to commutation of free labour rendered to the Chiefs for their personal benefit."<sup>32</sup> Apparently they feared the weakening of the Chief's power. Also there was some concern in the Colonial Office whether the commutation would apply to the entire tribe or just to individuals.

Governor Probyn in March 1906 requested that commutation be tried experimentally in one or two Chiefdoms. He was convinced that, "all the Chiefs agreed that the change would be very beneficial both to them and to the people."<sup>33</sup>

The Governor proposed that the assent of the people of the

32. C.O. 267/483, No. 42, 1 March 1906

33. Ibid.

tribe be required. It was the Governor's opinion, "either the whole tribe or none of the tribe would agree to commutation."<sup>34</sup>

Probyn was against a poll tax because some years the crops might not be sufficient. He believed a tithe would be a better way of securing revenue. the exist-

The Colonial Office told Governor Probyn to go ahead. They requested a report at the end of the year which would say how the people accepted the change and which is the best way to bring about commutation. That report is unavailable.

34. Ibid. Having its abolition sooner or later forced upon the Colony's Government."

Wilkinson suggested that as a first step that voluntary registration of slaves be done. Second state would be set after which unregistered slaves be declared free. After registration took place then the Government would know, "the real extent and nature of the problem."

On 15 July 1919, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Milner, agreed to Wilkinson's suggestion of voluntary registration.

However, in October, 1920 nothing had been done due to lack of staff to carry out the job. Governor Wilkinson

35. Cmd. 3026 of 1920, p. 3

36. Ibid.



### G. Registration of Slaves.

Probably a combination of the ending of World War One and the fear of international action concerning slavery increased Governor R.J. Wilkinson's concern over the existence of slavery in the Protectorate. On 22 January 1919, Governor Wilkinson sent a dispatch to the Colonial Office discussing ways to effect a final settlement of slavery and forced labor in the Protectorate.

Governor Wilkinson believed that with the ending of the war the question should no longer be postponed. "For my own part I cannot believe that slavery can be perpetuated, and I feel that the choice lies between abolishing it ourselves, or having its abolition sooner or later forced upon the Colony's Government."<sup>35</sup>

Wilkinson suggested that as a first step that voluntary registration of slaves be done. Second a date would be set after which unregistered slaves be declared free. After registration took place then the Government would know,<sup>36</sup> "the real extent and nature of the problem." On 15 July 1919, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Milner, agreed to Wilkinson's suggestion of voluntary registration.

However, in October, 1920 nothing had been done due to lack of staff to carry out the job. Governor Wilkinson

35. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 9

36. Ibid.

promised as soon as he had the staff, something would be done. But the problem of slavery was not considered to be the most important. Wilkinson saw the problem as "one of status rather than actual servitude,"<sup>37</sup> Registration never took place.

#### CHAPTER IV.

37. Ibid.

IV. BRITISH EFFORTS TO GRADUALLY ABOLISH  
SLAVERY IN THE PROTECTORATE.



In October, 1921, Acting-Governor Dr. Maxwell proposed that slavery be abolished to aid the economic growth of Sierra Leone. At the time Governor A.R. Slater arrived in Sierra Leone on 4 May 1922, the question of slavery was already in the minds of the British. When Governor Slater went to Makump, in the Northern Province, he urged the Chiefs assembled there to treat their, "domestics," well.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Slater was deeply impressed by an article that appeared in the Sierra Leone Weekly News. It was from this article that Slater assumed what was Sierra Leonean Colony opinion about Protectorate slavery. This article was a three part comment on the Annual Reports of the Northern and Southern Provinces for 1921.

The second part which appeared on 30 September 1922 contained the comments that appear to have affected Slater's attitudes towards the Sierra Leoneans on the slavery question. Slater wrote the Colonial Office on 12 October 1922, "if you will be so good as to read the leading article in the Sierra Leone Weekly News for 30 September 1922, you will see that even the Colony Editor of that journal is greatly concerned to defend domestic slavery against the criticism of a district commissioner."<sup>2</sup>

1. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 23

2. Ibid., p. 12

The lasting effect of this article can be seen in Slater's reference to it when Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1926 was released in Sierra Leone. This collection of despatches relating to slavery in the Protectorate was issued on 25 January 1926 prior to the discussion of the gradual abolition bill in the Legislative Council. In the sessional paper Governor Slater wrote, "there is a total absence of any 'public opinion' in Sierra Leone adverse to the system...The only reference in the Freetown Press since my arrival has been a severe criticism of a district commissioner who had had the hardihood to advocate reforms in connection with what the Editor called a 'really delicate matter'."<sup>3</sup>

The underlying theme of the editorial in the Sierra Leone Weekly News was that much of the troubles of the Protectorate would end if, "the Educated African would be given a place in the responsible management of his country."<sup>4</sup> Slater was correct in stating that there was no criticism of the slavery system in the article but neither was there in Captain W.B. Stanley's statements in his report for the Northern Province. The Weekly News later stated, "We entirely endorse what Captain Stanley has stated, to the effect that in all respects these slaves are practically freemen."<sup>5</sup>

3. Ibid., p. 21

4. Sierra Leone Weekly News, (hereafter referred to as S.L.W.N.) 23 September 1922

5. Ibid., 30 September 1922

Captain Stanley had written, "no matter how experienced a political officer is, it is usually impossible for him, merely by inspection, to say who is in servitude and who is not, since those in servitude dress the same, share the same food, and live in the same class of houses as their masters. "I am no advocate of servitude, but one must write what one sees."<sup>6</sup> Captain Stanley defended the slavery system in the Protectorate when he belittled an incident in Port Loko reported by District Commissioner H.C. Hodgson. "That a slave recently hanged himself rather than return to his master, shows what sort of relations exist between owner and 'domestics' in some cases."<sup>7</sup> Stanley's comment on this was, "Too much importance should not in my opinion, be attached to an incident of this kind."<sup>8</sup>

What both the Sierra Leone Weekly News and Captain Stanley were doing, was trying to show that the slavery system in the Protectorate was mild. It was not accurate for Governor Slater to draw the conclusion that either party was defending slavery. Yet this was the conclusion he drew in the case of the Sierra Leoneans.

6. C.O. 270/50, Annual Report for 1921, Northern Province, p. 7

7. Ibid., p. 25

8. Ibid., p. 7



The Sierra Leoneans' argument as stated in the Sierra Leone Weekly News was that they better understood the slavery problem. "We have some personal knowledge of the institution and see in the academic attitude of the political officers a sort of hazard, treading towards 'the danger zone' of the productive capacity of the people..." The article implied that if abolition occurred Freetown would be flooded with, "idlers and do-nothings...loafers and people of doubtful honesty..." who would make "the city a den of thieves." The article saw great danger in making: "literally free, those who for years have enjoyed the good will of their masters."

If the slaves were so happy, why would they invade Freetown? This contradiction was never resolved by the Sierra Leoneans. Freetown was being filled with Protectorate migrants who since World War One outnumbered the Creoles. Yet the tribal migrants or "aborigines" as some Creoles called them, were no political threat because of the high franchise qualifications. Probably due to the negative character of the Sierra Leonean argument, Governor Slater assumed that little support could be gained from the Sierra Leoneans in his attempts to abolish slavery.

The essence of the Sierra Leonean position was that slavery in the Protectorate was not the important issue. The important issue was that the educated Africans should be given positions of responsibility in the Government of Sierra Leone. Governor Slater probably saw this lack of concern for slaves another indication of the inability of the Sierra Leonean to rule himself. Yet the Governor admitted that the slave system in the Protectorate was mild.

Pressure to abolish slavery was also coming through other channels. On 6 September 1922, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland of Australia made a speech at the League of Nations Assembly where he noted that there had been a, "considerable recrudescence of slavery in Africa of late... it is in Abyssinia." <sup>10</sup> Later the Third Assembly had passed a resolution requesting that the Council present a report on slavery throughout the world to the Fourth Assembly when it met in 1923. The Secretary-General sent a circular letter to all League members requesting a report about the existing state of slavery in their territories.

In 1922, in response to a request by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Governor Slater sent a despatch to the Colonial Office about domestic slavery in Sierra Leone. Slater proposed that after a certain date, (which was not specified) every child born in the Sierra Leone Protectorate

10. League of Nations, Third Assembly Minutes (1922), p. 49

would be free. The Governor added, "But the subject requires the most patient consideration and I confess that I have not yet got to grips with it."<sup>11</sup> Governor Slater noted in his annual address to the Sierra Leone Legislative Council that he would be eventually considering the slavery problem.

In 1923 it became apparent that the League was going to pursue the question more closely. The Fourth Assembly decided to, "entrust to a competent body the duty of continuing the investigation with a view to obtaining further information on the subject."<sup>12</sup> In Sierra Leone Captain W. B. Stanley, Commissioner for the Northern Province, wrote a detailed minute on slavery in the Protectorate.

In March 1923 the League Council decided to create a Temporary Slavery Commission. A month later a Provincial Commissioners Conference was held in Sierra Leone where they discussed Stanley's slavery minute of 1923. They decided at the meeting that, "domestic slavery should be abolished in the Protectorate.

In 1924 Sierra Leone's report to the League of Nations noted that slavery was illegal in the Colony but was permissible in the Protectorate. The report ended by stating

11. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 12

12. League of Nations, Fourth Assembly Minutes (1923), p.119

that, "The Governor had recently laid certain proposals for accelerating the abolition of domestic slavery before the Secretary of State, which are receiving his consideration."<sup>13</sup> So by September, 1924, the British were publicly committed to the abolition of slavery in the Sierra Leone Protectorate.

The principal issue concerning the Colony Sierra Leoneans was that of more African participation in the Sierra Leone Government. The issue of Protectorate slavery was viewed as subordinate to a subtler type of Colony slavery. Thus a British pronouncement on Protectorate slavery in the League of Nations was of little interest in Sierra Leone. The demands of the Colony Sierra Leoneans at this time were for more representation on the Legislative Council.

In 1924 their demands were met when a new Constitution was promulgated in which the unofficial African membership was increased. On October 28 1924, an election was held and E.S. Beokeu-Betts and Dr. H.C. Bankole-Bright were elected from the Urban area. The Rural representative was A.E. Tuboku-Metzger. "On the whole, personalities rather than issues dominated these early election campaigns"<sup>14</sup> Among the seven unofficial nominated members were included

13. League of Nations, Slavery 1923-1936, A.25 (a) 1924.VI., p. 10

14. A.T. Porter, Creoledom, p. 127

three Paramount Chiefs from the Protectorate. Each Paramount Chief would come from a different Province.

An Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had been in active in the Colony from 1912 to 1920. The Sierra Leone Auxiliary was a pressure group whose function was to advocate educated African interests against the actions of the British Colonial administration. The Auxiliary was never successful in winning a victory against the Colonial Office and this is probably why the group became defunct when the National Congress of British West Africa was established in 1920.

There were four major issues that occupied the Auxiliary. The first was the cannibalism trials at Gbangbama, the second was discrimination against African doctors by the British, the third was the imposition of an export duty upon palm kernels, and the fourth was the failure of a District Commissioner to redeem some slaves.

The Auxiliary was not an organization whose principal goal was to abolish slavery in the Protectorate. There was little concern about the Protectorate people by the Colony Sierra Leoneans (Creoles) who considered the Protectorate person as rather uncivilized. The Creoles were more interested in fighting the battle of racial discrimination. This must be remembered when considering the acts



of the Auxiliary in relation to the abolition of slavery in the Protectorate.

The contact of the London office of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society with the Auxiliary grew quite tenuous in 1925. J. Powell Boston, editor of the Sierra Leone Guardian had kept in contact with the Society. Boston wrote an editorial in his newspaper on 6 March 1925, in which, "he declared that slavery still exists and flourishes," in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. Boston also, "contended that it is impossible for the slave to find the money wherewith to redeem himself, although customary law gives him one day a week to work for himself - a provision it is said, more honored in the breach than in observance." Boston sent this editorial to London where his comments were reprinted in the July Anti-Slavery Reporter.

Travers Buxton, Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, had heard rumors that Governor Slater had proposed a slavery law in Sierra Leone and Buxton wanted a copy of Slater's speech. The following excerpt from Buxton's letter to the Colonial Office shows well the lack of communication between Freetown and London on the slavery question. "Is it possible for you to lend us a copy of the speech by Sir R. Slater to the Legislative Council a few weeks ago? I have tried several quarters in London, but have been unable to secure a copy, and we



understand there is some interesting information in it upon the question of pawning and domestic slavery. Had we been able to obtain this anywhere else, I would not have troubled you in the matter."<sup>15</sup> Two days later, the Anti-Slavery Society had a copy of Governor Slater's speech to the Legislative Council.

The Anti-Slavery Society in London was happy to see that something was finally being done but was unable to understand the Sierra Leonean position. Travers Buxton wrote to J. Powell Boston about the proposed bill. The following quote will again show the difference in attitude between Freetown and London. Buxton wrote, "We were glad to see that Sir A.R. Slater had announced in the Legislative Council that a Bill was to be brought in for putting an end to domestic slavery. We shall be glad to know the view of you and other friends upon the Bill. I see in the Weekly News that there is some criticism of it on the ground that compensation should have been provided for the masters, and that liberty may mean license. It seems to us that the Bill is to be welcomed as it is long since the subject was raised before any effective means have been taken to deal with the question, and it has been an anomaly that domestic slavery should linger on so long in a British Colony."<sup>16</sup>

15. British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Archives (hereafter referred to as B.F.A.S.A.), 6 April 1925

16. Ibid., 23 December 1925

The January 1926 issue of the Anti-Slavery Reporter carried a comment that the society was, "glad to see,"<sup>17</sup> that Governor Slater had introduced the new law about slavery in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. On 14 January the Anti-Slavery Society wrote to L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies that the, "Committee has seen with satisfaction the announcement of the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Legislative Council that a Bill is to be brought in for the abolition of the legal status of domestic slaves in the Colony and the Protectorate."<sup>18</sup> The Anti-Slavery Society said nothing about compensation and it would seem that they were not interested in the compensation question. The position of the Anti-Slavery Society was made known to all who were interested in Freetown, as this letter was included in Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1926, which was released in Freetown on 25 January 1926.

As can be seen the Anti-Slavery people in Sierra Leone and Great Britain were not important factors in the decision to end slavery in the Protectorate. Their contact with the problem was academic. The decision to end slavery in the Protectorate was affected by influences outside Sierra Leone.

17. Anti-Slavery Reporter, January 1926, p. 134

18. Sierra Leone Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1926, p. 32

On 12 March 1925, Governor Slater had sent a copy of a proposed slavery law for the Protectorate to the Colonial Office. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, L.S. Amery, had deferred his reply until he had a chance to read the report of the Temporary Slavery Commission which met in July, 1925. On 7 September Amery had sent a despatch to Governor Slater. In Amery's opinion the legal status of slavery did not have to be abolished in Sierra Leone because of Section 4 of the Sierra Leone Protectorate Courts Ordinance stated that, "no claim for slaves shall be entertained." Since the League Commission's report did not mention Sierra Leone it would seem that it was their opinion that the legal status of slavery did not exist in the Sierra Leone Protectorate.

The proposed law was introduced on 3 December 1926 in the Legislative Council and provided for the gradual abolition of slavery in the Protectorate without compensation to the owners. The proposal stated that all people born in the Protectorate after the commencement of the law would be free and that any slave would become free when his master died.

19. Cf., Appendix IV., copy of Ordinance No. 9 of 1926

The British in Sierra Leone had been spurred into action as the result of the League of Nations investigation into slavery. The Colonial Office in March 1924 had asked Governor Slater for information regarding slavery in Sierra Leone. The Colonial Office was responding to a letter requested by the League sent in December, 1923. On 30 April 1924 Governor Slater had sent a reply to the Colonial Office giving a brief summary of the relevant legislation.

On 24 June 1924 Governor Slater had sent a long despatch to the Colonial Office outlining all the arguments and proposals about slavery in the Protectorate. He classified the reasons for taking some action under two headings, a) Humanitarian and Moral, and b) Economic.

Under the Humanitarian and Moral category Governor Slater noted that nearly all the political officers favored total abolition of slavery. The officers found a, "large part of their time is wasted over the innumerable 'palavers,'<sup>20</sup> that arise from operation of the slavery system. Most of these disputes were of a trifling manner. The tedium from this, "must often border on exasperation when the officer has to bolster up a system which is totally repugnant to one of his most cherished traditions."<sup>21</sup>

20. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 28

21. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 28

Slater noted that Captain Stanley predicted that the system would die a natural death in fifty years. But this was too long to wait. "A policy of inaction would mean therefore that Great Britain was content to see slavery persist in one of His Majesty's Protectorates for some 25 years after Queen Victoria proclaimed British jurisdiction therein."<sup>22</sup>

Also the Governor saw slavery, no matter how mild, as degrading to master and slave. "The fact remains that a domestic slave is a slave, and that a bad master has powers over him or her which are repugnant to the principles of British justice." Slater quoted from Lord Lugard in his Dual Mandate to further make his point. "Slavery as an institution is essentially bad, demoralizing the master and debasing the slave."<sup>23</sup>

There was some disagreement over the economic effects of the ending of slavery in the Protectorate. In 1921 the financial position of Sierra Leone was, "desperate."<sup>24</sup>

Government revenues had fallen due to the drop in palm kernel prices. Whereas in 1920 the price varied from £28 to £48 a ton with 50,425 tons being exported, in 1921 the price varied from £18 to £23 a ton with only 40,409 tons being exported.<sup>25</sup>

22. Ibid., p. 29

23. Ibid., p. 29

24. Ibid., p. 11

25. C.O. 270/65, Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1927, p. 6



As a result Acting-Governor J.C. Maxwell recommended the abolition of slavery to increase the wealth of Sierra Leone. The essence of Maxwell's argument was that abolition of slavery would change Sierra Leonean attitudes towards work. Once freedom was granted the newly emancipated person would work harder and thus create more revenue for Sierra Leone.

Maxwell pointed out that, "slave labour is wasteful labour." Under the slave system, "There is no security for property and consequently no inducement to work beyond what is absolutely necessary." Maxwell stated that if a slave returned to his village after working outside he would be deprived of his earnings. "The persistence of domestic slavery causes manual labour to be looked down on." Abolition of slavery according to Maxwell, "would increase the productive power of the people and as a consequence increase their taxable capacity." Winston Churchill was not impressed with Maxwell's arguments, "The abolition of slavery could not, however, have any immediate beneficial effect on the finances of the Colony."<sup>26</sup>

Captain W. B. Stanley wrote in 23 October 1923, "Personally, I do not believe that we can safely count on the financial position of Sierra Leone benefiting greatly if domestic servitude is abolished." In Stanley's opinion the, "tribes who were able to capture slaves are in every way



more vigorous than those who could not do so." Stanley then drew a rather unconventional conclusion. "Bearing in mind the African temperament, however, it is now impossible that with servitude in its present state and form, the average slave is made to work just a little harder than he would so if he enjoyed his freedom, but in order to get him to do this, the average master works just a little harder than he would otherwise do."<sup>27</sup>

Governor Slater felt that Captain Stanley's argument that slave labor was more productive than free labor was wrong. All that Stanley proved was that, "All labour, both slave and free, requires supervision in order to produce the maximum result." Yet the Governor could not adequately explain why the free peoples of the eastern part of the Colony produced less than the slave areas of the Protectorate. "I can only attribute it to the unfortunate example set by the Colony Africans proper, who have largely abandoned agriculture for clerical pursuits."

Governor Slater's economic reasons for the abolition of slavery were those based upon the argument that the ending of slavery would raise the dignity of manual labor. It would end the feeling that, "only slaves work on the land."<sup>28</sup>

27. Ibid., p. 48

28. Ibid., p. 31

In summary, the Government position was that slavery ought to be ended because it was evil. Also, it made British colonialism look bad, especially when the British were advocating a Slavery Convention at the League of Nations. From an economic standpoint no one made any arguments that were convincing either for retention or abolition.

The Sierra Leonean position on the proposed slavery bill was that compensation ought to be paid to the owners. Also, some Sierra Leoneans feared that Freetown would be flooded with ex-slaves migrating from the Protectorate.

The Governor was correct when he stated that there was no public opinion on the slavery question prior to the introduction of the gradual abolition bill to the Legislative Council. However, once the bill was introduced articles appeared in the Sierra Leone Weekly and the West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette.

T. J. Thompson, the editor, wrote seven articles in the West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette that appeared weekly from 5 December 1925 to 16 January 1926. The articles argued that the system of slavery was mild. Protectorate slavery was described as a, "harmless, traditional ancestral institution." Thompson felt, "the word 'slave' in this connection is misnomer; the correct designation in our opinion, is 'retainer,' 'dependent,' or 'servant' a status

similar to the Anglo Saxon 'serf' of the Feudal System." To further prove his argument Thompson quoted a Temne Chief's petition to Governor F. Cardew protesting the House Tax of 1897. "The name of slaves in your petitioner's country is altogether an exaggerated form of the word servants. " Indeed there is no such thing as slavery in your petitioner's country." Sir Samuel Lewis was quoted from his testimony before David Chalmers in 1898. "It will take sometime to destroy the patriarchial idea that attaches slaves to masters...I do not think it would be a good thing to destroy it for a long time yet." Thompson challenged the British; "What is the evidence, and if any exists, it should be made public, of inhuman or cruel treatment of owners to domestics?"

Thompson wrote that freedom would not be in the best interests of the slaves. If freedom was created, "the domestics will be evicted from their homes, turned out of doors by the owners, and left to wander in the various fakkies (slave village), towns, and districts of the Protectorate, penniless and homeless?" Unless compensation was paid, the owners would turn out their slaves. Then Thompson asked, "If there be a wholesale expulsion of domestics by their owners in each district of the Protectorate, where will the vagrants go? And if they are not disposed

29. West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette (W.A.M.T.G.),  
5 December 1925, 12 December 1925, 26 December 1925,  
9 January 1926

to work but eke out a miserable hand-to-mouth existence, what would be the condition of affairs?" Thompson feared a flood of migrants to Freetown from the Protectorate.<sup>30</sup>

Thompson pointed out that compensation should be paid because slaves were an essential part of the master's wealth. "Is it in good conscience a righteous and just act of a Christian Government to deprive the inhabitants of... the Protectorate, of the main source of their wealth without any compensation whatever.?" Also Thompson asked, "whether the views of the Tribal Authorities in the Protectorate, as representing the inhabitants of the extensive districts were expressed in the matter, and if so, the public would like to know what they are."<sup>31</sup>

Thompson also published a letter by C.D. Hotobah-During who had been one of the founders of the Freetown Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Hotobah-During's letter was also published in the Sierra Leone Weekly News the same day. Hotobah-During pointed out that Protectorate slavery was, "quite different from slavery in its true and objectionable meaning." He criticized the, "sudden and indiscriminate venture of the Sierra Leone Government being undertaken as it is without first taking the Chief in the Protectorate into confidence." He also

30. Ibid., 9 January 1926, 16 January 1926

31. Ibid., 5 December 1925

urged compensation.

The Sierra Leone Weekly published one editorial on the proposed slavery law. Cornelius May, the editor, urged that the British pay compensation. "We are afraid the course proposed by the Bill is rank departure from well established precedents." May was referring to the payment of £20,000,000 to slave owners when slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833.

May noted that slaves were part of the economic life of the Protectorate. "The abolition of domestic slavery therefore is bound to effect the producing capacity of the masters and therefore the question of compensation should form by no means negligible consideration, in the counsel of Government."

Also May advised that something ought to be done for freed slaves to guarantee that the, "production power of the Protectorate is not thereby impaired and also that the City of Freetown be not swamped by a number of strangers who delight to revel in the sweets of freedom and liberty at the expense and to the inconvenience of law abiding citizens." May feared that, "it is possible for a mighty  
33  
conflagration to ensue from a small spark."

32. Ibid., 9 January 1926, p. 3

33. S.L.W.N., 5 December 1925, p. 221



The Sierra Leone Weekly News published four letters from A.J. Shorunkeh-Sawyer that appeared weekly from 28 November 1925 to 26 December 1925. Shorunkeh-Sawyer had been appointed to the Legislative Council in 1911, but was then retired.

Shorunkeh-Sawyer centered his attack against the lack of compensation in the proposed abolition bill. "If it is not intended by the proposed legislation to award such compensation, that seems to me to import that it is in contemplation to abolish Domestic Slavery in the Protectorate as a result of the assertion of mere power." He pointed out that £20,000,000 was paid to slave owners when slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. He wondered why no compensation was to be paid. Is it, "because they are not British subjects or whether it is on some other ground."

Shorunkeh-Sawyer argued that the precedent had been set. "When the great William Wilberforce was concerned with the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies, he recognized and dealt with the concrete facts, viz:- mercy in the interest of the slaves, and justice by way of pecuniary compensation to their owners or masters."

The best way justice could be achieved was to pay compensation to the masters. Shorunkeh-Sawyer wanted the British to call an Assembly of Chiefs as provided by sections 3 to 8 of the Protective Native Law Ordinance of 1924.



He was critical of the British and accused them of promoting, "progress at a gallop." He wondered, "why since November, 1922, when I believe the Government initiated investigation of the problem in question, why have no Assemblies of Chiefs been called into action in the various Provinces of the Protectorate to say whether or not they agree to abolition without compensation."

Shorunkeh-Sawyer made no specific recommendations for mercy of the slaves. He was critical of the British approach. "From the year 1898 up to the present time, it has done absolutely nothing to educate the soul of the people of the Protectorate as to the advantage to be gained by the cessation of domestic slavery." All Shorunkeh-Sawyer could do was to, "express my sympathy for those slaves." He feared that the slaves when freed would be turned out from their master's premises. Shorunkeh-Sawyer wanted the British to make some provision for the freed slaves.

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After excitement of the Railway Worker's Strike

settled down a comment on the proposed slavery law appeared

34. S.L.W.N., 28 November 1925, 12 December 1925, 19 December 1925, 26 December 1925
35. On 13 January 1926, the Railroad Strike began which embittered feelings between Sierra Leoneans and British. The strike lasted until 25 February. Out of a total of 1,792 employees, 1,262 went on strike. 403 workers returned to work during the strike and 57 were dismissed during the strike. After the strike was over 435 workers went back to work while 367 lost their jobs. So a total of 424 men lost their jobs as a result of the strike. Sierra Leone Legislative Council Debates (S.L.L.C.D.) 1926-1927, 30 November 1926, p. 80

in the column "Gleanings from the Protectorate" by Mac Makori. Makori pointed out that the precedent for compensation had been established by the British in 1833.

"Abolition should go together with compensation, otherwise it is an abomination unto the people. If the white masters in the Western Hemisphere etc. were compensated for setting free their slaves, why should not the black masters or owners of slaves in Africa be compensated for theirs?"<sup>36</sup>

The week before the discussion of the proposed slavery law in the Legislative Council the Sierra Leone Weekly News published a letter to the Protectorate members of the Council from A.J. Shorunkeh-Sawyer. He asked the Protectorate Chiefs Bai Comber, Bai Kompa and Baki John Tucker, "Will you have the grit to differ from your Provincial Commissioner who will in no wise agree to the abolition being made without compensation?"

Shorunkeh-Sawyer advised the Chiefs to present the following motion. "That the consideration of the Bill be postponed pending the promotion into existence by His Excellency the Governor of assemblies in the Protectorate under Chapter 170 of 'Laws of Sierra Leone' to enable such assemblies to submit their views to the Governor on the proposed legislation." He ended the letter with a poem

36. His identity is not definitely known for sure. Dr. E. Taylor-Cummings ventured that he might be a retired Englishman named Morrison who had been an Assistant District Commissioner.

S.L.W.N., 6 March 1926, p. 456

whose last lines read, "Quit like men, be strong."<sup>37</sup>

Ordinance No. 9 of 1926, which provided for gradual abolition of slavery in the Protectorate, had its first reading in the Legislative Council on 3 December 1925. On 24 March 1926 the bill had its second reading and discussion began.

The British position was that no compensation ought to be paid. Attorney-General M.J.F. McDonnell stated, "up to the present, no compensation has ever been paid except where a clean cut has been effected. Whenever the abolition of slavery has taken place gradually by the operation of the course of nature, compensation has on no occasion been paid. Again in no case has compensation been paid in any of the West African Protectorates."<sup>38</sup> Commissioner for the Central Province, W.D. Bowden, further added, "Again in all cases where compensation has been paid there has always been a clean cut; slaves bought by money are freed by money."<sup>39</sup> He noted that in the Protectorate slaves were captured by war and not purchased with money.

Governor Slater stated that no compensation ought to be paid because, "no living person is being deprived of any property." Also he noted that compensation would be too

37. S.L.W.N., 20 March 1926, p. 481

38. S.L.L.C.D., 1925-1926, 24 March 1926, p. 396

39. Ibid., p. 402

expensive, "something like £800,000 to a million pounds --- To accept such a liability would obviously be to postpone abolition for an indefinite period."<sup>40</sup>

The British were under pressure to do something because of the proposed Slavery Convention that was being considered at the League of Nations. The Colonial Secretary revealed this when he said, "It is not often that Sierra Leone has upon it the eyes of a considerable part of the thinking world, but the Bill now before the Council has brought about one of these rare occasions. Not only has the British public been taking an interest in the matter, but, --- the League of Nations has cast its searchlight on Sierra Leone.. until this measure is passed there must rest a certain measure of stigma on Sierra Leone; and Sierra Leone is the last place in the world that can afford to tolerate a stigma of this particular kind."<sup>41</sup> Governor Slater further noted that the League was opposed to the mild type of slavery that existed in the Protectorate.

The British then charged that the Sierra Leoneans of the Colony were the only ones who wanted compensation. Commissioner for the Southern Province A.H. Ross, stated,

40. Ibid., p. 411

41. Ibid., p. 413

"The Chiefs are prepared and the people are prepared to receive the change...With regard to compensation, not one of the Chiefs or owners expressed any opinion about it, although they were well able to do so." Ross then charged, "Strange as it may appear, the only hint I have ever had of compensation is from newspapers emanating from the Colony. In any case the owners of slaves are not to be deprived of a great deal."<sup>42</sup>

Commissioner for the Central Province W.D. Bowden stated, "I think many of the views expressed both by the First Urban Member and the Second Urban Member are very much views of the Colony; they are not Protectorate views at all." Bowden believed the Freetown criticisms of the bill were made in bad faith. "They make one pause and wonder if one is here in Freetown or in some forgotten corner where the 'institution' is still sacrosanct."<sup>43</sup>

Finally the British saw little disruption in the life of the Protectorate as a result of the bill. Commissioner for the Southern Province A.H. Ross stated, "I am convinced that if this Bill becomes a law there will be very little if any social or tribal disorganization."<sup>44</sup> Commissioner for

42. Ibid., p. 404

43. Ibid. p. 402

44. Ibid., p: 404



the Northern Province R.S. Hooker stated, "The form of slavery here is so very mild that to abolish it seems to me to make very little change."<sup>45</sup> Commissioner for the

Central Province W.D. B owden made no predictions.

The Sierra Leonean position was that compensation ought to be paid. However, the Sierra Leoneans were not under any illusions about "debate" in the Legislative Council. The First Urban Member, E.S. Beoku-Betts referred to Major Hennessy's answer in the House of Commons in February 1926 where Hennessy had stated that in Sierra Leone, "no question of compensation should arise."<sup>46</sup> Beoku-Betts commented, "One feels diffident in discussing matters of such nature in an assembly as this, when it is felt that already some sort of a decision has been arrived at and that it is only time which is required for the full weight of the Government machinery to be brought down at one touch of the lever."<sup>47</sup>

The Sierra Leoneans believed that the British should follow the precedent set by the British when they freed the slaves in the Empire in 1833. The Second Urban Member, Dr. H.C. Bankole-Bright noted that the British West Indian planters received £20,000,000. "Now this shows that those

45. Ibid., p. 405

46. Anti-Slavery Reporter, April 1926, p. 19

47. S.L.L.C.D., 1925-1926, 24 March 1926, p. 397



who were trafficking in slavery derived financial benefit; they were compensated." But in Sierra Leone no compensation was to be paid because the slavery system was mild. His answer to the British, "how much more equitable to give compensation to owners who have not been brutal in their treatment to them."<sup>48</sup> Paramount Chief Bai Kompa, a Temne, stated that, "If the slaves want freedom they should redeem themselves or they should be redeemed so that we can put the money into the bank."<sup>49</sup>

The Sierra Leoneans wondered what would happen to the freed slaves. A.E. Tuboku-Metzger advised that, "there should be a definite provision made for lands to be given to the slaves when they become free, otherwise some of them in their liberty may be subjected to trouble and hardship by the refusal of the people among whom they may live to give them lands to work."<sup>50</sup>

E.S. Beoku-Betts answered Governor Slater's charge in Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1926 that the Freetown community had no strong opinion against slavery in the Protectorate. He said, "we do not look upon what exists in the Protectorate and what is sometimes called slavery, as slavery at all - we say it is part of the customs of the people that some of them should be in a position of rendering service to

48. Ibid., p. 400

49. Ibid., p. 401

50. Ibid., p. 407

certain others."<sup>51</sup> Beoku-Betts had not heard of injustices recently therefore he saw little reason for changing the system.

"It is a question of sentiment. People in England hear of slavery and imagine that we are living under conditions as existed in the eighteenth or seventeenth century. It is no case anything of the sort. Those who frequent the Protectorate would hardly know that there exists any form of slavery in that community."<sup>52</sup> Beoku-Betts saw the abolition bill as a meaningless gesture by the British to please the people back home.

The Sierra Leoneans disagreed with the British that the people in the Protectorate had been adequately consulted. The Rural Member, A.E. Tuboku-Metzger stated, "I have received some communication from the Southern Province ... that in the interviews the question of compensation was never introduced or discussed."<sup>53</sup>

E.S. Beoku-Betts proposed an amendment to the slavery law. "That the Bill be referred to a Select Committee to consider whether compensation should be paid to the owners of slaves and in the meantime the opinion of the Assemblies of Chiefs should be obtained as provided under section 6 of Chapter 170 of the laws of the Colony."<sup>54</sup> Dr. H.C. Bankole-

51. Ibid., p. 398

52. Ibid., p. 398

53. Ibid., p. 407

54. Ibid., p. 397

Bright seconded the amendment.

Paramount Chief Bai Comber believed that the, "Bill has been wrongly interpreted by some of the settlers in the Protectorate...If instruction is given for an assembly of chiefs to be held, some of us will be present to enable us to give our people true interpretation of the Bill, and I am sure the object of the Bill will be generally carried out without any trouble...I support the motion that a general assembly of chiefs be held in all the Provinces of the Protectorate."<sup>55</sup> Rumors had begun to spread among the slaves in the Protectorate already that the British had abolished slavery and that the slaves were free. The British blamed this state of affairs on the articles that appeared in the Freetown newspapers.

After ten comments by the members of the Legislative Council concerning the amendment, Governor Slater made his observations, "the Government of this Colony cannot properly agree to an indefinite postponement of this vital question...Government therefore cannot accept the amendment."<sup>56</sup> The amendment was defeated two to seventeen. Only Beoku-Betts and Bankole-Bright voted for it. Beoku-Betts was bitter, "if the chiefs who have spoken expressed one view and when it came to the matter of voting, voted the other way, it would be foolish of me to vote against them."<sup>57</sup>

55. Ibid., p. 401

56. Ibid., p. 411

57. Ibid., p. 414

After the amendment was defeated Ordinance No. 9 of 1926 passed the second reading unopposed. On 29 March 1926, the Legislative Council unanimously passed the gradual abolition law. That same day the British Government received a request from the Secretary-General of the League to make some observations upon the proposed Draft Slavery Convention. On 14 April 1926, the slavery law commenced.

Assuming to have cleaned up the last vestige of legal slavery in the British Empire on 29 May 1926, the British Government sent their observations to the Draft Slavery Convention. These observations were centered around the proposal to make slave trading on the high seas the same as the crime of piracy. On 25 September 1926, the Seventh Assembly of the League approved unanimously the Slavery Convention and urged all members to sign.

The British had assumed that the gradual abolition law would have little effect in the Protectorate due to the mild character of slavery there. The second reading of the bill had been delayed, "in order to give the Provincial Commissioners and the Paramount Chiefs - Members of the Council opportunity to explain its provisions to the Protectorate chiefs and people." Governor A.R. Slater met

#### CHAPTER V.

with the Paramount Chiefs in November 1925 just before they went home. Slater noted that "they exhibited no undue concern" V. A SLAVE REVOLT IN THE PROTECTORATE. "The question of compensation could be considered."

Commissioner of the Southern Province, A.R. Ross, reported to Governor Slater on 7 January 1926. His talks with the Paramount Chiefs. The Chiefs were pleased that no living chief would be deprived of his slaves. "All chiefs were in favour of retaining the freed slaves on the land providing ordinary tribute payable by an ordinary freeman was forthcoming." Ross predicted that he expected no social, political, or tribal disruption in the Southern Province.

1. Ord.-3029 of 1925, p. 53.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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Commissioner of the Southern Province, A.H. Ross, reported to Governor Slater on 7 January 1926, his talks with the Paramount Chiefs. The Chiefs were pleased that no living owner would be deprived of his slaves. "All chiefs were in favour of retaining the freed slaves on the land providing ordinary tribute payable by an ordinary freeman was forthcoming."<sup>3</sup> Ross predicted that he expected, no social, political, or tribal disruption, in the Southern Province.

1. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 53
2. Ibid., p. 54
3. Ibid., p. 58



The reports from the Northern and Central are not available. Judging from the statements made by the Provincial Commissioners in the Legislative Council, no one was worried about the effect of gradual abolition without compensation.

Four days before Governor Slater signed Ordinance No.9 of 1926 on 14 April 1926, the Governor directed the Colonial Secretary, H.C. Luke, to send instructions to the Provincial Commissioners. The essence of the British policy was that, "it is against the law for Government officers even in the executive capacity to recognize the legal status of slavery."<sup>4</sup> However, Luke pointed that the holding of slaves was not illegal.

There were three parts to the new British policy towards slavery in the Protectorate. First, "District Commissioners will in future cease to render any assistance whatever to masters who seek your aid in order to recover runaway domestics."<sup>5</sup> Second, "you will no doubt, endeavour to secure that there is as little economic disturbance as possible when masters die."<sup>6</sup> Third, any slave who becomes free under the ordinance will be granted a free redemption certificate if he applies for one.

4. Ibid., p. 60 *Berber Sheriff, third-person interview,*

5. Ibid., p. 60 *Berber Sheriff, third-person interview, 16 June 1963*

6. Ibid., p. 60 *Berber Sheriff, third person interview, 16 June 1963*

Rumors began to spread among the domestic slaves in the Protectorate even before the law was passed that the British had abolished slavery and the slaves were free. In the Northern Province in the Biriwa Chiefdom, Bombali District, the slaves believed these rumors that they were free. Some escaped to the Sella Limba Chiefdom while others refused to obey their Mandingo masters at Karina and Nafai.

The Mandingo slaves in the Karina-Nafai area were led by Kodogbo Sabu, the headman of the slaves in the slave village (Fakai) near Karina. Kodogbo Sabu, the son of Biladi, was owned by Foday Mansaray Dabor, a Mandingo master. The tribe of Kodogbo Sabu is unknown.

Kodogbo Sabu, "was truthful and we did not hesitate to send him out to transact any of our personal business."<sup>7</sup> Sabu heard of the gradual abolition bill from District Commissioner E.F. Sayers when he went to Batkanu, "to pay the taxes he had collected from his co-slaves."<sup>8</sup> Apparently Sabu believed that all the slaves were freed. "This piece of information spread from fakai to fakai."<sup>9</sup> District Commissioner E.F. Sayers had told Kodogbo Sabu and other slaves that came to Batkanu that they were not free but

7. Alhaji Alpha Borbor Sheriff, third-person interview, 22 June 1963
8. Tijan Sheriff, third-person interview, 16 June 1963
9. Madam Cherinoh Kadaybah, third person interview, 24 June 1963

only their children. "Several of these slaves are old soldiers or people who have travelled widely and this blow to their hopes roused resentment and discontent."<sup>10</sup>

The slaves in the Karina-Nafai area became stubborn.<sup>11</sup> "All these slaves were not doing any more good work."

At Karina and Nafai, "those who remained under Kodogbo Sabu's leadership treated all orders and messengers from their ... masters with indifference."<sup>12</sup> It was from this time that the slaves began to plan to do something definite about achieving freedom immediately.

The slaves went to Makeni to see District Commissioner J.T. Kemp. N'fa Nonko, section chief of the Mandingoes, at Karina, followed his slaves to Makeni. N'fa Nonko told Kemp that he had come to Makeni to collect his slaves. "Then the slaves said to the District Commissioner that all the other slaves from other countries (the United States of America and England) are now free and they too required freedom."<sup>13</sup> Kemp told the slaves, "you are not going to

10. Native Affairs Minute Paper, Karene District, Northern Province, Sierra Leone, No. 178/1926 (Hereafter referred to as N.A. 178/1926), paper 21, 20 December 1926
11. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962
12. N.A. 178/1926, paper 21, 20 December 1926
13. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962

be free but your children are not slaves with effect from today's date."<sup>14</sup> Kemp also told the slaves to go, "quiet themselves at home and he did not wish to hear anything about fighting."<sup>15</sup> Unsatisfied by Kemp's advice the slaves returned to Karina and Nafai.

Sometime in June 1926 the slaves left the Biriwa Chiefdom and moved to Pampanko, in adjacent Sanda Lokko Chiefdom. They moved to Pampanko because N'fa Nonko had some slave farms there. The slaves,"felt that they could have a stronger force if they joined their friends at Pampanko."<sup>16</sup>

The revolt of the slaves was a surprise to the Mandingo masters. "They plotted through secret meetings which did not come to our notice."<sup>17</sup> Many of the ex-masters deny that the revolt was planned. "The slaves did not plan any revolt, It was a sudden action they took..."<sup>18</sup> Yet all are agreed that, "the slaves revolted through the incitement of Kodogbo Sabu."<sup>19</sup>

14. Ibid.<sup>1922</sup>

15. Ibid.

16. Alhaji Alpha Borbor Sheriff, third-person interview, 30 December 1963

17. Ibid., third-person interview, 22 June 1963

18. Foday Swandy Fofana, third-person interview, 18 June 1963

19. Madam Cherinoh Kadaybah, third-person interview, 24 June 1963.

21. Alhaji Borbor Sheriff, personal interview, 15 September 1962

Sometime in September, Commissioner for the Northern Province, Captain W. B. Stanley met with the Chiefs of the Karene District at Batkanu. Stanley announced the British policy towards runaway slaves. A slave could gain freedom in two ways - either by purchasing his freedom or by running away without any of the master's property. However, the runaway slave must proceed further than the neighboring chiefdom, otherwise the master could enter the neighboring chiefdom and get his runaway slaves. The runaway slaves of the Biriwa Mandingoes led by Kodogbo Sabu must have learned of this statement of policy by Stanley. In September some of them moved to Mapurto in the Sella Limba chiefdom which was ruled by the Regent Banja, so to be safe from their Biriwa Mandigo masters. The rest remained at Pampako, in the Sanda Lokko Chiefdom.

N'fa Nonko wanted his slaves back. In early November Commissioner Stanley visited Karina, advising him, "to go to Kamalu and see Bai Samura and get his permission to collect the runaways and recalcitrants in Sanda Lokko and carry them back to Biriwa."<sup>20</sup>

N'fa Nonko gathered, "all the Mandingo tribe,"<sup>21</sup> and during the second week of November went to Kamalu where Paramount Chief Bai Samura of the Sanda Lokko Chiefdom

20. N.A. 178/1926, paper 21, 20 December 1926

21. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962

lived. There is some evidence that N'fa Nonko sent messengers to places outside the immediate area of Karina and Nafai.<sup>22</sup>

N'fa Nonko spent ten days in Kamalu while Bai Samura waited for orders from District Commissioner Sayers about what to do with N'fa Nondo. The British report states that Bai Samura<sup>23</sup> never received any instructions from Sayers. Alaji Alpha Borbor Sheriff, one of N'fa Nonko's sons who was present, states that Sayers ordered Bai Samura to surrender the fugitive slaves to N'fa Nonko.

There were over 300 fugitive slaves in the area and they were represented by four headmen, Kodogbo Sabu, Nyama, Fasidi, and Sabuba, with Kodogbo Sabu acting as the spokesman for the slaves. Other leaders of the slaves were Lansaneh, Jibba of Kaworokosonah, Alpha Koroma of Sokuldalah, Momodu Marah of Massah, and Bockari.

N'fa Nonko told Sabu that, "I have come to collect you to come back to my place."<sup>24</sup> Kodogbo Sabu replied, "we did not revolt it was the Europeans that set us free, but if you say that we should return we are prepared to return."<sup>25</sup>

22. "Many of the Mandingo pursuers were strangers from chiefdoms beyond Biriwa to the North." N.A. 178/1926, paper 16, 15 December 1926. Also N'fa Nonko sent messengers to Temne country, Lamina Kabia, personal interview, 15 April 1963
23. N.A. 178/1926, paper 8, 6 December 1926
24. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962
25. Alhaji Alpha Borbor Sheriff, personal interview, 30 March 1963



Sabu told Nonko that the slaves at Pampanko were hiding in the bush. Sabu asked Nonko for permission to go ahead to collect the slaves. Sabu left accompanied by five of Nonko's men - Tida Sadiku, Poday Lansana, Momodu Fona, Salla Silla, and Momodu Koroma.

"Immediately when they arrived Kodogbo Sabu sounded the horn and the slaves assembled. Sabu said that they should return to slavery, the slaves revolted and almost killed the five people present."<sup>26</sup> N'fa Nonko's men returned to Kamalu that evening.

The next morning N'fa Nonko returned to Pampanko with thirty of his followers to get the slaves. They found the place empty as the slaves had fled to a place near the Sella Limba-Sanda Lokko boundary. They may have wanted to go to Mapurto in the Sella Limba Chiefdom where they would be safe from their masters according to British policy.

The slaves led by Kodogbo Sabu had built a temporary camp at Masobai,<sup>27</sup> a one house village, whose headman was named Koba. The camp was composed of men, women, and children, and was located in the Sanda Lokko Chiefdom.

On finding Pampanko deserted the Mandingoes began to search for the fugitive slaves. The slaves placed an old

26. Ibid.

27. Masobai is also called Makoba.

woman as the guard to the entrance to the temporary camp at Masobai. "Yeramen, a slave owner, then found the old woman at the gate and asked her where his companions had gone. Of course he was trying to trace their course in a secret way. The old lady summoned Yeramen to swear on her white hair to confirm that he was a slave. Yeramen, anxious to know where the slaves were, did so and the lady directed them to their huts. Yeramen led the way and was followed by the others." <sup>28</sup>

On 25 November 1926, a fight occurred when the slaves and their masters met. The Mandingo masters were led by N'fa Nonko and the slaves led by Kodogbo Sabu. N'fa Nonko claimed that Sabu was encouraged by two Lokkos, Sub-chief Bai Bureh and Koba the headman of Masobai. The slaves were armed with flintlock guns and cutlasses. The Mandingoes claimed that they were unarmed and only carried ropes to bind the slaves. "We did not know that the slaves were going to fight us, that is why we did not bring any weapons with us." <sup>29</sup>

Yet both Kabindi and Sabu Konte, slaves who fought against N'fa Nonko, claim that their masters were armed with guns and swords. <sup>30</sup> Yet there are no reported casualties on the side of the slaves from gunshot wounds.

28. Kemoh Sorie, third-person interview, 26 June 1963

29. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962

30. N.A. 178/1926, paper 15/3, 13 December 1926 (Sabu Konte)

Also when the Regent of Sella Limba Chiefdom, Pa Banja Moi, disarmed N'fa Nonko's group, only one sword and twelve sticks were taken from them.. So it would appear that N'fa Nonko's followers did not carry guns when they entered Kama-kwie after the fight at Masobai.

During the fight Alpha Laiba, a slave, shot Yeramen in the thigh.<sup>31</sup> Laiba was aiming at his master Sala Silla but missed. Kabindi, a slave, shot Sala Silla in the back of the head. Sabu Kinte, another slave, also shot his gun but he missed. It is not clear what happened next but eventually the thirty Mandingoes led by N'fa Nonko were able to capture seventy slaves. "All the slaves who were captured after the fight were tied and flogged and taken to Nafai."<sup>32</sup> At Nafai the returned slaves were placed in stocks for several days as punishment. The masters confiscated thirty cutlasses and seven guns. At this point, the Mandingoes went to Kamakwie in the Sella Limba Chiefdom to search for more of their slaves. Alpha Laiba, Kodogbo Sabu, and the majority of the slaves had escaped.

31. In the British reports Alpha Laiba's name is listed as Laiba Mansare. "While the Mandingoes were making up their minds what to do, then Yeramen said to them, 'Do not go away for the slaves did not harm me.' Yeramen told the Mandingoes to, 'Advance!' Then the Mandingoes advanced and caught the slaves." Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962.
32. N.A. 178/1926, paper 15/2, 13 December 1926 (Kabindi)

Arriving at Kamakwie on the same day N'fa Nonko demanded twenty-seven of his slaves from the Regent of Sella Limba, Pa Banja Moi, who refused to surrender the slaves and told N'fa Nonko to disarm his group. Moi sent a message to Batkanu for advice from the District Commissioner Sayers, who ordered N'fa Nonko and his slaves to report to Batkanu. Sayers also praised Regent Moi for, "his action in disarming N'fa Nonko's people and reporting the case promptly to me."<sup>33</sup>

N'fa Nonko claimed he never received Sayer's order to return, so he returned to Karina. Yeramén whose wound became infected was sent on a hammock to Karina and died on 3 December 1926. On 4 December 1926, Nonko asked A.Lynch who was doing a topographical survey for the Sierra Leone Government to write a letter for him to Sayers. The letter mentioned the fight and the death of Yeramén.

On 6 December 1926 Assistant District Commissioner E.J. Tyndall sent messengers to Karina requesting the presence of N'fa Nonko, his followers, and his slaves at Batkanu. On 11 December 1926, N'fa Nonko, twenty Mandingoes masters, and twenty-seven slaves reported to Batkanu. A warrant for Alpha Laiba's arrest was issued charging him with the manslaughter of Yeramén. On 7 December two slaves, Sabu Konte and Kabindi were imprisoned for 14 days with hard labor for the illegal possession of firearms.

33. Ibid., paper 2, 26 November 1926

On 20 December 1926 Sayers reported to Captain W.B. Stanley that, "all or nearly all of the masters (some twenty-five) are now in Batkanu with N'fa Nonko, and about sixty of the slaves, and there is now no possibility of further physical conflict between the two parties."<sup>34</sup>

On the same day Kodogbo Sabu was arrested by Tyndall at Kamalu. Tyndall also reported that the Court Messengers were holding Alpha Laiba's wife and they expected to have Laiba soon, who was reported to be at Loma.

When N'fa Nonko and his followers arrived at Batkanu, they were arrested and were charged with conspiracy and riot. The slaves were held as witnesses. While at Batkanu the prisoners answered a roll call each morning. The slaves hired themselves out as farm laborers "in order to get 'chop'."<sup>35</sup> The prisoners remained in Batkanu until some time in January.

On 16 January 1927 Sayers reported to Stanley that five cases had been committed for trial in the Circuit Court. N'fa Nonko, Sheku Silla, Numa Kaloko, Momodu Dabu, Alpha Sheriff, Lamina Fona, and Fode Lansana Kaloko, all Mandingo masters, were charged with conspiracy and riot.<sup>36</sup> Salla Silla, Momodu Daba and Sheku Silla were charged with assault in separate cases. Alpha Laiba was charged

34. Ibid., paper 21, 20 December 1926

35. Ibid., paper 30, 16 January 1927

36. Alhaji Alpha Borbor Sheriff's name was erroneously listed as Alpha Serifu

with manslaughter. The cases were delayed, "in view of the<sup>37</sup> implications of the legal issues raised by these cases."

Also the British wanted N'fa Nonko to be represented by a lawyer.

The defendants and witnesses were released on bonds at £ 100 per person. Commissioner Stanley had recommended the release of N'fa Nonko to Sayers in late December. "As the Battalion of the West Africa Frontier Force is at present engaged in its annual training at Karina (Sub-Chief Nonko's town) I trust that the Sub-Chief will be allowed to return home when you can spare him."<sup>38</sup> Whether or not the Karina site had been chosen because of the November troubles is unknown.

There was some question of what to do with the fugitive slaves. British policy had been to allow slaves to runaway as long as they did not take the master's property. Sayers proposed in a letter to Stanley on 17 December 1926, he would try to persuade the bulk of the slaves to return to their masters. He would exact, "a public promise of good<sup>39</sup> treatment from N'fa Nonko," so as to reassure them.

Concerning Kodogbo Sabu, "if it is proven that there were ringleaders amongst the slaves who instigated others to

37. N.A. 178/1926, paper 30, 16 January 1927

38. Ibid., paper 27, 28 December 1926

39. Ibid., paper 18, 17 December 1926



run away without good reason, I shall instruct the Native Court in Sanda Lokko to punish them."<sup>40</sup>

In another letter to Stanley on 20 December 1926, Sayers wondered what to do with the slaves who had not left the Sella Limba Chiefdom. According to British policy these slaves were not free because they had only escaped to the neighboring chiefdom. Some of these slaves were natives of Sella Limba but had merely runaway to another part of the chiefdom. All these slaves had followed the leadership of Kodogbo Sabu and were the property of N'fa Nonko. "Do you wish me to order the slaves to return to their masters? ...therefore...the Paramount Chief Bai Samura should use pressure to compel them to work and to punish them if they refuse."<sup>41</sup>

Commissioner Stanley wrote to Sayers on 28 December 1926. Stanley told Sayers to tell the masters that the British policy was, "slaves must work for their masters or else; (a) redeem themselves; (b) runaway (without their master's property). If they runaway they must not be harboured by a neighboring chief whose territory adjoins the chiefdom from which they have come. They must be told and made to proceed further."<sup>42</sup> Stanley asked Sayers to make a settlement with the chiefs on this matter and to record it in the

40. Ibid., paper 21, 20 December 1926

41. Ibid., paper 21, 20 December 1926

42. Ibid., paper 27, 28 December 1926

43. Ibid., paper 30, 16 January 1927

Decree Book. Sayer reported on 16 January 1927, "none of them appear willing to return to their masters unless obligated by Government to do so -- they have by now gathered that if they only run away far enough Government will not assist their masters to recover them."<sup>43</sup> It is not known how many of slaves in Batkann left their masters, but they were free to do so.

#### CHAPTER VI.

#### VI. THE BRITISH IMMEDIATELY ABOLISH SLAVERY IN THE PROTECTORATE.

The immediate abolition of slavery was the result of the slave revolt in Maricao. The British attempted to have K'ia Nunko and his followers convicted of riot, conspiracy and assault for attempting to recapture their slaves. K'ia Nunko and his followers were convicted in the Circuit Court but the decision was overruled in the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone.

#### CHAPTER VI.

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The Supreme Court decision was widely publicized in Great Britain and the British Administration in Sierra Leone was forced to pass a new law that immediately abolished slavery. The British were not anxious to obtain compensation for the slaves who were not susceptible. But if it had not been for the slave revolt in Maricao the old gradual abolition law would have remained. The revolt forced the course of events much quicker than anyone had foreseen.

The day after the fight at Kasobai between the slaves and their masters District Commissioner Sayers noted that Ordinance No. 5 of 1926 had a serious defect. The ordinance, while saving the master's right to possession of and labour of his slave, deprived him of any remedy by legal process for an infringement of that right; the ordinance appears to do by stating that, "no claim to or in respect of a slave shall be heard by any court." As a result of this defect K'ia Nunko was tempted to, "retire on a small

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The Supreme Court decision was widely publicized in Great Britain and the British administration in Sierra Leone was forced to pass a new law that immediately abolished slavery. The Colony Sierra Leoneans attempted to obtain compensation for the slave owners but they were not successful. But if it had not been for the slave revolt in Karina the old gradual abolition law would have remained. The revolt forced the course of events much quicker than anyone had foreseen.

The day after the fight at Masobai between the slaves and their masters District Commissioner Sayers noted that Ordinance No. 9 of 1926 had a serious defect. The ordinance, "while saving the master's right to possession of, and labour of his slave, deprived him of any remedy by legal process for an infringement of that right; the ordinance appears to do by stating that, 'no claim to or in respect of a slave shall be heard by any court,' " As a result of this defect N'fa Nonko was tempted to, "revive on a small

scale the sofa raids of his ancestors." According to Commissioner Stanley, "Sub-Chief Nonko's people were wrong in following their slaves so far, but I have no doubt they acted under great provocation." The essence of the British case against N'fa Nonko and his followers was that they had pursued their slaves beyond the neighboring chiefdom and this was contrary to British policy.<sup>1</sup>

It was now apparent that Ordinance No. 9 of 1926 had some serious defects. The problem centered around paragraph 3 of section 6. "No claim for or in respect of any slave shall be entertained by any of the Courts of the Protectorate." What happened when a slave ran away from his master? Did the master have any way to legally recapture his slave? If the legal status of slavery was not abolished then did not the master have a right to reclaim his property? What was the meaning of the word "claim?"

There were two ways to define a claim. The English courts used a narrow definition where a claim would only apply to civil matters. The African courts used a broad definition where a claim would apply to criminal matters also. The ordinance was unclear to which meaning should be used. If a broad definition were used then conceivably a slave could have no claims entered against him. Thus the slave would enjoy an immunity that not even a free man would enjoy. Sayers' suggestion was that all claims

1. Native Affairs Minute Paper, Karene District, Sierra Leone, No. 178/1926, paper 3, 26 November 1926

against a slave should be recognized in a court except those relating to the ownership of the slave. To test the rights that no existed between slave and master under the new ordinance Sayer stated, "I shall therefore try and get a test case or so before the Circuit Court this session. ...Where there is good enough evidence of violence"<sup>2</sup> used by either "master toward slave or vice versa he would treat such behavior as an assault.

The cases were heard in Makeni at a special court session from 24 to 26 March 1926 with William Butler Lloyd as the presiding judge. N'fa Nonko was represented by C.E. Wright, a Creole lawyer from Freetown who was an appointed member of the Legislative Council. At the trial Alpha Laiba was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to one year at hard labor. Sheku Silla and Momodu Dabu were both acquitted of the assault charges. Salla Silla was convicted of assault and battery and Wright filed an appeal. All the defendants were acquitted of the riot charge but four of them were convicted of conspiracy, N'fa Nonko, Sheku Silla, Momodu Dabu, and Fode Lansana Kaloko. Numu Kaloku, Alpha Sheriff, and Lamina Fona were cleared of all charges. Wright filed for appeal of the conspiracy convictions.

No comment was made in the Freetown newspapers about these trials held in Makeni, although the results of the

2. Ibid., paper 18, 17 December 1926



The Justice concluded that, "until the Legislature trial were published in the Sierra Leone Gazette on 9 April 1927. Since the masters were defended by the prominent Freetown lawyer, C. E. Wright, the legal community must have known about the cases.

N'fa Nonko et al. and the Salla Silla case were consolidated on 29 June 1927 as the issues raised were identical. Did the master of a slave have the right to recapture the slave, if the slave ran away? On 1 July the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone quashed the convictions of N'fa Nonko et al. and Salla Silla in a two to one decision. The decision was published in the West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette on 2 July 1927.

The essence of the two majority opinions was that the Ordinance No. 9 of 1926 did not abolish the legal status of slavery. Mr. Justice S. Sawrey-Cookson, President of the Court, stated that Sierra Leone law recognized the status of slavery in that it still allowed redemption. "Here then we have the clearest possible recognition of a slave who is owned much as a 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 in and possession of the property of which he has been deprived by the absconding slave." Since it had been found in the Circuit Court that, "no more force than was reasonable," was used all the convictions were quashed.

The Justice concluded that, "until the Legislature makes it perfectly clear that no such right to re-take is to be recognized, I cannot find that the law as it stands at present denies that right to the slave owner in the Protectorate." Therefore Salla Silla did not commit an assault in retaking the slaves and N'fa Nonko, Sheku Silla, Momodu Dabu, and Fode Lansana Koloko were not guilty<sup>3</sup> of conspiracy in trying to get their slaves back.

Mr. Justice J. Aitken concurred with Justice Sawrey-Cookson stating, "the institution of slavery was recognized, regulated, and controlled," but was not abolished. Aitken stated that the laws of Sierra Leone, including Ordinance 9 of 1926 did not take away the slave owner's, "right to use reasonable force to re-take," his slave. Since the Circuit Court at Makeni had, "found that none but reasonable<sup>4</sup> force was used," the masters were acting legally.

Paragraph 3 of Section 6 of Ordinance No. 9 of 1926 stated that, "no claim for or in respect of any slave shall be entertained by any of the Courts of Protectorate."

Justice Aitken stated that, "they bar the slave owner's legal remedy, it is true; but according to a well-known principle of the English Law they do not take away his rights." Thus as long as reasonable force was used and

3. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 63

4. Ibid., pp. 64-66

no bodily harm occurred to the slave, the master had a right to recapture his runaway slave.

The master's right of recapture of the slave did not violate sub-section 8 of section 8 of Part III of Chapter 167 of the Laws of Sierra Leone of 1924. This section stated that it was offense when a person, "By any species of coercion or restraint unlawfully compels or attempts to compel the service of any person." Justice Aitken stated that this sub-section did not apply to, "reasonable acts of a master in relation to his own slave."

Mr. Justice P.B. Petrides dissented.<sup>5</sup> "It has been argued that if the law recognizes slavery then the law should recognize the right of a slave owner to recapture a run-away slave provided undue force is not used. This line of argument leaves me unmoved, two wrongs do not make a right. The Legislature may have neglected its duty, they may have for many years allowed a wrong to exist. If a wrong has been done by the Legislature, it is not for a Court of Justice to do another wrong and say, because the Legislature has allowed slavery to exist justice will also blind its eyes and approve of assault."

Petrides based his argument upon the idea that the right of recapture was, "repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience." He cited section 5 of

5. Ibid., pp. 68-69

Chapter 165 of the Law of Sierra Leone (1924) where it stated that only customs that were not repugnant would be allowed in the Protectorate. Petrides found the customary right of recapture of slaves repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience.

The reaction in Great Britain to the decision was that of shock<sup>6</sup> and disbelief. No one could understand why slavery was allowed in Sierra Leone, the home of the freed slaves. The subtle difference between the Protectorate and the Colony was lost to the general British public. The texts of the judgment were published in the London Times and Manchester Guardian on 27 July 1927. The same day the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Ormsby-Gore, sent a telegram to Sierra Leone requesting a copy of judgment, a copy was sent on 1 August. On 28 July, Mr. Ormsby-Gore, answered a question in the House of Commons about the N'fa Nonko case. "If there appears to be a fault in the drafting<sup>7</sup> of that Ordinance, an Amendment will have to be considered." On 29 July the Foreign Office apparently still uninformed about Sierra Leone submitted a report to the League of Nations which made no mention of the new situation.

When the Supreme Court's decision was published in Great Britain, letters were published in the British papers

6. K. Simon, Slavery, p. 79; Anti-Slavery Reporter, October 1927, pp. 104-105
7. Anti-Slavery Reporter, October 1927, p. 123

commenting upon the decision. Sir John Simon, an eminent English lawyer, stating in a letter to the London Times that the Supreme Court decision, "must gravely perturb all who faintly believe that the exercise of British jurisdiction is inconsistent with the upholding of slavery." He pointed out that the judges do not make the law. Then he said, "if this decision represents the present law in the Sierra Leone Protectorate is it tolerable that it should remain so? It would be indeed lamentable if the chiefs of West Africa were led to believe that they have behind them the support of the highest British authorities for maintaining a system of slave-owning. The Colonial Office is doubtless considering what action should be taken, especially as the League of Nations is receiving reports at Geneva next month with a view to the final suppression of the remains of slavery throughout the world."

On 24 August 1927 G.B. Haddon-Smith who had been an official in Sierra Leone found the decision, "difficult to understand...it has always been recognized that when a slave escaped into British territory, be it Colony or Protectorate, he became a free man." What Haddon-Smith did not know that N'fa Nonko's slaves had not escaped into

8. West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette, (hereafter referred to as W.A.M.T.G.), 17 September 1927, p. 12

9. London Times, 27 August 1927

British territory, but has escaped within British territory.

There was little immediate public reaction to the N'fa Nonko case in Freetown beyond the publishing of the majority opinion on 16 July and the dissenting opinion on 23 July in the West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette. It was a time of change. J. de Hart, the acting Attorney-General, who had argued the government case left Freetown on 13 July to become the Solicitor General in the Gold Coast. Governor Slater left on 16 July to become the Governor of the Gold Coast.

The reaction during this period by the Sierra Leoneans was to formally disband the Sierra Leone Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. The Society which had been defunct since World War One had never concerned itself with the question of slavery in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. Its main purpose was to serve as a vehicle to the British Government for Freetown Sierra Leonean grievances. During the Legislative Council discussion of the gradual abolition bill the London office had done nothing to support the Sierra Leoneans in the compensation issue, so why continue? The Sierra Leoneans probably guessed that a new law would be passed to placate British opinion but nothing would be done about compensation.



So the file on the Sierra Leone Auxiliary ends as it began with a letter by C. D. Hotobah-During 11 August 1927. The letter shows the way the Sierra Leoneans felt. "I write to you as Secretary of the Sierra Leone Auxiliary of this Society, to advise you that our Committee has formed the opinion that the system of having auxiliary bodies established in the West African colonies in the interests of the native peoples, has not proved so effective or useful in promoting its work as had been hoped. The Committee has accordingly resolved that these Auxiliaries should be discontinued in their present form. It is suggested, however, that when the circumstances justify it, and the Auxiliary body considers that useful work can still be done, the members should form an independent organization. In such a case, the Committee would be prepared to consider applications from such bodies, if and when they can show that a definite purpose is being served by their efforts, for affiliation with the Society in London."

Beyond publishing the Supreme Court decision, the Free-town newspapers made no comment on the decision. If the papers were aware of the debate going on in Great Britain about Sierra Leone they made no comment.

10. British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Archives,  
11 July 1927

T. H. Thompson in an editorial on 17 September in the West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette wrote a rather realistic appraisal of the situation. The Freetown people did not see the question of slavery as important as the question of more Sierra Leonean participation in the governing process. No one in Great Britain seemed too concerned about the Railway strike in 1926 and no one in Great Britain worried about the ending of the elected Freetown City Council yet all the world was concerned about slavery. It was probably with this in mind that Thompson wrote, "This decision seems to have outraged the moral sentiments and feelings of a certain class of people in England, especially the Philanthropic Societies in that country and has created a nest of hornets in certain quarters in England... 'The King's business requires haste'... the bill practically abolishes slavery anywhere in the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone. If it abolishes the 'legal status' of slavery what other status of slavery does it recognize?"<sup>11</sup>

The Sierra Leone Weekly News made no comment on the proposed slavery law. An article from the London Daily Telegraph dated 30 August was reprinted on 17 September. This reprint noted, "The decision of the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone that an escaped slave may be lawfully re-captured by his master is surprising."<sup>12</sup>

11. W.A.T.M.G., 17 September 1927

12. Sierra Leone Weekly News, 17 September 1927, p. 41

In reaction to public pressure in Great Britain the Colonial Office began to act. Telegrams began to fly between London and Freetown. On 30 August Ormsby-Gore telegraphed the Officer administering Sierra Leone, H. C. Luke that he found the deficiency in Sierra Leone law as, "impossible to defend." He asked Luke to frame a new law as soon as possible. Luke telegraphed back on 31 August, "Legislative Council was adjourned yesterday and would not normally be again convoked until November." On 1 September Acting Governor H.C. Luke met with the Executive Council. The Council decided that legislation should be introduced as early as possible for a clean cut, the abolition of slavery. They recommended the dates of either 1<sup>13</sup> January 1928 or 1929.

On 2 September 1927 Ormsby-Gore telegraphed, "Slavery - I consider special earlier sitting should be held." On 6 September Luke telegraphed the proposed bill which would abolish the legal status of slavery throughout the Protectorate. Luke proposed that, "the Bill be introduced into the Legislative Council on 15 September and pass its final stage of 22 September. On 8 September Ormsby-Gore told Luke to get advice from the Provincial Commissioners for the date when the law should come into effect. Ormsby-Gore added, "Hope earliest practicable date will be

13. Cmd. 3020 of 1928, p. 70

considered."<sup>14</sup>

On 9 September 1927, the Executive Council decided to introduce the Bill into the Legislative Council on 15 September, with the date of commencement fixed for 1 January 1928. On 10 September Luke telegraphed Ormsby-Gore that the Provincial Commissioners wanted the commencement date to be 1 January 1929. Luke, however, was, "pressing them to reconsider in favor of 1928." On 14 September Ormsby-Gore telegraphed Luke, "I am grateful for prompt way in which you have dealt with matter."<sup>15</sup>

A special session of the Sierra Leone Legislative Council opened on 15 September in which Ordinance No. 24 of 1927 was introduced. The new law would abolish the legal status of slavery and would commence on 1 January 1928. No compensation would be paid to the owners.<sup>16</sup>

H. C. Luke, the Acting Governor, at the special session of the Legislative Council said, "the judgment has evoked a great deal of interest and comment in the United Kingdom, at Geneva and elsewhere, and has created a certain amount of uneasiness in the public mind." He told the Council that the Secretary of State for the Colonies wanted to get

14. Ibid., pp. 71-72

15. Ibid., p. 72

16. Cf, Appendix V., copy of Ordinance No. 24 of 1927

the legislation passed before the new Governor, Sir Joseph Byrne, arrived. He referred to the new bill as, "what might almost be termed as emergency legislation." The bill passed its first reading with no discussion. On 22 September 1927 at the second reading of the bill the discussion<sup>17</sup> began in the Legislative Council.

The British position was that no compensation ought to be paid to the owners of the slaves. Commissioner for the Northern Province, Captain W. B. Stanley, pointed out, "There are precedents for a clean cut without compensation. In the past there has been a clean cut in Nigeria and in the Gold Coast without compensation." The Acting Colonial Secretary, Captain C. E. Cookson added a dubious historical point. "Slave owners in the West Indies...had no previous warning that slavery would be abolished. It is quite clear that in this Colony and Protectorate as elsewhere there has been ample warning." Cookson did not mention that the British in the West Indies were given ample warning by the British abolition of slave trade in 1807.

The British further pointed out that slavery was mild in the Protectorate. Commissioner Cookson said, "in fact 'slavery' here has by now become scarcely slavery at all, so that we are not contemplating such an immediate 'clean

17. Sierra Leone Legislative Council Debates, 1926-1927, 15 September 1927, 22 September, 1927. All the subsequent quotations unless otherwise noted, this source.

cut' as took place in the West Indies." Commissioner Stanley predicted few slaves would leave their masters. "The bulk of the slaves in this Protectorate are not discontented, they are slaves of the house of the second and third generation who have become genuinely attached to the families with whom they have lived, and they will continue to work for them and will not leave them because, in the past, they have not been oppressed."

Acting Governor Luke said the reason compensation was paid in the West Indies was because, "the slaves who were being emancipated represented the only labour in the Islands --- To have emancipated the entire supply of labor of the colonies in question without compensation would have meant not only ruin and bankruptcy for the planters; it would have meant the complete economic disruption of the Colonies themselves." Since Luke foresaw few slaves running away there would be no need for compensation. Concerning those masters whose slaves did runaway, Commissioner Cookson piously added, "no bad master can claim compensation on any moral ground whatsoever."

The final British argument against compensation was that it was too expensive. Acting Governor Luke stated that it would create additional taxation upon the Protectorate. Luke added, "There would thus be created the ludicrous situation of the slave-owner having to pay a higher house



tax in order to provide himself with his own compensation." Commissioner Cookson further added that compensation payments would be difficult to administer. He cynically commented, "half the people of the Protectorate would immediately become owners and the other half slaves, so that by collusion between both parties everyone might hope to profit." "However, the British had recommended to the Colonial Office that, "the payment of compensation for communal labor to take effect from the 1st January, 1928."

The problem of land for the freed slaves was not considered serious by the British. Paramount Chief Bai Comber supported the British when he said, "There will be no trouble to the use of lands by emancipated slaves; there will be no trouble at all as they will all live amongst themselves, and work together." Commissioner Stanley agreed with the Paramount Chief.

Underlying the British position was the desire to do something to stop the criticism of Sierra Leone concerning slavery. The unfavorable publicity that Sierra Leone had received as a result of the Supreme Court decision in July 1927 had to be stopped. This could only be ended by passing some new legislation.

Each official who spoke at the Legislative Council was aware of this. Attorney-General A.C.V. Prior when explaining Ordinance No. 24 of 1927 commented that the

Supreme Court decision had, "aroused an unusual amount of interest. I put it mildly and I leave it at that."

Acting Governor Luke was a little more explicit when he was explaining why the British had abandoned the gradual abolition of slavery approach. "Circumstances, however, have changed; and the reasons for acceleration have been explained, as I hope satisfactorily to the Honorable Un-official Members."

The Sierra Leonean position was that compensation ought to be paid because Ordinance No. 24 of 1927 deprived the owners of property. The Rural Member, A.E. Tuboku-Metzger commented, "No matter what might have been done in Nigeria or the Gold Coast, this Government has recognized and committed itself to the principle that it is equitable to pay compensation to the owners who would be deprived of their property in case of a clean cut of the legal status of slavery." Tuboku-Metzger then quoted the statements of the British when they argued against compensation during the discussion of the gradual abolition bill. During the debate in April 1926 the British stated that compensation would not be necessary because abolition would be gradual. Such an argument stated Tuboku-Metzger committed the Government, "to the principle of paying compensation," when an immediate abolition was promulgated.

The First Urban Member, E.S. Beoku-Betts noted, "The Full Court places slaves in the position of chattels to be recaptured by owners as their property. If that is so it needs no great reasoning to say that if you are depriving a person of his property that person has the right to be compensated."

However, the Sierra Leoneans were not united on the compensation issue. J.A. Songo-Davies, the British appointed member of the Legislative Council said, "The more I think of it, the more it appears difficult for me to say that compensation is necessary." Songo-Davies saw the paying of compensation as delaying the law because many claims and counter-claims would be made.

The Protectorate Members of the Council were not clear as to their position. Only one Chief out of the three present spoke. Acting Governor Luke in his summation of the discussion stated, "I do not want to stress unduly the significance of the fact that the only appeals for compensation in today's debate have come from representatives of the Colony, and that no appeal has come from the representatives of the Protectorate." However, this statement was not completely true.

Paramount Chief Bai Comber, a Mende, from the Central Province stated that "the slave-owners in the Protectorate will suffer greatly and their wealth will be broken down

almost entirely. I am recording this fact so that in the future you may be able to make some sort of recommendation to the big people in England to enable them to make some sort of provision for the betterment of the Protectorate." This was the closest that any Protectorate Representative, who were all slave owners, ever came to asking for compensation.

Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright, the Second Urban Member, was in Great Britain and was unable to participate in the discussion. Two interviews with him appeared in Manchester Guardian on 3 and 9 September 1927. These two interviews were reprinted in the Freetown Newspapers, but both appeared after Ordinance No. 24 of 1927 was passed.

Bankole-Bright disagreed with Rev. J. H. Harris that the number of slaves in the Protectorate were 215,555. Harris probably got these figures from Captain W. B. Stanley's estimate in Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1926. Bankole-Bright estimated that there were only 150,000 slaves, "of whom at least 50,000 have freed themselves by marrying their master's daughter."<sup>18</sup> He believed that only £200,000 would be needed for compensation. During the discussion in 1926 the British had estimated compensation would cost from £800,000 to £1,000,000.

Bankole-Bright suggested that the £200,000 be paid over a four year period in sums of £50,000 each year, this

money coming from Sierra Leone itself. He was confident that, "the Sierra Leone revenue would make up by increased production as the result of freeing a certain number of people."<sup>19</sup> This money would be allocated to the owners upon the recommendation of a central body of Chiefs. The payments would be audited by the Sierra Leone Government.

As a first step to implementing this plan, Bankole-Bright suggested the appointment of a small commission. This commission, "should find out the exact facts and numbers,"<sup>20</sup> of slaves. The commission would be composed of three members, British and Sierra Leonean.

The Rural Member, A. E. Tuboku-Metzger made four specific recommendations in his speech in the Legislative Council. First, he recommended compensation to the owners. Second, that land be secured for the freed slaves; and third that unpaid communal labor in the Protectorate be paid. Fourth, he recommended that a Registration Bureau be established in the Colony and the Protectorate; "to regulate and control the movements of natives migrating from the Protectorate into the Colony without definite purpose."

All these proposals were disregarded as the British went through the motions of "debate." The bill passed its second reading. Then the Council resolved itself into a Committee to consider the bill clause by clause.

19. Ibid., 8 October 1927, p. 27

20. Ibid., 8 October 1927, p. 95

A. E. Tuboku-Metzger proposed that the bill read that slavery be abolished rather than just the legal status of slavery. He believed, "By the qualification 'legal,' it would appear that there may be other forms of slavery recognized and not abolished." Attorney-General A.C.V. Prior stated, "I do not think that there is any doubt in matter." "But Tuboku-Metzger persisted, "But, Sir, while the law does not recognize the legal status there may be some other status existing, such as the economic status, or the social status whereby the man is not considered a free man. I should like the freed man to be absolutely free."

Acting Governor Luke assured Tuboku-Metzger, "that his difficulty was not a real one." E. S. Beoku-Betts asked, "Your Excellency, we have abolished the status of slavery de jure. Is abolished de facto also?" Discussion continued on the rest of the clauses of the bill.

Finally the Attorney-General proposed the suspension of the rules so that the bill could be read for the third time, A. E. Tuboku-Metzger objected. The Acting Governor asked him not to press his objection, "because Government regards it as of extreme importance to pass this Bill today." Toboku-Metzger did not withdraw his objection. Ordinance No. 24 of 1927, "An Ordinance to Abolish the Legal Status of Slavery in the Protectorate" was read a third time and became law on 22 September 1927.



The reaction of the Sierra Leoneans in the Colony to the total abolition of slavery in the Protectorate was to write editorials in their newspapers predicting chaos in the Protectorate. The Sierra Leoneans urged that compensation be paid to the owners and that some sort of controls be imposed to prevent the colony from being overrun with ex-slaves migrating from the Protectorate. Most of the Colony fury was directed towards G.C. Dixon a reporter from the London Daily Mail. Dixon wrote six derogatory articles about Sierra Leone in the Colony newspapers alive for six months. Little concern was shown for the welfare of the ex-slaves but much was shown for the dignity of the Colony Sierra Leoneans.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VII. EPILOGUE.

Two days after the British promulgated Ordinance No. 24 of 1837 the Sierra Leone Weekly News published an editorial. Because slaves were the property of their masters, the editor urged, "the British Taxpayers to buy the Freedom of all slaves in the Protectorate." It was not sufficient for the British to merely express disgust against slavery. Abolition without compensation, "would be inflicting a disastrous blow on the economic position of the Protectorate as also a smashing calamity on the resources of all slave owners." Also the newspaper recommended that something be done, "to regulate the movements of the freed slaves that they do not become a drag to the progress and

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advancement of the Protectorate."<sup>1</sup>

On 1 October the newspaper pointed that with abolition of the legal status of slavery, "the purpose of the British Government has only been half achieved." The editorial urged, "something should be done to help the people to tide over what would then be really an unprecedented difficult situation."<sup>2</sup> The editor was worried about Freetown being flooded with freed slaves.

On 8 October the only public comment concerned about the welfare of the slaves themselves appeared in the Sierra Leone Weekly News. The article was written by Modibo. "I am afraid Creole people in general have treated this matter of slavery too lightly, much too lightly if not with complete indifference, in the past. While strangers, who cannot in any way suffer by its retention or benefit by its removal, have for years 'pressed Parliament' to remove the dread curse from our country, we who are most intimately concerned in the matter have scarcely lifted a finger to bring about the happy result...Talk of Compensation! Well, yes, there ought to be some compensation - not to the masters but to the poor slaves in an act of reparation for all the untold miseries they and their ancestors have endured for generations."<sup>3</sup> This was the only public argument made by anyone for the welfare of the slaves rather than the masters.

1. Sierra Leone Weekly News, 24 September 1927, p. 62

2. Ibid., 1 October 1927, p. 80

3. Ibid., 8 October 1927, p. 94, 100

On 31 December the Sierra Leone Weekly News urged the establishment of Labor Bureau to give the newly freed slaves, "some sort of guidance in the direction of educating them how to exercise their freedom to their own benefit."<sup>4</sup> Otherwise the editor feared that the production of palm produce might decline.

The West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette did not publish an editorial immediately. On 24 September 1927 they only reprinted comments by people in Great Britain concerning the Supreme Court decision. Also reprinted were Sir Edward Hilton-Young's comments to the Sixth Committee of the League on 13 September 1927.

On 1 October the West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette reprinted the 15 September comments of the Acting Governor H.C. Luke to the Legislative Council. On 8 October an editorial was printed. In this editorial the reaction to the new bill was bitter, "The Bill has been passed and the legal status of slavery whatever that expression may mean<sup>5</sup> abolished in the Protectorate." The editorial also implied that the Protectorate representatives had been pressured to vote for the bill in a meeting they had had with the British several days before the final sitting of the Legislative Council.

4. Ibid., 31 December 1927, p. 316

5. West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette, 8 October 1927 p. 8

On 1 January 1928, the legal status of slavery was abolished in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. In Karina where the slave revolt began, Kodogbo Sabu told the slaves that they were now free. "When the slaves heard this they were dancing the whole of the day."<sup>6</sup>

"Some of the slaves, after they had been set free, lived in groups and founded villages where they could farm for themselves."<sup>7</sup> Near Nafai the following villages were founded, Panpankoh, Fodesoriah, and Maribaya. Some slaves when becoming free, "added a second name to their former one, e.g., Laiba is now called Alpha Laiba."<sup>8</sup> Some slaves moved further away to Kondebaia, Sokudala, and Kaworoso-kornah.

In the Mabile Valley (Bombali District), in the Tambakka Chiefdom (Karene District), and in the Tamiso Chiefdom (Koinadugu District) slaves left their masters. The majority of these masters were Mandingoes. N.G. Frere, Acting Commissioner for the Northern Province, estimated in April 1928 that the number was 6,000 to 7,000. He claimed that, "the majority of whom had separated themselves from their former masters (after refusing to work for a lengthy period) before Ordinance No. 24 of 1927 was enacted."<sup>9</sup>

6. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962

7. Tijan Sheriff, third-person interview, 16 June 1963

8. Foday Swandy Fofana, third-person interview, 18 June 1963

9. C.O.270/58, Annual Report for 1927, Northern Province, p.4

Frere reported, "it is too early yet to estimate what the full effect of the Ordinance will be, and it will make itself felt gradually, (even the chiefs will not volunteer an opinion) but it is quite certain that the situation has been accepted by all concerned with the utmost loyalty, and that no apprehension need be felt in regard to migration on a large scale of freed slaves from one part of the Protectorate to another, or to the Colony." Frere predicted some of the slaves would return. "There are in fact obvious signs that ex-slaves from the Mabole Valley,...who migrated to French Guinea and to Tambakka country, are gradually returning to their chiefdoms, but not of course to the villages of their former masters." <sup>10</sup> Some slaves <sup>11</sup> migrated to Heremakono in Guinea and stayed there.

The abolition of slavery was a disaster to the Mandingo slave owners in the Karina area. There was no one to work the farms because most of the slaves had left or were working for themselves. Around Karina there were over 1,700 slaves, 1,016 were owned by N'fa Nonko. N'fa Nonko was one <sup>12</sup> of the, "largest slave owners in the Protectorate."

10. Ibid.

11. Alhaji Saccoh, personal interview, 5 April 1963; many of the slaves of the Saccoh family at Sakorayi migrated to Heremakono in Guinea. The head slave was Musa Marah.

12. Native Affairs Minute Paper, Karene District, Northern Province, Sierra Leone, No. 178/1926, paper 17, <sup>13</sup> 13 December 1926



At Waridala 268 slaves left and the Fofana family reports that, "we are still suffering."<sup>13</sup>

The British were aware of N'fa Nonko's position. In February 1928, the Executive Council decided to ask the Colonial Office for permission to grant N'fa Nonko £100 for his legal expenses. The Council also discussed the possibility of granting £100 to Salla Silla. When N'fa Nonko was offered £200 he refused it.

"The European took £200 which he handed to my Father that it was sent by the Government and that the Government was very sorry for him. Then my Father refused to accept the £200, he thought the £200 was the payment in freeing the slaves. Then the European said to my Father that it was the law and my Father said, 'I know it is a law and I believe another law might come again.' Then when my Father returned to Karina he called all the Mandingoes and told them he was given a sum of £200 by the Government but that he refused to accept it. Then the Mandingoes said that you were quite right to refuse the £200."<sup>14</sup>

To reduce the economic disruption caused by the abolition of slavery, the British sent agricultural experts into

13. Alhaji Mustafa Fofana & Alhaji Suliman Fofana, personal interview, 31 March 1963; The Fofana Family prospered well during the diamond boom in the 1950's. Today Waridala contains a £35,000 mosque and a clock tower built from diamond profits.
14. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962

the areas where many slaves had left. For the year 1928 R.R. Glanville the Acting Director of Agriculture reported, "in the Bombali District a special effort was made to encourage rice cultivation in the thickly populated areas of Biriwa and Safroka chiefdoms...results were quite satisfactory."<sup>15</sup> Also they were experimenting with the growing of cocoa in Koinadugu District and southeast Bombali District.

The French in Guinea were teaching farmers the use of plows. The British believed that since conditions in the Northern Province were similar, ploughing might also be introduced there. The British decided to send three Sierra Leoneans to be trained in plowing techniques by the French at Kankan, Guinea.

In April 1928, R.R. Glanville took three Sierra Leoneans with him to Guinea. Two were the sons of N'fa Nonko, Alhaji Borbor Nonko and Alhaji Lamin Sheriff. The three Sierra Leoneans stayed at Kankan for six months, then they returned to Sierra Leone. When they returned one was sent to the Experimental Farm at Njala and the second was sent to Karene District Headquarters, Batkanu.

The third, Alhaji Borbor Nonko, returned to Karina and was given a plow and oxen from Freetown. "Afterwards I returned to Karina and I was doing the same work that was taught in Guinea. The very first year I harvested a large

15. C.O.270/59, Annual Report for 1928, Land & Forests Dept, p31

rice crop, three times the work of the slaves. When the slaves heard this, they all gathered and came to my Father and said that they were going to stay with him. Then my Father accepted them and they are still in this village." <sup>16</sup>

In 1929, R.R. Glanville reported that a total of 80 acres were ploughed in the Northern Province. Ploughing centers were established at Karina and Batkanu. "The local oxen took readily to the work and were able to plow after a very short training...I have no hesitation in saying that all the operations in connection with the actual ploughing succeeded even better than I had hoped for." <sup>17</sup> By 1930 R.R. Glanville reported that the total acreage being ploughed was now 190 acres. A total of twenty-eight farmers were using 31 ploughs and 18 harrows in the Northern Province. In 1931 the number declined with only seventeen farmers ploughing 133 acres.

Although the British attempted to do something in the Karina area where the slave revolt occurred, little was done in the entire Northern Province. The abolition of slavery appears to have had an effect upon the economic life of the Northern Province. The Commissioner for the Northern Province reported, "The most remarkable trade feature is the big drop in the tonnage of all produce sent

16. Alhaji Borbor Nonko, personal interview, 15 September 1962

17. C.O. 270/60, Annual Report for 1929, Agriculture Department, p. 9

by rails from stations in the province." <sup>18</sup>

In the Northern Province palm kernels fell from 6,733 tons in 1927 to 5,894 tons in 1928. Rice fell from 2,089 tons in 1927 to 1,459 tons in 1928. In the case of rice the total tonnage for all stations in the entire Protectorate rose from 4,115 tons in 1927 to 4,337 tons in 1928.

In 1929 the decline continued, in the Northern Province. Palm kernels fell from 5,894 tons in 1928 to 5,505 tons in 1929. Rice declined from 1,459 tons in 1928 to 1,092 tons in 1929. Therefore, in the two years after abolition, palm kernel tonnage carried on the railroad declined 1,228 tons and rice declined 997 tons, in the Northern Province.

The Northern Province was the only province that reported the movement of slaves after abolition. The movement of slaves from their master's farms probably meant less was planted, also more rice was probably consumed rather than given to the master. In the case of palm kernels, fewer were gathered because ex-slaves used their spare time to build new homes in the villages they founded after freedom came.

According to reports by the British abolition had little effect in the Central and Southern Provinces. In the Central Province, it was reported, "the news of the approaching abolition of the status of slavery was quietly received." The British officials publicized the new law in 18. C.O.270/59, Annual Report for 1928, Northern Province, p.4

their travels around the Province, "the news was received by all concerned in a calm and sensible manner." W.D. Bowden, the Commissioner, predicted, "The full economic benefit for the country as a whole of this step is doubtless not for the moment appreciated by the people or their rulers, but time will show the wisdom of the step and true importance of the event become more and more evident." For the year 1928 the Central Province Report stated, "The event was received in a calm and sensible manner throughout the province." The Commissioner quoted the District Commissioner from Pendembu District, "The measure was received without demur - almost with apathy throughout the district, and one might now believe that there had never<sup>19</sup> been such an institution."

In the Southern Province in 1927, it was reported that about 1,000 slaves came to the headquarters at Pujehun, "to ascertain actually from Government itself, that they were free." However, "This was no dislocation of native social life, the majority of the freed slaves 'sitting down' happily under their old masters." For the year 1928 it was reported, "Abolition of slavery had little effect anywhere in the province and offered few problems even to the Native Courts."

19. C.O. 270/58, Annual Report for 1927, Central Province;  
C.O. 270/59, Annual Report for 1928, Central Province.

J.S. Fenton, the Acting Commissioner noted, that trade in the province was exceptionally good during 1928. He ventured the opinion that this might be due to abolition. "It is just possible that the ex-slaves cut more palm produce than their quondam masters used to trouble about, but twelve months is too short a period from which to deduce a tendency."<sup>20</sup>

Abolition appeared to have had its greatest effect in the Mandingo areas of the Northern Province. The rest of the Protectorate seemed to have been little affected. How abolition affected the slaves themselves is not known because no study had been done on this topic. In 1945, Max Gorvie, a Sierra Leonean, wrote, "In physical and mental development the slave to a certain extent is comparatively inferior to the freeborn. Slaves have such a sense of inferiority that they can be sorted out easily from a group of any people."<sup>21</sup> How much of this attitude remains in Sierra Leone is unknown. One hopes it is dying.

Gorvie added, "The designation of 'slave' carries with it such an odium that whether the slave was adopted as a son or given his liberty the stigma remained. Slavery,<sup>22</sup> therefore, has a demoralizing effect on any community."

20. C.O. 270/58, Annual Report for 1927, Southern Province; C.O. 270/59, Annual Report for 1928, Southern Province.
21. M. Gorvie, Old and New in Sierra Leone, pp. 53-54
22. Ibid., p. 54



Amadu Koroma, a former president of a Native Court in the Kholifa Chiefdom (Temne) in Magbass in the Northern Province said that if a person calls another a "slave" he could be fined up to £5. However, he said there were few such cases.

Yet in 1963, few people are willing to admit that they were former slaves. This probably shows that the social stigma of being an ex-slave still remains. What effect it has upon Sierra Leone is unknown.

The British administration, with exception of Karina, did little to prepare the people of the Protectorate for abolition. Subsequent events show that they were correct in assuming that abolition would not disrupt the Protectorate. A more complete judgment on the economic effects of abolition cannot be made until an economic study of this period is done.

The only group outside Sierra Leone that was concerned with Protectorate slavery was the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society of Great Britain. The society never had any knowledge of the problem in Sierra Leone because by the 1920's their auxiliary in Sierra Leone was defunct. Thus when abolition came they favored it because slavery was evil.

23. Amadu Koroma, personal interview, 15 April 1963

The society did mobilize British public opinion against slavery after the N'fa Nonko case was published and helped force the Colonial Office into a position of total abolition. The Society was also active in Geneva in working for an International Slavery Convention under the sponsorship of the League of Nations. This Convention was approved by the League in September 1926, exactly two months before the revolt of Karina-Nafai slaves. The society helped the cause of the Protectorate slave by making his case known to the rest of the world.

After abolition had been promulgated in Sierra Leone the society kept watch on the British Colonial Office to make sure that abolition took place.

On 23 November 1927, Earl Buxton spoke on the matter in the House of Lords. Buxton congratulated the Government for its prompt action after the shocking decision of the Supreme Court. He asked for assurance from the Government that slavery would be abolished, "without qualification, without delay, and without compensation." He also urged immediate application of the new law.

Earl Buxton asked the Colonial Office about the administration arrangements that were being made in Sierra Leone to inform the people of abolition. He also wondered about the administrative arrangements being made for slaves who were old or indigent. Finally he wanted to know whether the slaves would have land.

Lord Lovat answered for the Colonial Office. The people would be informed about the new law through the District Commissioner. The ex-slaves would be given land through the tribal authority and would be treated as any other stranger coming into the chiefdom. Concerning old and indigent slaves, Lord Lovat believed that existing tribal custom already had sufficient ways to care for them.<sup>24</sup>

On 12 December the Secretary of State for the Colonies, W. Ormsby-Gore answered the questions of W. Baker and Colonel Day in the House of Commons. They wanted to know how the new law was being publicized and how many slaves did the new law effect. Ormsby-Gore stated that the new law had received, "wide publicity in Sierra Leone." He could not say how many people the law would affect because, "The question of what is called domestic servitude amongst primitive tribes in Africa is a difficult one to define."<sup>25</sup>

On 20 February 1928, W. Baker, M.P., asked the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, L.S. Amery, whether he had received any report about the effects of the new law. Amery said that he had not received a reply from Sierra Leone. On 21 May Amery still had not received a reply from Sierra Leone. On that same day Baker asked Amery whether the law concerning the migration of people out of the chiefdom could defeat the purposes of the abolition law.

24. Anti-Slavery Reporter, January 1928, p. 180

25. Ibid, p. 174

L. S. Amery answered this question on 11 July 1928, after consulting with Governor J. Byrne of Sierra Leone. Amery reassured Baker that the migration law would not affect the abolition law. Governor Byrne had told Amery, "that the operation of these provisions will be carefully watched, and that, in particular, the political officers concerned will be alert to discover and to deal with any attempts at extortion." Amery noted that the decision of the chief concerning anyone leaving the chieftdom would be appealed to the District Commissioner. "The District Commissioner, who realizing that there had been an attempt on the native's freedom, would decide in his favour."<sup>26</sup>

The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society made no public comment on the 1927 reports from the three provinces until its July 1929 issue of the Anti-Slavery Reporter. Having read these reports, the society was satisfied that abolition had taken place. The Reporter now referred to the master-slave relationship as that of employer-employee. After quoting the relevant sections of the 1927 Provincial Reports, the article concluded, "This is strong testimony that the policy of abolishing the legal status of slavery was not only the right but the safe one."<sup>27</sup> Satisfied with the situation in Sierra Leone the society now concentrated in making sure that this information got before the League of Nations.

26. British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Archives, 11 July 1928
27. Anti-Slavery Reporter, July 1929, pp. 70-71

At the 17 September 1928, meeting of the Sixth Committee of the League, the Swiss delegate, Mr. Rappard, congratulated the British on the rapidity with which they passed Ordinance No. 24 of 1927. "It was probable that the moral influence of the League of Nations had helped to bring about this reform." The delegate hoped that the British would inform, the next Assembly of the social and economic effects produced by the law. The British delegate, Mr. Locker-Lampon, told the committee that the British would, "next year furnish the Assembly with information concerning the effects of the Act suppressing slavery in Sierra Leone."<sup>28</sup>

On 13 October 1928 the British sent additional information concerning slavery in Sierra Leone. The British stated, "in all essential particulars the provisions of the Convention are being complied with."<sup>29</sup> The letter stated that gradual steps were being taken to gradually pay for all labor called out on public service. The British had decided to remunerate all labor employed in the construction and repair of Government buildings, also they hoped soon to pay wages for road construction in the Protectorate.

On 30 November 1928, the Colonial Office requested information from Sierra Leone about the effect of the new

28. League of Nations Ninth Assembly (1928), Sixth Committee Minutes, 17 September 1928, p. 30

29. League of Nations, Official Journal, December 1928, p. 1958

abolition law. On 14 February 1929, before the Annual Reports from the Province for 1928 were written, the Governor sent his reply. His reply contained the information of the 1927 Provincial Reports. This information was sent to the League on 29 May 1929. At the Tenth Assembly of the League, the rapporteur of the Sixth Committee noted in his report on 20 September 1929 that the abolition of slavery had caused no economic or social disturbances in the Sierra Leone Protectorate.<sup>30</sup>

After this time the League and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society became interested in the slavery question in Liberia where laborers were being sent to Fernando Po. As far as the League and the British abolitionists were concerned, the problem had been solved in Sierra Leone.

On 22 September 1932, Sir Eric Drummond, the Secretary-General of the League, sent a circular letter to all the League members. One of the questions he asked was about the effects of abolition. The Anti-Slavery Society learning of this circular letter wrote the Colonial Office about Sierra Leone on 22 March 1933. The society was interested in what, "system of employment has followed upon the Domestic Slavery System."<sup>31</sup>

30. League of Nations, Slavery (1923-1936), A.17.1929,VI., pp.3-4

31. Anti-Slavery Reporter, October 1933, pp. 114-115



The Colonial Office replied that they had no information beyond which they had submitted to the League in May 1929. Concerning employment conditions, the Colonial Office wrote, "Reports indicate that no system of employment had to be devised for the freed slaves, for they became independent farmers and obtained farms readily. Others sought employment with the Sierra Leone Development Company, and at the mines. These men are paid monthly, or fortnightly, for the most part but are on daily rates. There is no rule as yet regarding notice for termination, but this will be regulated by the proposed Labor Code."<sup>32</sup>

On 14 February 1935, the British reported to the Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery. Concerning Sierra Leone, they stated, "From a more recent report, it appears that there was a tendency on the part of some of the former so-called 'slaves' to object to doing communal labor. Moreover, whereas they were formerly voiceless in assemblies (and usually absent), after the enactment of the ordinance they tended to side against their former masters and to become more vocal. No system of employment had to be devised for the natives in question; they became independent farmers, farming land which they obtained readily everywhere, and paying small rents. Many of them sought employment with the Sierra Leone Development Comp-

32. Ibid., p. 115

any and at various mines, at market rates of pay." <sup>33</sup> The Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery met once a year until 1938. Each year it reported for Sierra Leone that Ordinance No. 24 of 1927 had little effect upon the social and economic life of the Sierra Leone Protectorate.

The problem in Sierra Leone by the 1930's was no longer slavery but those of working conditions of free men. In 1932, an Ordinance was passed restricting the chiefs right to forced labor. In 1934, a comprehensive Labor Code was enacted. In 1938, the forced labor law was strengthened. In 1939, trade unions were allowed to organize in the Colony and the Protectorate. Thus began a new era in labor relations in Sierra Leone.

33. League of Nations, Slavery (1923-1936), Report of the Second Session of the Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery, C.159.M.133.1935.VI., p. 22

CAPTAIN W. B. STANLEY'S ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF  
SLAVES IN THE PROTECTORATE AS OF 9 OCTOBER 1923

| TRIBE    | TOTAL<br>POPULATION<br>1921 CENSUS | PERCENTAGE<br>OF PERSONS IN<br>SERVITUDE | NUMBER OF<br>PERSONS IN<br>SERVITUDE |
|----------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Mandingo | 8,705                              | 39                                       | 3,446                                |
| Gusu     | 33,753                             | 33                                       | 17,738                               |
| Vol      | 28,000                             | 30                                       | 7,352                                |
| Yalunka  | 12,600                             | 29                                       | 3,180                                |
| Temma    | 311,418                            | 26                                       | 62,183                               |
| Sullon   | 56,500                             | 25                                       | 11,313                               |
| Mende    | 557,674                            | 15                                       | 83,651                               |
| Fulla    | 6,061                              | 15                                       | 900                                  |
| Gola     | 8,772                              | 16                                       | 897                                  |
| Krim     | 23,471                             | 19                                       | 2,347                                |
| Koranko  | 30,166                             | 18                                       | 3,010                                |
| Konno    | 112,215                            | 10                                       | 11,221                               |
| Shorbro  | 37,200                             | 4  | 2,232                                |
| Lonko    | 45,052                             | 5  | 2,252                                |
| Kissi    | 44,506                             | 5  | 2,325                                |
| Limba    | 112,610                            | 5  | 5,600                                |
|          | 2,446,373                          | 15.15                                    | 219,773                              |

Source: Cmd: 3020 of 1928 "Correspondence relating to  
Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protector-  
ate," p. 45

CAPTAIN W. B. STANLEY'S ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF  
SLAVES IN THE PROTECTORATE AS OF 9 OCTOBER 1923

| TRIBE    | TOTAL<br>POPULATION<br>1921 CENSUS | PERCENTAGE<br>OF PERSONS IN<br>SERVITUDE | NUMBER OF<br>PERSONS IN<br>SERVITUDE |
|----------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Mandingo | 8,705                              | 35                                       | 3,046                                |
| Susu     | 53,753                             | 33                                       | 17,738                               |
| Vai      | 24,541                             | 30                                       | 7,362                                |
| Yalunka  | 12,400                             | 25                                       | 3,100                                |
| Temne    | 311,418                            | 20                                       | 62,283                               |
| Bullom   | 56,556                             | 20                                       | 11,311                               |
| Mende    | 557,674                            | 15                                       | 83,651                               |
| Fulla    | 6,001                              | 15                                       | 900                                  |
| Gola     | 8,773                              | 10                                       | 897                                  |
| Krim     | 23,471                             | 10                                       | 2,347                                |
| Koranko  | 30,100                             | 10                                       | 3,010                                |
| Konno    | 112,215                            | 10                                       | 11,221                               |
| Sherbro  | 37,200                             | 6  | 2,232                                |
| Lokko    | 45,052                             | 5  | 2,252                                |
| Kissi    | 46,506                             | 5  | 2,325                                |
| Limba    | 112,010                            | 5  | 5,600                                |
|          | <hr/> 1,446,375 <hr/>              | <hr/> 15.15 <hr/>                        | <hr/> 219,275 <hr/>                  |

source: Cmd. 3020 of 1928 "Correspondence relating to Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protectorate," p. 45

## APPENDIX II.

## REDEMPTION CERTIFICATE

## REDEMPTION CERTIFICATE.

TO ALL TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

This is to certify that the bearer.....  
 who was the domestic of .....of.....  
 Chiefdom .....District, has this.....day of  
 .....obtained freedom; the sum of .....pounds  
 having been paid by one .....of  
 .....in the .....Chiefdom.....  
 .....District, for this purpose, the said  
 .....is hereby, in accordance with Section  
 38 of Ordinance No. 33 of 1901, declared to be a free  
 .....

Any person depriving or attempting to deprive the  
 said .....of .....liberty will be  
 liable for prosecution.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and  
 Official Seal at .....in the .....  
 District, in the Protectorate of Sierra Leone, this  
 .....day of .....192...

.....  
 District Commissioner

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source: Cmd. 3020 of 1928 "Correspondence relating to  
 Domestic Slavery in the Sierra Leone Protector-  
 ate," p. 35

## APPENDIX III.

NUMBER OF SLAVES REDEEMED IN THE KOINADUGU DISTRICT  
1916-1923

|      |    |
|------|----|
| 1916 | 10 |
| 1917 | 5  |
| 1918 | 19 |
| 1919 | 57 |
| 1920 | 4  |
| 1921 | 31 |
| 1922 | 11 |
| 1923 | 17 |

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sources: Annual Reports for the Northern Province,  
1920, 1921, 1922, and 1923

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source: Sierra Leone Royal Gazette, 14 April 1926, p. 508



## APPENDIX IV.

## ORDINANCE NO. 9 OF 1926

Protectorate (No. 2) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1926

No. 9 of 1926

An Ordinance to Amend the Protectorate Ordinance, 1924

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the Protectorate (No. 2) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1926.
2. Section six of the Protectorate Ordinance, 1924, shall be repealed and the following section shall be substituted therefor:
  - "6. After the commencement of this Ordinance
    - (1) All persons born or bought into the Protectorate are hereby declared to be free.
    - (2) All persons treated as slaves or held in any manner of servitude shall be and become free on the death of their master or owner.
    - (3) No claim for or in respect of any slave shall be entertained by any of the Courts of the Protectorate."

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source: Sierra Leone Royal Gazette, 14 April 1926, p.508

## ORDINANCE NO. 24 of 1927

No. of 24 of 1927

An Ordinance to Abolish the Legal Status of Slavery  
in the Protectorate

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the Legal Status of Slavery (Abolition) Ordinance, 1927; it shall apply to the Protectorate, and shall come into operation on the first day of January, 1928.
2. The legal status of slavery is hereby declared to be abolished throughout the Protectorate.
3. For the heading to Part II of the Protectorate Ordinance, 1924, namely "Slave Dealing, etc." there shall be substituted the heading "Dealing in Persons, etc."
4. Sections five and seven of the Protectorate Ordinance, 1924, are hereby repealed.
5. Section eight of the Protectorate Ordinance, 1924, shall be amended in the following particulars:-
  - a) In paragraph (1) for the word "slave" there shall be substituted the word "person;"
  - b) Paragraph (2) shall be deleted;
  - c) In paragraph (3) for the word "servitude" there shall be substituted the words "any service;"
  - d) In paragraph (4) the words "or become a slave" shall be deleted, and for the word "servitude" there shall be substituted the words "any service;"
  - e) In paragraph (5) the words "or in any service" shall be inserted between the words "in servitude" and the words "as a pledge;"
  - f) In paragraph (7) for the words "slaves or other" there shall be substituted the word "any."
6. The Protectorate (No. 2) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1926, is hereby repealed.
7. The Protectorate Courts Jurisdiction Ordinance, 1924, shall be amended in the following particulars:-
  - a) Section four shall be repealed;
  - b) In paragraph (2) (a) of section seven and in paragraph (2) (a) of section twenty-four for

the word "slaves" there shall be substituted  
the word "persons."

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source: Sierra Leone Royal Gazette, 12 September 1927,  
pp. 92-93

A. Interviews (information listed as follows:  
Name, Translator, Location, Date)

1. Personal Interview.

J. S. Fenton - speaks English - Freetown,  
Sierra Leone - 30 April 1963

Alhaji Mustafa Fofana & Alhaji Sulman Fofana -  
Issa Sheriff - Waridala, Siriba  
Chiefdom, Northern Province,  
Sierra Leone - 31 March 1963

Lamina - speaks English - Mabon, Kholifa  
Chiefdom, Northern Province,  
Sierra Leone - 15 April 1963

CHAPTER IX.

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2. Third-Person Interview (answered a set of  
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Freetown, Sierra Leone - 1 May  
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Foday Swandy Fofana - Issa Sheriff - Manjoro,  
Biriwa Chiefdom, Northern Pro-  
vince, Sierra Leone

## 2. Third-Person Interview (con't)

Madam Cherinoh Kadaybah - Issa Sheriff -  
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