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SELECTED ATTITUDES AND VALUES OF YOUNG ADULTS
IN NORTHERN SIERRA LEONE

by

FATU Y. KAMARA

A report submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF
SOCIAL WORK

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1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I	INTRODUCTION	1
II	COLONIZATION AND BRITISH RULE IN SIERRA LEONE	3
	Court decision in Black Poor Committee 1772. . . .	3
	Difficulty of settling in Freedom City	4
	Establishment of Government in New Freedom City. .	5
	The British Hut Tax War.	8
III	TRADITIONAL NORTHERN SIERRA LEONE FAMILY	14
	Family Composition	14
	Marriage Ceremony.	15
	Polygynist Practices	18
	Selection of Spouses	19
	Position of wives in the order of marriage	20
	Grounds for divorce.	21
	Secret Societies	22
	Formal or Western Education.	23
IV	METHODOLOGY.	25
V	ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA.	27
VI	CONCLUSION	55
	REFERENCES CITED	59

I. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Sierra Leone is situated on the Northwest African coast and occupies an area of 28,000 square miles. It is bounded on the north and the east by the Republic of Guinea, on the south by Liberia, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. It has a population of 2.5 million people, comprised of thirteen tribes. The main tribal groupings are the Limbas, Mendes, Temmes, and Creoles. With the exception of the descendants of former slaves residing in the Colony area, most of the occupants of the interior are believed to have emigrated into Sierra Leone from neighboring West African territories at an earlier period. Largely illiterate and primitive in some aspects, these interior tribes rely mainly on subsistence farming. They contrast sharply with the settlers or Creoles who reside in the colony area. The Creoles are highly literate, "civilized" and practice western culture and traditions more than any other group in Sierra Leone.

Due to British policy and the obvious dislike of European influence by the inhabitants of the hinterland, it took a long time before development programs could be instituted in that part of the country. In fact, the northern tribes, the subject of my paper, because of their stronger traditional opposition to western culture lagged behind in improvement and social reforms. For instance, while schools were opened in the colony area in 1787, and in the southern and eastern provinces in 1906, the north did not get its first high

school until 1950.

In the first part of this work I intend to examine the social institutions of the Northerners with particular emphasis on their family system. I shall devote the second part to analyzing the changing attitudes of literate and illiterate Sierra Leoneans from the North towards family relationships. I shall also explain how far the assimilation of European culture by these people has affected the traditional African Society. In my conclusion, I shall make recommendations and suggestions on how the two cultures, Western and African, can be used to benefit the inhabitants of the north.

II. COLONIZATION AND BRITISH RULE IN SIERRA LEONE

The Republic of Sierra Leone is located along the West Coast of Africa. It is equal in size to South Carolina and has a population of 2.5 million people. It is alleged to have received its name from a Portuguese explorer, Pedro Da Cintra, who reached that part of Africa in 1462. Hearing the sound of noises in the neighboring mountains from the harbor, and thinking that lions resided in those mountains, he therefore called the place Sierra Leone, meaning in Portuguese, lion mountains. Other historians however, feel that the country got its name¹ from "its wild looking, Leonine Mountains".

In June 1772, Judge Mansfield delivered a famous court decision in England, in the Somerset case, in which he maintained that any slave who stepped on English soil automatically became a free man. The immediate effect of Mansfield's judgment was to increase the number of blacks in England. Several came from all sections of the new world in search of freedom under the British flag. Most of the arrivals were poor, jobless, destitute and uncared for.

Consequently, a "Black Poor Committee" was formed by some British citizens, under the chairmanship of James Hanway, to watch over the social welfare of the blacks.² Acting upon the recommendation of

¹Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 1.

²Ibid, p. 14.

Dr. Smeathman, a Swedish botanist studying at the time in the Banana Islands near Sierra Leone, the Committee decided to repatriate the ever increasing number of blacks in London to Sierra Leone.

The first group which arrived in February 1787, consisted of 450 blackmen, 41 blackwomen, 70 white prostitutes, 38 officials and one private passenger. They occupied a piece of land which had been bought by Committee officials from one of the local chiefs. The settlers named their new settlement Freedom City, symbolic of that freedom which had eluded them for many years.

Two months later, natives attacked and destroyed the settlement, mainly because they feared that the new arrivals would interfere with the slave trade, their main source of revenue. The settlers in fear of subsequent attacks abandoned the entire settlement and headed for different places near what was before known as "Freedom City". Faced with an unsuccessful first attempt, members of the Black Poor Committee disbanded and formed a new group called the Sierra Leone Company, whose major objective was to rejuvenate the abandoned settlement and make provisions for subsequent arrivals.

During the American War of Independence, a number of blacks and whites supported the British government against the rebellious colonists. At the end of the war, most of the loyalists feared reprisals from the victorious Americans and therefore, requested to follow the defeated British forces. Great Britain decided to send these loyalists to Halifax, Nova Scotia in Canada.³ Finding the place to be extremely cold and faced with insufficient land to grow crops, the black loyalists petitioned the

³ John Petersen, *Province of Freedom* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962), pp. 27-28.

British government that they be sent to Africa. A group consisting of nearly 1,000 blacks was taken to Sierra Leone in 1792 by British officials. The new arrivals were known as Nova Scotians because they had previously resided in that place. Shortly thereafter, another group of settlers from Jamaica, the Maroons, were brought to Sierra Leone by Great Britain.

During the Napoleonic Wars, the Sierra Leone Company's colony fell victim to French sailors. They attacked it, robbed the settlers, and destroyed what they could not take to their ships. Also, sporadic attacks by natives and the alleged rebellious nature of some of the settlers contributed to the British government's decision to take control of the colony. In 1808, it was declared a crown colony.⁴

For many years, British influence was limited only to the colony area. Most of the interior of Sierra Leone where the bulk of the people resided, was untouched. In 1890, the British officials in Freedom City, which now came to be known as Freetown, began to sign trade agreements with the chiefs in the hinterland, and also to secure concessions from these chiefs to allow the British to arbitrate in the disputes with neighboring tribes. In 1894, Sir Frederick Cardew was appointed acting governor of the colony, and in 1895, he was made full governor. Prior to his confirmation as governor, he made an extensive tour into the heartland of Sierra Leone and on the basis of what he saw formulated a policy for the area.⁵ The British by an Act of Proclamation in 1896,

⁴Hassan B. Sisay, "Review of Liberia by Charles M. Wilson," Journal of Negro History, LVII (January 1972), p. 49.

⁵T. J. Alldridge, The Sherbre and its Hinterland (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1901), pp. 165-281.

declared a Protectorate in the hinterland without the knowledge and consent of the people.⁶

Having thus created a protectorate, the British found it expedient to administer some form of control over the area claimed. The protectorate was divided into five districts, Bandajuma, Keinadugu, Ronietta, Panguma and Karena.⁷ Each district was put under the command of an English officer with the title of "District Commissioner". The title of paramount chief was conferred upon the most important chiefs within the districts. This was a departure from earlier times when ruling heads used the titles of "Kings", "Queens", or "Chiefs". The government wanted to emphasize that there was only one Queen, Queen Victoria of Great Britain, ruling the protectorate, and no other person was allowed royal titles.⁸

The proclamation also introduced an ordinance that imposed compulsory social reforms in the protectorate, removed oppression and scaled down the notorious slave traffic, that was now directed to the ports of Conakry in the controlled regions of the French. Because of its emphasis on moral principles and respect for the fundamental human rights of liberty, and freedom from slavery and arbitrary arrest, it alienated the feelings of the chiefs.⁹ The ordinance also reduced the

⁶Sierra Leone Royal Gazette, (August 1896).

⁷Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 542.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹T. J. Alldridge, *The Sherbre and its Hinterland* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1901), p. 302.

powers of the chiefs and gave extensive judicial control to the young district commissioners in matters which before this time were handled by the chiefs.¹⁰ The commissioners arbitrated in tribal disputes and in some instances even transcended their powers by interfering in chiefs' coronations, thus violating native customs and traditions.

For instance, in the district of Karena, the local chief died in 1896, and a long period elapsed in which the natives mumbled and fumbled over the legal successor. After one and a half years of fruitless delay, the district commissioner intervened and unilaterally appointed a chief of his own choice.¹¹

Some clauses in the ordinance relating to land tenure virtually gave the crown all lands in the protectorate.¹² A provision abolishing corporal punishment was interpreted by the chiefs as challenging a man's rights to beat his wife. This was incomprehensible to the chiefs as local laws and customs had given overwhelming power to husbands over their wives. There were also clauses that abolished every form of slavery, including the domestic type. The protectorate people therefore feared that reforms would be even more extensive. Rumors circulated that in the future, the British would stop chiefs from hearing "palava" and that the government would ban polygyny, a vital economic institution.¹³

¹⁰J. D. Hargreaves, "The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate and the Insurrection of 1898", Cambridge Historical Journal, XI (1956), pp. 63-64.

¹¹Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 553.

¹²H.R.F. Bourne, "Sierra Leone Troubles", Fortune, 70 (NS 64) p. 226.

¹³Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 552.

The event which however, increased the yawning gap of differences between the colony and the protectorate was the imposition of a tax by the British officials on everyone in the protectorate. A year's notice was given before levying the tax, which consisted of five shillings for every house of two rooms; while villages of less than twenty houses were exempted from the tax.¹⁴

Govenor Cardew, in recommending the tax, was quite optimistic of its yielding good results, and on the whole, he was rather pleased with the way people were reacting to British rule:

The protectorate ordinance as far as I can ascertain is working smoothly and the authority and jurisdiction of the district commissioners is being felt and accepted. I gather this from unofficial as well as official sources, but of course, the crucial time will be when the House Tax is levied but with an adequate police force and a sufficient complement of white officers, I have no apprehension as to the results.¹⁵

But on the contrary, the people in the protectorate were not expectant of good results as Cardew had indicated to his Secretary of State in London. For the men employed to collect taxes were neither honest, merciful, nor efficient. These were frontier policemen, who, in many instances were either convicts or runaway slaves who had escaped to the colony.¹⁶ They now came back with profound animosities and deep-seated vengeance to collect taxes from some of their former masters.

¹⁴Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui, *Protests And Power In Black Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 172.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 580.

In December 1894, the Sierra Leone Weekly News, and the Sierra Leone Times, featured articles on the lawless and wicked attitudes of the policemen towards their kith and kin. Allegations ranged from random murders and commando raids to the ravaging and looting of defenseless villagers. The papers also accused the policemen of forced labor by compelling the aborigines with kicks and blows, to carry their loads without wages. They allegedly robbed the villagers, seduced their wives, and humiliated parents in front of their children.¹⁷ In addition to the trail of tears left by these inexperienced and ignorant agents of British imperialism, there were horrible atrocities perpetrated on the protectorate people by the English officials themselves. These took the form of punitive expeditions sent into the hinterland to deal with potential trouble causers. Many people lost their lives and properties from these random forays.

These incidents and several others increased the suspicions and distrust which the peoples of the protectorate were gradually acquiring against British rule and justice. Hatred for everything European therefore took a new dimension and began to involve elements of militancy especially in Mende land where missionaries had made extensive inroads among the different tribes.¹⁸ The missionaries began to be suspected of spying on local chiefs and disclosing their findings to the British government. They were also accused of preaching false and harmful doctrines to the native boys, especially those that encouraged them to

¹⁷ Robert Totberg and Ali Mazrui, *Protests and Power in Black Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 179-180.

¹⁸ Missionary attacks were not very common in the North because there were few missionaries there and because of its strong Muslim influence. The South was more appealing to the missionaries.

their illiterate, pagan brothers and to revile the achievements of their ancestors. Such teachings threatened to break up the whole society, and many protectorate people vehemently opposed opening more missionary schools. The aloofness and suspicions of native people toward all European styles and customs accelerated when the missionaries began to refer to the highly respected "Porroh Society", as "devil worship".¹⁹ These derogatory references toward one of their most sacred secret institutions was greatly resented.

In 1897, using the Hut Tax as a pretext, a group of chiefs from the protectorate drew up a petition and presented it to the Governor in Freetown. They expressed grave concern about the erosion of their judicial authority and the increased powers of the district commissioners.²⁰ They protested against the abolition of the slave trade, the activities of the frontier policemen, and finally revealed their inability to pay the house tax. To most people in the protectorate the tax was misunderstood, hence they deemed it unnecessary and redundant. One chief even remarked that it was impossible that the Queen should lack money when her head was on every coin.²¹ The chiefs also did not see what rights the government had to make them pay for their homes. To them, yielding to the Hut Tax meant an abrogation of their rights to their houses.

One other crucial point which most writers on Sierra Leone history overlook, viz, Christopher Fyfe, Michael Crowder, Hirst and Isa Kamara, is the effect of the tax on the institution of chieftaincy. Since

¹⁹Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 554.

²⁰*Ibid*, pp. 542-545.

²¹*Ibid*, p. 576.

ancient times, chiefs traditionally accepted young girls from their subjects as wives. Some chiefs therefore ended up having seventy or more wives. Some of the important wives of the chiefs were provided with separate huts of their own. Accepting a tax levied on each hut was an economic challenge greater than the chiefs could cope with.

Besides the ruinous effects of the tax to the chiefs, many people including tribal heads and prominent citizens of the protectorate interpreted the imposition of the tax as a signal for the degeneration of the one time powerful and flourishing British government. So common was this notion of a British death, that one Temne man was forced to remark, "her majesty was dead, therefore, England is in ruins. If not so, why should a government that was pensioning our Kings now tax the very Kings and their subjects."²² Another opponent of the tax and English rule in the protectorate recommended what to him appeared a livelier and more humane way of exhibiting British power,

The English people must exhibit their greatness like God, by leading some crafts with biscuits, bread, salt meat, pork etc., annually to distribute them to the natives, and should not come to extract money from people who value five shillings as five pounds.²³

In the midst of these confusions, European traders, and settlers, who now called themselves Creoles, doubted whether the tax could be collected. They maintained that the people would take to the bush rather than pay, and that trade could be ruined. The British traders, alarmed at the frequent reports that the tax was affecting trade,

²² A. B. C. Sibthorpe, *The History of Sierra Leone* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), p. 125.

²³ Ibid.

resolved in April 1897, to ask that the tax which they had long opposed be repealed. The Secretary of State for the colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, was at first very sympathetic to their views. But when he received reports that these same merchants were selling gun powder to the natives and encouraging them to rebel, he repudiated their demands.

Letters of protest and petitions against the tax and British rule in the protectorate were sent by chiefs to the Governor. One protest letter which epitomized all the grievances of the natives was sent to Captain Sharpe, District Commissioner of Port Loko, was signed by Bai Bureh, leader of the anti-British forces in the protectorate, and four other chiefs. 'They protested the English declaration of a protectorate in the interior and vehemently opposed the interference of British officials in their social customs and traditions. For instance, the chiefs complained about the abolition of slavery in the hinterland, the seizure of chiefs' lands, the downgrading of the power of the local authorities and the continuous alteration of their society by the "British strangers".

When Great Britain refused to listen to their demands and concerns, Bai Bureh assembled his war boys in Port Loko and declared war against the British. After four years of fighting in which many people lost their lives and property, the native forces surrendered in 1898, and thereby paved the way for British occupation of the interior. In 1906, the British government built roads in the hinterland, opened the first high school at Bo, and extended the railway to Bauya and Rotifunk. In 1924, Great Britain drew up a constitution for Sierra Leone and made provisions for elected black officials from the colony and protectorate

areas to sit in the legislature. The 1947 constitution broadened black participation and increased the number of representatives to the legislature from the protectorate. In 1951, Sierra Leone became a self-governing state under the leadership of Milton Margai. Ten years later, it became an independent state within the British Commonwealth. Formal connections with the British crown ended in 1971, when the newly elected Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens, declared the state a republic.

With this brief background, we shall turn now to a general description of the northern tribes in order to lay a basis for the study of their changing attitudes in relationship to the family.

III. THE TRADITIONAL NORTHERN FAMILY

The Republic of Sierra Leone is divided into four sections, the north, south, east and west. My area study, the north, is the largest in size and the most thickly populated. It's area is about 15,000 square miles and it has a population of half a million people. It is occupied by Temnes, Limbas, Yalunkas, Lokos, Mandingos, Fullahs, and many other smaller tribes.

Since the north is located in the Savannah region, which is mainly grassland, many of its inhabitants are either farmers or cattle ranchers. There are however, a small number of businessmen operating in big towns and trading centers like Makeni, Kabala, Port Loko and Lunsar.

The majority of the northerners are illiterate and practice Moslem and African customs. Most of their social beliefs and institutions are the same, apart from minor differences in customary initiation and secret society procedures.

In the traditional northern family, the most important person is either the father, grandfather or uncle. His authority over the family is supreme and largely unchallenged. As the head of the family, he is responsible for maintaining order, and this involves establishing his authority over his wives and children, grandchildren, their wives and children.²⁴

²⁴Alba I. Zizzamin, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), p. 54.

Apart from the father, grandfather or uncle, there are other important traditional rulers in the north. Among the most important, is the Clan Chief. His duties are very similar to those of the head of the family. But as a Clan Chief, he is primarily responsible to interpret the customary laws and settle all disputes among his subjects. He is also to protect them in case of attack from the outside. The clan members in turn are to offer certain services to the Chief. For instance, they work on his farms, assist in the administration of the clan, and offer him their daughters as wives.²⁵

One of the most important institutions among the people of the north is marriage. This sometimes involves a long period of betrothal in which men will negotiate with friends for a young baby about to be born. Other times the period of negotiations starts when a young man sees a girl he would like to marry. After making secret visits to the girl's home, the male will reveal his marital intentions to his parents, who will then summon the whole family and ask that the issue be discussed. Generally, the discussion will center on the girl's parents, their social background, and what chances there are for the success of the marriage. Also, consideration is given to the girl's appearance, her behavior and association with other girls in the village. After these investigations, the family will decide on whether to support the proposed marriage or not. In many instances, the crucial decision is made by the father. It is not uncommon to find cases in which the boy's family approves of his choice but because the father

²⁵Alba I. Zizzamin, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), p. 59-60. For a detailed discussion of the African Clan System, see Chinna Achebe *Things Fall Apart*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

refuses to agree and the marriage proposal collapses. Sometimes, a compromise is achieved in which the father allows the son to retain his choice and he in turn allows his father to select a second wife for him.²⁶

The selection of girls as wives involves a number of stages. In the first place, you have the engagement period in which different things are given to the girl's parents. The most common gifts are liquor, kola nuts, raphia, mats and palm wine.²⁷ In some cases, the would be husband will offer his services on the farms of his future parents-in-law. After that, the prospective husband will continue to pay visits to his parents-in-law until preparations are finalized for the wedding ceremony. Before this happens however, the boyfriend has to do a number of things. One of the most important parts of the wedding contract is the payment of a dowry price for his bride. According to experts on African customs,

The dowry represents compensation and a homage to the power of the family chief, who then cedes to the groom a share of his authority over the young girl and consequently of his parental control over the children that will be born of her.²⁸

The brides price however, is reciprocal. If a groom pays an expensive dowry, her parents are expected to buy costly furniture and kitchen utensils for the couple.

²⁶Alba I. Zizzamin, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa* (Milwaukie: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), p. 95.

²⁷M. McCulloch, *Peoples of Sierra Leone* (London: International African Institute, 1964), p. 58.

²⁸Alba I. Zizzamin, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa* (Milwaukie: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), p. 79.

On the night that the girl is brought to the house of the groom, her parents will beat drums and invite their friends and neighbors to participate in an open feast. The bride's mother will spend most of her time the day before questioning her daughter on whether or not she has been engaging in pre-marital sex. Such interviews are usually held in smoky rooms and are limited to a few people who are friend's of the bride's family. Considerable importance is attached to a girl's virginity because the traditional African society abhors pre-marital sex.²⁹ A woman who is guilty of pre-marital sex will not only bring disgrace to herself, but will lose a lot of her friends. In fact, there are instances in which girls are so worried about retaining their virginity that they will adopt devious and nefarious practices in order to conceal their former sexual involvements.

There is always dancing and drinking on the night that the bride is brought to the groom's home. She will be led to her husband's room at about 8:00 p.m. by an old woman who will be responsible to certify her virginity. They usually get that information from either the husband or by examining the groom's bed spreadings for traces of blood. While all this maneuvering continues in the groom's room, the bride's parents will wait with anxious suspense outside for a word or sign confirming their daughter's virginity. If they receive a positive reply, the drinking, dancing and drumming will continue at an accelerated pace.³⁰ If, on the other hand, the answer is negative, all the feasting will

²⁹E. R. Langley, "Sierra Leone Studies," *Marriage Customs Amongst the Temnes* Chapter 13, (1928), pp. 54-59.

³⁰*Ibid.*

suddenly cease and the bride's parents will return to their home with downcast eyes.

When African women marry, they do not start a family of their own. They instead belong to an already constituted family. This type of situation is made possible by the extended African family system. One of its most complex characteristics, however, is its polygynous nature. Many western writers do not understand the way polygyny operates and how it is appropriate to the African society. For instance, there are several reasons why Africans desire to marry more than one wife. The most obvious and frequently granted reason is that the possession of several wives reveals a man's economic standard.³¹ In essence, a man's status in the society is not based on the number of cars that he owns, or the amount of stocks he has bought but by the wives he is able to marry and maintain.

Today, the greatest polygynists in Africa are the chiefs, sub-chiefs and local authorities. Apart from their being able to pay for the wedding costs, they also receive unsolicited wives from their loyal citizens.³² People who want to be associated with the ruling families in their villages also give up their daughters as wives to these authorities. Furthermore, chiefs are forced to possess several wives because of the various obligations that they are required to satisfy. For instance, as head of the village, they are supposed to entertain government and out-of-town visitors. Their duties require a large staff. Also according to customary law, Africans are permitted to inherit

³¹Alba I. Zizzamin, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 79-95.

³²Ibid, pp. 93-94.

the wives of their deceased relatives.³³ Since the chiefs sometimes have large families, they therefore always end up with a great number of wives to support.

Apart from the above, there are also other reasons why people in the northern part of Sierra Leone practice polygyny. For instance, lack of modern baby foods is an important factor. On many occasions women nurse their babies for two to three years. During that time, they do not have any sexual contacts with their husbands because they fear that such connection will pollute the milk in their breasts.³⁴ The only recourse therefore, is for the male to either go without sexual intercourse right through the period the wife will be nursing the baby or marry another woman. Many a time, the men select the second alternative. Also, a co-wife is regarded as an effective solution for extra help. In a country where tractors are rare commodities and mechanized farming is minimal, the possession of many wives will supplement a much needed labor force.

Customary law also permits fathers to select wives for their son and this is particularly common among the Limbas and Temnes in the north. The Moslem religion also contributes to polygyny in Northern Sierra Leone. Since most of its inhabitants are Moslems and their prophet Mohamed allows them to marry more than one wife, many people who belong to that faith become polygynists. For instance, an heir is allowed to marry the widows of the deceased as long as he has the money and is mature enough to keep

³³M. McCulloch, *Peoples of Sierra Leone* (London: International African Institute, 1964), p. 59.

³⁴Interview with Adama Kann, October 20, 1972.

them. Brothers are permitted to marry the widows of their older brothers if they are able to provide them with financial support.³⁵

The most complicating laws, however, among the tribes of Northern Sierra Leone, deal with the position of the wives. The functions of each wife in a polygynist home are defined by the time in which she was married. Normally, the most important among the wives is the first one. She is referred to as "Mbatheh" among the Temnes. She is the intermediary between the husband and the co-wives.³⁶ She has absolute authority over them and arbitrates in their disputes. She is also in charge of the house keys and decides what food should be cooked each day. If the husband plans to marry another wife, her approval is always sought before executing the proposal. Her most important and perhaps controversial function however, is to decide each day which of the "little wives" should sleep with the husband. Many polygynist homes have been wrecked because of the selfish tendencies of the senior wives. Many would like to monopolize the husband and thereby force the co-wives to rebel or quit the home. According to customary law, each wife is supposed to spend three nights with the husband and then give way to the other. The first wife, however, is allowed to go to bed with the husband at any time. It is her unrestricted access to the husband that sometimes leads to abuse and vehement opposition from the "little wives".

Apart from animosities emanating from the bedroom controversies, polygyny also contributes to many other side effects. The 'delicate harmony' existing between the wives is frequently broken by quarrels

³⁵E. R. Langley, "Sierra Leone Studies", Marriage Customs Amongst the Temnes, Chapter 13, (1928), p. 58.

³⁶Interview with Adama Kann on October 20, 1972.

and exchange of fists. Furthermore, the husband's tendency to favor one wife against the other will lead to chaos and a bitter struggle at home. In fact, the success of the home depends entirely on the husband's ability to manipulate his wives and thereby maintain an uneasy neutral position. His problems are compounded if all the wives and their children stay in the same house.

One of the ironies of polygyny however, is that the birth rate is lowered for people who practice it. For instance,

Mogho-Naba Kom, who ruled the Mussi at the end of the past century, had 500 wives but only 20 children, all daughters. Mogho-Naba Kom, who died in 1946 had 350 wives and a total of 42 children. The celebrated sultan of Fousam in the Cameroun, Ndojoya, had 147 children despite the fact that his wives at one time numbered 1,200.³⁷

Most of the wives and children of polygynists either stay in the same village or campus. It is therefore not uncommon to go to towns in the north in which most of the inhabitants are related.

Divorce in the polygynous society is long and complicated. According to African tradition, the husband has right over his wife as long as she is alive. Even when he dies, customary law provides that the wife should marry one of his relatives. The most common grounds for divorce however, are impotency, frequently flogging the wife or neglecting to support the parents-in-law.³⁸ The husband also is permitted to divorce his wife on the following grounds: (a) infidelity (b) sterility (c) stealing (d) non-virginity. For each of the above,

³⁷Alba I. Zizzamin, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), p. 96.

³⁸E. R. Langley, "Sierra Leone Studies", *Marriage Customs Amongst the Temnes*, Chapter 13, (1928), p. 58.

the husband may most likely get his dowry refunded.

The problems arising from the return of dowries and the complex marriage laws have forced a number of African countries to carefully examine the institution of polygyny. In Bamako, the government has made it illegal for someone to pay a dowry of over \$150.00. This makes it easy for the parents to return the dowry in case their daughter rejects the husband. In Guinea, President Sheku Toure has abolished forced marriages and made 17 years the legal age for girls to marry. Despite these changes many problems remain to be solved. The parents still have the greatest say on the type of person their daughter will marry.

The power of the parents over their daughters is enhanced by the existence of secret societies. Before the colonial rulers, the Porroh, the Gbangbani and the Bundo had immense influence in northern Sierra Leone. The first two societies were predominantly controlled by males and they dealt with customary initiation. It is in these societies that the parents are able to shape the future course of their sons' lives. There the "young boys" are taught the different roles they are to play in the adult life. They also learn skills, trades and listen to lectures delivered by the elders.³⁹ Among the Limbas in the north, membership in the Gbangbani society is an important requirement for anyone interested in becoming a chief, sub-chief, or local authority. In fact, control of the village rests entirely on these members. Anyone who refuses to join the society faces isolation, and considerable loss of prestige.

³⁹M. McCulloch, *Peoples of Sierra Leone* (London: International African Institute, 1964), pp. 29-94.

In the case of the Bundo Society, which is female control, the girls' period of training starts after their first two weeks in the bush. There they are taught how to become good wives and future parents. They also learn female skills that include cooking, singing and dancing.⁴⁰ The initiation period usually lasts for about six weeks after which the initiates prepare for the graduation ceremony.

At that time, parents, relatives and husbands-to-be take part in an elaborate ceremony in which the graduates would be displayed in general sections of the village. They will be allowed to receive presents from the crowd. The ceremonial feasting usually lasts for a couple of days and immediately after the "digbas" and "saimas" will send the young graduates to their different homes. This act marks the end of the traditional education program.

Among the tribes in the north, Western education is regarded with suspicion. They fear that their children will adopt the white man's ways and neglect his African customs. They also feel that the missionary schools teach Africans to despise their elders and hate farm work. People in the north therefore prefer to keep their sons at home and teach them how to become successful farmers. The opposition of Northern tribes to Western values is much more apparent in their attitudes towards female education. Most feel that the educated girls may be difficult to control because of their new ideas and strange habits which they have acquired in school. They charge that a girl who has never been to school has a better chance of marrying either a

⁴⁰K. L. Little, "The Changing Position of Women in Sierra Leone," Africa XVIII, pp. 1-17

chief, a diamond digger, a wealthy trader or some influential person.

Despite these obvious setbacks, many of the northern tribes are beginning to change their views and are sending more of their children to school. Already there are over fifteen high schools in the north as opposed to only one high school in 1950.

The emphasis on the secret societies is eroding. The former power of the Porroh, Gbangbani and Bundo societies are no longer as effective. The more westernized the community becomes, the less emphasis is placed on African tradition and societies.

In effect, the majority of the northern tribes still follow the African customs. There are signs that this is gradually changing. The next part of this paper will focus on the effects of increased modernization on young literate and illiterate men and women in the northern tribes of Sierra Leone.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in the northern part of Sierra Leone. The seven main tribes in the north are: Fullah, Limba, Loko, Mandigo, Susu, Temne and Yalunka, and all were represented. The three main areas of residence, city, town and village were all taken into consideration in the sampling of the respondents.

In December 1972, fourteen questions were drawn up in the form of a questionnaire with fixed and open ended response and were given to one hundred college age respondents. The college age group in this paper was defined as ages 19-30. The groups were divided into two main groups viz, educated and uneducated and four subgroups which included Muslim and Christian females and males. Twenty-five questionnaires were given to each educated or uneducated male and females. Because of the unequal division of Christians and Muslims residing in the north, an equal number of representation of these religions was not feasible.

Four words were used interchangeably in this research. The word educated or literate refers to those respondents with formal western education of schooling from class one (first grade) to the defined college age. The uneducated or illiterate refer to those with or without Arabic or western formal education.

Fifty questionnaires were given out to literate male and female Christians and Muslims to be filled out by themselves. The other fifty were completed through face to face interviewing technique by the researcher. Temne and Creole which are the two commonly spoken languages in Sierra

Leone as a whole and were used during the interviews. During rare instances when a respondent was not able to communicate using one of these languages, literate interpreters were used to interpret the questions to the respondents.

The aim of the research was to ascertain the attitudes of college age young people, reflecting the intergenerational changes from traditional values. The underlying purpose was to understand the direction of change and distribution of attitudes for social planning and dealing with people and their social problems from the perspective of social work.

Independent variables were sex, religion and education, with age group and residence and religion held more or less constant. Dependent variables were focused around family life, since that institution is central. Economic, educational and family values were elicited as dependent variables.

Time available, complexity of village distribution and traveling difficulties made a random sample unfeasible. Therefore, a selected sample based on the independent variables was used.

Analysis of the data is in the form of summary tables which report the question, the different values and the contrasting independent variables with comments. Measures of statistical inference seemed inappropriate.

V. ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

In this section, the values of the college age population will be presented in tabular form, followed by comments. Table titles reflect modal findings. The question to which they responded will be stated. Subheadings give the independent variables and the stubs give the dependent variables, that is, the values to which they were responding, in the form of preferences or choices. Numerical values show the number of persons within the categories who made the indicated choice.

Many differentiations and relationships appear in the tables not singled out for comment, but are presented for the readers own purposes. Respondents' verbal and open-ended responses were used in the commentary, as well as the researchers native familiarity, when necessary for understanding reactions.

TABLE Ia

THE EDUCATED PREFER EDUCATED SPOUSES

Question: Which of the following would most likely influence your choice of a wife or husband?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIAN		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. Religion	5	1	3	3
b. Education	8	9	4	8
c. Tribe	0	1	3	0
d. Some town or area	2	0	0	1
No Response	0	1	0	0

TABLE 1b
THE UNEDUCATED PREFER TRIBAL SPOUSES

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIAN		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. Religion	3	1	5	8
b. Education	0	0	0	1
c. Tribe	4	4	7	8
d. Same Town or Area	3	0	3	2
No Response	0	0	0	1

In this question, the respondents were asked to indicate which of the following: religion, education, tribe, same town or area, would most likely influence their choice of spouse. Most of the educated Christians and Muslims chose education as a main factor in their choice of a spouse. While the uneducated respondents chose spouses from their tribes or places of residence, the new western commonality amongst the educated, proved to be more overpowering in attracting couples, as opposed to the traditional method of considering cultural groups for a spouse, because they "speak the same language". Because of the influence of education, the respondents do not feel bound to communicate just through their tribal language; instead other foreign languages taught in schools can be substituted to carry out communication that would have bound them to marry in the traditional way.

TABLE IIa
NORTHERN TRIBE'S CHOOSE SPOUSE THEMSELVES

Question: Whom do you most prefer to choose your spouse?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. Friends	3	0	2	0
b. Parents	0	2	2	0
c. Self	10	10	5	11
d. Other	2	1	1	0
No Response	0	0	0	0

TABLE IIb
NORTHERN TRIBE'S CHOOSE SPOUSE THEMSELVES

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. Friends	1	0	2	3
b. Parents	4	3	8	7
c. Self	5	2	5	7
d. Other	0	0	0	3
No Response	0	0	0	0

In this question, the respondents were asked to indicate the person they would most prefer to choose their spouse for them. The responses made in this question showed that all the respondents, with

the exception of the uneducated Muslim male and the uneducated female groups would more prefer choosing for themselves.

The diversion of the educated respondents to choose their spouses themselves, as opposed to the traditional role of the parents' choosing still seems to indicate the influence of education in their desire to discontinue some of the traditional expectations.

The period of time when the uneducated male can stay in his parents' home is not determined by marriage. Far often, young men at the age of 16, 17, or 18, leave their homes for the cities or the diamond fields at Kono. Generally they stay in these fields either as illicit diamond diggers or engage themselves in some odd job around the town. In spite of this independence from their home, either by employment or as a "city drifter", their religious ties have not been broken and they have remained committed to their traditional and religious patterns. It is not surprising to see the uneducated male more committed because the Muslim faith requires more male involvement than female.

While the uneducated female indicates an equal split of responses between self and parents, it shows they are slowly but certainly working through some of their mixed feelings as to whether to choose for themselves or to carry on with the tradition of allowing the parents that honourable privilege. This gradual change tends to reflect western influences. Traditionally, females in African homes spend a longer period in their parents' homes than do the males. Their stay under this parental control is almost indefinite, especially if they are unable to get someone to marry them. Consequently one would

expect them to have a greater degree of parental obedience than the male.

Like males who leave home for school or job, the educated female groups gain their independence of individual thinking from experiences of being away from home while attending high school or college, as opposed to the uneducated. Also, their choice of choosing a spouse by themselves was justified as a way of freeing themselves from blaming others. If the marriage fails to work out, then they would like to see it as their fault, because they themselves would have simply failed to work a little harder at a successful marriage.

The conclusions from their responses seem to indicate some degree of western and educational influences on the respondents' unenthusiastic ambition to continue the traditional marriage customs.

TABLE IIIa

NORTHERNERS TO RESIDE WITHIN TRIBAL AREA

Question: When you marry, would you prefer to live:

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. at father's house	0	1	1	1
b. with other relatives	2	5	1	3
c. near father's house	2	3	1	2
d. in tribal area, but (not a, b, or c)	4	2	7	5
No Response	4	2	0	1

TABLE IIIb

NORTHERNERS TO RESIDE WITHIN TRIBAL AREA

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. at father's house	6	1	7	6
b. with other relatives	0	0	1	2
c. near father's house	2	1	4	2
d. in tribal area, but not (a, b, or c)	2	0	2	8
No Response	0	3	1	2

In question three, the respondents were asked to indicate where they would prefer to live when they get married. Here again, most of the educated Muslims and Christian male respondents preferred to live

within the tribal areas. In sharp contrast to their views, the uneducated males from both religions, would prefer to live in their father's house. Interestingly enough, the females split on this question. The educated Christian females prefer to live with other relatives while their Muslim counterparts chose the tribal areas. The uneducated Christian females wished to stay in their husband's houses wherever they may be, while their Muslim counterparts preferred to live in tribal areas. In the male no-response group, they merely indicated a willingness to live wherever they could find employment and feel comfortable.

This question reveals interesting conclusions. Left with no suitable alternative, educated Christian and Moslim male respondents prefer to maintain some independence by staying in a tribal area rather than near their relatives. The women on the other hand, were different. Although as literates, one would expect them to be slightly broad minded, yet they chose to live in the houses of their relatives rather than stay independent. Besides the fact that the women's dependency is generally more acceptable, staying alone by herself is discouraged and looked upon disapprovingly by the public because such women are usually accused of practicing prostitution, an allegation that is almost non-existent in the case of men.

TABLE IVa

WIVES WOULD WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME

Question: If your wife could work outside of the home, would you allow her to? (males answer)

Would you work away from your husband's home? (females answer)

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	9	6	5	4
No	5	4	5	7
No Response	1	3	0	1

TABLE IVb

WIVES WOULD WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	5	4	11	9
No	4	0	4	11
No Response	1	1	0	0

In question four, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the male would allow their wives to work outside the home or if the women would accept employment outside of the home. On both of these issues the educated and uneducated groups, all but the female Muslims would allow or accept outside employment. One explanation for the difference in response between the two female religious groups could be that Muslim females are generally brought up in an atmosphere of

obedience for religion, parents (nuclear and immediate family) and husband. Since the act of working away from home symbolizes an act of attempting to equate themselves with their husbands, this would therefore be contrary to their beliefs. The interviewed uneducated Muslim women precisely saw their roles as staying home and cooking for the family and taking care of the children.

TABLE Va
PARENTS TO SETTLE DISPUTES

Question: If you and your spouse(s) should have a quarrel, who is most likely to settle your dispute:

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. Parents	9	7	7	9
b. Other relatives	4	5	2	3
c. Native Court (chief)	1	0	0	0
d. Civil Court	0	0	0	0
No Response	0	0	1	0

TABLE Vb
PARENTS TO SETTLE DISPUTES

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. Parents	6	4	14	16
b. Other relatives	1	0	0	3
c. Native Court (chief)	2	1	0	0
d. Civil Court	1	0	0	0
No Response	1	0	0	1

The respondents were asked to state the person or institution that would settle their disputes. In this question, the traditional role of the parents (either patriarchal or matriarchal) to settle unresolved arguments between spouses was indicated. Although parental

control and African tradition is being challenged in Northern Sierra Leone, by Western influence and education, yet their roles seem to remain viable and effective.

Regardless of the respondent's religion, sex or educational status, the role of the family as an intervener during a family crisis was held quite highly. Other family members were chosen as second place to settle marital disputes, over the native or civil courts which would involve other members outside of the family unit.

TABLE VIa
REASONS FOR DIVORCE

Question: What would cause you to seek a divorce?

EDUCATED:

CHRISTIAN	
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Unfaithfulness	Unfaithfulness
No respect for parents	Ungratefulness
Can't compromise	Dislike or death
MUSLIM	
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Disobedience	Unfaithfulness
Unfaithfulness	Riotous Living (Gambling)
Disputes and egocentrism	Ungratefulness

TABLE VIb
REASONS FOR DIVORCE

UNEDUCATED:

CHRISTIAN	
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Unfaithfulness	Husband's choice
Lack of Respect for parents and Friends	Ungratefulness
Disobedience or death	Neglect of children
MUSLIM	
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Unfaithfulness	Unfaithfulness & ungratefulness
Disobedience	Husband's choice or death
Wife's choice, death	No respect for parents

These answers are in order of frequency of multiple responses. They did not indicate too much difference in reasons for divorce. The majority of the respondents chose unfaithfulness or attempting to have a secret affair with someone other than the husband or one of the husband's wives. This answer reveals the deep-seated opposition that northerners have against adultery. In an area where polygyny is common and accepted, one would expect more relaxed feelings towards adultery. But on the contrary, having an affair outside of the marriage seems to be highly disapproved by both the literate and illiterate respondents.

Ungratefulness, for the purpose of this paper is defined as exploitation and manipulation of one partner until a certain desired goal is attained. Afterwhich, the partner loses his importance in the marriage as a partner. A typical example given was saving money to start a business. Following the success the husband might go and marry a much younger and attractive wife to run the store. For the first wife, this is ungratefulness and can result in a divorce especially if she has been totally neglected.

Because of the close extended family relationships in Northern Sierra Leone, lack of respect for parents of either side, could be reasonably considered as a good enough reason for divorce.

TABLE VIIa

EQUALITY FOR CHRISTIANS

Question: Do you believe that men and women should have equal say in family decisions?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIAN		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	12	10	4	8
No	2	3	6	4
No Response	1	0	1	0

TABLE VIIb

INEQUALITY FOR UNEDUCATED

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIAN		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	3	2	5	9
No	7	3	10	11
No Response	0	0	0	0

In this question, the respondents were asked to say if men and women should have equal say in family decisions. With the exception of the educated Christian males and females, the rest of the groups tended to feel that a man should have a greater say in family decisions than the woman. In this question, we can detect the influence of education and religious teaching. While more Christians thought it expedient to consult their wives or husbands before reaching a decision,

the Muslims with their strong belief in the humble or inferior role of the wife, responded accordingly. Education in this instance has had little effect on them. Also an analysis of the responses show that the illiterate are more reluctant to give greater powers to the women than the literate respondents. The uneducated respondents from the both religious groups rejected the idea of sharing decision making at home with their wives.

Nevertheless, a great number of the respondents were aware and expressed the reality of modification of some traditional practices that are slowly taking place. The majority of them would answer the question by saying "equality is not customary, but things are changing".

TABLE VIIa
REASONS FOR MONOGAMY

Question: What would your main reason be for not being in a polygynous marriage?

EDUCATED:

CHRISTIAN

Male

Female

Jealousy amongst parents & children
Quarrels in the home
Religion, unfairness, economic

Jealousy amongst parents
Religion
Unfairness

MUSLIM

Male

Female

Social, economic
Quarrels in the home
Jealousy amongst members

Jealousy amongst parents -
children
Quarrels in the home
Husband's unfairness

TABLE VIIb
REASONS FOR MONOGAMY

UNEDUCATED:

CHRISTIAN

Male

Female

Quarrels in the home
Religion
Financial

Quarrels in the home
Competition
Husband's unfairness of love

MUSLIM

Male

Female

No reason

Quarrels in the home
No reason
Husband's Unfairness of love

Respondents were asked to give reasons why they would not want to be from a polygynous home. All the groups, with the exception of the uneducated Muslim males, listed jealousy among children and parents, quarrels in the homes, competition, unfairness of the husband's love for the parents and children and the lack of trust amongst parents. Consequently, only the educated Christian males and females, and the uneducated Christian males gave religion as a reason for not wanting to continue the traditional polygynous family style practices. The maintenance of the family, as it relates to educating the children was also one of the given reasons. This concern brings out the present aspirations of Northern Sierra Leone families to provide Western education to their children and something much more than they ever had.

The uneducated Muslims had no reason why they would not want to have a polygynous home. This response also goes to explain their religious practices of four or more wives as being an acceptable way of life for them.

TABLE IXa
CHARACTERISTICS FOR A SPOUSE

Question: In the order of priority, which characteristics do you look for in selecting a spouse?

EDUCATED:

CHRISTIAN

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Good Character	Education
Beauty	Religion
Education	Ambitions

MUSLIM

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Good Character	Education
Beauty	Good Character
Education	Ambition

TABLE IXb
CHARACTERISTICS FOR A SPOUSE

UNEDUCATED:

CHRISTIAN

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Beauty	Ambition and love
Good Character with respect	Good job, education
Religion	Faithful

MUSLIM

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Good Character	Good Character
Co-operation & Obedience	Good Family Relations
Beauty and Kindness	Religion and Handsomeness

In this question, the respondents were asked to list in their order of priority, three characteristics they look for in selecting a spouse. In the first order, the educated Christian and Muslim males, uneducated Muslim males and females would all choose good character. Good character in this paper was defined by the respondents as "obedience" and respect for both side of parents and friends. Their choice of good character, reflects the concept of extended family relationships, upon which Northern Sierra Leone operates. If a wife is not friendly and does not accept other family members who often stop in for temporary stays and if she allows animosity to creep in, such relationship could create problems which lead to a divorce.

The other choices between the second and third varied from ambition, love, good family background relationships and cooperation, good looks and education.

In spite of the gradual influence of education and Western way of viewing things, with the exception of the educated Christians, all the groups seem to consider the traditional "good" qualities for a suitable spouse.

TABLE Xa
MALE BABIES PREFERRED

Question: How many children would you prefer (girls and boys)?

	CHRISTIANS	MUSLIMS
Boys	75	83
Girls	67	65
Total	142	148

In regard to this question, the respondents were asked to state how many children they would like to have, indicating the number of boys and girls. This question reveals that both Christians and Muslims prefer producing more boys than girls. This in essence shows that although Westernization has had some influence in the North, most of its inhabitants still want to perpetrate the old African custom of showing preference for males over females. Also, the research reveals that both Christians and Muslims have almost the same desire for large families.

TABLE X Ia
EDUCATED PREFER BIRTH CONTROL

Question: Do you or would you use birth-control devices?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	12	11	6	10
No	3	2	3	1
No Response	0	0	1	1

TABLE X Ib
ONLY UNEDUCATED FEMALES PREFER BIRTH CONTROL

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	3	4	4	11
No	7	1	11	9
No Response	0	0	0	0

This question deals with whether they will use birth-control devices. The educated Christian males and females said yes. Their positive reply is probably due to their exposure to Western influence and education and the economic burdens of having more than one wife. Most of those who responded seemed to press the economic difficulties rather than the tribal requirement. But on the contrary, the illiterate respondents from the two religious groups replied in the negative because of their religious convictions. These Muslims and the Christians

both believed that it was unethical and irreligious to use birth control pills. The only surprise came from the illiterate female respondents in both religions. All consented to use birth control devices only after they have produced the desired number of children. In an environment where males are regarded higher than females, husbands whose wives produce females consistently never reach the "desired goal" until they have boys. This process will increase the number of children and lessen the use of birth control devices.

TABLE XIIa

LESS EDUCATION REQUIRED OF FEMALE SPOUSE

Question: Your spouse should be: (more educated, equally educated, less educated or not educated)?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
More Educated	4	7	2	7
Equally Educated	0	5	3	6
Less educated than yourself	11	1	7	0
Not educated	0	0	0	0

TABLE XIIb

LESS EDUCATION REQUIRED OF FEMALE SPOUSE

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
More Educated	2	0	0	13
Equally Educated	2	3	6	4
Less Educated than yourself	4	1	9	0
Not Educated	2	1	0	3
No Response	0	0	0	0

An analysis of the answers from this question confirms once again the greater role of the male in the traditional Northern Sierra Leone family home. Most of the males from both religions feel that they should be more educated. Such a situation will give them the opportunity to fulfil their role of the traditional male in the home as the head

and superior over the female. Most of the respondents also indicated that a wife who is more educated than the husband may take up insubordination and undermine the position of her man. Naturally, these simplistic conclusions from the men show a continuous trend of their unwillingness to grant complete equality at home with their wives. The women on the other hand seem to accept this situation as a natural fait accompli. Although a few were unable to say why it should be so, the majority seem to imply that the more educated a woman becomes, the smaller her chances of getting a husband becomes, since this education might automatically put her in a superior role over the man.

Simplistically, therefore, the women in past years have been more satisfied to stay at home and fulfil their prescribed roles as housekeepers and mothers, rather than to compete in offices and other working areas with their husbands.

TABLE XIIIa

PREMARITAL SEX ACCEPTABLE ONLY FOR MEN

Question: Do you think that premarital sexual standards should be the same for men and women?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIAN		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	4	5	4	0
No	11	8	8	7
No Response	0	0	0	0

TABLE XIIIb

PREMARITAL SEX ACCEPTABLE ONLY FOR MEN

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIAN		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	4	0	3	7
No	6	5	13	13
No Response	0	0	0	0

Despite the fissures, all the respondents from both religions with the exception of the educated Christian females, believed men should have more laxity in this issue than women. The positive answers seem to follow the same trend of putting the male on a higher scale than the female. These feelings do not appear to have been radically altered by Western influence which supports equality between the two sexes. Most of the people who responded to the question felt that the society indirectly permits a male to have an affair with another

woman besides his wife while the woman is expected to play the submissive role of one woman for one man. In supporting this argument, the illiterate respondents think that since men are not required to maintain their virginity to the time of their marriage it can therefore be assumed at point as being right for them to have an affair with another woman before that time. But this argument was sharply opposed by the educated Christian women who demanded that the standards for premarital sex should be the same. Here we are beginning to notice the spirit of independence among the educated class manifested in a stronger way. If this kind of attitude continues, it might lead to an imperative alteration of the woman's role in Northern Sierra Leone families.

TABLE XIVA
VIRGINITY NOT REQUIRED FOR EDUCATED

Question: Do you believe a woman should be a virgin at first marriage?

<u>EDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	3	9	5	5
No	12	4	5	7
No Response	0	0	0	0

TABLE XIVb
VIRGINITY REQUIRED FOR UNEDUCATED

<u>UNEDUCATED:</u>	CHRISTIANS		MUSLIMS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	6	3	15	15
No	4	2	0	5
No Response	0	0	0	0

In this question, with the exception of the educated Christian males and Muslim females, all other groups said yes predominantly. There was, however, a split among educated Muslim males. One half answered in the affirmative, the other in the negative.

Once again, we see the exaltation of the man on a higher scale in something of extreme importance. The greater degree of freedom that is acknowledged to men, as opposed to women, was also evident. The answers also implied that although Western influence is permeating

rapidly among the Northern tribes, yet it also indicates that there are strong remnants of tribal customs. Virginity among the Northern tribes seems to be an expectation from a woman at her first marriage.

This subject, in past years had a great influence in determining the success or failure of a marriage. But, as the answers of the educated Christian males and Muslim females show, there may be some erosion of African customs.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the questions and answers discussed, indicated that the inhabitants of the Northern part of Sierra Leone may be changing their social customs as a result of their being consistently exposed to Western and missionary influence. This change is, however, occurring at a slow pace. With the exception of a few, the attitude of the educated men in the North towards marriage is mainly "native". Despite the impact of Western culture through the opening of schools and churches, men still maintain supreme control over women. The husband is still regarded as the head of the family and most of the major decisions are reached by him. Interestingly enough, there is little attempt at challenging the absolute position of the males. With the exception of a few cases in which some women express the desire to have equal rights with men (see Q. VIIa, female Muslim) the rest believe that it is proper for men to be estimated on a higher scale than themselves. For instance, the majority of the women interviewed agreed that men should be more educated than themselves. They also maintained that when it comes to premarital sex requirements, a man should be given greater options than the woman. This obvious attribution of the higher position to the male is unlike some Western societies. At an age when most women in European countries are striving for equality with men, it is notable that there are some in Africa who want to continue their ancient roles of "producers of children" and

"preparers of food" for their husbands.

Another important conclusion that comes out of this study is that the religious differences between the Christians and the Muslims are minimized by education. In other words, what appears to be the main issue here is not religion but Western educational experience. In almost case after case, all the male respondents from the two religious groups gave similar answers to the questions.

It is equally significant to note an "adverse" effect that education is having on the Northerners, especially the males. For instance, this study reveals that the more someone becomes educated, the less he is committed to tribal ways and customs. This is demonstrated by the fact that most of the male respondents showed a spirit of independence on crucial questions. Many preferred to live alone after marriage rather than stay with their parents as is usually the case in African traditional Society. Also, educated females exhibited little independence while a few challenged the overwhelming dominance of the males over the females. The group that showed the least detachment from the tribal home was that of the illiterate males and females. They supported staying close to their parents and hardly questioned the predominant role of the men. When asked what would most likely influence their choice of a husband or wife, they selected tribe over education, religion and nearness of towns.

The study reveals that most of the respected Northern Sierra Leone traditional practices have some dissenters affected by the impact of Western Culture.

Marriage, which was an important African institution is now being patterned in the Western fashion. The parents no longer possess their original position as selectors of wives for their children. According to the research findings, most of the respondents, especially the unmarried ones, preferred to select their own spouses. Their rationale behind this, they said was to free themselves from blaming others when things don't go exactly the way they should. Moreover, the emphasis on virginity among Northern women is eroding. Before, the majority of girls at first marriage were expected to be virgins. Failure to be so, would have led to disgrace and even divorce. Although there are still many parents who feel a girl should be a virgin until she marries, that conclusion is not unchallenged, especially by the educated women.

Furthermore, polygyny has been an integral practice of the inhabitants of the Northern part of Sierra Leone for a long time, but the research reveals that this is no longer true. Literate Northerners now prefer to marry one wife rather than two or more. Many of the respondents interviewed expressed concern about the economic burdens imposed on anyone who decides to marry more than one wife, plus endless quarrels that tend to create animosity among members of the family. They therefore preferred to abandon the African tradition of possessing plural wives for the European concept of one man, one wife.

Presently the research seems to reveal that some Western influence is slowly drifting in and affecting most of the college educators. In order for Northerners to take a decisive step on whether to encourage this, and how much to encourage and which ones to encourage and when

to encourage these changes necessary steps must be taken. The first step would be to encourage the teaching of African social studies in high schools, teachers colleges and universities. The pupose of these studies would be to discuss the pros and cons of the two cultures, so that individuals would become more aware of the choices they would be making.

More research should be conducted to provide information about the people of the North. The availability of this information would not only serve as documented material for history, but as a reference for other cultures. In this way, we would have shared our tradition as well as having taken on other Western or modern ways.

Social policy and action must take into account the religious, sex, educational and other differences in the population, and the impact both of traditional and changing views and practices.

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