

**THE TEMNE IN FREETOWN HISTORY: RETHINKING THE HISTORY OF
THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY, 1890-1961**

by

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Philosophy**

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DEDICATION

To God be the Greatest Glory

Dedicated to Hajaratu (my wife), Joseph (son) and Josratu (daughter)

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List of Abbreviations

SLPP: Sierra Leone Peoples Party

APC: All Peoples Congress

TPU: Temne Progressive Union

TTA: Temne Tribal Authority

SLWM: Sierra Leone Women's Movement

CSO: Colonial Secretary's Office

SLWN: Sierra Leone Weekly News

SPP: Sesay's Private Papers

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Abstract

This study reviews the history of one of the oldest colonies of British Africa – the Sierra Leone Colony - famously known as Freetown. Established as an experiment in social engineering in the 18th century by British philanthropists, it became home for four batches of ex-slaves namely the “Black Poor,” “Nova Scotians,” “Maroons” and “Liberated Africans” also known as “Recaptives.” Together these different groups of former slaves evolved a unique community in Freetown and its environs in the 19th century referred to as Creoles. The historical records reveal that Creole society did not exist in isolation; rather it coexisted with non-Creole ethnic groups like the Temne who were original owners of what later turned out to be the Sierra Leone Colony. The Temne community organized around various institutions such as the Temne Tribal Authority, cultural associations, mosques, markets and around leaders they perceived as elites. These institutions and their leaders helped project Temneness in the Colony between 1890 and 1961. In addition to boosting the ethnic pride of the Temne, the institutions served as alternative institutions which catered for the demands and general welfare of the Temne community including migrants in a complex cosmopolitan environment. The extant historiography overlooks the activities of this community and places too much emphasis on the European versus African paradigm. This revisionist study shows that the complex history of the Colony is better understood and widely appreciated when the activities of Creole and non-Creole community leaders, imams, secular elites and provincial migrants are fully integrated in the ‘master narrative.’

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

This study offers an alternative perspective on the social history of the Sierra Leone colony between 1890 and 1961. It rethinks the extant Sierra Leone historiography which focuses on the European versus African model. The study examines the rise of Temneness and its institutions and how and why they became influential in the Sierra Leone colony in the post Second World War period.

In 1787, British philanthropists sought land in Africa to repatriate ex-slaves who had won their freedom in Britain through a series of legal actions. Many of these ex-slaves faced social difficulties in England, such as destitution and unemployment. To relieve them from these social problems, humanitarians nursed the idea of repatriating the freed slaves to Africa. Henry Smeathman, a botanist, recommended Sierra Leone as suitable for this enterprise.¹ In accepting the recommendation, the British philanthropists negotiated a series of treaties with two Temne chiefs in Sierra Leone for the lease of a piece of land. The first treaty was signed with King Tham (erroneously referred to as Tom in the literature), in 1787; he leased a piece of land “for the sole benefit of the free community of settlers, their heirs, and successors.”² The signing of this treaty resulted in the resettlement of 411 ex-slaves to the new settlement. The ex-slaves – named the Black Poor – were followed by another batch of 1200 former slaves from the Canadian province

¹ J. J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone: Western Sierra Leone* (London: Browne and Nolan, Ltd., 1903), pp. 27-28.

² Crooks, *History of the Colony*, p. 30. See also *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, April 16, 1890; and C.S.O. *Treaty Between the Governor of Sierra Leone and King Tom* (London: 1801). *Sierra Leone Weekly News* is henceforth abbreviated as SLWN.

of Nova Scotia, referred to as the Nova Scotians, in 1792. Before their arrival, King Naimbana, the Temne overlord of what became the Sierra Leone colony in the 19th century, forced the British philanthropists to sign another treaty. This proved to be the final treaty between the philanthropists and the Temne chiefs. In other words, the signing of this treaty meant that the land was permanently leased to the settlers.³ In 1800, about 500 Maroons from Jamaica were also repatriated to the new settlement, thus forming the third batch of freed slaves in Sierra Leone.⁴ The liberated Africans became the fourth batch of freed slaves resettled in the new settlement. That is, with the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, British government naval boats patrolled the Atlantic Ocean intercepting slave ships. This action led to the recapture of about 40, 000 slaves destined for Europe and the Americas. The recaptured slaves, also known as recaptives, were repatriated to the new settlement in Sierra Leone between 1808 and 1860.⁵ The new settlement was administered by the Sierra Leone Company until 1807, when financial difficulties forced the Company to hand over its responsibility to the British government. The British government assumed full control of the settlement declaring it a Crown colony in 1808.⁶ Thus, the Sierra Leone colony comprised Freetown and its environs including territories previously controlled by the indigenous Temne.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the four batches of ex-slaves living in the colony evolved a society referred to as Creole.⁷ They occupied and lived in various parts of the

³ *SLWN*, January – April, 1892; See also *SLWN*, June, 1895.

⁴ Crooks, *History of the Colony*, pp. 38-56.

⁵ Crooks, *History of the Colony*, p. 107.

⁶ Crooks, *History of the Colony*, pp. 107-109.

⁷ Creole refers to descendants of ex-slaves born in the Sierra Leone Colony. For detailed definition of the term, see Arthur Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society* (London: Oxford University, 1963). See also Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles*

colony. The history of this group has dominated Sierra Leone historiography; i.e. many of the historical works on Sierra Leone, particularly colonial Freetown and its environs, focus on the activities of this group and their role in shaping the history of the colony in the 19th and 20th centuries. In other words, the images that emerge from many of these works suggest that the history of the colony is best understood by understanding the history of the Creoles.⁸ James Thayer reinforces this view when he notes:

The repatriated Africans [Creoles] who were settled in Sierra Leone are one of the most intensely studied [sic] and well documented people on the continent of Africa, certainly in sub-Saharan Africa [in the 19th and 20th centuries]. Except for large ethnic groups like the Yoruba or the Asante [sic] it is hard to find a single ethnic group on which so much scholarly effort, mostly of an historical nature, has been expended.⁹

The works of scholars such as Christopher Fyfe, Arthur Porter, Leo Spitzer, Frances White and Akintola Wyse, among others, privilege the Creoles over non-creole ethnic groups. In their various works, the authors focus much attention on the activities of the Creoles and the views they portrayed about themselves. In addition, it is clear from their

of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870-1945 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1974) and Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (Freetown: W.D. Okrafo-Smart Ltd, 1989). See also Barbara Harrell-Bond, "Misunderstanding Arising from the use of the Term Creole" *Africa* 47 3 (1977), p. 305, and Joseph Bangura, *Ethnic Invention and Identity Formation in Sierra Leone: A Case Study of the Creoles, 1870-1861* (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 2001). Krio and Creole are terms used interchangeably in Sierra Leone historiography to refer to the same group of people living in Freetown. I will use the two interchangeably since many of the materials I will be reviewing carry the old usage "Creole."

⁸ The Colony of Sierra Leone comprised Freetown and the peninsula towns or rural areas; these were territories previously owned and controlled by the Koya Temne in the 18th century. When Freetown was declared a Crown Colony in 1808, the British government through treaties and sometimes force, annexed all areas previously owned by the Temne including Leicester, Gloucester, Kent, Regent, York in the West and Waterloo, Hastings, Rokel, Wellington, Kissy, etc in the east. Thus, the use of the term colony in this study refers to Freetown and the rural areas or peninsula towns.

⁹ James Steel, Thayer. "A Dissenting View of Creole Culture in Sierra Leone," *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* 121-122 31 1-2 (1991), p. 251

various works that many of the authors were keen to project the Creoles as agents of Western civilization, particularly in Sierra Leone. In other words, Fyfe, Porter and others used the history of the Creoles to argue that Africans had enough capacity to thoroughly assimilate Western civilization. In a speech delivered to Freetown residents in 1951, Fyfe argues that the Creoles were the torchbearers of Western civilization “in Sierra Leone and West Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries.”¹⁰ He repeated many of these views in his numerous works on Sierra Leone. In fact, in concluding his massive *History of Sierra Leone*, Fyfe argues that the Creoles,

Were ... indispensable, the unrecognized vehicle by which not only British rule but [also] trade, education, and Christianity were conveyed to West Africa. In the churches and schools which must have closed without their ministrations, in mercantile counting-houses and government offices, dependent on their subordinate toil, these gentle pioneers bringing a European culture Europeans resented their possessing, could well look round them to see in whatever good Britain brought West Africa in the nineteenth century a plant which could never have taken root without their slighted labour.¹¹

He also argues that other ethnic groups who lived in the colony looked to the Creoles as a social reference and followed their example: “whatever they feel about the Krios personally they followed their social lead [sic].”¹² Because the Creoles served as agents of Western civilization, they influenced the identity and mode of life of non-creole groups: “the offspring [of non Creoles] had a choice of identity – to be Krio or (as might be) to be Temne, Limba or Mende. But whatever their choice, their upbringing was still

¹⁰ *SLWN*, April 9, 1951.

¹¹ Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University, 1962), pp. 619-620.

¹² Christopher Fyfe, “1787-1887-1987, Reflections on A Bicentenary” in Murray Last and Paul Richards, *Sierra Leone, 1787-1987 Two Centuries of Intellectual Life* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1987), p. 148.

within Krio culture.”¹³ This suggests that members of the Temne or Limba ethnic groups born in the colony had to “behave like Krios to be accepted as civilized.”¹⁴ It is unclear the variables Fyfe used in assessing Mende or Temne culture in the colony. In addition, it is clear from the views expressed in many of his works that Fyfe regarded Christianity, education and attendance at balls as hallmarks of civilized behavior in colonial Freetown.¹⁵ He argues that the Creoles saw it as their duty to teach non-creole groups these values. In fact, the Creoles did not limit their civilizing mission to the Sierra Leone colony; they undertook similar enterprises and provided educational and religious training to non-creole groups in the Protectorate as well.¹⁶ Though the thrust of Fyfe’s works centers on the agency of the Creoles, he also acknowledges the presence of non-Creole groups in the colony. He contends that many of the non-creole groups enjoyed some advantages from the colonial authorities. In 1895, for example, the colonial government accorded the Temne the opportunity of electing a headman to coordinate their affairs in the colony.¹⁷ The government extended similar opportunities to other non-Creole groups in the early 20th century. As a matter of fact, the government enacted legislation recognizing the importance of tribal headmen in 1905. Fyfe also claims that non-creole groups served as laborers and petty traders.

Arthur Porter, a Creole, shares some of the views of Fyfe. Porter contends that Western education dominated by the Creoles became the “royal road” to success in the colony: “Education was thus, in Freetown, one of the important mechanisms providing

¹³ Fyfe, “Reflections,” p. 148.

¹⁴ Fyfe, “Reflections,” pp. 148-149.

¹⁵ Fyfe, *A History*, pp. 403-415.

¹⁶ Christopher Fyfe, “European and Creole Influence in the Interior of Sierra Leone before 1896” *Sierra Leone Studies* 6 (1956), pp. 113-115

¹⁷ Fyfe, *A History*, p. 495.

for social mobility. It was, and still is [sic] the royal road to success and positions of power and prestige.”¹⁸ Throughout his works, Porter did not identify other mechanisms of success. For him, Creoles thoroughly assimilated the values of Western civilization, and thus they became the “desired reference group in Sierra Leone.”¹⁹ It was the norm for non-creoles to act like or pretend to be “Creoles,” at least before the Second World War period.²⁰ Nonetheless, after 1945, Porter argues, non-creole groups challenged the status quo, particularly when education thrived among them. In addition, with the introduction of drastic constitutional reforms in 1948, non-creole groups participated more fully in national politics.²¹ In all, in his major works, Porter highlights the civilizing agency of the Creoles in the Sierra Leone colony.

Other works which deal with similar themes include the works of Leo Spitzer. His works deal with Creole agency and the views Creoles held about themselves. He notes that: “the [Creole] group was numerically small. But it included the most literate and vocal members ... of society, men with direct access to the Sierra Leone press and other vehicles of communication. Occupying the top rung of the social hierarchy, they set fashions, shaped opinions, and exerted an influence far exceeding their numerical strength.”²² Spitzer argues that Creole cultural arrogance affected their relationship with non-creoles. In his major work, he examines the development and “expression of Creole

¹⁸ Arthur Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society*, (London: Oxford University, 1963), p. 92.

¹⁹ Porter, *Creoledom*, p. 63.

²⁰ Porter, *Creoledom*, p. 28.

²¹ Porter, *Creoledom*, pp. 68-72.

²² Leo Spitzer, “The Sierra Leone Creoles, 1870-1900” in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972), p. 108.

ideas about themselves, their British mentors and colonial masters and other Africans.”²³ Spitzer points out that the “Creoles viewed themselves as special, different from or even superior to Africans who had not experienced prolonged cultural contact with Europeans.”²⁴ Akintola Wyse, a Creole, touts similar themes in his recent work. He describes the Creoles as “Krio” to distinguish them from other Creole groups around the world. In many of his works, Wyse argues that Creoles exhibited cultural arrogance because they believed “they possessed a superior culture civilisation [sic] to that of the interior peoples and that they were so many distances removed from their unfortunate brethren.”²⁵ The phrase “interior peoples” refers to non-creoles who resided in the colony. Wyse also argues that Creole society was assaulted by people he describes as “the detractors of the Krio.”²⁶ He states:

But it was at this period [19th and 20th centuries] when the accomplishments of the Krio sparkled with brilliance, the successful among them displaying all the attributes of a bourgeois society with its social circuit and pretensions, vocal press and reading public, and being called ‘the Athens of West Africa’, that the detractors of the Krio began to make continual assaults on their society.²⁷

The statement above suggests that a challenge to the Creole establishment by non-creoles in the colony was an assault on Krio society. Wyse fails to indicate why a challenge against Krio society was an “assault” on that society. It is clear from his works that like Fyfe, Porter and Spitzer before him, Wyse’s interest revolves around the need to highlight Creole achievements, including their mastery of Western civilization in the 19th

²³ Spitzer, *Creoles of Sierra Leone*, p. 3.

²⁴ Spitzer, *Creoles of Sierra Leone*, p. 218.

²⁵ Akintola Wyse, *H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), p. 17.

²⁶ Akintola Wyse, “The Krio of Sierra Leone: Perspective and West African Historiography” in Simon McGrath et al., eds., *Rethinking African History* (Edinburgh: Center of African Studies, 1997), p. 205.

²⁷ Wyse, “Perspective and West African Historiography,” p. 205.

century. For him, though the British “disappointed” the Creoles by encouraging Protectorate educated elites to gain political power in Sierra Leone after 1945, the Creoles served as effective agents of Western civilization in the colony and West Africa throughout the 19th and much of the 20th centuries.²⁸ Creole cultural life is also examined in Abner Cohen’s work. Cohen traces how the Creoles used culture to assert their superiority in colonial and post-colonial Sierra Leone. He points out that the Creoles used Christianity, membership in freemasonry, attendance at balls, and civil service positions to assert their superiority over non-creole groups. In short, the Creoles constituted the Freetown elite before 1947.²⁹ Cohen’s argument suggests that the Creoles were a fairly secure elite from the 19th century to 1960. However, he maintains that between 1947 and 1967, non-creole groups challenged the status quo and gradually became part of the Freetown elite.³⁰ In sum, Cohen wants to argue that Creole assimilation of Western civilization earlier than non-creole groups, enabled them to dominate the political scene in Sierra Leone for much of the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Other scholars concerned with a different set of questions include, among others, Frances E. White and LaRay Denzer. White argues that Creole women traders played a major role in the development of the economy of the colony. She contends that Creole women undertook specific risks by venturing into the interior of Sierra Leone to buy goods wholesale which they sold in Freetown.³¹ Some of these Creole women traders permanently lived in their host communities in the hinterland and assimilated their

²⁸ Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone*, pp. 20-29.

²⁹ Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations of the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society* (Berkeley: University of California, 1981), pp. 18-23.

³⁰ Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture*, p. 138.

³¹ E. Frances White, *Sierra Leone’s Settler Women Traders: Women on the Afro-European Frontier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987), pp. 13-16.

culture and traditions. The Creole women traders in Freetown became established business merchants and led wealthy and independent lives compared to their non-creole colleagues. In another of her works, White claims that Creole women traders from the 19th century to 1950 dominated the Big Market in colonial Freetown. Creole women traders in this market dominated the sale of vegetables and other garden products in particular. In all, White argues that the Big Market served as a central market which connected the local and international economies. The market formed an important core of Creole society.³² She also notes that after 1950, the monopoly Creole women traders had over trade in this market gave way to the rising influence of people she describes as Temne and Mandingo women traders. Like White, Denzer believes that the role of women in shaping the history of the colony has been largely ignored in the established literature. While White has focused on the economic activities of Creole women, Denzer focuses on their political agency. She argues that Creole women played a substantial role in proto-nationalist politics in colonial Freetown. The political activities of these women climaxed with the foundation of the West African Youth League in 1938 and the Sierra Leone Women's Movement in 1951. Denzer claims that women actively participated in both organizations. She argues that politics in colonial Freetown was not mainly the business of men; women were equally active in the political debate. They participated in the political dialogue in spite of the strong opposition they encountered from some sections of their men folk. In all this, the strong leadership demonstrated by Adelaide Casely Hayford in the National Council of British West Africa and Constance

³² E. Frances White, "The Big Market in Freetown: A Case Study of Women's Workplace" *Journal of the Historical Society of Sierra Leone* 4, 1&2 (December 1980), p. 22.

Cummings-John in the Sierra Leone Women's Movement gave women a voice in the political and social activities of colonial Freetown.³³ She posits that non-creole women also formed part of the women's movements. All in all, the works of Denzer give agency to Creole women in raising the profile and relevance of women in the Sierra Leone colony. The works show that Creole men were not the only "enlightened" and effective leaders; Creole women were also leaders in their own right.

Other scholars such as Leslie Proudfoot, Adeleyi Ijagbemi and Ibrahim Abdullah, have addressed other aspects of Creole history. The work of Proudfoot gives major agency to the Aku in propagating and disseminating the teachings of Islam in the colony. Though he recognizes the efforts of the Mandingo and Fula in spreading Islam, Proudfoot contends that Aku Islamic elites played a greater role in this from the mid 19th century to the end of colonial rule. He however, also recognizes the contributions of non-Aku groups such as the Temne and others.³⁴ A detailed summary of his views is outlined below. Ibrahim Abdullah's works focus on the labor question in Sierra Leone in the post Second World War era. He examines working class agitation in colonial Freetown and the response of the colonial government to these issues. While his works are rich on trade union activities they are silent on issues of culture and identity.³⁵ The works do not

³³ LaRay Denzer, "Women in Freetown Politics" *Africa* 57 (1987), pp. 440-446.

³⁴ See L. Proudfoot, "Towards A Muslim Solidarity in Freetown" *Africa* 31 (1961); see his other work, "Mosque Building and Tribal Separatism in Freetown East," *Africa* 29 (1959).

³⁵ See Ibrahim Abdullah, "'Liberty or Death': Working Class Agitation and the Labour Question in Colonial Freetown, 1938-1939," *International Review of Social History* 40 (1995); See his other works, "Rethinking the Freetown Crowd: The Moral Economy of the 1919 Strikes and Riot in Sierra Leone," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28 2 (1994); "Rethinking African Labour and Working-Class History: The Artisan Origins of the Sierra Leonean Working Class," *Social History* 23 1 (1998), and "The Colonial State

examine ethnic categories, for example, among the working class or among the various trade unions. Because of the nature of his questions, I have not found the works of Abdullah relevant to my question. I have therefore not reviewed them here. In addition, I have also not reviewed the works of Adeleye Ijagbemi who has done some work on the Temne because his period of inquiry is much earlier than mine; his questions are also different from mine.³⁶ The works of T.C. Anwyl, Kenneth Wylie, E.R. Langley, James Littlejohn, among others, have also examined non-creole groups like the Temne in the Protectorate. Vernon R. Dorjahn examines the changing political system of people he describes as Temne. He analyzes the various functions of Temne chiefs in the “pre-Protectorate and post-Protectorate days.”³⁷ However, these works are mainly concerned with the history and activities of the Temne in the Protectorate.³⁸ I have not reviewed them here because I do not find them relevant to my questions and concerns.

Finally, the works of Michael Banton, Barbara Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard and David E. Skinner are so far the most comprehensive which give agency to non-Creole groups. The works of Banton were the first to examine the importance of tribal

and Wage Labor in Postwar Sierra Leone, 1945-1960: Attempts at Remaking the Working Class,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 52 (1997).

³⁶ See Adeleye Ijagbami, “The Kosooh War 1838-41: A Study in Temne/Colony Relations in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 14 (June 1971) and his unpublished work, *The History of the Temne in the 19th Century* (PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh University, 1968).

³⁷ Vernon R. Dorjahn, “The Changing Political System of the Temne” *Africa* 30 (October 1966), p.431.

³⁸ See T.C. Anwyl, “The Timne and Other Tribes of Sierra Leone” *Journal of the African Society* VI LXI (1916); Biyi Esu, “Temne People and How They Make Their Kings” *Journal of the African Society*, XII, XLVI (1913); E.R. Langley, “The Temne, Their Life, Land and Ways,” *Sierra Leone Studies* XXII (1939); James Littlejohn, “The Temne House,” *The Journal of the Historical Society of Sierra Leone* 14 (1960) and Kenneth Wylie, *The Political Kingdoms of the Temne: Temne Government in Sierra Leone, 1825-1910* (New York and London: Africana Publishing Company, 1977).

rule in the colony in the 19th century. The colonial government utilized the services of people recorded as Temne, Mandingo, Limba, and Loko headmen in running the affairs of non-creole groups. Banton maintains that these ethnic communities including the Aku played a role in the cultural development of the colony through the formation of ethnic associations which fostered their unity and ethnic values from the 1930s to the end of colonial rule in 1961. The associations proved to be recreational avenues.³⁹ Barbara Harrell-Bond et al. expanded the frontier of Banton's works by examining community leadership in colonial Freetown. The authors argue that the Creole did not live in isolation; i.e. they show that the Creoles had company as different ethnic groups lived side by side with them. The authors point out that various communities which lived in colonial Freetown promoted their "economic, cultural, religious, and political interests."⁴⁰

The works above serve as a useful guide for my study as they show that the Creoles did not only have company, but also that apart from education, other variables like community leadership or tribal headmanship mattered in assessing the role various groups played in shaping the history of the colony.

A careful examination of the works above will reveal their motivation. Fyfe et al. aim to show that the Creoles assimilated Western civilization well and effectively served as its principal agents. In other words, the scholars mentioned above were eager to show that Africans had a history and that Africans used the tools of Western civilization successfully. Arthur Porter sums up this view in his major work:

³⁹ Michael Banton, *West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (London: Oxford University, 1957), p. 150.

⁴⁰ Barbara Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard and David E. Skinner, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801-1976)* (Hague: Mouton, 1978), p. 16.

Creoledom exemplified the possibility of rapid and effective social change. It argued powerfully for the speedy acceptance of Africans within the international community. The Creoles undoubtedly fulfilled the most cherished ambitions of their benefactors that, once, the chains were removed and given the opportunities, they could rise to any heights of Victorian England was capable of providing. And the lesson was not lost, though their detractors were many... This is its larger theoretical relevance. It provides a setting, a historical demonstration, for students of social change some of whom, even today, doubt the capacity, capabilities and potentialities of Africans.⁴¹

White expresses similar motivation for focusing on Creole women in many of her works. She acknowledges that the motivation for her works on Creole women is derived from the need to “challenge the western-biased categories that have found their way into much of their emerging feminist canon comparing women’s status across cultures.”⁴² Clearly, the intellectual milieu in which these scholars wrote influenced their thoughts. Shortly after many African countries gained political independence from their European colonizers in the late 1950s and early 1960s, nationalist sentiments heightened. African historians were keen to glorify the African past; i.e. many scholars wanted to show that contrary to the views expressed by some European scholars in the early 20th century, Africans indeed had a proud history. In other words, in many of the works published in the immediate postcolonial period, some Africanists and African historians aimed to show that Africans had not only demonstrated enough capacity to assimilate and disseminate the values of Western civilization, but that they also had the intellectual depth and breadth to replace the departing Europeans. In Sierra Leone, Fyfe et al. used Creole history to challenge Eurocentric views as noted above. This is evident in Spitzer’s motivation for focusing on the Creoles. In commenting on the response of Africans to colonialism, Spitzer argues that “the history of the Creoles is an especially rich source for

⁴¹ Porter, *Creoledom*, p. 140.

⁴² White, *Settler Women*, p. 13.

this kind of study.”⁴³ It can be suggested that such motivation made these authors hail the views Creoles held about themselves. However, it is also clear that methodological factors influenced many of these works. This is because the Creoles had almost a century of accessible history traceable through archival sources. Many of these scholars found the Creoles a much more researchable group as indicated by Denzer and White. That is, because a majority of the Creoles proved to be literate in English, many scholars easily conducted interviews with them directly. In addition, many of the works reviewed above imply that Creoles proved much more cooperative to scholars than others.

The motivation of these scholars notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that their works are deeply informative on some aspects of the history of the colony. As Cohen argues, the history of Sierra Leone as written by Fyfe et al., “has indirectly come to punctuate and give basic structure to Sierra Leone.”⁴⁴ He notes further “the most authoritative academic history of Sierra Leone by Christopher Fyfe (1962), starts with an introduction of 12 pages covering the earlier history of the country of the Creoles and the Colony.”⁴⁵ Like other scholars writing on Sierra Leone, I have also used many of these works in this study as they relate to the activities of the Creoles, and the interaction between Creole and non-creole groups.

However, because of their motivation, the authors ignored other aspects of the history of the colony. For instance, many of the works reviewed above fail to get past the European versus African paradigm. Because many of these scholars used Creole history to prove that Africans had a glorious past, they failed to adequately examine the history

⁴³ Spitzer, *Creoles*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture*, p. 138.

⁴⁵ Cohen, *Elite Culture*, p. 138.

and activities of non-creoles; i.e. while non-creoles were presumed to exist, their views and opinions are to some extent left silent in the established literature. In addition, the motivation of Fyfe et al. led them to simply accept Creole claims of superiority without critically assessing the validity of such claims. Though some of the scholars highlight the tension between Creoles and non-creoles in the colony, particularly in the post Second World War period, these scholars simply accept Creole claims of hegemony, as noted above. In his major work, for example, Arthur Porter argues that education was one of the important mechanisms to measure success in colonial Freetown, but he does not identify other mechanisms used to determine success. He does not also indicate in his work whether chiefly status or tribal headmanship was considered a highly regarded or successful status. In one of his major works, Wyse uses the phrase “interior peoples” to refer to non-creoles; i.e. while he describes the Creoles as “colony people,” he refers to non-creoles born in the colony as “interior people.”⁴⁶ Describing non-creoles born in the colony as “interior people” suggests that the non-creoles are not “colony people.” This implies that Wyse is ignoring the fact that the colony comprised territories previously owned and controlled by non-creoles such as those described as Temne, who together with the Creoles formed the population of the colony. His argument suggests that the history of the colony equals Creole history.

In her examination of the agency of women, White focuses heavily on the commercial activities of Creole women traders. In her work on the Big Market, even though she acknowledges the role Temne and Mandingo women played in the Market after 1950, she gives the impression that Creole women traders served as a social

⁴⁶ Wyse, *Bankole-Bright and Politics*, p. 150.

reference for non-creole women whose economic progress became clear with the decline of Creole fortunes. More importantly, White does not include in her work the contribution of the following markets to the economy of the colony: King Jimmy, Kissy Road, Dove Cut and Up Gun. Non-creole market women traders mostly dominated these markets.⁴⁷ What role did these markets play in the economy of the colony? In short, though White's works give women agency as mentioned above, yet the voices of non-Creole women are silent in many of her works. Like White, Denzer also fails to give non-Creole women voice in many of her works. She acknowledges the support Cummings-John received from non-creole market women in the Sierra Leone Women's Movement (SLWM), but did not indicate whether these women occupied leadership positions in the SLWM or in other women's associations in the colony.

Finally, though the works of Proudfoot recognize the role non-Aku groups such as the Mandingo, Fula and Temne played in spreading Islam, he focuses too much attention on the agency of the Aku in this. In other words, his works remain superficial on the agency of non-Aku indigenous groups such as the Temne, Mende, and Limba in the propagation of Islam. His works, for example, do not give any indication of the formation of Muslim associations formed by non-Aku Muslims in the colony. His analysis of Muslim associations suggests that primarily the Aku formed and ran these associations.⁴⁸ He is silent on the Muslim Reformation Council formed by Alhaji Gibril Sesay, a non-Aku elite and scholar. In addition, there are no indications in his works about the role of the Madrasas in the teaching and spread of Islam, at least between 1901 and 1912.

⁴⁷ H. Osman Newland, *Sierra Leone: Its People, Products, and Secret Societies* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 17-21.

⁴⁸ See L. Proudfoot, "Muslim Solidarity," p. 448.

Overall then, the questions addressed by Fyfe et al. imply that there was one cultural model in the colony. Because of this approach adopted by these scholars, they fail to ask other questions that fully reflect the views, activities and contributions of non-creole groups. It is clear that, in the process of redressing what these authors view as Western prejudice against Africans and their past, they privileged the Creole over non-creoles. In addition, though the works of Banton et al. give agency to non-creole groups, they do not address gender issues. The questions addressed by Banton, Barbara Harrell-Bond et al. prevented them from investigating the commercial activities of Creole and non-creole women traders. How did non-creole women contribute to the development of the economy of the colony in the 19th and 20th centuries? In addition, the questions addressed by these scholars prevented them from investigating the process by which non-creole groups became influential after the 1940s.

As stated earlier, this study offers an alternative perspective on the history of the Sierra Leone colony between 1890 and 1961. It goes beyond the African versus European model adopted in many of the works discussed above, to the new social history agenda which is also interested in the diverse relations among Africans that are not necessarily about the colonial question. It examines how and why Temneness and its institutions rose to prominence in the post Second World War period. A careful examination of the historical records reveals that Temne organized around particular institutions such as tribal administration, cultural associations, mosques, micro-credit schemes, from the 1890s through the 1940s. By organizing around these institutions and with the increase in their population the Temne became socially, politically, economically and religiously influential in the post Second World War period. In other words, the study focuses

specifically on the economic, social, religious, and political activities of Temne commercial agents, cultural activists, imams, and politicians in the colony. The study shows how Temne used chiefly politics, population growth and “ethnic pride” to challenge Creole influence in colonial Freetown. Since 1895, the colonial government allowed the Temne to elect a headman who would liaise between his subjects and the government. The process of integrating chiefly rule in the colony’s administration became statutory in 1905.⁴⁹ Shortly after this ordinance, the Temne Tribal Ruler and his subjects evolved an administration later referred to as the Temne Tribal Authority (TTA) which served as their symbol of authority in the colonial period. A rise in Temne population increased the standing of the Temne Authority among the various communities in colonial Freetown at this time. The Authority comprised native courts and offices occupied by different officials appointed by the Tribal Ruler.⁵⁰ The Creole establishment frowned on the idea of tribal administration that would parallel its authority in the colony. As the largest non-creole ethnic group, the Temne led other non-creole groups in confronting the Creoles over such issues. The roots of this challenge lie in the fact that the Temne claimed to have offered refuge to the Creole in the 18th century. They therefore, believed that the land which harbored the Creole and others belonged to them.⁵¹ These threads of history have not been carefully analyzed in the extant literature. As noted above, the extant literature primarily focuses on the European versus African paradigm.

⁴⁹ C.S.O. *An Ordinance to Promote A System of Administration by Tribal Authority Among the Tribes Settled in Freetown, No. 19 of 1905* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1905), p. 1.

⁵⁰ C.S.O. *Notes on Tribal Administration in Freetown M P/170/39: Tribal Rule 48/1915* (Freetown: 1917), pp. 1-5.

⁵¹ C.S.O. *Notes on Tribal Administration*, pp. 4-7.

This study is driven, as mentioned above, by the social history agenda which advocates issues that go beyond nationalist questions. In particular, I am motivated by the approach of historians and scholars such as Frederick Cooper, Jane Parpart, Allen Howard and Philip Zachernuk, among others. For these scholars, the struggles and survival skills of ordinary Africans were as important as the activities of Western educated African elites in colonial West Africa. To understand the African past, historians should devote more time and energy to analyzing the “transformation of ideology and culture, the forging of vast spatial systems in which people carried out their efforts at survival, advancement, and struggle.”⁵² Cooper et al. suggest that urban studies require historians and scholars to investigate and analyze the lives, activities, struggles, and roles of Western-educated elites as well as ordinary people in shaping cities in colonial Africa. This is because, until Africanists and African historians alike devote serious attention to studying these strands of history, we will not thoroughly understand and fairly interpret the African past. Cooper touts similar concepts and points of view in some of his other works. In one of his major works, he argues that the conventional approach to history that divides African history “between colonial and post-colonial African history, a division which conceals as much as it reveals,” should be replaced with an approach that “bridges one of the classic divisions of African history, between the “colonial” and “post-colonial.””⁵³ This new line of historical inquiry suggested by Cooper is a useful method of probing the actions of non-creole cultural agents in the Sierra Leone colony. How and why did Temne become influential in the colony in

⁵² Frederick Cooper, *Struggle for the City: Migrant, Labor, Capital and the State in Urban Africa* (Beverly Hills, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1983), p. 10.

⁵³ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), pp. 4-15.

the 1940s? The answer to this big question can be found, as already mentioned, by investigating Temne tribal administration, cultural associations, commercial, Islamic and political activities. By studying the activities of these Temne men and women, it is clear that disparate historical actors “struggled” to shape the history of the colonial city of Freetown. Clearly, the views of these authors reveal to us that African history is more complex than the binary interpretation which is the colonizer versus the colonized models. In other words, the approach adopted by many of these scholars shows that much more went on in colonial cities in West Africa than merely nationalist issues. Howard argues that various players engaged in the struggle for control of public space in colonial Freetown and other colonial cities. His analysis implies that the history of colonial Freetown is complex and cannot be reduced to the colonized versus colonizer’s model. In analyzing the role of colonial subjects and intellectuals in Nigeria, Zachernuk argues that the activities and motives of these historical actors were shaped by multiple agendas. In other words, he argues that the activities and actions of intellectuals in Lagos, Abeokuta, etc. cannot be simply understood as anti-imperialist. The motives of these intellectuals were shaped by power struggle, self-aggrandizement and economic factors. This argument fits into the social history approach which goes beyond the colonizer versus colonized model. These scholars show that African history is not just about the activities, views, and nationalist movements which emerged in the post World War II period. In using the approach advocated by the new social history, it can be argued that if the activities of the Creole Hubert Bankole-Bright and Adelaide Cromwell were considered relevant in the history of the Sierra Leone colony, the activities of Haja Sukainatu Bangura, Yenki Kamara and Yankaday Kargbo, Temne market women and cultural

elites, were also relevant in this respect. Freetown historiography devotes much time and space historicizing the socio-political activities of Bankole-Bright, Isaac Wallace-Johnson, Adelaide Cromwell and Constance Cummings-John. We have been led to believe that these historical actors and the institutions they espoused proved to be more influential than their non-Western educated non-creole counterparts such as Gibril Sesay, Sukainatu Bangura, Mbalu Conteh and others. In sum, save for a few studies, there is a dearth of literature on the role non-creole marketers, small scale entrepreneurs, cultural activists played in shaping the history of the colony between 1890 and 1961. In fact, it is clear that the Temne and Creole wrangled over space and administrative authority, among others. In other words, the Creoles and the Temne confronted each other over ownership of Freetown. This remained a source of tension between these two groups throughout the colonial period.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on primary and secondary sources. Many of the primary sources were from archival documents, press reports and interviews. I found many documents in the Colonial Secretary's Office in the Sierra Leone National Archives at Fourah Bay College useful for the period of my enquiry. However, though the archives proved useful to me, I could not locate other important files. Files on municipal council which covered my period of inquiry, for example, were not found. Unfortunately, the municipal library in Freetown was also completely destroyed during the rebel war in 1999. Therefore, documents relating to its activities have been lost.

In addition to these colonial documents, I also used newspaper articles which covered certain events that fall under my investigation. It should be pointed out that in the 19th and mid 20th centuries, Creoles owned and ran all newspapers in the colony. It is clear that the newspapers were biased in their coverage of certain events. From the nature of accounts published, it is obvious that many editors sympathized with the Creole establishment and its position on many issues. In their coverage of the friction between the Creole-run municipal council and the tribal administration of non-creole groups, for example, many newspapers sided with the Creole position.⁵⁴ Also, in the confrontation between the colonial authorities and the Creole establishment over the review of the constitutions of 1922, 1947 and 1951, many of the newspapers supported various camps in this debate. The Creole-run newspapers sided with the Creole position while newspapers like *Daily Mail*, later the *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, sympathized with the government and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party. In 1960, other newspapers such as *Madora* were launched to serve as a mouthpiece of the women's movements in the colony. It published articles and stories pertaining to the welfare of women. Although the Sierra Leone Women's Movement had Creole and non-creole members, the mainstream media discriminated against them which prompted them to launch their own newspaper. The *Shekpendeh* newspaper was launched by the United Peoples Party (UPP), a Creole-Temne led party as a propaganda tool between 1956 and 1959. The membership of the party was concerned that the mainstream media was biased in favor of either government positions or Creole related issues. Though the *Weekly News* was a Creole-run newspaper and sympathized with Creole positions on several occasions, it covered non-creole related

⁵⁴ See the *Weekly News* coverage of events in this period from 1905 to 1950.

events on a fairly regular basis. In fact, I derived and utilized many pieces of valuable information from this publication.

Finally, because of the dearth of literature on events, such as the formation of cultural associations, I conducted interviews to ascertain information on their origin, aims and objectives including their contribution to the history of the colony. In all, about thirty people were interviewed; these included chiefs, market women, founders and founding members of various cultural groups like the *Tarancis*, *Ambas Geda*, *Alimania*, Temne Progressive Union, and the like. The decision for this selection was influenced by the fact that I could not find any archival documents that speak to the origin, activities and structure of these cultural associations save for a few press accounts. In addition, the interviewees were selected for two reasons: first, when I visited the secretary of the Tribal Council in Freetown, chief Younge and the Town Clerk of the Freetown City Council to elicit information from them about chiefly issues, they strongly recommended to me that I should talk to tribal leaders and elders and they graciously suggested several names. The final list was drawn based on the advice of the current Temne Tribal Ruler, and current Mandingo, Fula, Loko and Limba headmen; they noted that the selected names were people associated with voluntary associations in the colony. They claimed to know many of the names on the list. In addition, during the interviews, some interviewees recommended additional names to be contacted, particularly names of imams and names of former association colleagues. Second, the interviewees were selected on the basis of their insight on Temne, Mandingo, Limba, Loko, and Fula customs.

Each interviewee was interviewed separately with the same set of questions. I adopted this approach to prevent interviewees from consulting with one another either to cross check their information or seek information on events they did not know about. In other words, this approach ensured that the interviewees gave unrehearsed answers to questions. In all, about 80 questions were asked during interview sessions. Almost all the questions bordered on the same themes but were worded differently to verify the consistency of answers. I should note that almost all interviewees gave similar responses to the same questions put to them differently. However, in cases where the answers given on the same set of questions on specific events were markedly different, and were not independently verified or corroborated, the information was discarded.

All interviewees or informants gave permission for use of their names, quotations and opinions in this study. Detailed biographical information on some of the interviewees can be found in the appendix.

Finally, I used private papers, unpublished pamphlets, typescripts, unpublished dissertations and reports, written and compiled by various researchers, scholars, students, and colonial officials. I used the private papers of Alhaji Gibril Sesay currently lodged in his private library in Freetown. One of his surviving sons gave me exclusive access to these papers. Some of the unpublished reports I used are found in the Sierra Leone National Archives at Fourah Bay College while the typescripts are found in the Fourah Bay College library. A number of the unpublished dissertations consulted are found at the Killam library at Dalhousie University while the Killam library through inter-library loan made others available to me.

CHAPTER OUTLINE:

Chapter two shows that the Temne organized around the institution of tribal administration, marriages, etc., i.e. it shows how and why the Temne organized themselves around such institutions between 1895 and 1960. While the Creoles occupied mainly the west, and central parts of Freetown and the peninsula villages, the Temne and other non-creole groups mainly occupied the eastern part of the colony. The big picture which emerges from this narrative is that while Creoles exerted some influence in areas they mainly occupied, non-creoles exerted a similar degree of influence in their areas of occupation, e.g. control of migrants, exerting influence on trading activities of their members living in this section, etc.⁵⁵ The chapter also analyzes the steady rise in the Temne population in the colony from 1895 to 1960. The historical records note that Temne population grew faster to become larger than other non-creole groups in the colony at this time.⁵⁶ Clearly, the steady rise of Temne population affected the demographic make-up of the colony. The implication of this was that the responsibility of the Temne Tribal Authority increased as it had a much larger population under its control. Flowing from this, the chapter examines the structure and powers of tribal administration, particularly the role of the Temne Tribal Authority. How did the Temne Tribal Authority make the idea of “being Temne” important? The historical records show that people who were recognized by the Temne Tribal Authority as being Temne enjoyed

⁵⁵ *SLWN*, January – March 1887. See also *SLWN*, June and September, 1893; John I. Clarke, *Sierra Leone in Maps* (London: University of London, 1969); A. P. Kup, “An Account of the Tribal Distribution of Sierra Leone,” *Man* (August 1960).

⁵⁶ *SLWN*, April 1893. See also C.S.O. *Sierra Leone Blue Books, 1901* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1901) and others: *Sierra Leone Blue Book, 1910*; *Sierra Leone Blue Book 1913*. See C.S.O. *Report and Summary of the Census of 1921* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1922) and C.S.O. *Report of 1947 Population Census* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1949).

some benefits and protection from the authority, e.g. provision of employment either within or outside the Authority and provision of housing, etc.⁵⁷ In addition, the Temne Authority was charged with the responsibility of controlling migrants from the Protectorate; i.e. Temne migrants who visited the colony had to report to the Temne Tribal Ruler or his subordinates. Sources show that there were more Temne migrants in the period between the 1890s and 1920s than other non-creole migrants.⁵⁸ The pattern and size of such rural-urban migration required such tribal structures to work. The functions and role of the tribal authorities in colonial Freetown clearly show that we cannot explain the growth and success of Freetown between 1895 and 1961 with reference to the Municipal Council alone.

The chapter also examines the tension between ethnically-defined communities in colonial Freetown from 1905 to the post Second World War period. The Creole establishment was opposed to tribal administrations that would parallel the Municipal Council. The Temne Tribal Ruler and others confronted the Creoles on this; they argued that Freetown did not belong to the Creoles alone. It is clear that tension between the Creoles and the Temne coalition started with the adoption of the tribal administration ordinance in 1905. Such tensions continued when the Temne and others vied for municipal council seats in the 1950s. In addition, the Temne and the Creole establishment clashed over the use of public spaces such as cemeteries, markets etc. The Creoles claimed jurisdiction over these public spaces while the Temne refused to accept such Creole claims. In all, the chapter shows that to clearly understand the dynamics of politics

⁵⁷ Milton Harvey, "Implications of Migrations to Freetown: A Study of the Relationships Between Migrants, Housing and Occupation" *Civilisations* 18 2 (1968), pp. 248-253.

⁵⁸ *SLWN*, March 1894.

in colonial Freetown, municipal politics should be told together with the history of tribal administration.

The third chapter shows that the Temne formed and organized cultural associations between 1939 and 1952. The TTA supported and to some extent aided these associations which served as symbols of Temne unity. Clearly, a steady rise in Temne population growth and cultural threats from other non-creole groups such as the Mandingo and the Aku forced the Temne to organize cultural associations. Primarily founded and run by Temnes, the associations became a vibrant and prominent part of city life. They attracted admirers from other ethnic groups and boosted Temne ethnic pride through their activities. They assisted migrants to acculturate to urban life, organized marriages for members and helped them to participate in religious activities. The associations emerged as a political force which influenced the lives of many Freetown residents – Temne and non-Temne alike. In addition to being an influential force, the associations also organized fund raising activities and donated the proceeds to British war efforts. They also made donations to non-Temne Muslim groups. In all, the chapter shows the rise of Temne cultural influence from the 1940s and the implications of such ethnic organization in Freetown politics.

Chapter four describes the role of the Temne in the spread of Islam in the colony. With the Temne Tribal Authority and formation of cultural associations the Temne were able to participate actively in the propagation and spread of Islam especially after 1940. Sa'fu Deen Alharazim, Ola Thomas et al. argue that from the mid 19th century, the Aku played a much bigger role in the spread of Islam. They note the role played by individual Muslims in the propagation of the faith such as Alfa A. Kassim, Alfa Muhammad

Badamasi and Sanusie Mustapha.⁵⁹ In addition to the works of these authors, Proudfoot analyzes the formation of Islamic associations and the major role the Aku played in this. For him, the urban experience of the Aku made them the leading Islamic missionaries. Their prior knowledge of the values of Islam put them at an advantage over those Proudfoot describes as indigenous Muslims.⁶⁰ He notes that the Aku “were the first people to establish strong neighborhood groups organized around their mosques, and through their connexion – often by family ties – to Freetown society, they had the necessary insights and concepts to equip them for major forms of organizations.”⁶¹ But he never fully explored the role of these “indigenous Muslims” in the Islamization process. Though he notes the mosques built by the Temne and other non-Aku Muslims, he does not analyze the numerous mosques built by the indigenous Muslims and how they organized around them. Proudfoot also fails to examine the various Islamic associations formed by non-Aku groups. Ola Thomas argues that the “combined activities of the learned Muslims including the Mandinkas [sic], Fulas, and liberated Africans [Aku] was to strengthen the faith of the Freetown Muslim community as they began to adopt more orthodox practices [in the 19th and 20th centuries].”⁶² Thomas notes that the Aku sponsored and established many of the *Karanthes* in colonial Freetown where Aku children were taught the rudiments of Islam. Because of this advantage, the Aku

⁵⁹ See M. Saif ud Deen Alharazim, “The Origin and Progress of Islam in Sierra Leone” *Sierra Leone Studies* 21 (January 1939); See also L. Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity” and his other work, “Mosque Building.”

⁶⁰ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 148-149.

⁶¹ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 148.

⁶² Ola Thomas, “Freetown Muslims” (Freetown: 1975), p.13. This is a typescript used as a resource material in teaching Aku children on the spread of Islam in colonial Freetown.

possessed a superior knowledge on Islamic theology.⁶³ He fails to show whether the children of indigenous groups such as the Temne, Mende, Limba and Loko attended these *Karanthes*. The historical records show that from 1901 to 1912, Temne children had the second highest enrolment in the *Karanthes*.⁶⁴ This oversight portrays an incomplete picture of the history of Islam in the colony. In contributing to this debate, Lamin Sanneh supports the views of Proudfoot and Thomas. He argues that the Aku were the first to introduce Islam in places like Aberdeen, Waterloo and Hastings including their stronghold of Fourah Bay and Foulah Town in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶⁵ He stresses the intellectual ability of the Aku which made them effective agents in the propagation of Islam. Like Thomas and others, Sanneh makes no mention of the role of non-Aku Muslims in this.

Alusine Jalloh's recent work argues that the Fula played a bigger role than the Aku in spreading Islam: "for over two centuries Fula traders have helped to shape the religious landscape of Sierra Leone, especially Freetown."⁶⁶ The Fula not only had a long history of propagating Islam in West Africa, "they have played a major role in the conversion of almost half the 4.5 million people of Sierra Leone."⁶⁷ Unlike Alharazim, Thomas and others, Jalloh gives primary agency to the Fula for the propagation and

⁶³ Ola Thomas, "Freetown Muslims", pp. 13-15.

⁶⁴ C.S.O. *Return of Mohammedan Schools, 1905* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1905), pp. 1-3.

⁶⁵ Lamin Sanneh, "Islamic Consciousness and the African Society: An Essay in Historical Interaction" (Freetown: Unpublished Paper, Institute of African Studies, University of Sierra Leone, 1975), pp. 4-7. He has expanded these ideas in his recent work, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ Alusine Jalloh, *African Entrepreneurship: Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone* (Athens: Ohio University for International Studies, 1999), p. 151.

⁶⁷ Jalloh, *African Entrepreneurship*, p. 151.

entrenchment of Islamic principles in Sierra Leone as a whole. Though he recognizes the role of the Aku, Temne and others, for him, their role in this religious enterprise remained secondary to that of the Fula. But David Skinner holds a contrary view. In his numerous works, he argues that no one ethnic community or factor dominated the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone including the colony in the 19th and 20th centuries. He gives agency to the Aku, Mandingo, Fula and Temne for their role in this. He notes that in 1826, about 2,174 indigenous people lived in Freetown excluding the Aku and the Creoles; half of the Mandingos, Fulas, Susus, and Temne who constituted this number engaged primarily in Islamic activities.⁶⁸ In discussing the commitment of the Temne to Islam, Skinner contends that: “no instance could be traced of a Timmanee [sic] having been converted to Christianity. This cannot be attributed to any invincible attachment to their present superstitions as many are said to have become converts to the Mohammedan faith, which is supposed to be making considerable progress among them.”⁶⁹ Nonetheless, though Skinner’s work is the first to give credit to the role of non-Aku such as the Temne in the spread of Islam, he does not examine the rise of Temne influence in Islam after 1940. He does not, for example, address the organization of Temne around their numerous mosques and how they used these centers not only in spreading Islam but also as common meeting places to organize Temne marriages, discuss commercial transactions, etc. Finally, though Skinner’s works prove valuable to me, many of his works cover a much earlier period than mine. This chapter will show that the rise of Temne Islamic

⁶⁸ David Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone During the 19th Century* (University of California, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1971), p. 131. See his work on “Mande Settlement and the Development of Islamic Institutions in Sierra Leone” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11 (1978).

⁶⁹ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, p. 132.

influence was in line with the general rise of Temneness in the colony. It will point out that the Temne mosques went beyond teaching and spreading the Islamic faith alone. Rather these Islamic institutions hosted merchants and brokered marriages using Islamic customs and traditions.

Finally, this chapter examines the life, activities and role of Alhaji Gibril Sesay, described as Temne in press reports and in other historical records. Though a Temne, he was also an Islamic missionary and city counselor. A careful examination of his activities shows that he was influential within the Islamic community. In the 1950s, he established Islamic associations such as the Reformation Society and the Sierra Leone Pilgrims Association; he used these associations to train people described as Temne Muslims.⁷⁰ His life story shows the rising influence of a member of the Temne community within the Islamic community in the colony.

The contribution of non-creole women in the economy of the colony is examined in chapter five. It stresses that the local economy involved non-creoles such as Temne, Mende and others. The works of Denzer et al., as mentioned above focused much attention on the activities of Creole women. In addition to the works of Denzer and White, Adelaide Cromwell and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch have also examined the activities of women in colonial Freetown. Cromwell highlights the role women like Adelaide Casely Hayford played in giving women a voice. She points out that Casely Hayford was a successful woman who fought strenuously for the rights of all women

⁷⁰ *Membership and Contributors of the Reformation Society, Freetown, 1958* (Freetown: 1958), Sesay Private Papers. The Sesay Private Papers are hereafter abbreviated as S.P.P.

irrespective of their class or religious orientation.⁷¹ Though the work illuminates the activities of a successful feminist, the work is clearly the biography of a Creole woman. Cromwell fails to indicate whether women from other ethnic groups, particularly the Temne, played a part in the accomplishments of Casely Hayford as a feminist. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch's recent work on the agency of women merits attention as well. The big picture which emerges from her work is that the activities of feminists such as Cummings-John gave women a voice in politics from the late 1930s onwards.⁷² Her work falls within the category of scholarly works which give major agency to Creole women. It does not address the role of Mende, Limba, Mandingo and Temne women traders. More importantly, she ignores the role of non-creole women in King Jimmy, the Big Market, Dove Cut Markets, etc. How did these women develop the economy of these markets? In sum, the extant feminist literature has not fully integrated non-creole women as they should be. The chapter shows that Temne organized around their commercial institutions. They developed and participated in micro-credit schemes and turned out to be major suppliers of vegetables and other produce from the 1930s onwards. In addition, the chapter also highlights the biography of Haja Sukainatu Bangura. Her story indicates the success of a non-creole woman in giving illiterate women a voice. She was a social, religious and political activist. As an established business woman, she employed the services of many young Temne girls. She served as vice chair of the Sierra Leone Women's Movement in 1951. This suggests that though she was illiterate she interacted with feminist leaders such as Cummings-John and others. Her story illustrates that there

⁷¹ Adelaide Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Casely Hayford 1868-1960* (Washington: Howard University, 1992), pp.142-144.

⁷² Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 175.

was a powerful non-creole market woman whose voice has not been represented in the established literature.

Finally, the conclusion of this study will show that the rise of Temneness and its institutions in the post Second World War made the Temne socially, economically, politically and religiously influential in the Sierra Leone colony. These institutions clearly played a role in the social formation of colonial Freetown. It shows how and why Temne organized around various institutions such as tribal administration, cultural associations, and mosques. Though I have not provided a complete analysis of the role of non-creole historical actors, the study shows that there is a story to be told about the impact Temneness has on the history of the Sierra Leone colony. The study shows that to a very large extent the Temne acted as a group and they proved that contrary to the received wisdom, the Creole not only had company in many ways, but also that non-creole groups challenged their so called hegemony. This analysis of the rise of Temneness in colonial Freetown serves as a first step in narrating the role of indigenous ethnic groups in shaping the history of the colony. The next step should be to integrate these narratives into a bigger study.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE TEMNE TRIBAL AUTHORITY IN THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY, 1890-1961.

This chapter examines the history of tribal administration, particularly the Temne Tribal Authority, in the colony from 1890 to 1961. The chapter shows how the Temne organized around a particular symbol of authority and the role played by this authority in the rise of Temne influence from the 1940s onwards. This perspective is important because the history of local administration in the colony from the 1890s to 1961 should not be viewed through the lens of the Municipal Council alone as previous studies seem to suggest.

Sources show that Temne experienced a big wave of migration to the colony from 1890 to the mid 1940s. How did these migrants survive in colonial Freetown? The historical records reveal that the Temne Tribal Authority provided orientation and economic assistance to these migrants. What benefit did the Authority derive from its role in helping the migrants? Finally, why and how did the Temne organize around a political structure like the Temne Authority? With the introduction of constitutional reforms in Sierra Leone from the 1920s to 1940s, the Temne practically led an anti-creole coalition against Creole cultural arrogance and political ambitions.¹ How did this make Temneness influential in the Sierra Leone colony after the 1940s? These questions will be explored here.

Between 1890 and 1947, various groups described as Mandingos, Serakules, Fulas, and Susus migrated to the colony. The variables used in determining the identities

¹ See *Legislative Council Debates, No IV of Sessions 1947-1948* (Freetown: Government Printing Office), and *Legislative Council of Sierra Leone, Second Session, 1952-1953* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1953) and *SLWN*, August 1947 and *SLWN*, April 1948.

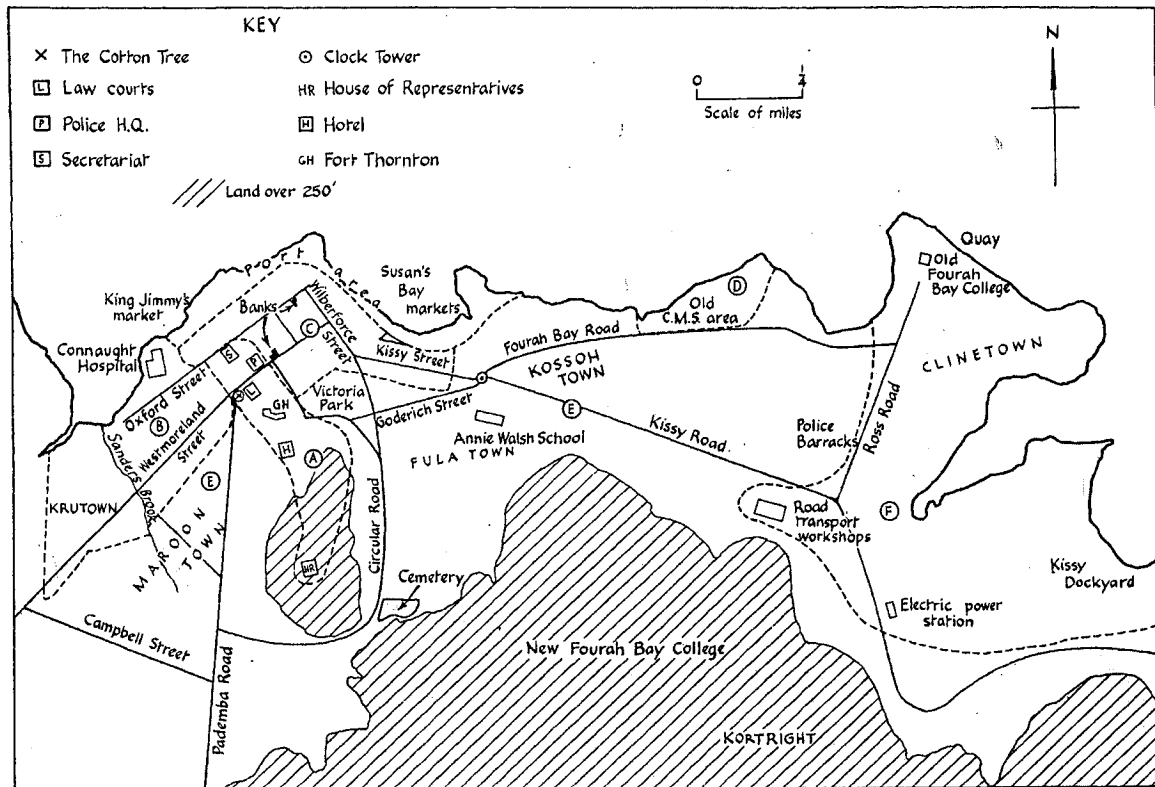
of these groups remain unclear, though Howard notes that with regards to the “Susu, Mandingo, Serakuli, and other Mande identities, communities, and institutions were generated in the capital of Sierra Leone [Freetown] during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through negotiations within communities, among communities, and between communities and the British authorities.”² Thus, Creoles and the disparate non-creole communities constituted the population of the colony. These communities occupied different sections; while the Creoles occupied the central and western parts including the peninsula towns, non-creoles such as the Temne, Mende, Limba, Mandingo, Fula and Loko occupied mainly the eastern and central sections. Temne and other non-creole community leaders resided in these areas, especially around Bambara Town, Susan’s Bay, Kissy village, Ro Kupr, Wellington, Waterloo, Hastings and Kissy Road.³ However, though Temne and others had a particularly strong presence in the east and central sections, they also settled in Adonkia, Leicester, Gloucester, Lakkah, etc.⁴ The map below gives a clear sense of the partition of the colony before independence in 1961.

² Allen M. Howard, “Mande Identity Formation in the Economic and Political Context of North-West Sierra Leone, 1750-1900” *Padeuma* 46 (2000), p. 14.

³ *SLWN*, September - November 1892. The paper contains reports about the different groups in the colony in their analysis about crimes in Freetown and its environs in the 19th century. See also Milton Harvey, “Implications of Migrations to Freetown: A Study of the Relationships Between Migrants, Housing and Occupation,” *Civilisations*, 18 2 (1968) and John I. Clarke, *Sierra Leone in Maps* (London: University of London, 1969).

⁴ Ernest G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years* (London: Cass Library of African Studies, 1968), pp. 5-15.

The Demographic Dynamic of Colonial Freetown⁵



The map above indicates the sections of the colony occupied by different communities before 1961. The dotted lines and the region marked "F" show areas with a dense population of Temne and other non-creole speaking groups. That is, the lines and the area marked "F" indicate towns in the east-central part of the colony while sections marked "A", "B", "C", "D," and "E" are areas with heavy Creole concentration. In Lord Hailey's report on the division of the colony, he notes that the indigenous people comprising the original inhabitants and owners of the land, the Temne, constituted a substantial portion of the population.⁶

⁵ K. G. Dalton, *A Geography of Sierra Leone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965), p.13.

⁶ Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British Territories* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951), p. 286.

As a matter of fact, between 1890 and 1892 migration from the Protectorate led to increased population growth among non-creole immigrants.⁷ Many of these migrants largely came from northern Sierra Leone, especially in Temne strongholds. Almost all of them were economic and political migrants in search of greener pastures.⁸ Thus, the population data of the colony indicates that from 1895 to 1901, Liberated Africans (Creoles) comprised 31, 907 of the population, “being a decrease of 2, 218 in the past ten years”; those listed as Temne constituted 5, 889, those described as Loko 717, Limbas 1, 056 and Mendes 3, 319 of the population.⁹ The increase in population of colony residents urged the government to rethink its administrative policy. Thus, in 1893, a Municipal Council was established which offered the Creoles an opportunity to administer their own affairs.¹⁰ Shortly after this, in 1895, the government recognized the necessity for tribal administration “to help in indirect administration to deal with matters outside the range of everyday administrative machinery; the better enforcement of law and order [in the colony].”¹¹ The Temne became one of the first non-creole groups to benefit from the new administrative policy when the government recognized Alimamy Bobo as their de facto tribal headman. Sources indicate that the numerical strength of the Temne may have influenced this decision by the colonial administration. It remains unclear the methods communities used to choose headmen at this time.

⁷ *SLWN*, January 1892.

⁸ Harvey, “Implications of Migrations to Freetown,” pp. 248-253. See also David Skinner, Barbara Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard, “A Profile of Urban Leaders in Freetown, Sierra Leone (1905-1945)” *Tarikh*, 7 1 (1981).

⁹ *SLWN*, January 4, 1902.

¹⁰ John D. Hargreaves, *A Life of Sir Samuel Lewis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 15-19.

¹¹ Michael Banton, *West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (London: Oxford University, 1953), p. 11.

The historical records indicate that the Temne population appeared to have been the only ethnic group which experienced a slight increase during the tenure of its newly recognized leader. While the Temne population stood at 13,370, by 1901 that of the Mende, Mandingo, Susu and Limba combined remained less than 14,000.¹² In fact, while the population of the Temne experienced a boost the Creole population suffered a slight decline.¹³ The criteria used by the compilers of this report in making such ethnic categories remain unclear. I assume they relied on the response of the people polled during their research. As Kuczynski argues about census taking in the British Empire, enumerators made basic assumptions about the people polled in their findings. In West Africa including Sierra Leone, census taking was difficult because of mass illiteracy which forced colonial officials to merely rely on linguistic factors to categorize people into ethnic boundaries.¹⁴ In the Sierra Leone colony, census officers in particular may have adopted the same tools used in other British colonies to identify Temne, Mende, Limba and others as Kuczynski argues. Clearly, the numbers outlined above show the numerical strength of the Temne which indicates the level of responsibilities of its tribal ruler.

The Temne community rallied around their newly recognized headman, who liaised between them and the government. As tribal headman, Bobo stood between the colonial administration and his community. He settled all “palavers” among them emanating from witchcraft and crimes of fornication and adultery in the various native

¹² C.S.O. *Sierra Leone Blue Book, 1901* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1901), p.1.

¹³ C.S.O. *Blue Book, 1901*, p.1.

¹⁴ R.R. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire* (London and New York: Oxford University, 1948), pp. 9-10.

courts he set up. This is because the colonial government did not have the resources and manpower to administer the various communities. More importantly, the colonial courts could not try cases that involved customary law. The government therefore gave Bobo a free hand in dealing with such matters among his people.¹⁵ He levied corporal punishment on defaulters and culprits. Usually when a complainant reported a matter of theft or abuse, he or she paid summons to the Tribal Headman. The feuding parties involved would attend court sessions until final arbitration of the matter. A culprit found guilty paid the court costs and other fines to the plaintiff. Appeals of such decisions could only be tolerated if Bobo did not adjudicate the matter himself.¹⁶ That is, in the event a disputant challenged the outcome of a decision reached in a lower court, the aggrieved party would appeal directly to Bobo.¹⁷ He presided over such appeal cases and his verdict was final.

Alimamy Momo succeeded Alimamy Bobo in 1895.¹⁸ Like his predecessor, Momo's responsibility included seeking and protecting the welfare of his Temne compatriots. He mediated between the colonial government and his subjects; i.e. he served as a mouthpiece of the government by conveying the orders of government to his people and he also conveyed Temne group needs to the colonial authorities. He assisted in enquiring into matters for the police when necessary and helped bring fugitives to

¹⁵ C.S.O. *Local Administration, Policies and Notes* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1940), p.12.

¹⁶ C.S.O. *Local Administration*, p.12.

¹⁷ C.S.O. *Local Administration*, p. 12.

¹⁸ T. J. Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony. Sierra Leone: As It Was, And As It Is, Its Progress, Peoples, Native Customs and Underdeveloped Wealth*. (London: Seeley, 1910), pp. 46-47.

justice.¹⁹ As Tribal Headman, Momo also coordinated inter-community and intra-community activities. In addition to this, he also protected the welfare of new Temne immigrants who needed help by providing them with temporary housing, employment and welfare for the unemployed.²⁰ For instance, in situations where a government agent needed laborers, guards or other labor-intensive jobs, the agent would contact Momo directly. On receipt of such requests, he recommended suitable candidates from among his community members. On other occasions, the headman approached government departments or private companies in search of jobs for his subjects.²¹ Momo also cared for the sick, the indigent and helpless. He made funeral arrangements for those who died destitute.

Because of the relative success of tribal administration, particularly among the Temne and other non-creoles, in 1905, the government enacted legislation to promote and enhance the system. The ordinance recognized the authority of tribal headmen in the colony noting:

When it is represented to the Governor by petition or other means that any tribe in Freetown possesses a recognized Chief, Alimamy, or Headman, who with other Headmen or representatives of the sections of the tribe, endeavours to enforce a system of tribal administration for the well-being of the members of the tribe, resident in or temporarily staying in Freetown, it shall be lawful for the Governor, subject to the provisions of sub-sections 2 and 3 hereof, to recognize such Chief, Alimamy, or Headman as the Tribal Ruler of such tribe for the purposes of this Ordinance.²²

¹⁹ Banton, *West African City*, pp. 16-17

²⁰ Barbara Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard and David Skinner, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801-1978)* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978), p. 195.

²¹ C.S.O. *Local Administration*, pp. 13-14.

²² C.S.O. *An Ordinance to Promote A System of Administration by Tribal Authority Among the Tribes Settled In Freetown, No. 19 of 1905* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1905), p. 1.

The ordinance officially recognized the title of Tribal Ruler for all heads of ethnic groups, a title which the Temne leader was already using. The ordinance made provision for Tribal Rulers to appoint their own administrative and political support staff. In 1906, the government promulgated another ordinance which conferred certain powers on the headmen of towns within the colony. In other words, the ordinance recognized the rights of inhabitants or tribesmen and women in peninsula towns or villages to elect their own tribal headmen. Since the Temne Tribal Ruler remained the overall head of the various Temne communities, Temne headmen in the various towns outside Freetown reported directly to him. The 1906 ordinance noted that:

It shall be lawful for a Headman, after consultation with the Committee, with the approval of the Governor from time to time to make, alter or rescind regulations requiring the residents in the town to perform certain work in or near the town on not more than eighteen days in any one year, and prescribing the manner in which such work is to be performed.²³

The ordinance also charged the headmen with the responsibility of collecting taxes and market dues and supervising the cleaning of cemeteries in their various communities. The headmen ensured proper maintenance of bridges, roads and streets, “when not repaired by the colonial government.”²⁴ They had authority to probe the cause of suspicious deaths within their jurisdictions through the institutions of commissions of inquiry.

The adoption of this ordinance gave some Temne Headmen in the rural towns the tools to assert their authority. In fact, some of these headmen asserted their authority beyond their jurisdictions. A case in point is Morlai Kamara, Temne Headman of Adonkia, outside Freetown. Kamara, apparently a junior chief to the Temne Tribal Ruler

²³ C.S.O. *An Ordinance to Confer Certain Powers on the Headmen of Towns in the Colony of Sierra Leone, No. 31 of 1906* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1906), pp. 1-2.

²⁴ C.S.O. *An Ordinance to Confer Certain Powers*, p. 2.

based in Freetown, moved swiftly after his appointment to assert his authority among his subjects. He passed the following regulation for all Temne and non-Temne residents of Adonkia: "All residents in the district of Adonkia who are not exempted as aforesaid shall, whenever called upon by the Headman or by any person be appointed by him for the purpose, [sic] perform work in such manner as may be directed by such Headman."²⁵ He stated further that residents should comply with directives that required their participation in "cleaning the Adonkia cemetery, in cleaning, maintaining, and repairing the streets in Adonkia and the public roads in the district other than the road maintained by the colonial government."²⁶ These responsibilities assumed by Kamara as headman of the Temne in Adonkia should be put in context. The fact that his responsibilities included maintaining and repairing the streets, cemeteries and bridges in his town shows his level of political responsibility. It is unclear how he generated funds to meet these responsibilities. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the regulations Kamara proclaimed for the Adonkia township did not target the Temne community alone (his principal subjects), but that the regulations also affected non-Temne residents. The Temne population in Adonkia comprised 2,137 while that of the Mende, Mandingo and Limba stood below one thousand.²⁷ Clearly, Kamara dealt with a very diverse group of subjects. The point to

²⁵ C.S.O. *Regulation Made By the Headman of Adonkia Under Section 4 of "the Headman Ordinance 1905"* (No. 38 of 1906) (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1906), pp.2-4. According to Christopher Fyfe, the Temne heavily populated Adonkia in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Bullom originally occupied it before the Temne dislodged and possibly assimilated them. The Temne eventually assumed control of the settlement in the 18th century. Adonkia later turned out to be a lucrative fishing community.

²⁶ C.S.O. *Regulation by Headman*.

²⁷ C.S.O. *Sierra Leone Blue Book, 1911* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1914), p.1. This document contains a record of census reports from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The same is true for the census reports of 1921 which has records of earlier census reports.

note here is that the goal of the colonial government aimed at encouraging tribal leadership in the colony. The above suggests that the government may have permitted the Temne headman to locally administer non-Temne subjects as shown in the Adonkia situation, originally a Bullom-controlled territory.²⁸ The historical records indicate that non-Temne who lived in Adonkia did not protest the powers assumed by Morlai Kamara, particularly when the colonial administration recognized his headship.²⁹ A similar trend prevailed in Waterloo in 1911. Here, the Creoles comprised 6,573 of the population while those registered as Temne numbered 5,916. The population of Mende, Limba, Loko and Mandingos stood slightly above 6000 in total.³⁰ Though the Temne headman did not serve as overlord here, he adjudicated cases for Loko, Mende and Limba ethnic communities. In short, like Adonkia, the Temne headman adjudicated cases from non-Temne complainants in Waterloo.³¹ His administrative staff included junior officials notably, the *Pa Rok*, deputy headman, and *Ya Bom*, the senior wife of the headman, and a court messenger. The headman served as the chief justice in the local court but his decisions could be appealed; i.e. litigants dissatisfied with the decision of the headman reserved the right to lodge an appeal with the Tribal Ruler in Freetown. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Tribal Ruler would send his personal assistant or *Pa Kombrabai* to resolve the dispute.³² If the envoy could not resolve the dispute the Tribal Ruler in Freetown would rule on the matter based on the facts before him. In addition to the Temne local administration, the Creoles maintained a separate local administration in Waterloo. In

²⁸ Fyfe, *A History*, pp. 445-450.

²⁹ C.S.O. *Regulation by Headman*, p. 2.

³⁰ C.S.O. *Blue Book, 1911*, p. 2.

³¹ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration*, pp. 6-8.

³² C.S.O. *Local Administration*.

fact, like non-creole groups, the Creoles in Waterloo took complaints and concerns to a “headman.”³³ However, the point to note here is that two local administrative systems apparently operated in Waterloo. While the Temne headman served the Temne, Mende and Loko communities, the head of the Creole community served his own subjects. It is clear from the historical records that non-creole groups including the Temne did not report cases to the Creole headman and vice versa. It can be argued that this function performed by the Temne headman and his colleagues gave non-creoles an alternate system of justice in Waterloo.

When the 1905 and 1906 ordinances came into effect, Alimamy Momo Kamara served as the Temne Tribal Ruler. The colonial commissioner of police, who held Kamara in high esteem, supported Kamara’s appointment. In heaping encomiums on Kamara in a memo sent to the governor, the Commissioner noted that:

I am of the opinion that Momo Kamara is well qualified to act as [Tribal Ruler] of the Temne in Freetown. I have personally known him for many years, and can testify to his ability and intelligence, [sic] I have always found him loyal to the government; he has great influence among his people and is firm with them.³⁴

The variables used by the Commissioner to determine the accurate identity of Kamara as a Temne are not clear. It is possible that he relied on the fact that no one objected to or challenged Kamara’s candidacy for the position. The government gazetted his appointment in 1906.³⁵ In 1908, the Loko community had no Tribal Ruler; the colonial administration delegated authority to Kamara to oversee and coordinate their affairs.³⁶ Thus, Kamara had the responsibility of resolving disputes among the Loko. In fact, Loko

³³ C.S.O. *Local Administration in Waterloo District*, MP 234/18 PC 22 1/18 112/10 (Freetown, 1911).

³⁴ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration*, p.8.

³⁵ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration*, p. 8.

³⁶ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration*, p. 8.

chiefs outside the colony frequently referred contentious issues which ensued among them to Kamara in Freetown for adjudication. Many Loko disputants accepted his rulings as final.³⁷ In fact, after the election of a Loko headman in 1908, Loko subjects continued to refer some disputes to Kamara. Shortly after the election of a Loko headman, some members of the ethnic group made representation to the governor requesting him to subsume the position of the Loko headman, Kangbe Sesay under the Temne Authority. The colonial government discouraged the idea and advised them to respect the legitimacy of their leader.³⁸ To have allowed an elected official to serve as a deputy to a leader of another community would have set a bad precedent. Based on the advice of the governor, Kamara ceased to receive complaints from the Loko community. Why did the Colonial government choose the Temne Tribal Ruler to rule over the Loko and not the Creole-dominated Municipal Council? The above suggests that the alternative administrative system at least met its intended goal as outlined above. In all, it shows that the Creole municipal council did not wield absolute influence; i.e. local administration in the colony was not only in the hands of the colonial authorities or the Creoles. Clearly, the Temne shared part of this responsibility. It is also likely that the colonial government encouraged an alternate system of local administration to limit or contain Creole rule. Irrespective of the motivation of the colonial government in encouraging tribal administration, we see clearly that the Temne Authority played a role in the governance of the colony.

As a matter of fact, the Temne Tribal Authority handled many civil and criminal cases that would have otherwise been directed to the law courts- an exercise which may have been a drain on the resources of the colonial government. I am not arguing here that

³⁷ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration*, pp. 8-9.

³⁸ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration*, pp. 8-9.

civil and criminal cases from the Temne communities did not reach the judiciary in colonial Freetown. My point is that the historical records indicate that non-creole groups and other residents had an avenue to lodge complaints with their community leaders or Headmen other than with the colonial establishment. As a result, the colonial courts or institutions designed for this were spared cases from residents and immigrants. Therefore, the role of Tribal Rulers and their colleagues who dealt with such matters should not be glossed over. In his analysis of the development of Freetown society, Porter did not address questions relating to the role of community leaders. He focused on other mechanisms of power and success such as attainment of Western education without indicating whether other mechanisms existed. In sum, tribal structures served the needs of non-creole groups as the municipal council served the Creoles. The Temne Authority in particular played an active role in this.

Part of the responsibility of the Temne Authority included informing the government on the death of any of its subjects. The Tribal Ruler facilitated commercial activities among his people; i.e. he coordinated trade transactions between his subjects and traders from the hinterland who identified themselves as Temne. He collected taxes from them and used these funds to help sustain the Temne Authority.³⁹ Allen Howard has argued that many traders who anchored at Susan's Bay in Freetown, a commercial center, spoke Temne and Bullom.⁴⁰ He posits that many of the commodities transported to Freetown which supported its economic foundation largely came from Temne dominated areas in the hinterland: "For example in 1885 a member of the chiefly family in Tane,

³⁹ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, Freetown, November 2003. See Appendix 12.

⁴⁰ Allen Howard, "Contesting Commercial Space in Freetown, 1869-1930: Traders, Merchants and Officials" *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 37 (2003), p. 260.

Bombali, led seven canoes down the river Rokel, reportedly carrying 500 bushels of palm nuts plus other produce; he exchanged them in a river factory... and went to Freetown with £ 90, to buy tobacco.”⁴¹ The Temne section chief, *Bom Wara*, based at the Susan Bay ensured that traders from the hinterland played by established trade rules and reported cases of theft to her and her subordinates.

Alimamy Sillah succeeded Momo Kamara as Temne Tribal Ruler in 1911. During the Sillah administration, the Temne population rose to 13, 370 while the population of the Mandingo, Mende, Limba, and Loko remained below eleven thousand in total.⁴² With a rise in Temne population Sillah’s responsibilities increased since he supposedly had many people to control or administer. His responsibilities did not only include overseeing the welfare of Temne subjects, but also assisting the colonial government team in supervising appointments of Temne headmen. In one instance in which Temne parties quarreled over election results in Waterloo in 1911, the Commissioner of Police in Freetown specifically asked Sillah to help settle the dispute. In his correspondence to the District Commissioner based in Waterloo, Williams notes: “Alimamy Sillah is the Timinee [sic] Chief in Freetown and is asked to settle a dispute at Waterloo which seems only natural as evidently they cannot settle it themselves.”⁴³ Sillah and a number of section chiefs visited Waterloo to resolve the problem. After meeting with the Acting District Commissioner, Major R.H. K. Williams, and the contending parties, Sillah and

⁴¹ Allen Howard, “The Role of Freetown in the Commercial Life of Sierra Leone” in Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds., *Freetown: A Symposium* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1968), p. 43. Bombali is the headquarter district of the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. It was and continues to be a Temne stronghold.

⁴² C.S.O. *Report and Summary of the Census of 1921* (London: Waterloo and Sons Limited, 1922), p. 10.

⁴³ C.S.O. *Commissioner of Police to District Commissioner, Head Quarter District, Waterloo*, MP/F No. 238, 1911 (Freetown: 1911).

his delegation declared Alimamy Turay Temne Headman of Waterloo which all parties to the conflict accepted.⁴⁴ This responsibility given to Sillah by the Police Commissioner speaks to the broader issue of the role the Temne Tribal Ruler played as the overall head of the Temne in the colony. The evidence above indicates that the British colonial government respected the ability of the Tribal Ruler to handle contentious issues from their subjects. Sillah's resolution of the Waterloo dispute speaks to the bigger issue of maintaining social order in urban settings. As Banton argues: "were it not for the controlling influence of the Tribal Headmen, [disputes] would be more frequent and the accompanying social disorder greater."⁴⁵ In short, the role of the Temne Ruler illustrates that the Temne recognized a symbol of authority.

Before his death, Sillah expanded the legacy of his predecessor, Momo Kamara, who had started building a Temne mosque in the east of Freetown in 1902. Sillah improved and expanded the mosque though he did not complete it before his passing.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, many Temne Muslim worshippers used the incomplete mosque as a place of worship until the community erected a final structure. In fact, after the 1940s Temne owned and controlled a bigger number of mosques than other non-creole groups. These mosques served different functions for them ranging from a place of worship to commercial centers and wedding venues. The symbolic and practical importance of the Temne mosques is analyzed in chapter four.

⁴⁴ *SLWN*, August, 1911. See also, C.S.O. *Appointment of Kandeh as Timni Alikali of Waterloo*, MP 1681/21 LM 34 3/11 109/23 (Freetown, 1911).

⁴⁵ Banton, *West African City*, p. 150.

⁴⁶ Harrell-Bond, et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 131.

Alimamy Suri succeeded Sillah in 1919.⁴⁷ In 1923, the colonial administration asked Suri to supervise the process of choosing a Temne headman in Waterloo and the surrounding areas; Waterloo served as the district headquarters for its surrounding townships. When a dispute arose among the Temne community here, “Governor Rowe first asked the Timne [sic] Tribal Ruler of Freetown to go to Waterloo and assist the people of the town to become unanimous as to the selection of a Tribal Ruler.”⁴⁸ The election in Waterloo, fraught with bickering over identity, is one case where one party disputed the Temneness of another; i.e. the contestants traded accusations about their true Temne identity.⁴⁹ However, the colonial administration, concerned about the dispute, asked the Tribal Ruler in Freetown to mediate. It should be noted that the position of Temne headman in Waterloo as noted earlier carried some clout among its subjects and non-Temne community members. The headman presided over the local courts here and had the right to punish and fine culprits. The revenue generated out of these fines supported and sustained the Temne administrative structure. The Temne Authority also paid part of the honorarium of the headman. The intervention of Suri saved the day. The minutes in the Colonial Secretary’s Office indicate that violence almost ensued among the contending parties during the election. After extensive deliberation with the feuding parties, Suri declared one of the candidates, Alimamy Lamina, the winner of the election. He informed the colonial authorities in Freetown after all sides accepted the decision. The government and the Temne Authority thus officially proclaimed Lamina headman of

⁴⁷ C.S.O. *Alimamy Suri, Tribal Ruler of the Timnies*, Minute Paper 107/2211/1923 (Freetown: 1923)

⁴⁸ C.S.O. *Tribal Ruler of the Timnies*, p. 10.

⁴⁹ C.S.O. *Tribal Ruler of the Timnies*, pp. 10-11.

Waterloo.⁵⁰ However, it remains unclear the criteria used to resolve the dispute over identity, i.e. how the authorities established the Temneness of the parties. Since the colonial administration and the Temne Authority upheld Lamina's appointment, we can assume that his Temneness might have been imposed or accepted. Also, Suri might have convinced the government that the selected candidate had the ability to maintain law and order. Nonetheless, it is clear that the institution of tribal administration worked; the government relied on the services of the Temne community leader to resolve disputes it probably perceived as customary and traditional.

Suri's responsibilities continued to grow as the population of his subjects climbed. The census report of 1921 speaks to this. The report notes that "the Temnes are the most populous of the tribes in the colony; their population rose from 13, 370 to 18, 8843.... That the native of the colony, or Creole, is slowly but steadily decreasing in numbers cannot be gainsaid."⁵¹ In other words, while the Temne experienced an increase in population, the numerical strength of the Creole declined from 31, 078 in 1911, to 28, 222 in 1921.⁵² It is unclear whether an increased birth rate triggered the upsurge in Temne population at this time. However, migration played some role in this. Many of the immigrants from northern Sierra Leone in the 1920s onwards identified themselves as Temne.⁵³ Banton has argued that because the Temne local administration had more clout than the other tribal establishments, those who identified themselves as Temne subjects enjoyed some economic benefits. In addition, the Temne Authority helped its immigrants reorient themselves and helped prevent their exploitation in an urban environment. For

⁵⁰ C.S.O. *Tribal Ruler of the Timnies*, p. 10.

⁵¹ C.S.O. *Report and Summary of Census, 1921*, p. 11.

⁵² C.S.O. *Report and Summary of Census, 1921*, pp. 10-11.

⁵³ *The West African Mail and Trade Gazette*, January 2, 1926.

instance, the *Bom Wara* in Kroo Bay and Susan Bay who represented the Temne leader ensured that Temne traders received protection from her office during crisis moments. When traders from the Protectorate anchored in any of these sites, they reported to her. She would tax their goods and offered options for accommodation to them.⁵⁴ Sub chiefs from other communities carried out such duties of protecting their traders on arrival in Freetown.⁵⁵ But it is unclear whether non-Temne communities had sub chiefs stationed at Susan Bay or Kroo Bay in particular, which served as major ports of entry for traders from Temne strongholds in the Protectorate. The benefits of displaying Temneness, not least by migrants may have influenced the rise in Temne population at this time.

The 1905 and 1906 Ordinances continued to be the legal bases on which Tribal Rulers assumed their powers until 1925 when the government enacted new legislation which revised their duties and functions: "All members of the Temne Tribe resident in Freetown shall be subject to the Tribal Ruler of the Temne Tribe. Every member of the Temne Tribe arriving in Freetown from the Protectorate or elsewhere shall within seven days report his arrival to the Ruler."⁵⁶ What is new in the new legislation is the requirement of migrants to report to the Temne Authority within seven days of their arrival. In addition to this, the legislation further required that Protectorate migrants should obtain authorization in the form of passes to come to the colony after 1925. Apparently, migrants who failed to report to the appropriate authorities faced penalties.

⁵⁴ Hassan Kamara, "Temne and Their Chiefs" (Freetown: 1976); this is an unpublished typescript sold in Freetown by the author himself. Kamara was a radio commentator on Temne issues at the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation. He is widely perceived as an organic historian. See appendix 20.

⁵⁵ Banton, *West African City*, p. 160.

⁵⁶ C.S.O. *The Laws of the Colony*, p. 560.

Clearly, this definitive power given to the Temne Ruler and others illustrate the fact that the local administrative structures in colonial Freetown worked.

With the enactment of the 1925 legislation Alimamy Koroma became the Temne Tribal Ruler.⁵⁷ He adjudicated cases which involved property relations such as indebtedness, pawning of property by a Temne to another Temne or non-Temne community member, etc. He had authority to convene general meetings of his community when he deemed fit. Koroma generated funds in diverse ways to facilitate the work of his Authority. He ensured that members officially recognized by the Temne Authority paid a monthly subscription. The Authority lodged all revenues it generated in an account with the "Post Office Savings Bank in the names of the Tribal Ruler and two principal headmen."⁵⁸ The right to disburse such funds for the welfare of its subjects rested with the Authority and two principal signatories, usually two headmen.⁵⁹ Disbursement of funds occurred in cases that included, among others: "relief of the poor and sick; burial of the poor having no relatives at time of death; [and] relief of any member of the Temne Tribe in distress."⁶⁰

Because of the provision of the 1925 legislation Koroma constantly kept tabs on new Temne migrants. A careful examination of the content of the 1925 legislation reveals that the Temne wielded more powers than other ethnic groups because of their size.⁶¹ The 1925 legislation also required that Temne migrants who wished to be employed in Freetown had to receive prior permission from the Tribal Ruler whose responsibilities

⁵⁷ Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, Appendix 1

⁵⁸ C.S.O. *Laws of the Colony and Protectorate*, p. 561.

⁵⁹ C.S.O. *Laws of the Colony and Protectorate*, pp. 561-562.

⁶⁰ C.S.O. *Laws of the Colony and Protectorate*, p. 561.

⁶¹ C.S.O. *The Laws of the Colony*, pp. 565-567

included accommodating unemployed migrants for a period of time.⁶² On the expiration of their so-called period of stay, the ruler should ensure their return to the Protectorate.⁶³ The colonial administration made it explicit that these rules should be obeyed by all members of the Temne ethnic group: “Any member of the Temne Tribe who contravenes any of the foregoing sections shall pay to the Tribal Ruler such penalty, not exceeding five pounds, as may be adjudged by the Temne Ruler.”⁶⁴

As mentioned earlier, Temne migration increased steadily after 1925 as many more of them “participated in Freetown-based trade in bulky products and foods than did members of other groups.”⁶⁵ Also, many Temne worked as unskilled laborers in many households. Between 1923 and 1927 the Temne formed the bulk of the Police Force, constituting about 31% while the Creole and the Mende comprised 4% and 16% respectively.⁶⁶ Paramount Chiefs in the hinterland petitioned the colonial administration complaining about the rapid rate at which their inhabitants migrated to Freetown. In noting this phenomenon, Anne Phillips claims that the mass exodus of their laborers dismayed the chiefs “and caused consternation to the Sierra Leone government which found itself with stagnant production in the Protectorate and a swollen city in Freetown.”⁶⁷ The objection from chiefs notwithstanding, a “Mendi or Timani will produce a bigger profit if he leaves the Sierra Leone Protectorate for regular work [in

⁶² C.S.O. *Laws of the Colony and Protectorate*, p. 562.

⁶³ Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 143.

⁶⁴ C.S.O. *The Laws of the Colony*, p. 562.

⁶⁵ Barbara Harrell-Bond, Allen Howard, David Skinner, *Community Leadership*, p. 77.

⁶⁶ C.S.O. *Employment and Administrative Report, 1923*. (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1924), pp. 1-6.

⁶⁷ Anne Phillips, *The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University, 1989), p. 34.

Freetown] than if he remains in it to cultivate the soil.”⁶⁸ Clearly Temne migrants preferred to live in the city rather than in the Protectorate because they gained certain material advantages such as access to trade, access to adjudication mechanisms and access to urban status.

Momo Tanka temporarily succeeded Alimamy Koroma in 1942; his tenure lasted for two years; Kande Bureh succeeded him as Temne Tribal Ruler in 1944. Bureh obtained “an influence far greater than that of any of his predecessors although they had wider legal powers.”⁶⁹ Bureh’s tenure as Temne Ruler gave the Temne community great socio-political influence. As the first literate Temne chief, he expanded the structure of his administration and increased the powers of women.⁷⁰ Bureh divided Freetown into seven sections which he placed under male and female sub-chiefs. That is, he placed each section under an *Alikali* and *Bom Wara*. The *Alikali* headed the first section assisted by the *Bom Wara*, who took full control of the affairs of that section in the absence of the *Alikali*. While Pa Alimamy headed the second section assisted by his most senior wife, Ya Bom Posseh, Pa Santigi headed the third section also assisted by his female counterpart Bom Kapr.⁷¹ Other Alikalies and Santigies headed the fourth and fifth sections while female chiefs headed the sixth and seventh sections.⁷² All section chiefs took instructions from Bureh and reported directly to him. He charged them with the basic duties of settling disputes among Temne community members in their various sections, such as ill-treatment of women by their husbands, seduction, impotence and

⁶⁸ Philips, *Enigma of Colonialism*, p. 35.

⁶⁹ Banton, *West African City*, p. 160.

⁷⁰ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, Freetown, November 3, 2003.

⁷¹ Banton, *West African City*, p. 151.

⁷² Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, Freetown, November 3, 2003.

desertion of wives from cruel husbands and the right to levy fines on convicts. They also collected monthly dues as an income generating measure to help the Authority function effectively. The Authority deposited such income in a special fund. Critics of the Authority complained to the colonial government about the financial activities of the Temne Ruler. The government, however, rebuffed the complaint:

With reference to all the allegation that he [Kande Bureh] charges fees in court, the Tribal Headman is fully justified in acting as arbitrator in matters of purely native customs although he has not been granted by law powers to enforce decisions which are the sole duty of the Magistrate Courts. If, however, the Temne people wish to place such affairs in the hands of the Tribal Headman, the customary expenses have to [be] borne by those concerned.⁷³

The above suggests that the government had great confidence in the Temne administration.

As Temne Ruler, Bureh had broad functions. He presided over serious cases dealing with intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts. These disputes included conflict among community leaders, kinship relations, conflicts over debt repayment and conflicts between Temne and other ethnic groups. As the final court of appeal, litigants dissatisfied with the outcome of cases adjudicated by section chiefs in lower courts could appeal to him directly; he reserved the right to revise rulings from such courts.⁷⁴ Bureh served as the link between the Temne community in the colony and those in the Protectorate. On numerous occasions, he participated in the election and crowning of Temne Paramount chiefs in the Protectorate. He seemed to have performed this role to the satisfaction of the government although his critics complained that he used their tax monies to foot

⁷³ C.S.O. *Complaints against the Temne Tribal Headman*, T2/6/5, MP 1158/1/1/16, 4/10/49 (Freetown: 1949).

⁷⁴ Interview, Mohamed Sorie Kamara and Ambassador Conteh, Freetown, November 2, 2003. I interviewed both informants separately. See appendices 22 and 7.

expenses incurred from personal trips. In response to one such complaint directed at him in 1949, the government rose to his defense:

With regards to the allegation that the Tribal Headman [Kande Bureh] demanded money for making visits to the Protectorate, the only journey to which you refer is that to Kambia As no complaint was made at the time, His Excellency cannot but feel that it was regarded at that as a reasonable contribution by the Temne Community for expenses into the Protectorate to take part in the crowning of a Temne Chief.⁷⁵

Apart from participating in coronation ceremonies in the Protectorate, when Temne chiefs visited Freetown either for business or official assignments, Bureh accommodated and entertained them. Using the funds from the Temne Authority, he undertook educational projects for his community. In 1949, he established an evening school for Temne adults and children; English and Arithmetic formed the core of the school's curriculum.⁷⁶ Bureh also used his position to reduce inter- community ethnic conflicts. As leader of the largest non-creole community, he "vigorously championed the rights of Protectorate peoples in the Colony."⁷⁷ His reputation as an intelligent and dour administrator attracted praise in newspapers. Bamikole Sawyer, apparently a Creole, noted: "The Tribal Headman of the Temnies [sic] is one of the progressive educated representatives of the indigenous natives of this country."⁷⁸

Clearly, at this time, i.e. after 1945, through its numerous activities, the Temne local administration had increased its standing in colonial Freetown. The community rallied around this structure by cooperating, to a large extent, with the demands of the

⁷⁵ C.S.O. *Complaint*, T2/6/5, MP 1158/1/1/16, 4/10/49, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁶ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, Lamin Kamara and Santigie Turay, Freetown, November 3, 2003. I interviewed all three separately. All claimed to have attended this evening school. See appendices 12, 21 and 29.

⁷⁷ Barbara Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p.199.

⁷⁸ *The African Standard*, August 1949.

Authority through the payment of taxes on a fairly regular basis, and obeying its customary laws, etc. Senior officials of the Authority also appealed beyond their base by participating in inter-community events. In 1946, at a ceremony marking the establishment of a multi-ethnic association, the Muslim Association, the Temne Authority donated £11.00 “on behalf of the Temne tribe.”⁷⁹ The membership of the association included Ahmed Alhadi, an Aku and Registrar of the High Court of Sierra Leone, I.B. Sanusi also an Aku and Justice of the Peace, the Creole Metcalfe Cole, a Councilor and G. Spillsbury, a legal counsel.⁸⁰ The aim of the association included the need “to serve Sierra Leone by opening to the children of Sierra Leone a sound training in Arabic, English, etc. so that they could organize their own people in the manner the prophet of Islam has prescribed.”⁸¹ Shortly after its establishment, the association opened its first school. Bureh chaired the launching of the school and his performance drew this editorial reaction from the *Weekly News*: “Kande Bureh [,] who might be regarded as typical of the progressive elements in Freetown and of the Temnes whose Tribal Head in Freetown he is, held the audience by his flow of eloquence and the aptness of his illustrations.”⁸² Bureh regularly acted as chair of the association during meetings.⁸³ The conclusion one can draw from the above is that the Temne community and its local administrative structure did not restrict its activities within the Temne community alone: they also participated in national affairs.

⁷⁹ *SLWN*, March 1946.

⁸⁰ *SLWN*, November, 1946.

⁸¹ *SLWN*, March, 1946.

⁸² *SLWN*, March, 1946.

⁸³ *SLWN*, November, 1946.

In 1947, Governor Stevenson proposed changes to the 1924 constitution; he recommended expansion of the legislative and executive councils. The proposals drew the ire of Creole politicians who opposed any idea that gave non-creoles political power.⁸⁴ Consequently, a sharp division emerged between the Creole and non-creole communities. With such political divisions two Aku leaders, Ahmed Alhadi and Honourable Abdulie, approached Kande Bureh, the Temne Ruler, to form a neutral organization that would bridge the sharp divide between the two sides. The group thus launched the East End Political Group.⁸⁵ Bureh served as its chairman. At the group's first meeting, chairman Bureh noted that the issue of the "re-constituted legislative council and the building of a Community Center for the East Ward was to be resolved by all means necessary."⁸⁶ He promised to do his best to reconcile the two communities, i.e. the Creoles and non-creoles. It can be argued that such a prominent role played by the Temne Ruler in national affairs shows the rise of Temne influence in colonial Freetown. The fact that a solicitor and Justice of the Peace would ask him to help resolve the political stalemate between the feuding parties indicates the growing influence of the Temne. It is apparent that the local administrative structure of the Temne played a role in this growing influence. The group could have chosen the leader of the Mandingo community to head it. Sources show that the East End Group did not fully resolve the impasse but made impressive headway. The formation of the group proved to be a big step in fostering inter-community cooperation over political disputes by prominent political actors and the leader of the Temne community was clearly part of this process.

⁸⁴ *SLWN*, August 1950

⁸⁵ *SLWN*, June 1948. Ahmed Alhadi was a Registrar of the High Court and Justice of the Peace in colonial Freetown. Mr. Abdulie was a solicitor.

⁸⁶ *SLWN*, June, 1948.

With growing Creole opposition to the proposed constitutional changes, the Temne, Mende and other non-creole groups formed a coalition to counter what they perceived as Creole vacuous obduracy. To strength their unity, the Creoles formed the National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL) which served as a mouth-piece for their political course. In response, the Mende, Temne, and others formed the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) “to meet the immediate need for an unofficial African majority in the legislative and executive councils.”⁸⁷ In all this, the Temne Tribal Ruler played a central role in consolidating support for the SLPP among non-Creole communities. A correspondent in *West Africa* summarized the strength of the head of the Temne Authority: “Kande Bureh has two strongholds: East Freetown where he is the idol of the illiterate, and a fair tract of the Northern Province. He has a strong appeal to ‘poor boys.’ If there should be real popularity for the United Front he is necessary.”⁸⁸ The two sides launched stinging broadsides against one another. The leader of the Creole party, Dr. Hubert Bankole-Bright noted that:

The Protectorate came into being after the butchering and massacre of some of our Fathers and Grandfathers and their blood streamed in the streets of Mendi [sic] Land because they were described as black English Men... and after only fifty years of their treacherous and villainous act Loyal Sierra Leone is asked by the British Government to vacate her seats in their British Legislature (this is what it tantamounts to) [sic] for the descendants of the murderers of our ancestors.⁸⁹

Clearly, the Creole wanted no compromise as they continued to attack the proposals and the backwardness of non-creoles. Ahmed Alhadi, who had asked Bureh earlier to work out a compromise on the proposed constitution, joined forces with his Creole colleagues. In a pamphlet published in 1956, he notes: “the 1951 constitution is repugnant to the laws

⁸⁷ *West Africa*, June, 11, 1960.

⁸⁸ *West Africa*, June 25, 1960.

⁸⁹ *SLWN*, August, 1950

of England and contrary to what the Free Settlers were led to expect when they laid down their lives for the British people. In fact [,] the 1951 constitution is stock-in-trade to convert Sierra Leone to another Palestine.”⁹⁰ In responding to these attacks, the leader of the non-creole group, Sir Milton Margai, used an asset the Temne had always deployed against Creole arrogance. That is, Sir Milton used Temne claims to counter unflinching Creole verbal attacks by describing them as: “a handful of foreigners ... that our forefathers had given shelter... who have no will to cooperate with us and imagine themselves to be our superiors because they are aping the Western mode of living.”⁹¹ The reference to “forefathers” argues the case of the treaty signed between the Temne and the British philanthropists in 1787 as noted in chapter one. The Temne have always deployed such inflammatory rhetoric whenever they clashed with Creole politicians. Sir Milton Margai used it as a weapon in his confrontation with Bankole-Bright.

In addition to the above, Temneness proved to be a political instrument used by Creole activists, particularly in pursuit of a course of action. When the Creole Isaac Wallace-Johnson formed his National Youth League in 1939, he used a Temne slogan to garner grassroots and general support. Blyden notes: “for the first time in the country’s long history, all of the people were literally brought together under a common slogan SABARNOH[,] (a Temne language term meaning, DIS KONTRI NA WE YONE (Krio) or this land belongs to us, the people.”⁹² Obviously, Wallace-Johnson intended to show that though a Creole, he could reach out to all and sundry. By using a phrase which the

⁹⁰ Ahmed Alhadi, “The Re-Emancipation of the Colony of Sierra Leone” (Freetown: 1956), p.2.

⁹¹ Quoted in Gershon Collier, *Sierra Leone: Experiment in a Democracy in an African Nation* (New York: New York University, 1970), p. 15.

⁹² Edward Blyden III, *Sierra Leone: The Pattern of Constitutional Change, 1924-1951* (Harvard University, PhD Dissertation, 1959), p. 168.

Temne used quite often to show their ownership of Freetown, he indicates that his youth league embraced Creole and non-creole communities. Certainly, one can argue that this recognition of Temneness at this time may have been influenced by the strength of Temne institutions, not least the Temne Authority.

Apart from the fact that Bureh helped found the SLPP in 1951, the government also utilized his services in 1955 during a nation-wide strike. In 1955, the Secretary-General of the Artisans Workers Union, Marcus Grant, demanded a pay increase from the government. The failure of the government to honor such demands resulted in an industrial action that later culminated into a nationwide riot.⁹³ The riots spread to the Protectorate, taking a particularly violent turn by the time the government quelled them.⁹⁴ In Freetown, the government failed to persuade the workers to resume work. The failure of talks between the government and the workers forced it to constitute a conciliatory committee which included Kande Bureh and A.B. Magba Kamara to convince Marcus Grant to call off the strike.⁹⁵ Why did the government believe in Bureh and Kamara, both non-creoles, to convince the head of a creole-dominated union of workers? An examination of the historical records reveals that as head of the Temne Tribal Authority, the largest non-creole establishment, and a founding member of the ruling SLPP, and because of Kamara's link with the ex-service men's union, both men seemingly had the gravitas to prevail on Grant. Grant proved to be a hard nut to crack at his initial meetings with the two men. The government then asked Bureh and Kamara to appeal to the

⁹³ *Daily Mail*, April 1955.

⁹⁴ *The African Vanguard*, February 1955.

⁹⁵ C.S.O. *Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Strike and Riots in Freetown, Sierra Leone During February 1955*. (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 29-30.

workers directly to end the strike.⁹⁶ My informants stressed that the government provided logistical support to Bureh so he could face the striking workers directly. Using a government vehicle he visited many Temne and non-Temne households in the east of Freetown to persuade them to discontinue their strike action and cast aspersions on the motive of Grant and his executive. He also visited Creole communities but changed his tune advocating instead unity behind the newly installed African-led government. Apparently, the government employed the tactic of getting Bureh involved to undermine the efficacy of the strike. One of my informants, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, emphasized that he was one of the striking workers; he noted that when chief Bureh addressed them to resume work they willingly did so.⁹⁷ Finally Grant, Bureh and Magba Kamara convened a meeting of the striking workers to address them. When the meeting commenced “at the Queen Elizabeth II playing Fields, it was addressed by Marcus Grant, the Honourable Mr. Beoku-Betts, and Chief Kande Bureh, in that order. The initiative taken in this matter by the Honourable Mr. Beoku-Betts, Mr. Magba Kamara and Chief Kande Bureh was public spirited and praiseworthy.”⁹⁸ After the meeting, the workers accepted the plea of Bureh and other members of the conciliation committee to resume work. Chief Gbonko related that Grant eventually agreed to a joint meeting with Bureh and Magba Kamara because the strikers were losing steam and wanted to save face. Notwithstanding this, clearly Bureh’s influence in the colony came about as a result of his position as Headman of the

⁹⁶ C.S.O. *Proceedings of a Commission of Inquiry into the Freetown Strike and Riots in February 1955*. (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 3-6.

⁹⁷ Interview, Chief Gbonko, Freetown, November 2, 2003. Hajj Bangurah corroborated this information and noted that he empathized with the workers as a private citizen. He claimed to have attended some of the meetings convened by Bureh and others to undermine the strike.

⁹⁸ C.S.O. *Report of Commission of Inquiry*, p. 31. See also *The African Vanguard*, February 1955.

Temne Tribal Authority. The use of his services as leader of the Temne community Bureh shows the importance of Temneness and its growing influence.

The Temne Authority also played a role in supporting its candidates in the rural area council elections in 1949. With the expansion of local administration in the colony, the government adopted the Rural Area Council Ordinance in 1949 which permitted the constitution of village committees and councils. These councils oversaw the administration of their districts through such committees. The councils also dealt with development and budget issues and reported to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Development.⁹⁹ The success of the rural area administration led to the withdrawal of the Commissioner of Waterloo in 1953. The results of the first election of the council indicate that in Waterloo two of the elected representatives, Alimamy Kabia and E. Turay, described themselves as Temne.¹⁰⁰ In Hastings, the election results returned three Creole representatives, W.A.K. Williams, Festus John, Marcus Roberts and Alimamy Kargbo described as Temne.¹⁰¹ In Tasso Island Gbassay Kargbo and Alimamy Kamara, (both described as Temne) and Charles John (a Creole), won the elections. In all, it is clear from the rural area ordinance that the Creoles and Temne dominated the Rural Area Councils. It is unclear whether those who described themselves as Mende, Limba, and Loko contested but lost the elections. The point to note here is the rising influence of Temneness in the politics of the colony in the post Second World War period.

⁹⁹ C.S.O. *The Rural Area Council Ordinance No. 11 of 1949 MP 13764/23* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 3-7. See also C.S.O. *Review of Government During the Year From November 1952 to November 1953* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1953), p.4.

¹⁰⁰ C.S.O. *Ministry of Internal Affairs and Development 137/64/23/1/52* (Freetown: Elections Organ Office, 1957), p. 8.

¹⁰¹ C.S.O. *Ministry of Internal Affairs*, p.8.

The trend continued in the Municipal elections of 1957 where those recorded or described as Temne candidates put up a strong showing. Since the establishment of the municipal council in 1893, non-creoles did not participate in its administration. For residents to be qualified as candidates for election to the municipal Council, they had to be literate in English and own a property with an estimated annual worth of £20.¹⁰² Most non-creole residents in colonial Freetown did not meet this requirement and so could not vote. The colonial administration showed unhappiness over what it perceived as an anomalous situation with respect to Municipal politics, particularly when non-creoles could not vote in politics. In 1944, the government set up a committee to review and restructure the Council and its operations. This policy also coincided with the review and restructuring of tribal administration which the Creole and government officials had demanded earlier. This process is examined below. However, the point here is that a review of the municipal council at this time changed the face of politics in the colony. A member of the committee opined that: “the report of the Committee set up in 1944 for the reconstruction of the City Council made special reference to the circumstances in which the large Protectorate-born population of Freetown is left without direct representation on the Council.”¹⁰³ While Creoles persistently challenged the rationale behind the creation of tribal administration, the colonial government wanted a more comprehensive reform of local administration in the colony. Thus in 1945, the government introduced and adopted an ordinance which reviewed the structure of the council. The ordinance lowered the qualification for the right to vote or be voted for in municipal elections:

¹⁰² Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 169.

¹⁰³ *African Standard*, August 1945.

Every person whether male or female shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for any one ward and when registered to vote at the election of a member of the Council for such Ward who ... had attained the age of twenty-one years ... and in the last six months the owner and occupier of a property (jointly or severally) of any house, warehouse, counting-house, shop, store or other building (in this Ordinance referred to as qualifying property) in the City, of which the estimated annual value is not less than six pounds.¹⁰⁴

The above represented a big change in the property qualification for voters. It is assumed that the government introduced these changes to extend the pool of registered voters. Despite these reforms, the number of voters who met these requirements remained insignificant. In 1956, the government introduced more changes in the municipal elections. It lowered the property qualification further to £3. Barbara Harrell-Bond et al suggest that changes in the property qualification dramatically increased the size of the electorates. Some of my informants recalled voting “for Temne candidates in city council elections in 1957.”¹⁰⁵ The point to note here is that the changes in the municipal ordinances helped non-creoles to effectively challenge Creole dominance of municipal politics. More importantly for my question, the Temne tribal administrative structure played a role in supporting community members who vied for municipal seats. The Temne leader Kande Bureh became a target of newspaper reports that he openly meddled in politics by campaigning for “Temne candidates.”¹⁰⁶ In fact, Bureh’s involvement in such political campaigns drew the ire of the then fading Wallace-Johnson who complained to the colonial government of “the Temne Tribal Ruler’s open involvement

¹⁰⁴ C.S.O. *An Ordinance to make Provision with respect to Municipal City of Freetown No. 1 of 1945* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1945), p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Ambassador Sorsoh Conteh, Freetown, December 10, 2003.

¹⁰⁶ *Shekpendeh*, October 1957.

in politics.”¹⁰⁷ The complaint from Wallace-Johnson suggests that the Temne Authority participated in supporting particular candidates. The government, however, rejected Wallace-Johnson’s complaint as having no merit and that the Temne Ruler had a right to offer support to its candidates in a “moral way.”¹⁰⁸ In fact, in that same year when the first multi-ethnic municipal council elections were held, i.e. 1957, the governor appointed the leader of the Temne Central Mosque, Alhaji Gibril Sesay, a major subject of this study, to the City Council.¹⁰⁹ Following Sesay’s appointment, two other Temne members who contested Council elections won their seats: Ahmed Conteh of the East Ward and Ibrahim Sesay in the West Ward.¹¹⁰ Thus, a year after the colonial government radically changed the franchise, at least two members from the Temne community represented a ward each from the east and west of the colony.

In sum, the analysis above suggests that from the 1890s to the post World War II period, Temneness assumed some degree of significance; that is Temne institutions developed and rose to a level of prominence. The establishment of a tribal administration which triggered the creation of a Temne Tribal Authority gave the Temne community a symbol of unity and organization. It catered for Temne migrants, provided temporary housing for them, offered them limited protection against exploitation from job seekers, adjudicated cases between disputants among them and non-Temne communities, and helped new Temne migrants adjust to the shocks of colony life. The various leaders of the

¹⁰⁷ C.S.O. *Complaint from I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson About the Temne Tribal Ruler to the Governor, 134/11, 1957* (Freetown: 1957).

¹⁰⁸ C.S.O. *Colonial Secretary to Isaac T.A. Wallace-Johnson, March 25, 1957* (Freetown: 1957).

¹⁰⁹ Sesay Private Papers, *Appointment to the City Council, November 1957* (Freetown: 1957).

¹¹⁰ *Sierra Leone Royal Gazette*, November 1957, quoted in Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 200.

Authority created the foundation for the rise of the Temne in municipal and national politics. During the Creole confrontation with non-creole groups, Temneness became a political asset; i.e. the SLPP used Temne historical claims to Freetown to impugn the Creoles as ingrates who should appreciate the accommodation offered to them. The rise of the Temne Authority created the foundation which influenced the rise of other Temne institutions such as cultural associations which played a role in the acculturation of immigrants, and Temne mosques which also played a role in the Islamization process in colonial Freetown (discussed in chapters 3 and 4 respectively). Notwithstanding the rise of Temneness, tension between the Temne and the Creoles continued to characterize their relations. I have decided to analyze this tension below because it speaks to the growing rivalry between the two communities for political influence in the colony after 1945. It shows the Temne Authority and its leaders confronted Creole cultural and political arrogance and this had a great impact on their relations.

INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND TENSIONS IN THE COLONY: 1890-1960.

From the proclamation of the Tribal Administration Ordinance in 1905, the Municipal Council remained suspicious over the rationale for the establishment of a tribal administration separate from the Council. The tribal administrations, particularly the Temne Authority, always fired back at such Creole opposition. Before examining this tension, it will be useful to give a brief background of the Municipal Council. The Council itself has been an object of study in other works. My examination of its history here will be brief.

The Municipal Council was created in 1893, and consisted of fifteen members; twelve elected and three appointed by the governor-in-council.¹¹¹ Its first mayor, the Creole Samuel Lewis elected in 1895, strongly advocated self-rule for Africans.¹¹² In lending support to strengthening the institutions of the Municipal Council, he vociferously argued that “the object should be to train the inhabitants to all methods of self-help, and how to deal with their own affairs.”¹¹³ The mandatory duties of the Council included the cleaning and lighting of streets, the provision of markets and cleaning of cemeteries. The Council had authority to raise its funds from market dues, city rates and cemetery dues.¹¹⁴

As noted earlier since its establishment, Temne and other non-creole residents did not form part of the administrative make-up of the Council. Though the Creole dominated and ran the operations of the Council, they showed wariness toward the consolidation of tribal rule. Certainly, they saw no need for a system of tribal rule that would parallel the Council. However, the British government had its own motivation for allowing indirect rule to prevail in the colony. John Hargreaves argues that the British pursued the system of indirect rule in Sierra Leone due to inadequate colonial staff or personnel difficulties associated with understanding customary law and the need to allow Africans to take charge of their affairs.¹¹⁵ Opponents of this system argue that the British authorities used

¹¹¹ Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony*, p. 62.

¹¹² Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony*, p. 62.

¹¹³ J. D. Hargreaves, *A Life of Sir Samuel Lewis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 68.

¹¹⁴ Hargreaves, *Sir Samuel Lewis*, p. 69.

¹¹⁵ See John Hargreaves, “African Colonization in the 19th Century: Liberia and Sierra Leone” *Sierra Leone Studies* 16 (1962), pp. 1-10 and his other works “The Evolution of the Native Affairs Department” *Sierra Leone Studies* 3 (December, 1954), and “Western Democracy and African Societies: Some Reflections from Sierra Leone” *International*

the system in West Africa in line with their divide and rule strategy; i.e. to undermine African unity. No matter the rationale behind the system, the British colonial administration insisted on chiefly rule in the colony since the mid nineteenth century. In the 1920s, the Creoles and some members of the colonial administration intensified calls for the abolition of the system of tribal administration. In the Legislative Council a Creole Councilor argued that:

There is no need for tribal rulership as all the tribes who settle in the colony are being incorporated into the population of the colony by a process of natural evolution, and in the course of time they will be so incorporated that it will be hardly possible to tell the difference between one tribe and another, or to what particular tribe a person belongs.¹¹⁶

Creole opponents of the system described it as redundant and duplicative. They maintained that the government failed to consult the Council when endorsing Tribal Rulers. In a newspaper article the Council argued that the Tribal Administration (Amendment) Ordinance of 1918 gave the Municipal Council the right to be consulted on such matters:

Section 2, (2) [notes that] whenever a representation is made to the Governor... referred to in sub-section 1 hereof, the matter shall be referred to the Corporation of Freetown for report as to whether or not in their opinion is for the benefit of the Corporation and of the Tribe that a Tribal Ruler thereof should be recognized; as to whether or not the chief, Alimamy or Headman proposed to be recognized is a fit and proper person to be such Tribal Ruler.¹¹⁷

In addition to Creole calls for its abolition, Harrell-Bond et al., note that the system proved defective in some ways; i.e. they charge that some of the Tribal Heads faced

Affairs 31 3 (July 1955), 327-334. See also Diane Frost, *Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 1999), pp. 125-146.

¹¹⁶ C.S.O. *Legislative Council Debates, Sessions 1925-1926*. (Freetown), pp. 146-148.

¹¹⁷ *West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette*, January 30, 1926.

accusations of corruption from their subjects.¹¹⁸ Consequently, the persistent calls for the abolition of the tribal administration, led the colonial government to institute a commission of inquiry to look into the incessant complaints directed against the system.¹¹⁹ The mandate of the commission included examining the efficacy of tribal administration and making recommendations. The commission's findings stated that the tribal administrative system indeed proved inefficient. This is because tribal rulers could not generate revenues to run their authorities and had to employ corrupt means to generate funds; it noted that tribal rulers could not exercise control over their subjects because of the scattered nature of tribal settlements.¹²⁰ Based on the strength of its findings, the commission recommended that tribal administration be abolished and that their social duties be subsumed under a government department. It also recommended stripping the tribal rulers of their judicial duties to be performed by local magistrates.¹²¹ The colonial government shied away from implementing these recommendations verbatim because of their overly ambitious nature. The colonial authorities believed in the system and accepted arguments advanced by some headmen about its necessity. Nonetheless, the government introduced some reforms to enhance the system and make it efficient. It therefore introduced a new ordinance which slightly modified the operations of the system. The notable clause in this ordinance recommended "the reduction from 1s to 6d in monthly dues payable to the Tribal Headman."¹²²

¹¹⁸ Barbra Harrell-Bond, et al, *Community Leadership*, pp. 156-174.

¹¹⁹ *Sierra Leone Guardian*, July, 1932.

¹²⁰ C.S.O. *Report on Tribal Administration in the Colony, 1932* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 6-11.

¹²¹ C.S.O. *Tribal Administration*, pp. 7-11.

¹²² C.S.O. *Tribal Administration*, pp. 3-4.

However, even with these changes, opposition to the tribal administrative system continued to grow and the colonial administration had to respond to them. In 1939, the government instituted another Commission of Inquiry headed by the District Commissioner, A.B. Matthews, which he concluded a year later. The report, equally blistering, criticized the bookkeeping practices of tribal rulers and recommended a five year tenure for tribal rulers. It also recommended changes to the way the tribal rulers dealt with immigration. The colonial government, nervous to adopt the radical measures recommended by Commissioner Matthews, who appeared not to admire the tribal system, could not implement the recommendations. His successor, a supporter of the system, noted that: "Tribal Headmen have shewn in recent months a most encouraging desire to make something of their administration and it would be most unfortunate if their enthusiasm were allowed to die from inactivity."¹²³ However, after the Second World War, in line with calls for a reform, the colonial authorities made attempts at reforming tribal rule and unifying its systems. Such attempts drew fire from the Creole-dominated Municipal Council. The Creoles totally abhorred any attempt to consolidate the tribal system. A careful examination of the historical records reveals clearly that the Creoles feared that by empowering non-creoles through their tribal administrative structures, the government was not only encouraging a dual system of local governance, but creating political rivalry which might only grow bigger should the British leave. They therefore preferred not a modification of the system but rather its abolition, as shown in this comment:

¹²³ CS P 170/1939; MP 2008 31. 1. 1945. 58-9, quoted in Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, pp. 148-149.

It seems ironical that whilst efforts are being made to end the colony/Protectorate distinction, there should at the same time group be sets up ... within the City, which in effect would mean division of the people instead of welding them into one.... [The Municipal] Council is strongly opposed to the setting up of Tribal Council and Board in Freetown, as they are considered to be unnecessary, inimical to the interest of the people and derogatory to the status of the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors [sic].¹²⁴

These comments and attitude did not go unchallenged. The Temne Tribal Headman, Kande Bureh, fired back at the attitude of the Creoles towards tribal administration. Bureh argued that tribal rule gave the colony the stability it enjoyed. Buoyed up by other local administration officials, Bureh charged that: “without tribal administration, Sierra Leone government would find it difficult to administer justice in the country and the social life of the tribes in the colony would severely be disrupted.”¹²⁵ The debate continued to rage; the Creoles showed no let up in their quest for the abolition of the system.

The Temne and other non-creole groups also stepped up their vituperative response to Creole calls for the abolition of a system which they so cherished. The Temne leader along with leaders from other ethnic groups took strong exception to what they perceived as Creole obstructionism on the issue of tribal rule in the colony. They accused the Creoles of wanting to dominate Freetown. A Municipal City Councilor opined in the *Sierra Leone Daily Mail* that not only should tribal administration be abolished but also immigration from the Protectorate should be halted altogether.¹²⁶ This statement again drew the ire of Bureh who accused the Councilor of wanting to make Freetown a reservation for Creoles. He noted:

¹²⁴ CS MP 2008/5, 3.7. 1956: 336-7, quoted in Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 151.

¹²⁵ *Daily Mail*, October and November, 1953.

¹²⁶ *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, October, 1953. See also *African Standard*, September, 1949.

Mr. Beckley suggests that Protectorate people should be restricted from making visits or staying in Freetown. Does he want to make Freetown a Reservation for Creoles? How can he succeed in preventing the aborigines from staying in their homeland. Let him go to Creole-land and make such fantastic suggestions.¹²⁷

The argument put forward by Kande Bureh, again supported by his colleagues, is that as Temne Tribal Headman he served as link between immigrants from the Protectorate and the colonial government in the colony. When migrants visited the colony, they needed accommodation which tribal leaders readily provided. Also, many of these immigrants spoke their native languages; for example, Temne migrants in the colony spoke *Theimne*. *Theimne* itself was not enough to communicate with people from non-Temne communities. The migrants therefore needed some orientation from their tribal authorities including the head of the Temne Authority, junior chiefs and others, who played this role better. Bureh charged that the Creole-dominated Municipal Council did not have what it took to perform such duties. In addition, when people committed crimes in the Protectorate and ran to Freetown to escape justice, Protectorate chiefs or the government contacted Tribal Headmen who would in turn issue directives to their section chiefs and other officials in different parts of the colony to locate the fugitives. The suspect would usually be found in most cases within a week or less and returned to his or her respective chiefdom.¹²⁸ Bureh and his colleagues used these arguments to counter Creole opposition to tribal rule in colonial Freetown.

Another point of contention between the Temne Authority and the Municipal Council had to do with control over space. The Creoles claimed to be in charge of the municipality of Freetown and therefore had the right to control the commercial and

¹²⁷ *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, 23. 10. 1953; quoted in Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 153.

¹²⁸ Michael Banton, *West African City*, p. 143.

political spaces there. They alluded to the fact that the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council included collecting market dues and cemetery fees as part of its revenue generation.¹²⁹ The Temne in particular, refused to accept such rights claimed by the Creoles. Oral sources indicate that when the Municipal Council consistently maintained that it reserved the right to give permission for use of public spaces, the Temne Tribal Authority firmly believed that they did not need permission to use these facilities. An informant recalled that in the 1940s and 1950s, when a member of the Temne community died, the Municipal Council demanded that permission be sought for the deceased to be buried in any of the following cemeteries: Kissy Road, King Tom, Race Course and Ascension Town.¹³⁰ Until permission was received the gates of the cemeteries would never be opened even when the Temne Authority would protest to the colonial administration. In most cases the view of the Municipal Council prevailed. As a matter of fact, the Municipal Council Ordinance of 1945 placed the Council in charge of cemeteries as shown in this clause: "it shall be lawful for the Corporation to provide and regulate the use of Public Cemeteries in the City and notwithstanding anything contained

¹²⁹ Banton, *West African City*, p. 143.

¹³⁰ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, Freetown, November 2, 2003. There is not much documentary or archival information here on the Temne-Creole tension with respect to the use of public space in the colony. During field research for this study in Freetown in 2003, I visited the Freetown City Council to obtain information on the Council and its operations in the colonial period. The Town Clerk told me he could not help me with the information I was seeking because the Council's library was destroyed during the 1999 rebel invasion of Freetown and its environs. I therefore had to rely on oral testimonies obtained from people who claimed to be old enough to recollect this period. Given the limitations of archival or municipal records, I relied on the information provided me by Chief Gbonko who claimed to be a very active and enlightened Temne young man when these events unfolded in the 1940s and 1950s. Hassan Kamara, the local historian claims to possess some knowledge on the Temne-Creole tension in the 1950s as well. I however, found two press reports on the tension. I suspect the P.R.O in London has some materials on this. I was unable to visit this facility because of immigration problems.

in the Public Health Ordinance of 1924, to close any such Public Cemeteries in accordance with bye-laws made under the Ordinance.”¹³¹ However, tribal rulers, particularly Kande Bureh, who refused to accept any such Creole assertion of authority, encouraged his subjects to use other designated burial sites like Rokupr, Circular Road, Kissy and Wellington Cemeteries which the municipal council apparently did not firmly control or rather care much about its use. To ease the tension between the two sides, the Council proffered a solution; it allowed the Temne and other non-creole groups to bury their dead in the Rokupr cemetery in Wellington officially opened in 1947.¹³² This suggests that the Council and the Temne Authority wanted to ease tensions over use of these public spaces. Such attempts at resolution of disputes fit into the concept of shared spaces argued by Howard who notes that communities and groups shared or contested public spaces in colonial cities in Africa.¹³³ The Temne leader persistently challenged Creole rights of control of public spaces even when the statutes validated some of the Creole claims. The point to note here is that by allowing the Temne to use Rokupr for burial purposes the Creole establishment recognized the need to deal with the Temne community in the colony.

In addition to the clash over cemeteries, the Temne and Creoles also clashed over the use of markets. The Municipal Council again perceived itself as the controller of these spaces. This speaks to another of Howard’s points that commercial spaces were contested in colonial Freetown: “Small-and middle-scale African traders fixed

¹³¹ C.S.O. *An Ordinance to make Provision*, p. 18.

¹³² *SLWN*, August 2, 1947.

¹³³ See Howard, “Cities in Africa”; See also Allen Howard and Richard M. Shain, eds., *The African Spatial Factor in African History: The Relationship of the Social, Material, and Perceptual* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005).

themselves in places where they found commercial gain, and in so doing asserted their right to be there.”¹³⁴ The Temne and the Creoles clashed over the use of King Jimmy, Bombay Street and Kissy Road Markets where both groups had a significant number of traders, after 1945.¹³⁵ The Council demanded market dues from users of the above markets. The Temne protested over the payments of such dues to the Municipal Council; they preferred payment of such dues to their tribal officials. My informants recollected that tension between the Temne and the Creole-dominated Council was exacerbated when the Council banned the opening of markets on Sundays. The Council considered Sunday the Sabbath and therefore could not permit use of its grounds for public trading on such days. The Mayor insisted, “the City Council has not at any time encouraged Sunday trading.”¹³⁶ This was clearly unacceptable to the Temne. The Temne Authority felt that the Council had merely arrogated this right to itself.¹³⁷ They argued that Freetown was not absolutely Christian and that declaring Sunday a holy day violated the rights of Muslims and others. They also argued that the colonial administration did not endorse such Creole assertions. In retaliation, the Temne Authority banned Temne traders from selling their goods or opening their markets on Fridays, the Muslim day of prayer. Friday was chosen because many Temne traders in colonial Freetown described themselves as Muslims. The traders quickly obeyed such an order. It is not known whether other non-creole groups cooperated with the Temne on this. The Authority

¹³⁴ Allen Howard, “Contesting Commercial Space in Freetown, 1860-1930: Traders, Merchants, and Officials” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 37: 2-3 (2003), p. 261.

¹³⁵ Interview, Haja Sukainatu Bangura, Freetown, November 1, 2003. Bangura was born in Freetown in 1902. She was an outstanding trader who owned and controlled stalls in King Jimmy, Bombay Street and Kissy Road Markets. She is a special subject of this study. See chapter 5 and appendix 2.

¹³⁶ *SLWN*, Freetown, November 5, 1949.

¹³⁷ Interview, Hassan Kamara, Freetown.

issued the order through its officials.¹³⁸ The position of the colonial government on this dispute remains unclear. What is clear, however, is the fact that the two sides maintained their turf; trading did not occur on Sundays or the Council made it a limited practice, and those who identified themselves with the Temne Authority refused to trade publicly on Fridays in the 1950s. A violation of the order by Temne traders met with a fine at the first instance and confiscation of goods on a second violation.¹³⁹

From the above account, it is clear that the Creoles detested the idea of tribal administrations which not only recognized the presence of these communities but also gave them legitimacy and their subjects legitimate status. The Temne Tribal Authority served as a symbol of unity for Temnes and gave a special importance to Temneness through its activities. Such activities clashed with the Creoles who grew suspicious over the rise of non-creole groups. The Temne Authority believed in their historical claim to Freetown and therefore strove to participate in issues that projected its interests. These tensions characterized Creole-Temne relations throughout the colonial period. With the rise of other Temne institutions like cultural associations, mosques and economic growth in the 1940s, the rivalry between these two communities grew.

Summing up, then, it is clear that the history of local administration in the colony from the 1890s to 1961 should not be viewed through the lens of the Municipal Council alone.

¹³⁸ Interview, Chief Gbonko, Freetown. Hassan Kamara and all my informants also corroborated this information. They noted that because the Temne headman barred Temne from selling their goods or open their markets on Fridays in colonial Freetown, that practice has continued to this day.

¹³⁹ Interview, Haja Sukainatu Bangura, Freetown.

CHAPTER 3

THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURE AND THE RISE OF TEMNE CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY, 1939-1960

The last chapter examined the rise of the Temne Authority in the colony from the 1890s to the end of colonial rule in 1961. It showed that with the establishment of local administration by the colonial authorities, those recorded and described as Temne evolved and organized around a local administrative structure. Given the Temne's advantage of numbers, the government encouraged this community to choose leaders who mediated between the government and their subjects. Such rudimentary structure produced a more definite administrative structure later referred to as the Temne Tribal Authority. A careful examination of the historical records reveals that because of the benefits associated with Temneness, such as provision of temporary housing for new migrants, employment, trade and political support whether running for municipal council elections or rural area administrative committees, a lot of people who identified themselves as Temne organized around the Temne Authority. In addition to the support the Authority gave to its subjects and community, it also played a role in the rise of other Temne institutions such as cultural associations and mosques, particularly after the 1940s.

This chapter examines the rise of these Temne cultural associations, the reason for their rise and the impact they had on the lives of their members. In other words, the chapter shows that Temne cultural associations became attractive to lots of people – Temne and non-Temne alike. Non-Temnes who joined these associations played by the rules of the various associations they joined, i.e. they learnt how to speak Theimne, the language of the Temne, sang Temne songs, and wore the associations' costumes. It

remains unclear whether by joining the so-called Temne associations, non-Temnes shed their ethnic identities in favor of the Temne one. What is clear however, is the fact that because of the activities the associations engaged in and the benefits associated with such activities, the associations not only flourished but also attracted a diverse group of people in colonial Freetown. I describe below the history and basic structures of these associations and why they attracted non-Temne community members.

I examine the activities of the *Alimania*, *Ambas Geda*, Endeavor, Temne Progressive Union, Boys London, *Nuru Jinati* and *Ariah*. I have not examined others such as *Safinatu*, because some of them lasted less than a year. I refer to the associations above as Temne associations in this study because their founders and founding members so described them. They claimed to have founded them in order to bolster Temneness in the colony.¹ Due to a dearth of documentary and archival information on the origin, structure and functions of these associations, I have heavily relied on the accounts recounted to me by these founding fathers.

Though my informants linked the establishment of these associations to the rise of Temneness in this period, it is clear that other factors such as the establishment of Mandingo and Aku associations influenced their rise as well. Banton notes that the Mandingo *Yankadee* and *Tarancis* and the Aku *Orjeh* and *Egungun* associations established in the 1920s and 1930s entertained their members impressively and rejected non-Aku and non-Mandingo members.² That is, the societies only embraced and admitted

¹Interviews, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, Pa Yenki Kamara and Sukainatu Bangura, Freetown, November 3-4, 2003. I interviewed all three separately. See appendix 19 for Yenkin Kamara.

² Michael Banton, *West African City: The Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (London: Oxford University, 1957), pp. 162-164.

members of other ethnic communities who identified with them. In fact, Banton notes that because the Aku and Mandingo admitted members of their communities to their associations, “a growing proportion of ambitious young Temne join[ed] the Mandinka and Aku societies, often learning the language and seeking to pass as members of these tribes.”³ Banton argues that the Mandingo and Aku looked down on the Temne who had no cultural associations which they led or claimed as their own. They became very sensitive to this scorn as some Temne members felt ashamed to identify themselves with the group: “that strangers should look down on them was a particular blow to Temne pride, for the land on which Freetown now stands was once Temne territory. They still regard it as theirs and claim for themselves the privileged status of those who own the land.”⁴ Banton also posits that the Aku societies started as benefit clubs and later transformed to dance societies.⁵ Their colorful displays made them particularly attractive to non-members including the Temne. Consequently, my informants acknowledged, Temne young men and women who wished to be part of the associations had to claim Mandingo or Aku identities. Thus, people attributed prestige and sociability to being Aku or Mandingo during this period.

Though the Temne Authority assisted its subjects in different ways and helped migrants reorient themselves, it found it difficult at first to halt the flight of Temne young men and women to other cultural associations. However, in response to this flight, the Authority helped found some of the cultural associations such as the *Ambas Geda*, *Alimania*, and Boys London between 1939 and 1953. Sources indicate that officials of the

³ Banton, *West African City*, p. 164.

⁴ Banton, *West African City*, p. 164.

⁵ Banton, *West African City*, p. 164.

Authority, i.e. section chiefs and junior officials, formed the *Alimania* and *Ambas Geda* in particular between 1939 and 1945. The founder of Boys London noted that he founded the association after being expelled from the *Ambas Geda* for indiscipline in 1952 but with the primary aim to help boost “Temneness” in his immediate environment.⁶ Pa Yenkin Kamara recalled that he founded Endeavor and the Temne Progressive Union for social and political reasons; i.e. to bolster “Temneness” and to create a political platform for those he perceived as Temne in 1938 and 1958.⁷ Banton notes that the Temne founded the *Ambas Geda* and *Alimania* in 1945 but my informants dispute these dates. They claimed that *Alimania* was formed in the 1930s and the *Ambas Geda* in 1944. A report from the *Weekly News* corroborates part of their claim; the report indicates that the *Alimania* was formed in 1939.⁸ The term *Alimania* is a derivative from Arabic meaning “a group of humble people full of patience.”⁹ In addressing a group of Temne Muslims in the east of Freetown, Dr. E. H. Taylor Cummings, Mayor of the Municipal Council, noted a decade later:

The Alimania Association was formed with the numerical strength of eight members all of whom, with the exception of one, were illiterates [sic] so far as English education was concerned. I may here tell you that this is a Timne [sic] Society opened to every African in the Colony and in the Protectorate.¹⁰

It is also claimed that the founders of the association principally established it as a dance group and to help “promote and foster more interest in social, educational, and religious standards and so help enhance progress of the African so as to take [his or her] place

⁶ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko and Bai Maro Conteh, November 5, 2003. See appendix 6 for Bai Maro Conteh.

⁷ Interview, Pa Yenkin Kamara, Freetown, November 3, 2003.

⁸ *SLWN*, May 14, 1949.

⁹ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah, Freetown, November 1, 2003. He claimed to have been a member of this association. See appendix 3.

¹⁰ *SLWN*, May 14, 1949.

honourably in the affairs of the Democratic world in the near future.”¹¹ Another aim of the association bordered on the need to bring Temne Muslim men and women together.¹² Hajj Bangurah noted that when Gibril Sesay nursed the idea of forming the association, he consulted with and received support from members of the Temne Tribal Authority. He recalled that three of the original members of the association served as *āŋ Sumothes*, court messengers and junior officials of the Temne Authority.¹³ Gibril Sesay, a primary founding member of the association, acted as Executive Director, assisted by a chairman referred to as *Pa Quoa* or Sultan; he dealt with the daily administration of the association and ensured that members respected the teachings of the holy Koran which guided the principles of the association. The Mammy Queen, the female counterpart of the *Pa Quoa*, headed the female wing. She also co-chaired general meetings and made sure that female members received respectful treatment equal to their menfolk.¹⁴ Her role is discussed in detail below. To enable the association to function effectively, the executive made monthly subscriptions mandatory.

In addition to the *Alimania*, the Temne also formed the *Ambas Geda* in 1944. There are conflicting accounts about the founding of this association. Banton argues that the idea of forming the association originated from an illiterate Temne goldsmith; he discussed the idea with Kande Bureh who then popularized it and later formed the association.¹⁵ My informants who passionately dispute this claim maintained that Kande Bureh and Alhaji Gibril Sesay formed the *Ambas Geda*, meaning, “we have gathered” in

¹¹ *SLWN*, May 14, 1949.

¹² Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

¹³ Interviews, Hajj Hassan Bangura and Sukainatu Bangura. Mammy Queen is synonymous with head woman.

¹⁴ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

¹⁵ Banton, *West African City*, p. 152.

1944. A dispute later ensued between Sesay and Bureh over the tenets of the association; Sesay wanted an association with strong Islamic principles while Bureh wanted a more secular association. Because Sesay's views did not prevail, he withdrew his membership and focused on the *Alimania* he had founded earlier. Bureh then took complete charge of the association as its sole founding father in 1944.¹⁶ The aims and objectives of the association included the need to uplift Temne prestige, help indigent members, and to promote Temne cultural values, such as respect for the elderly, communalism, and continued loyalty to the Temne Authority. Though Bureh and others primarily formed it to burnish Temne pride, he also used the association to garner support during his run for the Temne Tribal Headmanship election in 1945.¹⁷ Sources indicate that his popularity with young voters and members of the *Ambas Geda* gave him a certain advantage over his rivals, even though they formed part of the association. Bureh served as Managing Director, assisted by a *Sultan* or chairman.¹⁸ On winning the elections of the Temne headmanship, the *Sultan* assumed the post of Managing Director. He served as chief executive and chaired general meetings. The Vice *Sultan* and Mammy Queens assisted the *Sultan* by organizing women, the singing, dancing and drumming when plays or ceremonies were held. The decisions reached at the meetings needed the approval of the Mammy Queen before they could be implemented. The Sultan and the Mammy Queens ensured that male and female performers conformed to the association's dress codes. The costumes worn by dancers and singers were made of palm fronds woven with red and

¹⁶ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko. He claimed to have been a member of this association.

¹⁷ Interview, Hassan Kamara, Freetown, December 10, 2003. Kamara is a nephew of Bureh and also claimed to be an ex-member of the association. See appendix 20.

¹⁸ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko.

white country cloths.¹⁹ My informants related that the uniqueness of these costumes was based on the fact non-Temne cultural associations such as *Tarancis* and *Yankadee* used different types of dresses during their official ceremonies. While the Ogbalis or secretary serviced the meetings of the association, the Chief Whip maintained discipline during meetings and had the right to reject and arrest troublemakers.

As noted above, sources show that the Temne Authority played a role in the formation of the *Alimania* and *Ambas Geda*. Nonetheless, individuals who described themselves as Temne also took the initiative to form associations which attracted Temnes and non-Temnes alike. As already mentioned, the rise of ethnic associations in the 1920s and 1930s gave special prestige to these groups. These associations not only attracted residents but also migrants. This affected the demographic make-up of the colony since members who wished to be admitted to such organizations had to identify themselves with such groups. Though the *Alimania* and later the *Ambas Geda* reacted to this situation, Pa Alimamy Yenkin Kamara believed that the Temne community should do more to bolster its image. He believed that the Temne, as “owners of Freetown needed associations outside the ‘chief house’ to discuss political and non-political matters.”²⁰ Against this background, he established Endeavor, an association of Temne young men in 1938.

Born in Freetown to Temne parents in 1918, Kamara became a tailor at a very early age after he graduated from elementary school. He recalled that while the *Alimania* and the Temne Authority assisted members of the Temne community, he chose to

¹⁹ Interview, Pa Yamba Kalie and Adama Kamara, Freetown, November 4, 2003. Both were interviewed separately. They claim to have been dancers. See appendix 16 on Adama Kamara.

²⁰ Interview, Pa Yenkin Kamara, Freetown, November 2-3, 2003.

establish a “tailoring company which will provide employment for them and at the same time teach them a profession.”²¹ His grand agenda to cater for young Temne men faced financial problems; he often requested financial help from the Temne Authority to help “buy more machines and extend the building housing the company in eastern Freetown.”²² He served as the association’s Chief Executive assisted by three deputies. Kamara reminisced that the success of Endeavor in terms of providing employment and recreational facilities for its members, encouraged him to form a particularly political association, the Temne Progressive Union (TPU), almost two decades later. Ambassador Conteh noted that “The TPU was founded in 1958 by a group of dynamic Temne young men in the eastern part of Freetown led by a very prominent tailor by the name of Borboh Yenkin Kamara. The aim was to educate our less fortunate brother [s] to unite the entire Temne youths in Freetown, to further develop the Jam-ul-Jalil Mosque, the Imania Islamic Temne School, and to promote the Temne tribe in the Western area [of Sierra Leone].”²³ In this male-dominated organization, Kamara served as the Executive Director assisted by a chairman and a secretary-general. The association engaged mainly in political activities. Kamara averred that the disenchantment and unhappiness of Temne

²¹ Interview, Pa Yenkin Kamara.

²² Interview, Pa Yenkin Kamara.

²³ Notes from Ambassador Sorsoh Conteh. After my many interview sessions with the former ambassador, he chose to do me a short write-up on the contribution of Temne institutions in the Colony. The notes are based on his personal experience. I corroborated some of his accounts on the TPU with Yenkin Kamara himself. However, while Kamara corroborated much of what Ambassador Conteh wrote in his notes, both differ on the date the association was founded. Kamara mentioned to me that he founded the association in 1955 while Conteh indicated 1958 as the founding date. When I raised the issue of the two different dates with him, Pa Yenkin Kamara noted that he conceived the idea of forming the association in 1955; at this time he also held preliminary meetings with his friends to discuss the idea. But the first official meeting and launching of the association took place in 1958.

young men over the political situation in the colony concerned him and therefore decided to form an association which would encourage the participation of young men in national politics. The activities of this association are analyzed below.

Other associations formed by people who described themselves as Temne and former members of the *Ambas Geda* included Boys London, *Nuru Jinati* and *Ariah*. Chief Adikalie Gbonko, who founded Boys London in 1952, noted that as a young member of *Ambas Geda* he breeched one of the disciplinary rules and got expelled. In response to his expulsion and in league with a close friend, Pa Buya, then founded Boys London, meaning “Young Man’s Club.”²⁴ Despite their expulsion, he and his colleagues continued allegiance to *Ambas Geda* through the payment of monthly subscriptions. The aims and objectives of the association, like those of the *Ambas Geda*, included uplifting the Temne image and promotion of Temne unity. The executive restricted membership of the association to members of the Temne community only. The association had a slimmer structure compared to the *Alimania* and *Ambas Geda*. While Chief Gbonko served as Chief Executive Officer, his close friend and confidant Pa Buya served as chairman. The chairman presided over general meetings and closely supervised the activities of the executive. He made recommendations to the CEO on the applications of new members. The male-dominated executive had a Secretary, Financial Officer, and a Manager who organized the association’s activities. The Manager supervised the singing and dancing during official displays. The dancers wore special costumes, a dark brown *ronkoe* (country cloth) lined with red and gold.²⁵ Chief Gbonko noted that the costumes were unique and proved attractive which added glamour to the ceremonies. He noted that he

²⁴ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko.

²⁵ Interview, Pa Buya, Freetown, November 4, 2003. See appendix 4.

did not appoint female members to the executive because he “did not want a protracted executive.”²⁶ It is clear that by not including women as part of the executive, Chief Gbonko relegated the role of women to singing and dancing though he rejected this charge.

Based in Bambara Town as a largely singing and dancing association, Boys London held its general meetings on Sundays. The executive made monthly subscriptions compulsory to give the group regular income. The association frowned on indiscipline and disorderly conduct both at meetings and outside meeting halls. An association member caught trading insults with a colleague or a non-member in public would be suspended and perhaps expelled.²⁷ Within three years of its formation, Boys London became one of the most highly successful Temne cultural associations, at least in Bambara Town. Because of this success, Chief Gbonko noted that he received lots of applications from non-Temne community members wanting to join the association. The executive agreed to allow young men and women from Loko, Limba and Mandingo speaking communities to join the association. Pa Buya noted that the executive insisted on speaking Theimne as prerequisite to accepting non-Temne members. He and Chief Gbonko recalled that those wanting to join learned Theimne in different ways. The most common method used by curious parties included the habit of learning the language through interaction with Temne community members where they could learn the rudiments of the language. For non-Temne new joiners of the association, the Manager who supervised dancing and singing organized special classes to teach them songs and dancing patterns. In this way, they received lessons on basic syntax and semantics of the

²⁶ Interview, Chief Gbonko.

²⁷ Interview, Pa Buya.

language. The Manager encouraged them to learn and memorize these songs.²⁸ It is unclear whether the methods used to teach the new members proved effective or worked out smoothly. However, it is clear that the association forced new applicants to learn its medium of communication before being admitted. Chief Gbonko and Pa Buya did not explain the status of these new joiners; i.e. both men could not clarify the relationship between the new joiners from non-Temne communities and “real” Temne members. From their accounts, it can be suggested that the new joiners learned Theimne and assumed Temneness but did not necessarily shed their identities.

The final Temne cultural associations to be examined are *Nuru Jinati* and *Ariah*. Founded by Pa Wusu in 1951 in Magazine Cut, *Nuru Jinati* which meant “Heavenly Aspirations” was an offshoot of the *Ambas Geda* and *Alimania*.²⁹ The majority of its membership came from Sanda Temne, a subsection of Temne from Northern Sierra Leone. Sanda Temne have long been viewed as one of the most Islamic Temne communities in Freetown and Sierra Leone as a whole. The aims and objectives of *Nuru Jinati* included: promoting Temne culture, religious aspirations and communal social activities such as weddings, naming and funeral ceremonies, and promoting the participation of women in upholding Temne cultural practices in Magazine Cut and its environs. Principally a dancing and singing association, much is not known about its

²⁸ Interview, Chief Gbonko and Pa Buya. Both were interviewed separately.

²⁹ Interview, Chief Gbonko. During fieldwork for this study in Freetown, I did not talk to old members of this association as many are deceased. Chief Gbonko, who claimed to be a former colleague and friend of Pa Wusu, provided much of the information I use here. He claimed to have been an associate member of the association because of his close personal relationship with the founder. Since I could not access any other piece of information on this association, I relied on the accounts he provided. I should also point out that Magazine Cut was a community heavily dominated by Aku. Aku residents here were referred to as “Foulah Town” distinguishing them from Aku residing in the Fourah Bay area. Lots of Mandingos and Fulas also resided here.

structure save that Pa Wusu served as its chairman, and that Pa Kargbo, the secretary, serviced its meetings and handled its correspondence. Chief Gbonko noted that the association used the funds it generated on Islamic projects. In addition, he also reminisced that the association restricted its membership to Muslims alone. That is, to be admitted as a member an applicant had to be a Theimne speaker and a Muslim at the same time. The association emphasized as its watchword discipline, punctuality and regular attendance at meetings. It also punished by expulsion members engaged in fetish, fornication, adultery and superstitious activities.³⁰

The last of the Temne cultural associations to be examined here is *Ariah*, meaning “to adorn or beautify.”³¹ Founded in 1953 by a Temne activist, Pa Wusu, the association had similar aims and objectives like the ones described above but with a slender executive structure which comprised a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary referred to as *O'gbals O'gbals*. Mainly a dancing and singing association based in Magazine Cut, Bambara and Foulah Towns, *Ariah* restricted its membership to Theimne speakers or those who claimed to be Temne through descent; i.e. those born to Temne parents.³² Pa Dumbuya noted members of *Ariah* sang Theimne songs during dancing ceremonies, the main source of income generation.

Given the description of the origin, structure and aims of the various cultural associations, I now examine the relevance of these associations to the importance of Temneness. In other words, how did the activities of these associations make Temneness important and attractive from the 1940s onwards?

³⁰ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko.

³¹ Interview, Pa Mohammed Dumbuya, Freetown, November 1-3, 2003. The founders of Nuru Jinati and Ariah had similar names, Pa Wusu. See appendix 8.

³² Interview, Pa Mohammed Dumbuya.

THE ROLE OF TEMNENESS IN THE SOCIAL FORMATION OF FREETOWN, 1939-1960:

To clearly understand the factors which led to the rise of Temne institutions and influence of Temneness, it will be useful to put this in context. It can be argued that two major factors accounted for the rise of Temneness from the 1890s to 1961. First, the colonial authorities encouraged the various communities to adopt local administrative structures which represented their views and aspirations. Clearly, the colonial administration suffered from a lack of adequate personnel to govern these communities in addition to the fact they also lacked competence in customary law which characterized the lives of these non-creole communities. As stated earlier, the historical records show that the British government wanted a dual system of local rule in colonial Freetown. Hence they allowed the Creoles to have a municipal council and the non-creoles tribal administrations. Among these non-creole societies the Temne gradually organized around their administrative structure, the Temne Authority, as noted in chapter 2. This Authority assisted its subjects in diverse ways including migrants who described themselves as Temne. Second, the rivalry between the Creoles and non-creoles heated up since the adoption of the 1905 tribal administration ordinance. Such tension grew and got particularly intense between the Temne Authority and the municipal council. The Authority served as an alternative structure to the council; this means Temne looked up to a symbol of authority and organization. This symbol of authority governed their activities and provided assistance for them. In addition, non-creole groups such as the Mandingo developed cultural associations that in some ways affected what informants described as Temne ethnic pride. To counter and neutralize the above impact, the Temne used the

advantage of numbers and support of the local authority to organize cultural associations of their own. These associations became attractive not only to members of the Temne community, but others as well. Why did these associations attract non-Temnes? Did the new non-Temne members shed their identities as they joined these associations since the associations admitted Temne or at least Theimne speakers only? Finally, how did these Temne cultural associations contribute to the social formation of colonial Freetown? The analysis below wrestles with these questions. Also, though the various Temne associations were founded for diverse reasons but with the primary goal to uplift “Temne ethnic pride,” they performed several functions. Some of them served their immediate communities while others engaged in activities that impacted the colony as a whole. I will examine the contribution of each association

It is clear from the historical records that the *Alimania* emerged as the first cultural Temne association in 1939.³³ Between 1942 and 1943, the association started an evening “elementary class for children and a night class for adults.”³⁴ The classes catered for members of the Temne community only. This means, the administration of the school did not permit non-Temnes or non-Theimne speakers to attend classes at the school. Due to increased enrollment in the classes, the association funded the building of a school, later named the Temne School or Madrasa *Immaniyia* in 1945.³⁵ The school turned out to be the main Islamic educational institution for Temnes in the post World War II period.³⁶ In addition to the building of a school, in the 1950s, the *Alimania* also played an instrumental role in the building of the *Jami-ul-Jaleel*, also known as the Temne Mosque,

³³ *SLWN*, May, 1949.

³⁴ *SLWN*, May, 1949.

³⁵ *SLWN*, May 1949.

³⁶ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

particularly during the conclusive phase of the project.³⁷ This came about when the committee charged with building the Mosque ran out of cash and sought help from the *Alimania*. In response, the association embarked on fund raising activities. The association also funded wedding ceremonies for its indigent members and financially assisted the bereaved. It served as a meeting place for prospective couples as bachelors and spinsters attracted each other at such gatherings; marriages developed out of the colleagueship built in the association.³⁸ This role of the *Alimania* benefited its young members to some extent. This is because as youngsters mostly within marriageable ages, the association created a situation which helped them meet future partners. New migrants also benefited from the marital assistance the association rendered its members. As migrants, they needed orientation and assistance; many joined the *Alimania* which provided them with such help. Though the Temne Authority rendered this assistance, the *Alimania* particularly provided a social atmosphere where these migrants interacted “freely with their peers, expressed themselves on wide range of issues and refreshed themselves.”³⁹ Also, members who wished to see their children and relatives learn the tenets of Islam and appreciate the value of communal assistance found the association useful as well.⁴⁰ The association’s leadership also provided leadership for the Temne mosque. It taught members the rigors and skills of group management. The *Weekly News* reported that in 1951, “Alpha Abu Bakar, the Spiritual Leader of the *Alimania* Association has been asked in the name of Allah ... to resume his good work as Imam of

³⁷ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

³⁸ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

³⁹ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

⁴⁰ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

the Central Temne Mosque at Oldfield Street.”⁴¹ As Spiritual Leader of the *Alimania*, Bakar turned out to be one of the “most recognized Temne Muslim preachers” and served as a member of the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress and the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴²

Though my informants described the *Alimania* as a Temne association, their accounts indicate that the association engaged in activities that did not serve Temne interests alone. In other words, some of the activities of the association appealed beyond its Temne base. Sources show that the association attracted non-Temnes such as members of the Mandingo community, particularly with its strong emphasis on Islamic principles. As mentioned above, one of the aims of the association included promotion of Islamic principles among its members. As a largely Muslim group, this value may have impressed the Mandingo. A former member of the Mandingo *Tarancis*, Ibrahim Fadika, noted that though many Mandingo members continued to maintain their connection to the *Tarancis* and *Yankadee* societies, they “learnt Theimne so they could gain admission to the *Alimania*, which admitted Temne only.”⁴³ Fadika recalled that although a Temne association, the *Alimania* assisted many non-Temne Muslim communities through cash donations and by gracing social activities such as wedding or funeral ceremonies sometimes for free between 1944 and 1961.⁴⁴ Salieu Jalloh, who served as Fula headman from 1950 to 1960, reminisced that he admired the activities of the *Alimania* though he did not join any ethnic association. The *Alimania*, he noted, concerned itself with the welfare of Muslims through the “vision of its leader, Alhaji Gibril Sesay, who made sure that Temne Muslims and non-Temne Muslims serve the interest of the religion. In 1957,

⁴¹ *SLWN*, January 1951.

⁴² *SLWN*, July 7, 1951.

⁴³ Interview, Ibrahim Fadika, Freetown, November 4, 2003. See appendix 10.

⁴⁴ Interview, Ibrahim Fadika.

when the Fula community were fighting among themselves, officers of the Alimania did all they could to resolve the matter.”⁴⁵ Jalloh recalled that it did not surprise him when his Fula, Susu and Mandingo colleagues passed as Temne so they could be “part of the organization of the Alimania, because of the help they received from it.”⁴⁶ These accounts indicate that though described as a Temne association, the Alimania attracted people it urged to learn Theimne. The accounts also show that non-Temnes had to learn Theimne to get admission. However, it remained unclear whether these non-Temne Theimne speakers gave up their identity when they joined the Alimania. My informants stressed that the executive of these associations insisted that Theimne remained a prerequisite for admission since it served as the main medium of communication in the association. Alhaji Gibril Kamara noted that to eliminate the possibility of using several languages in “the Alimania, Theimne had to be used.”⁴⁷ Also, many of the association’s songs sung in Theimne and Arabic, expressed public opinion on intra- and inter- ethnic issues. On many occasions, the songs expressed a sense of solidarity with the Temne people and praise for their leaders. For instance, in one of the songs, the members noted:

Alhaji Sesay has done well for us, God bless him! Oh, good friendship is a precious thing. Alhaji Sesay of the Temne tribe, when no one knew the Temne would progress; Alhaji Sesay did well for us, God bless him!⁴⁸

It is clear from these accounts that members had to have a sense of Temneness to appreciate these songs and participate in the association’s activities. As noted above, the aims of the association bordered on uplifting Temne image; therefore by participating in

⁴⁵ Interview, Salieu Jalloh, Freetown, November 1, 2003. See appendix 12.

⁴⁶ Interview, Salieu Jalloh.

⁴⁷ Interview, Alhaji Gibril Kamara, Freetown, November 4- 5, 2003. Kamara is currently the Secretary-General of the Temne Central Mosque. See appendix 18.

⁴⁸ Banton, *West African City*, p. 174.

activities or singing songs that touted their officials Mandingo, Loko, Limba or Mende Theimne speakers who joined the Alimania played a role in projecting Temneness. These new joiners also wore the costumes of the Alimania during dancing ceremonies. The costumes, unique to, and used only by the association, symbolized its values and distinguished it from other associations. In all this, the status of non-Temne Theimne speakers remained unclear; i.e. it is difficult to determine whether Mandingo or Limba Theimne speakers received different treatment from those with Temne parentage in the association. That is, the relationship between the new joiners who learnt Theimne to gain entrance into the association and those with Temne parentage remains unclear. It can be suggested that these new joiners may have had a minimal but probably a working knowledge of Theimne. However, whether Temnes and non-Temnes were treated differently or equally, based on the testimonies of informants, it can be argued that the Alimania proved attractive and beneficial to both. In short, its activities projected Temneness in the colony.

In addition to attracting non-Temne community members, the association also supported the colonial government as it wrestled with the economic fall out from the Second World War. In other words, the Alimania contributed to the British war efforts; it raised funds to help the British authorities and their allies in the Second World War. In appreciating and thanking the *Alimania* for this gesture, the Mayor noted that:

During World War II realising [sic] that might is not right, and that aggression will never bring peace on earth, and realising also that King Niambana's [Temne chief and] –the British people, were fighting for our rights and privileges so that peace may reign supreme on earth forever, the Alimania Association thereupon staged a Grand Native Dance at the Wilberforce Memorial Hall, the net proceeds of which amounted to twenty-five pounds was landed [sic] to Government.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *SLWN*, May 1949.

This gesture shows that the association played a role in community development. It also suggests that the association contributed to nation building by realizing that the war to some extent drained the resources of the colonial government and therefore deemed it necessary to make a cash donation to it.

Towards the end of the 1950s, the *Alimania* became popular both in colonial Freetown and the Protectorate, particularly in Port Loko and parts of Kambia Districts.⁵⁰ The branches bore the same principles as the parent body in Freetown. Morlai Turay noted that sometime members of the *Alimania* who relocated to Port Loko or Kambia played a role in establishing these branches. Others formed the association with the help of association members in Freetown.⁵¹ Banton argues that many of the *Alimania* branches in the Protectorate performed diverse functions and had a much more secular character in contrast to the parent body in Freetown. Though Banton does not specify these functions, Bangurah and Turay noted that some of these branches participated in farming and community development projects. In all this, the branches recognized and respected Sesay as their national leader who headed the association for fifteen years.⁵² My informants could not clarify how Sesay, who insisted on the Islamic character of the association, related with the branches that engaged in non-Islamic activities.

It is also useful to examine another aspect of the association's activities. It encouraged female participation and supported leaders of its female wing. The first Mammy Queen of the association is Sukainatu Bangura. In an interview with her, Bangura noted that when Sesay nursed the idea of forming the *Alimania*, he first

⁵⁰ Interview, Morlai Turay, Freetown, November 5, 2003. See appendix 27.

⁵¹ Interview, Morlai Turay.

⁵² Interview, Hajj Bangurah and Morlai Turay.

contacted her as a renowned and established market woman in King Jimmy Market. Bangura attended the maiden meeting with some of her business colleagues: Yankaday Kargbo, Mbalu Conteh, Haja Nancy, Gbessay Sesay, Yebu Sesay and Adama Kamara (her sister in-law). At the meeting, members elected Gibril Sesay as President and Bangura, also known as Kai Bangura, as Mammy Queen.⁵³ As Mammy Queen, she maintained discipline among female members and supervised the cooking during official ceremonies or engagements. The Mammy Queen also ensured that the chief whip enforced dress codes during official engagements. Since the Mammy Queen served as the lead singer of the association, Bangura trained young girls in the art of singing and dancing. She presided over marriage ceremonies for young members sponsored by the association. From the above accounts it can be argued that these tasks strengthened the organization. In short, the role of the Mammy Queen and other female officials in cultural associations contributed to the success of these associations in the colony. This speaks to Geiger's argument about the important role individual women played in mass movements and nationalist struggles in colonial Africa. In Tanganyika, Geiger argues, female lead singers like Bibi Titi Mohamed played a significant role in garnering support for TANU. Bibi Titi's commitment to TANU helped broaden the appeal of the association beyond its traditional base of male supporters.⁵⁴ While Nyerere gave scripted speeches in English and sometimes in Swahili and mobilized men, Bibi Titi "recruited" and "collected" the women urging them through speeches and songs to join TANU in order to secure Tanganyika independence. Through her courage and serious determination to give

⁵³ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

⁵⁴ Susan Geiger, "Tanganyika Nationalism as 'Women's Work': Life Histories, Collective Biography and Changing Historiography" *The Journal of African History* 37 3 (1996), pp. 467-468.

women agency in Tanganyika nationalism, Bibi Titi increased the participation of women in TANU. Though illiterate, she had great influence in TANU. Clearly, Bibi Titi proved to be a leader of consequence and rallied the troops during heated moments with the colonial authorities and sometimes even when Nyerere was in hiding.⁵⁵ The important role of Bibi Titi in TANU as trumpeted by Geiger attaches a new meaning to female roles in male-dominated associations in colonial Africa. Conversely, Fatou Diarra and her colleagues used songs to convey their views on socio-political events in colonial Guinea: “women went to the markets every day... if there was a new song all the women learned it and sang it in the taxis, teaching one another. When there was an event, the leader went to the market with the song to teach it to other women. After the 1954 elections, women sang at the markets that the colonial government had rigged the elections.”⁵⁶ In the same vein, since the 1940s, Kai Bangura and others used songs to carve out a niche for themselves in the Sierra Leone colony; e.g. in the *Alimania*, Bangura and others used songs to laud and spread the principles of Islam, taunt males they perceived as cowards and encouraged non-members to join the association. The above point argues that roles like singing, dancing and mobilization of young women to promote the aims of mass movements deserve significant recognition in African historiography.⁵⁷ This lacuna is particularly strong in Sierra Leone historiography which has given little or no recognition to the role these tasks played in shaping the history of the colony between the 1930s and 1961. Even Professor Banton who has done some work on voluntary associations in

⁵⁵ Geiger, *TANU Women*, pp. 58-61.

⁵⁶ Jean Allman et al. eds., *Women in African Colonial Histories*, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2002), p. 288.

⁵⁷ LaRay Denzer, “Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27 (1994), pp. 1-12.

colonial Freetown has not accentuated the crucial role of the *Mammy Queens* and others in the *Alimania* and other associations. This study wants to suggest that Mammy Queens were core to the cultural associations; their tasks were as important as those of the chairmen. In fact, with the formation of the SLPP, the support of Bangura and others gave the party broader support.

Like the *Alimania* above, the *Ambas Geda* helped its members adjust to urban life by providing them with the relevant information and education on issues that affected their lives. Beyond this, it is claimed that the association raised the standard of dress and cleanliness among its membership.⁵⁸ Little, commenting on this cultural achievement by the *Ambas Geda* and other voluntary associations in colonial Freetown, notes: “they prescribe a specific code of personal and moral conduct which is designed to regulate the public behaviour of members as well as their relations with each other.”⁵⁹ The code of conduct of the *Ambas Geda* accentuated penalties for indecorous behavior in private or public. If a spouse reported an abuse of any sort, the discipline officer of the association investigated the matter and reported to the headwoman, the Mammy Queen. If the accusations turned out to be true, the headwoman scathingly reproached or admonished the convicted spouse.⁶⁰ It is unclear whether this worked equally for both genders. However, Sukainatu Bangura insinuated that she particularly protected women against their husbands because some men proved too abusive and sexist. Also, a member found quarreling in public or abusing elderly people or putting curses on others faced

⁵⁸ Interview, Chief Gbonko.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Little, *West African Urbanization: A Study of Voluntary Associations in Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), p. 96.

⁶⁰ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura. As the first Mammy Queen of the *Alimania*, she informed me that she dealt with numerous cases of spousal abuse. She emphasized that during her tenure, she reduced the number of such cases within the *Alimania*.

immediate suspension, expulsion or a heavy fine. Chief Gbonko explained that such disciplinary measures went a long way to curb bumptious and rambunctious attitudes among Ambas Geda members in private or public. Because the association effected such levels of discipline, its members looked to their officers for redress in unjust circumstances. When in need of assistance and advice on critical issues affecting their lives the executive remained the first port of call.⁶¹

The Ambas Geda also played a role in the life of migrant Temne young men and women. It helped with Temne migrants' general orientation to urban life by providing them with the information necessary about Freetown. Since the 1920s immigration into Freetown soared. Immigrants from the Protectorate flooded colonial Freetown for diverse reasons ranging from seeking greener pastures to escaping enslavement in the Protectorate. It should be noted that though slavery was abolished in Africa the institution continued in some regions of the Protectorate. These slaves were called "Domestics" in the Protectorate.⁶² Slaves who escaped enslavement in the Protectorate left an economic gap that worried their respective chiefs: "This dismayed the chiefs who saw a mass exodus of their labourers to the coast, and caused consternation to the Sierra Leone government which found itself with stagnant production in the Protectorate and a swollen city in Freetown."⁶³ In addition to the above factor, some migrants came to Freetown to escape the harsh treatment of District Commissioners and the Frontier Police in the

⁶¹ Interview, Pa Yamba Kalie, Freetown, November 5, 2003. See appendix 14.

⁶² *West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette*, January 9, 1926. See also Allen Howard, "Pawning in Coastal Northwest Sierra Leone, 1870-1910," in Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Pawnship in Africa: debt bondage in historical perspective* (Boulder and San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994), p. 276.

⁶³ Anne Phillips, *The Enigma of Colonialism: An Interpretation of British Policy in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 34.

Protectorate.⁶⁴ Others came to the city in search of job and commercial opportunities. The *Alimania* and *Ambas Geda* “helped with the migrant’s general orientation, particularly when most of these migrants were dazzled by urban life. The arrival of Temne migrants to colonial Freetown meant a departure from traditional ways of life they led in a tightly organized society in the Protectorate. It was the role of the Mammy Queen to assist young Temne female migrants to adjust to the culture shock in colonial Freetown.”⁶⁵

Sukainatu Bangura reminisced that the role played by voluntary associations in helping new immigrants in colonial Freetown was not unique to the Temne alone; others like the Mandingo and Fula did the same. She however, particularly stressed that in her own case she did not only help reorient the Temne girls, but offered them employment opportunities. Upon arrival from the Protectorate to colonial Freetown, Bangura would show the young migrants methods of saving money and the most effective way of investing their profits in small scale enterprises.⁶⁶ Kenneth Little has also commented on the role of voluntary associations in assisting migrants in colonial Freetown, noting:

The association helped the migrant adapt to the new life by providing him [or her] with new information about the town.... The association also reduces the migrant’s isolation by acting as a ‘civilizing’ agency on his behalf. It inculcates new standard of dress, social behaviour and personal hygiene; the advantage from the migrant’s point of view is that he felt at home with his neighbours.⁶⁷

Little argues that voluntary associations provided material and moral support to migrants on arrival in colonial Freetown. He also opines that migrants usually turned to the head of

⁶⁴ *West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette*, January 9, 1926.

⁶⁵ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura; this information was also corroborated by Hajj Bangurah, who was an executive member of the *Alimania* in 1955. See also Kenneth Little, *Africa Women in Towns: An Aspect of Africa’s Social Revolution* (London: Cambridge University, 1973), p. 50.

⁶⁶ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

⁶⁷ Little, *West African Urbanization*, p. 80

an association rather than to his or her lineage for advice. The presence of these migrants affected the demographic make-up of colonial Freetown. Many took on menial jobs despised and frowned upon by Freetown residents, particularly Creoles. Many Temne and Mende migrants formed part of the labor force in colonial Freetown.⁶⁸ Sources show that the migrants felt relatively comfortable with their hosts who guided them through their daily lives in a complex environment. It has been argued that when the new migrants faced trouble with the law or had financial difficulties they felt comfortable reporting the matter to the association. The association usually promptly responded to these cases faster than relatives.⁶⁹

The Ambas Geda also tried to shape the socio-cultural life of the colony by enforcing discipline among its members. That is, the association enjoined members to adhere to its rules. These rules as noted above include respect for elders, good comradeship, thriftiness, and punctuality at meetings, good dress codes, and proper public behavior, among others. In several instances, the Ambas Geda substituted the courts of the Temne Authority or colonial courts. That is, when conflicts ensued between members, the chief whip usually intervened and tried to resolve such disputes. In cases where he found it difficult to resolve conflicts, he called on his superiors. In such instances, the chairman and headwoman would impose a solution, as a last resort which the parties usually accepted. Sources show that the association discouraged the idea of members taking complaints to the Temne Authority, which usually handled much more complex cases involving witch-craft within the community or between the Temne and members from other ethnic groups. By taking on this role, my informants noted that the

⁶⁸ *SLWN*, June 14, 1942.

⁶⁹ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko.

association minimized the number of conflicts disputants took to the Temne Authority, or the colonial courts who experienced difficulties in resolving cases involving customary law. Also, resolving disputes among members in the association helped create unity among them. Finally, the discipline enforced among members of the association made them ready to accept discipline in other spheres.⁷⁰ Banton contends that the recreational activities organized by the leadership of the association with emphasis on moral standards helped reduce crimes in colonial Freetown, at least among the Temne community.⁷¹ In the area of punctuality at meetings, latecomers paid fines; failure to honor such fines resulted to suspension or expulsion.

Little has argued that voluntary associations taught immigrants thrift by the demand for regular payments of dues, and “its practice is taught by mutual benefit schemes as well as by the savings clubs themselves.”⁷² The *Ambas Geda* practiced a limited credit scheme which gave out loans to its members to do small scale business. The loans had conditions attached to them; i.e. if a member had received financial assistance from the association more than twice, he or she was not liable to be granted a loan. The rationale for such conditionality was based on the fact that the amount of the loan was relatively high and required a longer repayment period. Ansumana Koroma, a beneficiary of one such scheme recollected that in some cases a group of four or five members would be granted loan for a joint business scheme. The recipients of such loan

⁷⁰ Interviews, Chief Gbonko, Pa Yambie Kalie and Sukainatu Bangura. All gave their views in separate interviews.

⁷¹ Michael Banton, “Adaptation and Integration in the Social System of Temne Immigrants in Freetown” *Africa* 26 4 (October 1956), p. 335.

⁷² Little, *West African Urbanization*, p. 89-90.

would agree to repay such loans at an agreed time usually after a year.⁷³ This scheme helped many Temne migrants engaged in small scale commercial enterprises.

Like the *Alimania*, the *Ambas Geda* also helped project Temne prestige. Oral testimonies indicate that the criteria used to assess prestige hinged on good public display or performance by an ethnic-based association. It depended on the way the association impressed onlookers through its flamboyant costumes and mode of dance.⁷⁴ During wedding ceremonies of a member or when invited or hired to perform at a ceremony, the unique costume worn by the *Ambas Geda* clearly distinguished it from others and onlookers. My informants recalled that all members of the *Ambas Geda* including joiners from other ethnic groups wore such costumes when the association had a public function.⁷⁵ Another marker of prestige involved the level of support an association gave its members when in conflict with other association members within the Temne community. If an *Ambas Geda* member faced a court action from a non-*Ambas Geda* member, for example, the said member expected the association to help with court expenses and legal aid by employing the services of a Temne who was au fait with customary law. In situations where the court action involved cases with a member from another ethnic group, the association gave both financial and moral support but not legal advice since the issue might be beyond Temne customary law. Such assistance shaped the public view about an association's social standing. During such conflicts, non-association members or members from associations that could not provide such help, received scorn

⁷³ Interview, Ansumana Koroma, Freetown, December 5, 2003. See appendix 23.

⁷⁴ Interview, Saidu Turay, Freetown, December 10, 2003. See appendix 28.

⁷⁵ Interviews Ansumana Koroma and Saidu Turay. Both were interviewed separately.

through songs during public functions or were taunted by public observers.⁷⁶ In addition, when an *Ambas Geda* was in dispute with a non-member, the association usually devised songs that would taunt the said individual as an “enemy of the association.”⁷⁷ In fact, the themes of such songs vilified the character of the non-*Ambas Geda* member.

Though based in Freetown, between 1950 and 1958, the *Ambas Geda* established branches in Mateboi, Makeni, Kambia and Magburaka.⁷⁸ The rise of various cultural associations in the colony meant that various ethnic groups tried to project their image. The relative success of the *Ambas Geda* in terms of offering assistance to members, creating unity, burnishing Temne ethnic pride and giving members an alternative to Creole institutions encouraged interested parties to establish branches in other areas in the Protectorate where the Temne community had a large majority. In other words, because the *Ambas Geda* played a role in uniting its members under a Temne umbrella, my informants argued that this served as incentive in establishing similar branches in the Protectorate. Leaders of these branches regarded the *Ambas Geda* in Freetown as their parent body with similar structures. In Freetown, associations of Limba and Loko speakers copied the *Ambas Geda* in structure and form, while others in fact abandoned their ethnic associations and joined the *Ambas Geda*. Pa Sorie Dumbuya, a section chief of the Limba community in the east of Freetown, recalled that many members of his household joined the *Ambas Geda* in 1954. He recollected that Limba young men and women impressed by the extravagant theatricality of the *Ambas Geda* quickly identified

⁷⁶ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko and Sukainatu Bangura.

⁷⁷ Interview, Ansumana Koroma.

⁷⁸ Interview, Chief Adikalie Gbonko. These are Temne strongholds; my dad hails from Magburaka. He recalled watching *Ambas Geda* functions as an onlooker when he was a high school student.

themselves as “Temne so that they could gain admission into the *Ambas Geda*. Many of these young men and women who claimed Temne identity at this time had brought cases before me as Limba people. It was therefore surprising to hear some of them speak Theimne and claiming to be Temne.”⁷⁹ Pa Dumbuya could not confirm to me the number of Limba young men and women who fled to the *Ambas Geda*, but he reminisced that because “we Limba could not organize an ethnic association with clout and gravitas similar to the *Ambas Geda*, we lost many promising young men and women to the Temne. This situation affected our cohesion for a long time.”⁸⁰ On the issue where Limba joined the *Ambas Geda* and passed as Temne, Chief Gbonko explained that these members had to learn Theimne to be able to understand the cultural values of the association. Some Limba speakers easily passed off as Temne because the two languages are inter-related, i.e. they share similar dictions; many therefore found it relatively easy to learn how to speak Theimne. More importantly, he argued, many young Limba and women felt ashamed to be identified as Limba speakers. This is because the public viewed them as backward and primitive “palm wine cutters and sellers who always resided in remote sections of society.”⁸¹ He noted that many Limba young men and women admired the public rituals of the *Ambas Geda*. Also, some Limba speakers who spoke Theimne had learnt the language through their interaction with Temne either in Freetown or in the Protectorate, particularly in places such as Makeni and Kambia where the two ethnic communities constituted the largest majorities. When some migrated to Freetown, they found it easy to claim Temneness. In all of this, the treatment accorded

⁷⁹ Interview, Pa Sorie Dumbuya, Freetown, November 10, 2003. See appendix 9.

⁸⁰ Interview, Pa Sorie Dumbuya.

⁸¹ Interview, Chief Gbonko.

these Limba–Theimne speakers in the *Ambas Geda* remains unclear. I assume they equally received benefits accorded members with Temne parentage. It is also not clear the depth of knowledge the new applicants had to have before being admitted into the association. Judging from the testimonies of my informants, it can be argued that the new members in the *Ambas Geda* needed only a working knowledge of Theimne as long as they abided by its rules.

Brima Sesay, the headman of Loko speakers in Wellington, related that some Loko speakers who fled to the *Ambas Geda* did not return to the Loko community. Chief Sesay recalled that the *Ambas Geda* proved attractive to many of his colleagues in the 1950s: “they admired the melodrama of the *Ambas Geda*. Many had to give up their Loko identity in favor of the Temne one. Many had to do so because Kande Bureh, the head of the *Ambas Geda* [,] had insisted that only Temnes were to be admitted to the group; this made the Loko young men and women learn how to speak Theimne and claimed that identity.”⁸² Both Dumbuya and Sesay insinuated that usually when new joiners gained admission to the *Ambas Geda*, they found it difficult to return to their original ethnic groups either for fear of rejection or public ridicule. They related that normally the incentive which attracted these joiners continued to keep them in the association and thus they found it difficult to go back. I could not ascertain from chief Sesay the number of Loko speakers who defected to the Temne. But he and Dumbuya confirmed to me that members of both ethnic groups from different sections of Freetown fled to the *Ambas Geda*. They based their information on several meetings purportedly held by both groups to reverse the exodus of their members. In addition to the Limba and

⁸² Interview, Brima Sesay, Freetown, November 10, 2003. See appendix 24.

Loko speakers, the *Ambas Geda* also attracted some Mende speakers. Chief George Caulker, Mende section chief, recollected that many Mende speakers assumed Temne and Creole identities in the late 1940s and early 1950s for different reasons. In the case of those who passed off as Creoles, many did so to gain membership into the Creole-controlled freemasonry. Conversely, Mende speakers who wished to join the *Ambas Geda* learned to speak Theimne.⁸³ Banton corroborates this point by noting that many Mende joined the *Ambas Geda* on an individual basis. Little also argues that in the Protectorate many of the flourishing associations in the Mende region had Temne leadership.⁸⁴

Some of the activities of the *Ambas Geda* clearly incensed some members of the Creole community. The practice sessions infuriated critics of the association, particularly the singing and dancing aspects designed to sharpen the skills of drummers and dancers. Many ex-members noted that they often clashed with the Creoles who complained to Kande Bureh about too much noise from such practice sessions. An editorial in the *Weekly News* noted that in the evenings people would hear “drunken women [and men], the Temnes [sic] especially, resort to the vilest use of their unbridled tongues.”⁸⁵

The criticisms notwithstanding, the *Ambas Geda* continued with business as usual. It continued to undertake fund raising activities within and outside of the colony. Pa Mohammed Kallay, a Mandingo businessman and a non-member of the *Ambas Geda*, informed me that during the wedding ceremony of his daughter in 1955 in Freetown, he hired the *Ambas Geda* to grace the occasion “because of the nature of their dance and

⁸³ Interview, George Caulker, Freetown, November 10, 2003. See appendix 5.

⁸⁴ Kenneth Little, “Structural Change in the Sierra Leone Protectorate,” *Africa XXV* (1955), pp. 222-223.

⁸⁵ *SLWN*, September 9, 1943.

their beautiful Temne songs. Though I am Mandingo, I preferred the Ambas Geda.”⁸⁶ Clearly, the association used these funds to assist its members as noted above. It is thus clear such incentives attracted Temne and non-Temnes alike to join the association.

Apart from the Ambas Geda, Endeavor and the Temne Progressive Union both founded by Yenki Kamara also worked towards projecting Temneness. Kamara used Endeavor to help young Temne men acquire skills in tailoring and woodwork. He bought sewing machines to teach them these skills and also opened a local school for woodwork to train young men in carpentry although this enterprise collapsed early in the 1940s after two years due to inexperience and inadequate resources.⁸⁷ Endeavor also organized and promoted lantern parades, an annual event held at the end of the Muslim month of fasting. He claimed that lantern parades “attracted people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.”⁸⁸ That is, as public events these parades attracted not only members of the Temne community but members of the public as well. Kamara stressed that the association funded and built the lanterns used during such parades. Beyond these parades, the association also promoted inter-community sports, particularly soccer which proved very popular. Such inter-community events included teams from one section or a community playing against another from a different section or community. Before the establishment of his association, talented Temne soccer players found it hard to show their skills because they lacked the wherewithal that would enable them participate in such activities. As a soccer fan himself, he used his resources to promote the sports in the east of Freetown. He built a soccer team of Temne young men and organized

⁸⁶ Interview, Mohammed Kallay, Freetown, November 2, 2003. See appendix 15.

⁸⁷ Interview, Pa Alimamy Yenki Kamara.

⁸⁸ Interview, Pa Alimamy Yenki Kamara.

tournaments with Aku and Creole community teams in the east and west of Freetown. Between 1949 and 1952, for example, the Endeavor soccer team played non-Temne teams in Aberdeen, Wellington and Wilberforce. These competitions not only generated income for the association, they also established inter-community amiability. The proceeds from these tournaments sustained the operations of the association. Kamara reflected that “Endeavor was the only organized association which had a tribal soccer team; the others were not concerned about organizing a tribal soccer team.”⁸⁹ His major criterion for judging the Temneness of members of his association hinged on the fact that “he knew their parents well and they all spoke Theimne eloquently.”⁹⁰ However, he later opened the membership of the association to non-Temne community members such as the Creole, Aku and others. Again, Kamara noted that he admitted only those who spoke Theimne. As with other associations which used this variable, it is unclear the degree of Theimne knowledge new joiners had to possess. He also could not advance a clear position on the relationship between members who learnt to speak Theimne from those with Temne parentage. On opening Endeavor to non-Theimne speakers, Messrs Williams and Samu Johnson, both Creole young men, became “the first non-Temne members of the association in 1949; but later learnt how to speak Theimne very well.”⁹¹ This comment by Kamara suggests that some of the non-Temne members may have gained admission into the association with a minimal knowledge of Theimne with the possibility that they improved with time. Williams later rose to the rank of Secretary-General of the association. The activities of the association, Kamara argued vociferously, enhanced the

⁸⁹ Interview, Pa Yenki Kamara.

⁹⁰ Interview, Pa Yenki Kamara.

⁹¹ Interview, Pa Yenkin Kamara.

image of Temneness “because people admired his initiative in organizing an association of that nature. Before Endeavor there was no ethnic association which promoted inter-community sports in Freetown.”⁹² This account shows that the association had an ethnically mixed character though Kamara described it as a Temne association. However, in defending the Temneness of Endeavor, Kamara argued that Theimne remained the association’s main medium of communication during meetings and the association continued to pay its annual subscription to the Ambas Geda. He also claimed that he, a Temne by birth, remained the association’s head and owner. Though Creoles and others joined the association, it is unclear whether these people abandoned their “real” identities. It is possible that they remained members of Endeavor and learnt to speak Theimne but still maintained their Creoleness, Akuness or Mende identities. Nonetheless, the accounts of Kamara indicate the association attracted Temne, Mende, Aku and Creole community members. The accounts show that Endeavor fostered inter-community and intra-community interaction and understanding. It provided self-help projects and provided professional training for young men, though this might have been on a micro scale.

Parallel to the above association, Kamara’s Temne Progressive Union (TPU) also took part in educational but mainly political activities. The Union provided educational opportunities for Temne children. It provided funding for Temne children who attended the *Immaniya* School and also recruited Arabic teachers to teach adults as well in the school.⁹³ The history of this school and its activities are examined in chapter 4.

Apart from educational activities the TPU also engaged in political activities. Kamara averred that towards the end of colonial rule, acute antagonism existed between

⁹² Interview, Pa Yenkin Kamara.

⁹³ Interview, Ambassador Conteh.

the Creoles and non-creole ethnic communities. Dismayed by the possibility of losing complete political power to non-creoles, Creole associations such as the Nova Scotian and Maroon Descendants Association opposed any further transfer of power to non-Creoles.⁹⁴ The Sierra Leone Peoples Party, which represented non-creole political interests, experienced tension between the two largest ethnic groups in its membership – the Temne and Mende. Kamara noted that he and others decided to form a youth organization that would advocate and promote Temne interests, e.g. sponsor Temne young men to contest elections for the National Assembly.⁹⁵ He recollected that though Kande Bureh and other prominent Temne formed the bedrock of the SLPP, he wanted a more exclusive Temne political organization such as the National Council of Sierra Leone formed by the Creoles. The TPU held regular weekly meetings where members discussed issues relating to Temne political relevance. The outcome of these meetings resulted in the idea of forming a political party. In 1960, SLPP delegates, together with those of other political activities, went to London to discuss the terms of Sierra Leone's independence from Britain. Siaka Stevens, a delegate, opposed one of the provisions of the agreement and boycotted the rest of the proceedings. He returned to Freetown and transformed a movement he had formed earlier, the Elections Before Independence Movement (EBIM) into "the All Peoples Congress, with the sun as emblem."⁹⁶ Kamara recalled that Stevens, already suspicious of the Creoles and Mende speakers within the SLPP, tapped into the TPU for political support. The TPU membership gave the new party its unflinching support and some of its members such as Sorie Ibrahim Koroma

⁹⁴ *SLWN*, March, 1951.

⁹⁵ Interview, Ambassador Conteh.

⁹⁶ *West Africa*, September 24, 1960.

played a very active role in the affairs of the party and eventually rose to the rank of Vice President of Sierra Leone when the APC won the general elections in the 1960s.⁹⁷ The APC would rule Sierra Leone for 24 years in the postcolonial period. Before winning the general elections in 1967, the APC remained the official opposition before Sierra Leone gained independence. Though the TPU firmly supported the APC because of its staunchly anti-creole and anti-Mende agenda, Kamara maintained a few of its members supported the SLPP.⁹⁸ This is because some members still admired Bureh who remained a supporter of the party.

The above accounts show that rivalry between the Creoles and anti-creole camps continued to be acute in several ways. The need to provide alternative institutions and ways of life led to the rise of Temne institutions such as the TPU and in the late 1930s and post Second World War period cultural associations such as the Alimania, Ambas Geda and others. But the accounts clearly reveal that Temne institutions did not only compete with Creole institutions, towards the end of colonial rule, some members of the Temne community perceived Mende dominance of the SLPP as a threat. The accounts of Kamara and Ambassador Conteh indicate that the TPU played a critical role in the formation of the APC. In sum, Kamara's activities in founding Endeavor as a young man's club and the TPU as a political organization show that he played a part in raising Temneness.

Like Yenki Kamara, Chief Adikalie Gbonko, in collaboration with others, claimed to have played a role in raising Temneness. The cultural association he founded,

⁹⁷ Notes from Ambassador Conteh. Ambassador claimed to be a founding member of APC; he noted that his role in founding the party won him at least four ambassadorial appointments in Europe, Africa and Asia.

⁹⁸ *The Daily Mail*, May, 1952.

Boys London, engaged in self-help projects. The members participated in community development by assisting in building projects and helped in road maintenance in Bambara Town.⁹⁹ It provided incentives to members by offering financial and moral support to them. The association made it incumbent on itself to grace the wedding, naming and funeral ceremonies of members through public display. It also performed at the wedding ceremonies of non-members if hired for a fee. It used these funds to assist poor, bereaved and sick members. Pa Buya also maintained that the association devised a credit scheme used only during emergencies. It also encouraged members to educate their children and offered them financial aid to pursue this ambition.¹⁰⁰ Because of the nature of assistance it offered members, the association attracted Mandingo, Susu, Mende, Limba and Loko speakers in Bambara Town to learn Temne and gained membership.¹⁰¹ With this attraction, Chief Gbonko argued, Temne self-image and ethnic pride improved. He contended that the Mandingo influence which had relegated Temneness to the background in the 1920s and 1930s had waned in the face of Temne resurgence in the 1940s through its cultural associations. When I pressed Chief Gbonko on the issue of forming numerous Temne cultural associations, he responded that: “these Temne splinter associations were formed in our immediate communities to assert Temne presence in all sections of Freetown.”¹⁰² It is clear that the new members of Boys London carried multiple identities, i.e. those from non-Temne communities who joined Boys London may have still retained their “original” identities. Nonetheless, as Chief Gbonko argued, the fact that these members joined the association showed their attraction to Temneness.

⁹⁹ Interview, Chief Gbonko.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Pa Buya.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Pa Buya.

¹⁰² Interview, Chief Gbonko.

Nuru Jinati and *Ariah* associations based in the vicinities of Magazine Cut, Bambara and Foulah Towns, engaged in community development projects and thus attracted non-Temne speakers as well. They both helped build *Jamil-ul- Tawid*, the second-oldest Temne mosque in the colony. Chief Gbonko noted that some of the funds used to build the mosque came from the singing and dancing activities of these groups.¹⁰³ Undertaking the building of a mosque suggests that these associations participated in community development, particularly when the mosque, though run and controlled by members of the Temne community, benefited residents in Magazine Cut and its environs. Alhaji Sillah, the Imam of the mosque, maintained that Theimne and Arabic remained the main medium of communication in the mosque. That is, all proceedings in the mosque were held in Arabic and Theimne, e.g. translating sermons from Arabic to Theimne during Friday prayers, making announcements and holding committee meetings in Theimne. However, Sillah also noted that Mandingo, Mende, Fula and Limba speakers, for diverse reasons, prayed at the mosque. He reminisced that on rare occasions sermons explained in Theimne were further translated into Krio, the lingua franca, in deference to non-Temne worshippers.¹⁰⁴ He could not clarify the process used to distinguish between Temne and non-Temne worshipers. In justifying his description of the Jam-ul-Tawid as a

¹⁰³ Interview, Chief Gbonko. In my desire to verify some of the claims made by Chief Gbonko who emphasized his close personal relationship with the founder of this association, I spoke with the current Imam of the Jam-ul-Tawid mosque, Alhaji Usman Sillah. I elicited from him the history of the mosque and its composition. Alhaji Sillah, who was not a member of *Nuru Jinati*, confirmed to me that the mosque was indeed built largely out of the funds of the association and to a small extent from personal donations/contributions by individual Temnes. Sillah is not an indigene of colonial Freetown, i.e. he was not born there. Born to Temne parents in Northern Sierra Leone, his parents migrated to Freetown with him in 1920 from whence he has lived. He moved to Magazine Cut in 1942.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Alhaji Usman Sillah, Freetown, November 10, 2003. See appendix 25.

Temne mosque, Sillah accentuated that Temne constituted the executive of the mosque including him, as Imam. In addition to this, he noted that part of the proceeds used to build the mosque came from *Nuru Jinati* and *Ariah*, both Temne associations. However, his own accounts suggest that the mosque served the Magazine Cut, Bambara and Foulah Town communities as a whole not just the Temne community. Therefore, one can argue that though those who described themselves as Temne ran the affairs of the mosque, it attracted non-Temne worshippers as well. Sillah's emphasis of the Temneness of the mosque and the role of *Nuru Jinati* and *Ariah* in this can be linked to the general trend of raising the profile of Temneness and how it served various communities within the colony of Sierra Leone. Chief Gbonko claimed that *Nuru Jinati* admitted Temne or Theimne speakers only. It punished by expulsion members who practiced fetish, fornication, adultery and superstitious activities. By adopting this position, the association taught members moral uprightness and belief in a supreme being.¹⁰⁵

The activities of *Ariah* went beyond contributing to the building of the Jam-ul-Tawid mosque. It promoted inter-Temne visitations; i.e. the association's leadership would visit other Temne communities in Cline Town on Fridays, the Muslim day of prayer. Normally the host community would return the visit and pray in the Mosque.¹⁰⁶ These exchange visits helped to consolidate Temne unity and promoted understanding among members of the group.¹⁰⁷ The above suggests that leaders of the Temne community undertook activities that promoted Temne unity which in turn helped to raise Temneness in the colony. By encouraging inter-Temne community visitations and

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Chief Gbonko.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Pa Mohammed Dumbuya.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Pa Mohammed Dumbuya.

promoting understanding among them, it was easy to mobilize the group in participating in national politics. Pa Dumbuya insinuated that during the municipal elections of 1957, “all Temnes voted for Temne candidates because the Creoles hated us and the Mende[s] could not be trusted.”¹⁰⁸ It is clear from the above statement that Pa Dumbuya and others, who described themselves as Temne, undertook activities that raised the public persona of Temneness to compete with or perhaps neutralize Creole power. It also shows though the Temne had collaborated politically with the Mende they still distrusted them.

Summing up, then, the account above illustrates that between 1939 and 1960, various cultural associations emerged with the aim of raising the status of Temneness in the colony. Though the founders described them as Temne associations, their accounts reveal that non-Temnes formed part of them. It is clear that these Temne associations proved vibrant and attractive to Temne and non-Temne community members. The members adhered to the tenets of the various associations and thus the associations contributed to molding the lives of migrants and residents alike in colonial Freetown. In short, because the associations got the allegiance of their members who abided by their rules, it is clear that they wielded power and influenced life in the colony in diverse ways.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, Pa Dumbuya.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF TEMNE INSTITUTIONS IN THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN THE COLONY, 1917-1961

The last chapter examined the rise and influence of Temne cultural associations and their role in projecting Temneness in the colony. The rise of the Temne Tribal Authority gave Theimne speakers a rallying symbol which gradually helped them build various institutions; this effort to some extent played a role in projecting a Temne image and influence in the colony. Thus, Temneness came to play a role in shaping the social history. In addition to the role of cultural associations, religious institutions also played a role in projecting the image of Temneness. That is, like the Temne Tribal Authority and cultural associations which rallied Theimne speakers together, Islam too served as a uniting force for the Temne community. Though Freetown was originally a Christian settlement, Islam came to play a particularly crucial role in the historical development of the colony. Allen Howard and others have argued that Islam has always been part of the colony's history; i.e. they argue that before and after the establishment of the colony, various communities engaged in Islamic practices.

This chapter examines the role played by Temne Islamic institutions such as mosques, in the spread of Islam in the colony. How did Temne Islamic institutions help project Temneness in a largely Christian settlement? As noted above, the colony was originally established as an experiment in social engineering with Christianity as its official religion for many inhabitants, particularly the Black Poor, Nova Scotians, and the Maroons.¹ In fact, while some of the early settlers practiced Christianity before their

¹ J.J. Crooks, *A History of Sierra Leone: Western Africa* (London: Browne and Nolan, Ltd., 1903), pp. 108-115.

resettlement in Freetown, others became converts upon their arrival.² However, both the colony's original inhabitants, particularly the Temne, Loko, Mende, Limba, and later the Mandingo, Susu, Fula, and liberated Africans referred to as Aku because of their strong Yoruba connection, practised an alternate religion – Islam – in the 19th and 20th centuries.³ The commitment of the Theimne and Mandingo speaking groups to spreading the teachings of Islam led some sections of the press to describe them as “interior Mohammedans.”⁴ Several letters to the editor of the *Weekly News* in 1893 and 1894 indicate that the “interior Mohammedans” substantially increased their numbers in the eastern part of the city and were practicing an “alien faith” in a “Christian city.” The letters urged the colonial government to curb the activities of these Mohammedans.⁵ Barbra Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard and David Skinner argue that Islam influenced social interaction among the native communities: “Islamic institutions fulfilled an integrative function for many of the Native migrants to the colony. There was also a considerable amount of syncretism between Islamic and local beliefs and practices. Many aspects of social and family life, however, were partially affected by Islam.”⁶ The

² Crooks, *History of the Colony*, pp. 108-115.

³ *SLWN*, April, 1893; see also *SLWN*, June 1895. Aku is the term used to refer to mostly Muslim ex-slaves of Yoruba descent. In the 19th century, they were variously defined in the press as “Creole Mohammedans,” “Muslim Creoles” and “Aku Mohammedans.” See *SLWN* April 22, 1892; *SLWN* November 20, 1893 and *SLWN* September, 1894. For a detailed definition of Aku and all, see John Peterson, *The Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969) and his *Freetown: A Study of the Dynamics of Liberated African Society, 1807-1870* (Northwestern University, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1963), pp. 10-20.

⁴ *SLWN*, April 22, 1893 and *SLWN* December 16, 1895.

⁵ *SLWN*, April-June 1893 and *SLWN*, March 15, 1894.

⁶ Barbra Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard and David E. Skinner, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801-1976)* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978), p. 8.

authors contend that Islam provided for, and to a large extent reinforced, communal values and norms of behavior among non-creole groups and the Aku.

Because the Creoles in particular, and to some extent the colonial government, viewed Freetown as a Christian settlement, religious tension between the Christian Creoles and the Muslim non-creole groups including the Aku over the use of public space sizzled. In 1843, for example, the colonial authorities destroyed a mosque under pressure from the Christian community.⁷ These sectarian tensions persisted well into the 20th century, thus prompting appeals from some sections of the press for religious tolerance. One such appeal particularly noted that:

Sierra Leone people [Creoles] should note that there are more English educated Christians [sic] than there are Muslims in this colony. They should know that it is their patriotic duty to help their backward Muslim brethren (born in the same country) as much as themselves. They should remember that the susceptibilities of loyal subjects like the Muslims should not be injured.⁸

It is unclear why the author referred to Muslims in the colony as backward. It can be assumed that the author made this charge because many Muslims had little or no Western education and Western education was largely used to determine the degree of one's enlightenment. Despite the pressures from Christian Creoles who wanted the colonial government to limit the practice of Islam, the religion survived throughout the colonial period. In fact, it did not only survive persecution from non-believers of the faith, it also impacted the lives of Temne, Mandingo, Fula, Aku and others in a variety of ways. David Skinner has noted the collaborative efforts of various communities in the spread of

⁷ *SLWN*, June, 1893.

⁸ *West African Mail and Trade Gazette*, April 10, 1926.

Islam.⁹ He argues that Islam revolved around the lives of Aku as well as the non-Aku communities: “the cultures of Sierra Leone were affected by Islam in a variety of ways, some of them direct and obvious, others more subtle.”¹⁰ However, though Skinner argues that Islam served as a rallying point for the indigenous community, some scholars have privileged the Aku over others with regards to the spread of Islam. These scholars posit that the Aku gave Islam a popular appeal. In other words, the works of Sai’fu Deen Alharazim, L. Proudfoot, Lamin Sanneh, and Ola Thomas among others downplay the role of indigenous Islamic institutions in the propagation of Islam in colonial Freetown. The authors fail to recognize the rise of indigenous Islamic institutions such as mosques built, run and owned by Temne speakers and the influence these had on the spread of Islam. This chapter argues that assigning too much agency to the Aku ignores the efforts of the indigenous community in propagating Islam.¹¹ It notes that the rise of Temne Islamic institutions show a general trend in the rise and influence of Temneness in the colony. In short, the rise of indigenous Islamic institutions such as Temne mosques and the Temne Islamic School not only shows the rise in Temne influence but also indicates that there were alternative institutions which catered for the religious needs of non-Aku Muslim worshippers. In particular, the above trend clearly shows that if we are to understand the impact Islam had on the colony’s history we should fully acknowledge the role played by indigenous historical actors in this enterprise.

Before I analyze the role and rise of these Temne institutions, it will be

⁹ David Skinner, “Mande Settlement and the Development of Islamic Institutions in Sierra Leone” *International Journal of Historical Studies* 11 (1978), p. 56.

¹⁰ Skinner, “Mande Settlement,” p. 56.

¹¹ By indigenous communities, I mean those communities who occupied Freetown and its surrounding areas before it became a settlement for freed slaves. These groups primarily include the Temne, original owners of the land, and Mende, Limba and Loko.

useful to briefly review the works of the authors mentioned above. A brief review of their works will help us understand their motivations, strengths and weaknesses on the subject. It will also give us a sense of why we should ask further questions about the significant role indigenous institutions played in the spread of the religion. The works are thematically reviewed and analyzed.

AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW OF THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY:

Sa'fu Deen Alharazim, Leslie Proudfoot, Lamin Sanneh and Ola Thomas have largely credited the Aku and their institutions in the propagation of Islam in the colony in the 19th and 20th centuries. They maintain that though the Mandingo, Fula and Susu taught some members of the Aku the tenets of Islam, the Aku played a greater role in disseminating the teachings of the faith since the mid 19th century. Alharazim, who described himself as Aku, became one of the first scholars to publish a detailed analysis on the spread of Islam in colonial Freetown. He claims that the Islamic activities of the Mandingos and Fulas attracted the Aku. Such attraction made the Aku seek the educational services of Mandingo and Fula teachers to instruct their children in the 19th century.¹² These graduates from this enterprise turned out to be principal propagators of the Islamic faith in Freetown. Such Aku agency in propagating Islam gave the religion a boost and popular appeal.¹³ In 1839, the Aku established the first mosques at Foulah Town and Fourah Bay. The colonial government frowned at this development and took steps to halt the practice

¹² M. Sai'fu Deen Alharazim, "The Origin and Progress of Islam in Sierra Leone," *Sierra Leone Studies* XXI (January, 1939), p. 13.

¹³ Alharazim, "Origin and Progress," pp. 13-15.

and spread of Islam by persecuting many Muslims, mainly Aku.¹⁴ In fact, Alharazim notes, the Governor ordered the burning of the first erected mosque in Foulah Town and publicly discussed the idea of expelling Muslims. The Aku survived such persecution and repeatedly appealed to the governor for religious tolerance.¹⁵ In all, Alharazim argues that though the Mandingo and Fula taught some Aku the principles of Islam, the Aku played a much bigger role in spreading and teaching the faith from the mid 19th to the early 20th centuries. This became evident in their steadfastness during the Muslim persecution and the burning of their mosque. They continued to practice the faith and persisted in their appeal to the colonial government for religious tolerance, which it gradually showed. Because Alharazim's focus is mainly on the role the Aku played in spreading Islam, he does not address the role indigenous Muslims and their institutions such as the Temne and others played in promoting the faith in the colony. He insinuates that apart from the Mandingo and Fula who initially exposed some Aku members to Islam, other ethnic groups followed the Aku lead. For him, if it were not for the commitment of the Aku the spread and entrenchment of the Islamic faith in the colony would have been difficult.¹⁶ Writing on a similar theme, Lamin Sanneh and Ola Thomas reinforce many of the claims made by Alharazim. Sanneh argues that intellectual factors played a much bigger role in disseminating the teachings of Islam than commerce and other factors in West Africa including Sierra Leone in the 19th and 20th centuries. That is, intellectual efforts such as the activities of Islamic clerics and teachers, played a much more effective role in the spread of the religion.

¹⁴ Alharazim, "Origin and Progress," p. 15.

¹⁵ Alharazim, "Origin and Progress," pp. 14-16.

¹⁶ Alharazim, "Origin and Progress," pp. 22-26.

Flowing from this, Sanneh argues that the liberated Africans showed enthusiasm in acquiring Islamic education from Futa Jallon. Their educational attainment gave them a certain advantage over other groups. Although the Mandingo initially introduced Islam to many of the groups in the colony in the 19th century, some members of the Aku were already Muslims before their resettlement in colonial Freetown and many wasted no time in showing their enthusiasm in engaging in Islamic activities.¹⁷ Because Futa Jallon played such a pivotal role in training many Islamic clerics, Sanneh notes that the region served as major route of Islamic influence; i.e. the Islamic clerics who lived in this region helped spread the faith in Sierra Leone through their students, mainly Aku, Mandingo and Fula speakers.¹⁸ He relates that the Aku served effectively as teachers, alfas and clerics to others, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In brief, Sanneh contends that the two major sources of the spread of Islam include liberated Africans resettled in the colony from 1808-1843 and Aku students who graduated from Futa Jallon. The Aku established various Muslim communities in the east and west of the colony from where they propagated Islam to their neighbors, including Temne, Mende, Loko, and Limba speakers.¹⁹ As part of their drive to entrench Islam in their communities, the Aku established Islam as their official religion in Foulah Town and

¹⁷ Lamin Sanneh, "Islamic Consciousness and the African Society: An Essay in Historical Interpretation" (Freetown: Unpublished Paper, Institute of African Studies, University of Sierra Leone, 1975), p.4. Many of the ideas contained in this paper have been repeated in Sanneh's recent work. See *The Crown and The Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban*, pp. 163-164.

¹⁹ Sanneh, *The Crown and Turban*, pp. 163-164.

Fourah Bay.²⁰ The above suggests that those who described themselves as Aku in these communities had to assume Islam as their religion. In sum, Sanneh argues that the training Aku received from other clerics in Futa Jallon and in other Islamic centers in West Africa coupled with the background some of them had before their resettlement in Sierra Leone gave them a certain advantage over other ethnic groups in spreading Islam. This is why he argues that intellectual factors played a greater role in the spread of the religion than other factors.

In support of the above position and touting the same theme, Ola Thomas states that despite the fact that the Aku were Islamic neophytes in the early 19th century, they helped entrench Islam in the colony. He notes that: “the combined activities of the learned Muslims including the Mandinkas [sic], Fulas, and liberated Africans [Aku] was to strengthen the faith of the Freetown Muslim community as they began to adopt more orthodox practices.”²¹ He does not give a timeline for this assertion. In the 19th century, Thomas claims, the Aku through the influence and leadership of Mohammed Wakka and Mohamed Sanusi opened Islamic learning centers in their communities, particularly in Fourah Bay and Foulah Town, referred to as *Karanthes*.²² Koranic classes held in these *Karanthes* and tutorials held in mosques helped spread the tenets of the religion. He contends that the *Karanthes* were opened to Mandingo, Fula and the Aku communities.

²⁰ Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban*, p. 165. See also Lamin Sanneh, “Amulets and Muslim Orthodoxy: One Christian’s Venture into Primal Religious Spirituality” *International Review of Mission* (1974).

²¹ Ola Thomas, “Freetown Muslims in the 19th Century” (Freetown: 1975), p. 13. This is a typescript, which is used as a source of reference to teach Aku children their history and their contribution to the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone. I am grateful to the staff at Fourah Bay College library who gave me access to this document.

²² Thomas, “Freetown Muslims,” pp. 16-29.

Like others before him, Thomas argues clearly that non-Aku Muslims followed the lead of the Aku who served as Islamic models.²³

The works of Proudfoot, Alusine Jalloh and David Skinner take a slightly different perspective on the subject. Proudfoot, for example, supports to a large extent the arguments of Alharazim, Sanneh and Thomas; i.e. he assigns primary agency to the Aku role in disseminating Islam. However, his analysis includes the role indigenous Muslims played in spreading the religion. Though he acknowledges the role of the Temne and Mende, he largely credits the Aku role in this. He argues that the values of Islam which the Aku acquired earlier on put them at an advantage over non-Aku Muslims.²⁴ The urban experience of the Aku made them the leading Islamic missionaries over indigenous Muslims.²⁵ When Muslims chose to form associations to foster unity among all Muslims in colonial Freetown, the Aku took the lead in this: “[Aku] were the first people to establish strong neighbourhood groups organized around their mosques, through their connexion – often by family ties to official Freetown society, they had the necessary insights and concepts to equip them for major forms of organization.”²⁶ On this theme, he avers that in 1932, a Muslim Congress was established to “bring mutual understanding among the general Muslim communities of [the] colony” and “to discourage tribal discrimination.”²⁷ The Aku largely dominated the association. By 1942, Aku and Temne officials led the executive of the Congress.²⁸ But bickering and rivalry between the Aku and Temne wrecked progress in the association. Such altercation led to the splintering of

²³ Thomas, “Freetown Muslims,” p. 29.

²⁴ L. Proudfoot, “Towards Muslim Solidarity in Freetown” *Africa* XXIX (1961), p. 148.

²⁵ Proudfoot, “Muslims Solidarity,” pp. 148-149.

²⁶ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 148.

²⁷ Proudfoot, “Muslims Solidarity,” p. 149.

²⁸ Proudfoot, “Muslims Solidarity,” p. 149.

Islamic associations – the Aku formed the Muslim Association and the Temne, the Muslim Reformation Society. Proudfoot states that the Muslim Association proved much more effective and efficacious than the Muslim Reformation Society.²⁹ The criteria he uses to assign primary agency to one ethnic group on its role in propagating Islam remain unclear. However, it can be assumed that he relied on the fact that the Aku used their religion as a mark of their identity; i.e. the term Aku is mostly used to describe “Muslim Creoles”, a sign of their devotion to the faith. It is also possible that Proudfoot uses what he perceives as Aku Islamic educational attainment as a marker of their role in the propagation of the religion. Unlike Proudfoot, Alusine Jalloh adopts a different theme in assessing the spread of Islam. For Jalloh, non-Aku players such as the Fula played a bigger role than others.

In his major work, *African Entrepreneurship: Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone*, he claims that: “for over two centuries Fula traders have helped to shape the religious landscape of Sierra Leone, especially Freetown.”³⁰ The Fula not only had a long history of propagating Islam in West Africa, “they have played a major role in the conversion of Islam of almost half the 4.5 million people of Sierra Leone.”³¹ Because many neophytes in Sierra Leone viewed Islam as prestigious, the spread of Islam among them became effective and successful. The Islamic education of the Fula made them to be “highly thought of and became, for many, a reference point and model.”³² Jalloh posits that the Fula who helped introduce the Aku to Islam in the 19th century forged

²⁹ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 154.

³⁰ Alusine Jalloh, *African Entrepreneurship: Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone* (Athens: Ohio University, 1999), p. 151. See his other work, Alusine Jalloh and David Skinner, eds., *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1997).

³¹ Jalloh, *African Entrepreneurship*, p. 151.

³² Jalloh, *African Entrepreneurship*, p. 157.

cooperation with Aku communities at Fourah Bay and Foulah Town, i.e. they helped them build schools and mosques and accompanied them for further training in Futa Jallon. Such cooperation not only improved the quality of Islamic education in Freetown, but also increased the number of Muslims literate in Arabic in the colony. The Fula, Jalloh maintains, saw their contribution as one that led to greater cohesion and unity in what he refers to as the trans-ethnic Muslim community in Freetown in the 19th and 20th centuries. Jalloh's work is one of the first to highlight non-Aku as major players in propagating Islam in the colony. His approach differs from what this study seeks to establish as analyzed below. Unlike Jalloh, David Skinner in many of his works includes a wider array of players in analyzing the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone. As a matter of fact, Skinner has done more work on Islam in Sierra Leone than many of the works reviewed here. His views and themes differ from Alharazim, Thomas, and Sanneh and to some extent, Proudfoot and Jalloh.

For Skinner, commerce played a much more effective role in the propagation of the Islamic faith, at least in Sierra Leone in the 19th century. He notes that in the 1820s, the most important Muslim traders included the Mandingo, Fulas and Temne. In 1826, indigenous people in Freetown numbered 2,174 excluding the Aku and Creoles; Mandingos, Susus, and Temne who engaged primarily in Islamic activities and trade, comprised half this population.³³ Through their commercial activities, the Mandingo, Temne, Fula and Susu engaged in spreading Islam in the hinterland and later in the colony in the early to mid 19th century. In short, he notes that trade always went hand-in-hand with Islam in Sierra Leone. In discussing the commitment of the Temne to Islam,

³³ David Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone During the 19th Century* (University of California, PhD Dissertation, 1971), p. 131.

Skinner contends that: “no instance could be traced of a Timmanee [sic] having been converted to Christianity. This cannot be attributed to any invincible attachment to their superstitions as many are said to become converts to the Mohammedan faith, which is supposed to be making considerable progress among them.”³⁴ He also recognizes the role of the Aku, Mandingo and Fulas in spreading the doctrines of Islam; Mandingo and Fula clerics exposed the Aku to the religion.³⁵

In the mid 19th century, the Aku established three principal mosques in Freetown: the Foulah Town Mosque opened in 1831, Fourah Bay Mosque opened in 1836 and a third one at Aberdeen opened circa 1870.³⁶ The establishment of these Mosques was followed by the opening of Islamic primary schools in 1899 where Arabic and English were taught to Aku children. By 1909, eight Muslim schools existed in colonial Freetown.³⁷ These efforts not only served the Aku communities, they also consolidated their influence in the colony. But Skinner also acknowledges that in spite of the great efforts the Aku made in establishing Islamic primary schools, the contributions of others like the Temne, Mandingo and Susu proved impressive. He notes that in a bid to counter the growing exclusivity of the Aku among the Muslim population, non-Aku Muslims, particularly the Mandingoes, Fulas, Serakulis, Susus and Temne, came together and built their own Mosque, Jam-ul-Qudus, in 1917 where they held Friday prayers. But a dispute among the various groups of this alliance led to some of them, especially the Temne, abandoning the Mosque in the same period in pursuit of their own places of worship.³⁸

³⁴ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, p. 132.

³⁵ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, pp. 139-140.

³⁶ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, P.149

³⁷ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, pp. 156-157.

³⁸ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, pp. 161-162.

Haunted by the idea that they owned Freetown, the Temne often disagreed with other groups they considered strangers on their land. That is, given their population strength and ancestral claims to the land, the Temne felt insulted when “strangers” attempted to impose order or control over them. They therefore embarked on building their own mosque. Skinner argues that another reason why the Temne broke away from the non-Aku Mosque alliance had to do with population increase. The rise in population of the Temne urged its members to consider building a commodious place of worship which would accommodate all of them. He also states that the rise in Temne population increased the number of Muslims in the colony in the 19th century: “it was the increase of Temnes in Freetown, who were already Muslims or converted to Islam under the influence of the Alfas that, [sic] accounted for some of the dramatic increase in Muslim adherents in the 19th century.”³⁹ Skinner notes that Temne had long been Islamic converts even before the establishment of Freetown as a settlement of freed slaves. All in all, Skinner argues that Aku, Mandingo, Fula and Temne all played a role in the propagation of Islam in Sierra Leone in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The works reviewed above usefully highlight the history of Islam in the colony. They give insight into the historical roots of Islam, Islamic schools and mosques. I have integrated some of these views in this study. It is clear that the motivation of Alharazim, Thomas, Sanneh, and Proudfoot for assigning major agency to the Aku role in spreading Islam has to do with the timing of their works. Many of these works published in the 1950s and 1960s served the moment of the times in which Africanists got preoccupied with the tasks of advancing the agency of Africans in African historiography. While Fyfe

³⁹ Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, p. 170. Alfa is the Islamic term for scholar.

and others focused on the European versus African model as detailed in chapter one, Proudfoot and others were keen to tell the story of the Muslim Creoles – the Aku – in a similar vein. In the process however, they fail to fully incorporate the influence wielded by non-Aku Islamic institutions. Such scholarship prompted scholars like Alusine Jalloh to explore and establish the role of other agents in this exercise. In addition to Jalloh, Skinner's works are among a few which assign broad agency to all ethnic groups in the spread of the religion in Sierra Leone as a whole. In particular, Skinner's main motivation had to do with his quest to see the degree of influence commerce had on the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone. His works mainly cover northwestern Sierra Leone which included parts of present day Guinea.

Though the works proved useful to this study, however, they could have been strengthened. By privileging the Aku over other ethnic groups in the propagation of Islam, Alharazim et al give the impression that indigenous Muslims such as the Temne, Limba, Mende, Loko and others followed the Aku lead. The historical records contradict this assertion. The Aku role in the spread of Islam came of age in the mid 19th century to the early 20th century. However, in the mid 1940s on, indigenous Islamic institutions emerged which played a role in the spread of the faith. In addition, the criteria used by these scholars to determine a group's agency in the spread of the religion remain fuzzy. Apparently, they assign primary agency to the Aku because the Aku built the first mosques, attended Islamic institutions in Futa Jallon, and seemed to have mostly suffered religious persecution. They describe the Aku as devoted and committed propagators of Islam. However, it is clear that the Aku did not practice Islam in isolation; they certainly interacted with other Muslims. The historical evidence indicates that since the 19th

century in the east of Freetown Islam proved to be the dominant religion and during Islamic festive seasons “the largest and most picturesque of the groups at the Race Course was that composed of the interior Mohammedans.”⁴⁰ The groups referred to by the article in the *Weekly News* comprised non-Aku groups which included the Mandingo, Fula, Temne and others. By minimizing the contributions of these groups, Alharazim and the others fail to approach the subject broadly. As Mervyn Hiskett notes, the colonial government perceived all Muslims in the colony as one and therefore they did not discriminate in persecuting them.⁴¹ In addition to the above, Alharazim and the others overlook the role of the different Islamic institutions which emerged in the early 20th century and the impact these had on the spread of the faith. As Clarke argues, indigenous ethnic groups like the Temne “outside Freetown also contributed to the spread of Islamic influence in [colonial] Freetown.”⁴² For instance, the colonial government employed the services of a Temne Muslim, Benneh Sankoh, to coordinate the activities of Temne, mostly Muslims, in the colony and Temne non-conformists in the hinterland.⁴³ Sanneh and Thomas do not address these issues. Sanneh’s view that intellectualism played a much bigger role in the spread of Islam in West Africa and Sierra Leone contradicts the views of Hiskett, Trimingham, Skinner and others who believe that a combination of

⁴⁰ *SLWN*, April 22, 1893. Race Course is situated in the eastern part of Freetown; it was and still is one of the central worshipping centers for the Eid-ul-Fitri prayers held at the end of the fast season.

⁴¹ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York: Longman, 1984), p. 297. See also Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from the 8th Century to the 20th Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), pp. 180-185.

⁴² Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 180.

⁴³ Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 180.

factors including commerce, militancy and the like contributed to the spread of the religion.

As stated earlier, Skinner, who has done extensive research on this subject, argues that commerce played a much bigger role in the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone than intellectualism. He attributes the spread of the faith to the efforts of the Temne, Mandingo, Fula and Susu speakers among others. In his analysis of Islamic schools, *Karanthes* or Madrasa, in colonial Freetown, Thomas notes that the Aku had more enrollments in these schools than the Mende, Temne, Limba and Susu. He does not however, give a timeline for his analysis. He also does not probe the policies of the schools. That is, what factors made Aku enrollment higher than others? Was it a deliberate policy to enroll more Aku children? Or was it because Aku children and their parents were more passionate about Islamic education? The historical evidence indicates that while the Aku had higher enrollments in their schools, the Temne similarly had high enrollment in their schools. In other words, the historical evidence shows that between 1902 and 1943 no one ethnic group absolutely dominated Islamic education in the colony.⁴⁴ In short, Thomas' work neglected to point out the presence of Temne students.

Though Proudfoot's works are useful, I find his overall argument, at least for my question, inadequate. Even though he recognizes the efforts of non-Aku groups, for the most part his argument is too Aku-centered. In analyzing the establishment of the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress in the 1930s, Proudfoot states that the Aku dominated life in the Congress; i.e. they dominated the Congress's executive and influenced many of its

⁴⁴ C.S.O. *Return of Mohammedan Schools, 1905* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1905), pp. 1-3.

decisions.⁴⁵ In addition to the Congress, other associations which emerged included the Muslim Association and the Temne Reformation Society. For Proudfoot, the Aku established and dominated the Muslim Association which proved to be more effective in influencing Islamic activities than the Temne-led Reformation Society.⁴⁶ The historical records show that the Muslim Association to which Proudfoot refers may have started as an Aku association but it certainly became open to Temne and others in the mid 1940s. In fact, on several occasions, Kande Bureh, the Tribal Headman, chaired the Association's general meetings.⁴⁷ As noted in chapter 2, Bureh's presence and chairmanship in this association gave it a much broader appeal and influence. To ignore the role leaders of other ethnic groups played in this association minimizes the contribution of these groups to the life of the association. In other words, to ignore the leadership role of non-Aku personalities in this association tells an incomplete story. Also, to opine that the Muslim Association proved more efficacious than non-Aku led associations is overblown. The Reformation Society under Alhaji Gibril Sesay proved very active and in fact was able to win concessions from the government to recognize Muslim holidays as national holidays. This issue is analyzed below. In addition to this, Proudfoot's examination of the various "tribal" mosques in the east of colonial Freetown fails to analyze the influence these institutions had on the spread of the religion. How did Temne sheiks and imam influence events, at least within the Temne community? This chapter shows that not only did Temne Islamic institutions rise in the post Second World War, but also leaders of these institutions influenced events in the colony.

⁴⁵ Proudfoot, "Muslim Solidarity," pp. 149-154.

⁴⁶ Proudfoot, "Muslim Solidarity," pp. 148-151.

⁴⁷ *SLWN*, November 1946.

Jalloh's attempt to exclusively write the role of the Fula in the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone is laudable but falls short of presenting a balanced account. That is, his account of the history of Islam in Sierra Leone is Fula-centered and fails to give us a sense of what led to Fula dominance of the religion as he argues. Clearly the Fula remained one of the well-educated Islamic elites and they certainly played a role in the dissemination of Islam as a religion, particularly in the 19th century. However, the historical evidence does not support the claim that the Fula were a pivotal social reference. What about the Muslim-leaning association, *Alimania*, formed to enhance Temne Islamic practices in 1939 as stated in chapter three? The major functions of this association included the enhancement of Temne knowledge on Islamic principles and to ensure that its members follow prescribed Islamic teachings in their daily activities. Jalloh's work does not address these issues. He recognizes the influence of non-Fula actors in spreading Islamic influence, particularly prominent foreign-trained scholars who had leverage to lobby international organizations to support the Islamization process "such as Sheik Gibril Sesay or Alhaji Kanu."⁴⁸ Even with this observation, however, Jalloh did not modify his claim that the Fula served as both chief propagators of Islam and a social reference in the colony. He could have strengthened his claim by widening his net of chief propagators of the religion to fully include the indigenous Temne and others.

Finally, the works of Skinner include a wider array of actors as mentioned above. However, his question significantly differs from mine. While Skinner has clearly noted the efforts of the Temne, Fula, Mandingo and Susu in spreading Islam, he has not

⁴⁸ Jalloh, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 156.

concerned himself with the rise of Temne Islamic institutions in the 1930s onwards. In other words, why did Temne mosques, Madrasas, and Islamic associations emerge in the colony at the time they did? What degree of influence did they command and how did their emergence and existence impact the propagation of Islam? In addition, what role did Theimne-speaking Islamic elites play in establishing the influence of the faith? Also, Skinner's works largely cover Sierra Leone as a whole. That is, his works do not fully and solely address the spread of Islam in the colony. Not only are my questions Colony-centered, they also focus on why the Temne institutions rose at the time they did and how their institutions proved to be a rallying force for the community. Finally, Skinner's works cover a much earlier period than mine. In addressing the questions raised above, this study will show that the rise of Temne Islamic institutions had to do with the rise of other Temne political and socio-cultural institutions. As noted in previous chapters, the tension between the Temne and Creole for socio-political influence and control of public spaces resonated in different arenas. Similarly, from the 1940s, the Temne organized around their mosques and teaching institutions; these served as alternative Islamic institutions for their community. These efforts made by the community conflicted with the Aku desire to establish themselves as the recognized gatekeepers of Islam in colonial Freetown. As "owners of the land," the Temne found such religious arrogance unacceptable. Through a series of activities the Temne proved to be influential within the Islamic community. I analyze these activities below.

THE RISE OF TEMNE ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY, 1920s – 1961.

It should be pointed out that the analysis of this chapter is heavily based on oral accounts or interviews conducted during fieldwork for this study. This is because there is a dearth of archival sources on the activities of some Temne institutions. Many of the informants interviewed claimed to have witnessed or observed the events they describe in their accounts, particularly between the 1940s and 1961. Some of their accounts are corroborated by secondary sources; others could not be independently verified. Despite the dearth of documentary sources, I also used a few available archival and secondary sources on this subject to bolster my overall argument.

The spread of Islam in the colony took different forms. As Harrell-Bond, Howard and Skinner have incisively argued, Islam was spread through the activities of landlords and commercial agents. That is, landlords served as Islamic agents in the sense that they would rent their houses to people who professed to be Muslims and would encourage those yet to be Muslims to convert to the faith.⁴⁹ Apart from the role of landlords, there were other methods used to propagate the religion in the colony. These included among many others, Islamic schools, mosques and the activities of individuals perceived as Islamic elites. I will analyze the role of these institutions carefully; i.e. first, I will examine the history and activities of the various Madrasas and their effect on Islam. Second, I will examine the rise, role and activities of Temne mosques. How did these institutions help in the Islamization process? Finally, I will highlight the activities of Islamic elites like Alhaji Gibril Sesay, who described himself as Temne and his role in the spread and dissemination of Islamic teachings.

⁴⁹ Barbara Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, pp. 8-20.

The colony had a distinctive system of Islamic education; i.e. the schools in the colony operated a one-tier educational system. The schools, referred to as Madrasas, served as major Islamic learning centers under the direction of *alfas*, learned men. The schools taught Arabic and Koranic verses including the value of prayer to students.⁵⁰ Between 1902 and 1943 various ethnic groups built their own Madrasas. Archival sources indicate that by 1901 the Aku had Madrasas *Sulaimania*, *Harunia*, and *Amaraia*. The Mandingo and the Fula owned Madrasas *Islamia* and *Umaria* in addition to the *Karanthes* they already operated.⁵¹ In 1901, the colonial government found it necessary to regulate the Islamic school system in the colony by appointing a Director of Mohammedan Education in the person of Dr Edward Blyden.⁵² To aid the development of Islamic education, the government adopted an ordinance to specifically fund the project in 1902: "All Mohammedan schools in the Colony and the Protectorate may receive from the Public Funds grants-in-aid under this Ordinance."⁵³ Thus by 1905, the government took formal supervision of the formerly funded, solely directed and privately owned Madrasas mentioned above. Government supervision meant that the government helped fund the schools and assisted in developing aspects of the schools' curricula. This means, in addition to teaching Arabic and verses of the Koran, the schools also taught

⁵⁰ David Skinner, "Islam and Education in the Colony and Hinterland of Sierra Leone (1750-1914)" *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 3 (1976), p. 503.

⁵¹ C.S.O. *Report on Mohammedan Education, 1912* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1912), p. 15.

⁵² C.S.O. *An Ordinance for the Development and Expression of Education on Western Lines Among the Mohammedans of the Colony of Sierra Leone and Protectorate* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 1.

⁵³ C.S.O. *An Ordinance for the Development and Extension of Education*, pp. 1-2.

Arithmetic, English, Geography and History.⁵⁴ However, it is clear from the records that the various ethnic groups controlled the day-to-day administration of their Madrasas; e.g. they appointed the registrars and principals of their schools. Also, the schools were community based; i.e. they were largely meant to serve their communities first though they admitted children from other communities.

The available historical evidence shows that those recorded as Temne had a higher enrollment than children from other indigenous groups. In 1905, the report from the Director of Mohammedan Education indicates that for the month of April, the start of the first semester, Aku students had an enrollment of three hundred in the Muslim schools while enrollment for Mandingo-speaking students stood at one hundred. In the same vein, students described as Temne had a total enrollment of sixty while those of Fula-speaking and Susu-speaking pupils stood at twenty-nine and forty-five respectively. The figures for registered Limba pupils remained at thirty-three while enrollment for the other ethnic groups remained below five. By the end of that semester, the average attendance for the Aku, Mandingo, and Temne pupils did not change, while those for the others dropped slightly. In many of the Madrasas, formerly solely administered and funded by members of various ethnic groups, the number of registered Temne students remained impressive.

⁵⁴ C.S.O. *Report on Mohammedan Education, 1912*, p. 18. See also C.S.O. *An Ordinance for the Development and Extension of Education*, pp. 1-2.

*Tabular and Statistical Representation of Madrasas in the Colony*⁵⁵

| Ethnic Groups | Madrasa, Islamia, 1905-1912 | Madrasa Harunia, 1905 - 1912 | Madrasa Sulaimania, 1905 -1912 | Madrasa Immaniyia, 1942-1943 |
|---------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Aku | 00 | 86 | 126 | 00 |
| Mandingo | 126 | 00 | 30 | 00 |
| Fula | 45 | 00 | 20 | 00 |
| Susu | 48 | 00 | 12 | 00 |
| Temne | 36 | 4 | 86 | 150-250 |

From the table above, it is clear that in Madrasa *Islamia*, a school established by members of the Mandingo-speaking community to serve the needs of their children, the Temne remained the only indigenous ethnic group which had registered pupils. In fact, toward the end of the first semester in 1905, while the number of enrolled Temne students stood at 36, enrollment for Susu and Mandingo students fell by 10%.⁵⁶ The table also shows that in Madrasa *Harunia*, formerly solely administered by Aku community members, the Temne remained the only indigenous ethnic group or non-Aku ethnic group which had pupils enrolled; i.e. the Aku had 86 of their pupils enrolled while the Temne registered 4 pupils in 1905.⁵⁷ In Madrasa *Sulaimania*, again a formerly and solely run Aku school, Temne students had higher enrollment than the other non-Aku groups. That

⁵⁵ C.S.O. *Returns of Mohammedan Schools*, pp. 14-15. In the Sierra Leone Public Archives located at Fourah Bay College, the only available records on the returns of Mohammedan education are those for 1905 and 1912. I have therefore used these statistics provided in these periods to analyze the enrollment of pupils in the various schools. My interviewees/informants did not yield much information on this either. I assume more records may be available in the Public Records Office in London which I was unable to visit.

⁵⁶ C.S.O. *Returns of Mohammedan Schools, 1905*, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁷ C.S.O. *Returns of Mohammedan Schools, 1905*, p. 17.

is, the historical records reveal that Aku and Temne students had a total enrollment of 126 and 86 respectively in the school. The Madrasas and *Karanthes* served as crucial Islamic learning centers. These institutions exposed students to the rudiments of Islam and its principles. The names of the schools symbolized ownership by the various communities; e.g. Madrasa Islamia shows Mandingo ownership and partial control, etc. It is unclear the criteria used by the administrations of different Madrasas in identifying the ethnic categories of their students. However, a former student of the Madrasas indicates that the administration of various Madrasas allowed students from other communities to enroll.⁵⁸ Hence, Temne, Susu and Fula students enrolled in the Mandingo school.

As noted above, there are gaps in the statistical data for some years. Therefore, I have not examined enrollment for other years. Nonetheless, the high enrollment of Temne students in the various Madrasas shows their level of Islamic devotion and commitment. Though the Madrasa system seems to have diminished in significance by the end of the 1930s to early 1940s, many of the beneficiaries of this system rose to the ranks of imams, secretaries and chairs of Muslim congregations.⁵⁹ In the case of the Temne, some graduates from these schools played a big role in supporting the rise of Temne Islamic institutions in the early 1940s. These Temne graduates such as Abu Bakar Moyu-Deen Kamara and Alhaji Gibril Sesay became imams of their community and in fact went on to train other sheiks and imams. As a matter of fact, Gibril Sesay, a major subject of study in this research project and a beneficiary of one of the Madrasas, with assistance from colleagues, later established a Temne Madrasa, Madrasa *Imaniyya*

⁵⁸ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah, Freetown, November 1-4, 2003.

⁵⁹ "Pen Portrait of Prominent Muslims in Sierra Leone" (Freetown: Unpublished Pamphlet, n.d.), pp. 4-5.

between 1942 and 1943.⁶⁰ Sources show that while Temne students enrolled in all Madrasas as noted above, the situation proved different in the Temne school. In other words, when the Temne School was established, non-Temne students did not register with the school. It remains unclear why this happened. It is possible that the founders of the school may have restricted admission to the school to children from the Temne community alone. However, the Temne children, adult men and women, who attended the school, received training in Islamic theology, Arabic and English. Bangurah recalls that the school did not receive government funding because of general budget cuts across government departments.⁶¹

Islamic theology as taught in the school entailed teaching the value of prayer, the benefits of converting to Islam and the benefits of believing in Prophet Mohammed as the “God sent Massiah.”⁶² Clearly this institution served as one of the formal media through which the knowledge on the principles of Islam was imparted to students. Many of the imams of Temne communities in colonial Freetown received their training from this institution. Sesay played a pivotal role in upholding the above doctrine. He taught Arabic and Islamic theology while Sheik Al Hassan Dubai taught Arabic and the history of Islam.⁶³ Unlike the other Madrasas, the government did not formally supervise the Temne Madrasa. It is possible that the government may have given approval for the establishment of the school and did not participate in its daily administration. In fact, the proprietor and first principal of the school sent out several appeals to government

⁶⁰ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

⁶¹ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

⁶² Sesay Private Papers “Notes on Islamic Teachings” (Freetown: 1951). These are private papers of the founder and proprietor of the school, Alhaji Gibril Sesay. Hereafter they are abbreviated as SPP.

⁶³ S.P.P. “Notes on Islamic Teachings,” p. 19.

departments and other ethnic mates to help finance the school.⁶⁴ Graduates of the school who turned out to be Alimamies, community leaders, imams, section chiefs, etc, played a primary role in the propagation of Islam in the colony. In fact, Bangurah informed me that while other Madrasas faded in the 1940s, the Madrasa *Imaniyya* continued to serve the Islamic needs of the Temne community.⁶⁵ Many saw the school as an alternative institution of learning to many of the Christian schools.

Apart from the Madrasa *Imaniyya*, the Temne-built mosques were used as avenues to propagate Islam. Between 1917 and 1944, a total of twenty-three mosques existed in all in the colony; seven of these belonged to the Temne community. The number of Temne mosques increased because of a surge in population and the difficulties associated with transportation, etc. When the Temne withdrew from the Mandingo controlled *Jam-ul-Kudus* in 1917, they embarked on establishing their own mosque. In the east of Freetown on Oldfield Street, they built a mosque which accommodated about "200 worshippers."⁶⁶ Because of the incommodious nature of the mosque, concerned leaders of the group decided in 1937 to build a much bigger one. A committee charged with this responsibility supervised the project and partially completed it in 1944.⁶⁷ The breakaway from the Mandingo controlled mosque by the Temne and the subsequent erection of a mosque which they called their own indicates Temne Islamic independence. It suggests their eagerness to participate in the spread of the religion through their own

⁶⁴ S.P.P. "Notes on Islamic Teachings," pp. 19-20.

⁶⁵ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah. I was unable to find registers for the Temne school either in the archives, Ministry of education or among the papers of Sesay. I therefore relied on the testimony of Bangurah, a former student of the school.

⁶⁶ L. Proudfoot, "Mosque Building and Tribal Separatism in Freetown East" *Africa* XXIX 4 (October 1959), pp. 410-411.

⁶⁷ Proudfoot, "Mosque Building," p. 411. Hajj Bangurah corroborates this account.

institutions. It also indicates Temne consciousness of the numerical strength of their worshippers and that they needed a much bigger space to accommodate their adherents. Finally, the break also shows Temne ethnic consciousness; i.e. they wanted to show that they were an organized group and able to direct their affairs in their own space. This became clear when clans, such as the Banguras, Koromas, Kamaras, and Contehs, gave financial donations for the building of a bigger mosque in 1944.⁶⁸ On a much broader level, the dissention shows that Islam, which served as a rallying point for Aku and non-Aku worshippers in the colony was fraught with confrontation and contestation over space. The Temne, Fula, Mandingo and the Aku could not agree to have one place of Islamic worship because they all had their individual agendas. This fits into Howard's point that urban dwellers "through daily confrontations and cooperation and by dramas and events-in-places, authorities, power holders, and residents constitute and re-constitute public spheres."⁶⁹ As Proudfoot notes on the proliferation of mosques, the elders of the various ethnic groups wished to assert their dominance through these institutions: "Hence the creation of tribal mosques, in which tribal languages are used rather than the *lingua franca*, is a move in the direction of equality on the one hand and the dominance of the elders on the other."⁷⁰ In the case of the Temne, this may have to do with their pride over the fact that as the most populous ethnic group in the colony, having their own mosque where they used Temne as the *lingua franca* promoted Temneness one way or the other.

As noted above, the mosque was partially completed in 1944 and named *Jam-ul-Jaleel* or the Temne Central Mosque. Its location in the east of Freetown is significant in

⁶⁸ Proudfoot, "Mosque Building," p. 411. Hajj Bangura corroborates this account.

⁶⁹ Allen Howard, "Cities in Africa, Past and Present: Contestation, Transformation, Discourse," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 37, 2 and 3 (2003), p. 202.

⁷⁰ Proudfoot, "Mosque-Building," p. 407.

terms of proximity.⁷¹ The location meant that many Temne adherents gained easy access to the mosques and its facilities. In other words the mosque served as the main place of worship for many Muslim Temne. Alhaji Moyi-Deen Kamara served as its first Chief Imam.⁷² A renowned Islamic scholar, he received his training in Islamic theology in Guinea and Senegal in 1920. In 1922, he returned to Freetown to serve his Temne community.⁷³ Moyi-Deen played an instrumental role in laying the foundation for the building of the Jami ul-Jaleel. He encouraged the holding of tutorials in Arabic including the teaching of Islamic theology to adult men and women in the mosque. It has been argued that the idea of holding tutorials in the mosque after prayers, initiated by Moyi-Deen, helped train many young men who later constituted part of the executive of the Temne mosque and subsequent mosques after 1944. One such outstanding student of Moy-Deen, Alhaji Gibril Sesay, later rose to the rank of Chief Imam in the *Jam-ul-Jaleel*.⁷⁴ Other students of Moyi-Deen included the former Secretary of the Temne mosque, Habibu Sesay, and Brimah Kargbo, chief Imam of the Limba mosque in 1953.⁷⁵ As chief Imam of the Jam-ul-Jaleel, Moyi-Deen also served as guest imam in the Limba, Loko and Aku mosques in the 1950s. He also visited the Protectorate to perform Islamic rituals. Sheik Gibril Kamara informed me that Moyi-Deen helped train many of the imams and other officials of the Limba, Mende and Loko mosques. Kamara and other informants have attributed the idea of building various Temne mosques in different

⁷¹ C.S.O. *Sierra Leone Blue Books, 1910* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1910). See also *Report of Population Census in 1921* (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1921) and John E. Clarke, *Sierra Leone in Maps* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

⁷² Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

⁷³ "Pen Portrait," p. 4.

⁷⁴ Interview, Sheik Gibril Kamara, Freetown, November 6, 2003.

⁷⁵ Interview, Sheik Gibril Kamara.

communities to Moyi-Deen. They also noted that other factors like the rise in population and other social difficulties influenced this decision as well.

In the 1950s, the increase in the Temne population meant that more places of worship were needed. In consideration of this fact, the Temne community in Bambara Town and Frederick Street embarked on building their own mosque. In 1952, they completed the building of the *Jami ul-Tawid* which became the second largest Temne mosque in eastern Freetown. Built largely out of the resources of Temne cultural associations like *Boys London* and *Ariah* discussed in chapter three, the mosque was also closer to many Temne Muslim worshippers in central and eastern Freetown. Before its establishment, Temne Muslims resident in Bambara Town and Magazine Cut worshipped at the Foulah Town mosque, owned and run by Aku. This means Aku and non-Aku worshippers followed the rituals of the mosque, the medium of communication being Aku (a Krio pidgin with an extensive Yoruba diction). My informants related to me that non-Aku Muslims who prayed in this mosque had difficulty comprehending the sermons in Aku.⁷⁶ Imam Sillah told me that with the building of the *Jam-ul-Tawid* mosque Temne propagated and taught Islamic doctrines to their members from the perspective of Temne Imams; i.e. Theimne became the medium of communication in the mosque.⁷⁷ Here, the imam would give his sermon in Theimne and urged his adherents to follow the teachings of the Holy Koran “and to ensure that they urge their friends, relations and allies to embrace Islam as the true religion of mankind.”⁷⁸ The above suggests that while imams of this mosque used Theimne to preach the gospel of Islam, it also showed their mastery

⁷⁶ Interview, Alhaji Usman Sillah, Freetown, November 10, 2003.

⁷⁷ Interview, Alhaji Usman Sillha, Freetown.

⁷⁸ Interview, Alhaji Usman Sillah.

of the Koran which they used as a source of reference during sermons. Also by using Theimne, the worshippers may have been in a better position to grasp the principles of the religion preached to them. Finally, it also showed the rise of Temne influence and influence of their religious leaders. That is, the mosque served as a rallying point where many Temne Islamic worshippers met and discussed political and other social issues relevant to them.

In the same period, 1950 to 1953, Temne Muslim residents living at Brook Street in the west of Freetown built the *Jami ul-Hamdallah*.⁷⁹ The building of this mosque proved crucial in the sense that it reduced the burden of the Temne Muslim worshippers who had to cover long distances to pray in the Jam-ul-Jaleel or Jam-ul-Tawid mosques in the east of Freetown. With the same spirit in the minds of Temne elders, they encouraged and assisted communities in Kissy village and Race Course build the *Jami ul-Huda* and *Jami ul-Masjid* which served Temne Muslim worshippers in greater Freetown. In addition to the above, between 1955 and 1960, Temne Muslim residents built two mosques in Kanikay, Cline Town and Wellington respectively.⁸⁰ In all, as mentioned above, the different Temne communities built and ran about seven mosques in the colony. These institutions formed part of a growing trend of Temne political, social and religious influence in the post Second World War period. Comparatively, other communities such as the Aku built, managed and ran about five mosques while the Limba, Loko and Mende each managed one mosque.⁸¹ In fact, Proudfoot claims that because “the Temne [were] the single largest tribal group in the city” they built the

⁷⁹ Interview, Sheik Gibril Kamara.

⁸⁰ Interview, Sheik Gibril Kamara.

⁸¹ Barbara Harrell-Bond et al., *Community Leadership*, p. 47.

largest mosque in 1944.⁸² There are no available statistics to indicate the number of attendees at the various mosques. However, Hajj Bangurah, an ex-official of the Temne mosque, recollected that the number of attendees “at Friday prayers, in particular were very large and the number increased with time.”⁸³

The proliferation of these mosques showed the rise in Temne religious influence from the 1940s onwards. In addition to serving as a place of worship, the mosques served diverse functions ranging from meeting places for merchants, to places where marriage deals were brokered. Merchants and politicians would meet in the mosques to discuss business and community politics. That is, worshippers and Temne leaders used these mosques to rally their community and discuss relevant issues pertaining to the Temne community. The significance of such a role played by the mosques became quite evident in the election of a Temne Tribal Ruler in 1945. With the passing of the Temne Tribal Headman Alimamy Koroma, in 1944, the Temne Authority searched for a successor. This search triggered the need for an election to fill the vacancy. Two factions emerged within the Theimne speaking community – the Kissy Road and Kande Bureh factions. The Kissy Road faction supported Kedi Kamara while the Kande Bureh faction, supported by some members of the Ambas Geda presented Bureh as their candidate. Though members of the Jami –ul-Jaleel could not resolve the matter before the elections, the religious leaders brought the two factions together after the election. Though the election proved bitter and rancorous, particularly when the elders of the Temne Central Mosque preferred Kedi Kamara, the leaders succeeded in reconciling the two parties. Kande Bureh, who won the elections, later emerged as a national-level elite as shown in

⁸² Proudfoot, “Mosque Building,” p. 406.

⁸³ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

chapter two. In short, the mosques served as a venue where disputants within the Temne community were reconciled. In addition to this, the mosques also engaged in national and municipal politics. In the municipal elections of 1957 it is claimed that many Temne religious and political leaders urged their worshippers to vote for candidates who identified themselves as Temne. The *Shekpendeh* newspapers alleged that Kande Bureh, the head of the Temne Tribal Authority and Alhaji Gibril Sesay, Chief Imam of Jami ul-Jaleel urged members of the Temne community to vote for "Temne candidates."⁸⁴ In fact, Kande Bureh used the cultural association he headed, the Ambas Geda, and the various Temne mosques to campaign for the Sierra Leone People Party (SLPP). As discussed in chapter two, the SLPP and the National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL) representing mainly Creole interests engaged in a bitter battle for political power. While many Creole residents supported the (NCSL), non-creole supported the SLPP. It is claimed that Kande Bureh canvassed the support of his Temne compatriots in mosques especially after Friday prayers when he would lecture them on the importance of voting for the SLPP in the general elections.⁸⁵ Apart from serving as political meeting points, the mosques also served as commercial bargaining points for merchants. That is, after prayers business partners would discuss issues of commercial interests to them; new trading contacts would also be explored and established.⁸⁶ Not only this, the mosques served the interests of Temne attendees in diverse ways. My informants recalled that Muslim Theimne speakers who could not attend Islamic learning centers benefited from their attendance of Friday prayers in the various Temne community mosques where they received detailed

⁸⁴ *Shekpendeh*, October 1957.

⁸⁵ Interview, Mohamed Turay, December 2003. *Shekpendeh* also made similar charges but stops short of mentioning mosques as an arena used to canvass support.

⁸⁶ Interview, Imam Sillah and Sheik Gibril Kamara.

sermons. Through this method many of the attendees appreciated the principles of Islam. During these sermons Imams stressed the need for strict adherence to the tenets of Islam including observance of five daily prayers. Non-Temne worshippers who visited these Temne community mosques benefited from such teachings as well. My informants recollected that non-Temne worshippers benefited from the teachings directly by asking questions on issues that seemed convoluted to them; often they got clarifications from the Imams or sheiks usually through interpreters particularly on Fridays during question time.⁸⁷

In addition to teachings done during Friday prayers, the executive of the mosques organized evening tutorial classes for adult men and women. Hajj Bangurah, one of the organizers of these classes, informed me that they were particularly held in the evening after *juma* prayers for Muslim traders who were unable to attend rituals in the mosques on regular basis. He claimed that the classes enhanced the knowledge of these Muslims on a wide range of Islamic doctrines.⁸⁸

The Theimne-speaking mosques also served as venues where marriages were performed. Such marriages were considered prestigious over “traditional marriages” performed in homes without the blessing of imams. Hajj Bangurah, for example, reminisced that he married his wife at the *Jam-ul-Jaleel* in 1955. He related that the executive of the mosque incurred part of the expenses of the ceremony. Morali Kamara also recalled that shortly after his uncle Kande Bureh became Temne Tribal Ruler, he,

⁸⁷ Interview, Imam Sillah, Hajj Bangura and Sheik Gibril Kamara.

⁸⁸ Interview, Gibril Kamara. Many informants repeated these claims to me. I could not find any evidence of these claims in the *Weekly News*, *African Standard* or the *Daily Mail*.

Bureh married his second wife in the *Jam-ul-Jaleel* in 1947.⁸⁹ From the various accounts of informants, it is clear that marriages were intra-ethnic; i.e. in most cases, all marriages brokered in the Temne mosques were between members who claimed to be Theimne speakers. The religious leaders, Bangurah and Sillah recollected, conducted the marriage ceremonies in Theimne with occasional reference to the Koran. In other words, the leaders used both customary and Islamic traditions to perform marriages in the mosques. It has been argued that as a result of the special amenities they enjoyed, people showed commitment toward their membership in the various mosques. Some of the amenities included performing marriages for free for committed members of the mosques, and the granting of financial aid to further grace the occasion, etc.⁹⁰ Not only did the mosques broker marriages, senior religious leaders also settled marital disputes in the mosques. The chief imam would usually preside over such issues; disputants and other executive members usually accepted his rulings as final. Sources show that this function of the mosques which settled marital disputes supplanted the role of native courts. Usually, Kamara explained, an executive of one of the Theimne speaking mosques would prefer his matter be heard by the religious elders than in an open court house presided by secular leaders.

These institutional role played by the mosques fits into the role of the cultural associations discussed in chapter three. It is obvious that the institutions not only complemented each other's role but also gave the Temne community alternative ways of life in colonial Freetown. Thus a Temne Muslim did not have to obtain a marriage license from the Freetown City Council for his or her marriage to be recognized by the

⁸⁹ Interview, Morlai Kamara, Freetown, November 10, 2003. See appendix 18.

⁹⁰ Interview, Imam Sillah and Morlai Kamara.

community. Marriages brokered by mosques or facilitated by the cultural associations, gained recognition, at least in the Temne community. The role of these mosques made things easier for new Temne migrants as well. That is, migrants found the simplistic nature of these institutions closer to the ones they knew in the Protectorate.

The Temne mosques, particularly the *Jam-ul-Jaleel*, served non-Temne communities as well. That is, Limba, Loko and Mende communities did not have established mosques of their own between 1917 and 1952; many indigenous Muslims who lived in the east of Freetown occasionally held Friday prayers in the *Jam-ul-Jaleel* or, for those in Kanikay, in the Temne mosque in Kanikay.⁹¹ My informants related that Loko and Limba speakers occasionally worshipped in the Temne mosques until “1959 when the Limba mosque was partially complete.”⁹² The above suggests that the Temne Islamic institutions served other communities as well. Proudfoot also highlights the point that the Limba and Loko did not have a mosque of their own in the colonial period but does not show where they worshipped.

In all, the big picture that emerges from the above account is that mosques built and managed by Theimne speakers show the Islamic influence of Temneness. Clearly, the Temne community established their own mosques to enhance the Islamic knowledge of their adherents and to prove that Islam was not dominated by one ethnic group as Alharazim, Thomas, and others argue. In other words, the establishment of seven mosques by the Temne community served as a “gratification of Temne pride and image

⁹¹ Interview, Imam Sillah. See also Proudfoot, “Mosque Building,” p. 415.

⁹² Interview, Gibril Kamara. Hajj Bangurah and Morlai Kamara corroborated this information at separate interviews.

in Freetown”.⁹³ My informants argued that the fact that the Temne did not have to worship in other mosques and submit to the authorities of other ethnic groups indicated Temne independence and ability to steer their own affairs.⁹⁴ In short, these institutions helped in the propagation of Islam in colonial Freetown. They helped organize the Temne Islamic community.

In addition to these institutions, the leaders of some of these institutions also engaged in activities that helped consolidate the spread of the religion. One such socio-religious elite was Alhaji Gibril Sesay. My informants see a connection between the activities of Sesay and the importance of Temneness. In other words, my informants argued that Sesay’s activities were mainly designed to promote Temne ethnic pride and institutions. They claimed that his activities were clearly seen by the Temne community as a “Temne religious leader playing a role in spreading the teachings of Islam.”⁹⁵ In assessing his activities, I have used archival sources, newspapers, his private papers and interviews conducted with his relatives, admirers, and independent observers.

ALHAJI GIBRIL SESAY: TEMNE ELITE, ISLAMIC SCHOLAR AND RELIGIOUS LEADER, 1920-1961.

Alhaji Gibril Sesay was born in Port Loko, northern Sierra Leone to an Islamic scholar in 1909.⁹⁶ He resettled in Freetown in the early 1920s where he attended the Bethel Day primary school and later the Madrasa Islamia. He studied rudimentary theology in these institutions. In the Gambia and Senegal, Sesay studied Islamic doctrines and Muslim

⁹³ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah.

⁹⁴ Interview, Imam Sillah and Sheik Gibril Kamara.

⁹⁵ Interview, Hajj Hassan Bangurah. Sheik Gibril Kamara corroborated this information at a separate interview.

⁹⁶ Interview, Alhaji Gibril Sesay as quoted in Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, p. 220.

sciences in the early 1930s.⁹⁷ In 1942, he embarked on the process of building a school for his people. To achieve this ambition, he solicited assistance from a variety of sources, not least the colonial government and people he considered Temne clans and well-wishers. When the school was officially opened in 1943 and named *Madrasa Immania*, Sesay became its first Principal.⁹⁸ He also taught Arabic in addition to his administrative responsibilities in the school. In the first few years of its opening the school had an enrollment of three hundred pupils.⁹⁹ This number of registered pupils triggered the need for an expansion of the school's facilities. To achieve this aim, Sesay needed additional funds to construct more buildings and refurbish old ones. In 1960, he turned to the colonial administration and requested a loan of \$ 150.00.¹⁰⁰ The loan from the government enabled him to expand the structure and facilities of the school. A decade after the establishment of the Immania, a Social and Literary Society was formed to promote healthy Islamic intellectual exchange in the school with Sesay chairing many of the sessions. The debates helped sharpen the knowledge of his students on Islamic values and partly trained them in the art of public speaking. My informants recollected that some of the students Sesay trained served the Muslim community in Freetown and the Protectorate in the 1950s. These included among many others, Alhaji Ibrahim Kargbo, the current chief Imam of the Temne Central Mosque in Freetown, a position he has held

⁹⁷ Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 180.

⁹⁸ Interview, Hajj Bangurah.

⁹⁹ Interview, Alhaji Gibril Sesay as quoted in Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁰ S.P.P. *Sesay to Ministry of Trade and Industry 22 February 1960*, (Freetown: 1960). I couldn't see a copy of this letter from the library of the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Freetown; the clerk at this Ministry noted to me that many of the records have been lost due to change of office buildings and space. He however, looked at some of the documents I was trying to verify and noted to me that the letter head used in Sesay's letter was accurate.

for twenty years. In the postcolonial period, in the 1980s, the government of Sierra Leone appointed Kargbo national chief Imam. Other students trained by Sesay included the chief imams of the Loko and Limba mosques, Alhaji Sheik Abass Kamara, treasurer of the Temne mosque, Sheik Abdul Latiff and Sheik Foud.¹⁰¹ Sesay also served as a part time teacher in the *Madrasa Islamia* owned and run by the Mandingo, where he taught Arabic on a weekly basis. In 1958, the department of Extra-Mural Studies at Fourah Bay College employed him to teach Arabic and Islamic Religious Knowledge.¹⁰² As a member of the department he helped organize national conferences on cultural themes held at Fourah Bay College campus. Though the conferences were organized in Freetown they attracted people from the Protectorate as well.¹⁰³

In the 1930s, when the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress was formed, Sesay served as one of four Secretaries.¹⁰⁴ The aim of the Congress was established “as a means of giving Muslims the concerted voice which would enable them to speak with an authority equal to that of established Christian society and to contribute to the educational organization of the country effectively whilst benefiting from it more fully.”¹⁰⁵ The Congress helped fund many students study abroad including Sesay himself. It funded him to study Islamic theology at Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1946.¹⁰⁶ He graduated with “degrees in law, theology, and Arabic from this institution and returned to Sierra Leone

¹⁰¹ Interview, Alhaji Gibril Kamara.

¹⁰² S.P.P. *Proudfoot to Sesay, June 1 1960*, (Freetown: 1960). Proudfoot was the Director of the Extra-Mural Studies Department at Fourah Bay College.

¹⁰³ S.P.P. *Proudfoot to Sesay, September 9 1958*.

¹⁰⁴ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 149.

¹⁰⁵ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 155.

¹⁰⁶ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 150.

in 1952.”¹⁰⁷ The evidence above indicates that Sesay may have taught at the Immania School as a non-degree holder. In 1953, the Muslim Congress appointed him Secretary-General, a post he held from 1953 to 1964.¹⁰⁸

In addition, Sesay became active in promoting the spread and influence of Islam in colonial Freetown. He was appointed chief Imam of the Temne Central Mosque and became preoccupied with completion of the mosque, writing several letters of appeal to the cultural associations and various Theimne-speaking congregations in Freetown.¹⁰⁹ His position as Chief Imam of the largest Muslim community helped increase his profile among Muslims in colonial Freetown. In 1957, Sesay helped found the Sierra Leone Muslim Pilgrims Association (SLMPA), serving as its first Secretary-General. The association was formed to coordinate the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which hitherto was planned on an individual basis or by various ethnic affiliations.¹¹⁰ As secretary of the SLPMA, Sesay coordinated the annual pilgrimage and collected funds for the purchase of all air tickets, and secured accommodation facilities for Sierra Leonean pilgrims in Mecca.¹¹¹ He served as the link between the colonial government, i.e. the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and would-be pilgrims.¹¹² In fact, he became the first to organize a Sierra Leonean pilgrimage on a grand scale in 1959 and served as leader of the delegation of pilgrims from 1959 and 1961.¹¹³ Other executive members of the SLMPA included Abdul Cole, an Aku, who served as Financial Secretary, Alhaji Mohamed Sillah, a

¹⁰⁷ Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership*, p.180.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, Gibril Sesay as quoted in Skinner, *Islam in Sierra Leone*, pp. 221-222

¹⁰⁹ S.P.P. *Sesay to the Temne Congregation, General Meeting, 11 May 1959*, Freetown.

¹¹⁰ *Shekpendeh*, September 1957.

¹¹¹ Interview, Hajj Bangura; Abdul Bangura corroborates this information.

¹¹² Interview, Hajj Bangurah, Freetown.

¹¹³ Interview, Hajj Bangurah.

Mandingo was the Organizing Secretary while the Temne Abu Bakar Koroma acted as Publicity Secretary.¹¹⁴ In short, the SLMPA which Sesay led was multi-ethnic with a membership range of about 60.¹¹⁵

In addition to his role as secretary of the pilgrims association, Sesay also founded the Sierra Leone Muslim Reformation Society in the 1950s.¹¹⁶ The aim of the Society was to “fortify the faith of young Muslims who have been long in contact with Western ways. In this it has been largely successful.”¹¹⁷ At the launching ceremony of the society, Sesay noted: “the Society is non-political and deals purely on [sic] religious matters. It has one of its paramount aims to elevate Islam in Sierra Leone, and has over 500 members both in the colony and the Provinces.”¹¹⁸ It is clear that the Reformation Society had a broad membership which went beyond Freetown. Sesay states in one of his letters that in his capacity as president of the Reformation Society, he persuaded the colonial government to recognize *Eid-ul-Fitri*, which marked the end of the Muslim month of fasting, as a national holiday.¹¹⁹ He also claims that when the colonial government

¹¹⁴ S.P.P. *Sesay to Members of the Sierra Leone Pilgrims Association, May 28 1957*, Freetown. Hajj Bangurah corroborates this information; he was a member of this association.

¹¹⁵ Interview, Haja Sukainatu Bangura, Abdul Bangura and Hajj Bangurah. I could not verify these figures in newspapers or documents in the archives. However, because my informants claim that they were members of the SLPMA, I am inclined to trust their assertion. Abdul Bangura is the eldest surviving son of Sukainatu Bangura; he is 70 years old and lives in Freetown. Hajj Bangurah and Sukainatu Bangura are not related. But both knew each other as young Temne activists in colonial Freetown. See appendix 1 on the biography of Abdul Bangura.

¹¹⁶ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 154.

¹¹⁷ Proudfoot, “Muslim Solidarity,” p. 154.

¹¹⁸ S.P.P. *Sesay to the Mayor, Freetown City Council, August 19, 1958*, Freetown.

¹¹⁹ S.P.P. *Sesay to His Excellency the Governor, Eid-ul-Fitri Celebrations in Sierra Leone, April 1958*, Freetown. I took this document and others relating to the City Council and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for verification. First, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, now Local Government, have no correspondence of colonial governors citing poor library

accepted his appeal to recognize *Eid-ul-Fitri* as a national holiday, he again requested that the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, *Eid-ul-Adha*, be recognized and declared a national holiday. The government granted the request in 1958.¹²⁰ In a press release marking the success over this, Sesay wrote: “through our instrumentality we have been able to get the birth day of the Holy Prophet Muhammad O. W. B. P. declared a public holiday through out the length and breadth of Sierra Leone.”¹²¹ As president of the Reformation Society, he urged Muslims in Freetown to recognize both Muslim holidays by processing on the streets of Freetown with each congregation displaying symbols of Islam written in Arabic. It is claimed that Sesay led these processions on horseback and addressed the various congregations who assembled at the lawns of the Judiciary building in colonial Freetown.¹²² The congregations, multi-ethnic in composition, paraded the streets in colonial Freetown; i.e. they included Aku, Mandingo, Fula, Limba, Mende,

facilities. They also noted that the Ministry has undergone significant changes over the last forty years of independence and so all old documents were sent to the government archives located at Fourah Bay College. The Staff at Fourah College dispute this. Nonetheless, many of Sesay’s correspondences relating to the Ministry of Internal Affairs were carried on official letterheads, which the Permanent Secretary of this Ministry confirmed to be accurate. In the case of the City Council, the rebels raised the library to the ground in 1999. All precious documentary data relating to the Council and its activities in the colonial era cannot be traced here. But the Town Clerk whom I spoke to also confirmed the authenticity of the letterheads that were used by Sesay in his correspondence with the Council. Both the Permanent Secretary and Town Clerk did not dispute the information contained in this particular document, though they were not members of Sesay’s association and did not know much about the association. It is possible that some newspapers reported on these issues; the ones I read during this research did not.

¹²⁰ S.P.P. *Sesay to Imams in Freetown Moulid Nabi’s Celebrations August 12 1958*, Freetown. Hajj Bangurah corroborates this.

¹²¹ S.P.P. *Sesay to Imams in Sierra Leone, July 1959*, Freetown. I could not independently verify this claim; i.e. I found no evidence of this in the press in colonial Sierra Leone.

¹²² Interview, Gibril Kamara. He noted that Sesay paraded the streets of Freetown monitoring these processions on a white horse.

Loko, etc. He notes in his correspondence to Imams in Freetown: “the Sierra Leone Reformation Society, which is non-sectarian and non-political, has drawn up its programme for this year’s celebrations.... It has contributed in its own little way to make the government see the necessity of declaring *Moulid Nabi* as a public holiday throughout Sierra Leone.”¹²³ My informants noted that this culture continues to this day. Apart from the *Moulid Nabi* processions Sesay initiated and encouraged, which became an annual Islamic event in colonial Freetown, he also organized annual lantern parades during the Ramadan season in the 1950s.¹²⁴ This event knew no ethnic boundaries. That is, though he served as the imam of the largest mosque in the colony, his initiatives and the programmes he developed served all Muslims irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. During Muslim festive seasons, various Muslim congregations would parade the streets of colonial Freetown displaying their craft and handiwork in the form of lanterns. On some occasions, the group with the most impressive craft would be award a price. In his assessment of Muslim associations, Proudfoot did not mention the above role played by the Reformation Society. He lauded the Muslim Association, which he claimed the Aku headed and controlled. The historical records reveal that the Reformation Society proved much more influential as it succeeded in winning holiday concessions from the colonial administration.

Gibril Sesay also served as the secretary to the Board of Imams since the 1950s. As secretary, the Prime Minister’s office consulted with him on the Muslim calendar and

¹²³ S.P.P. *Sesay to Imams: Moulid Nabi’s Celebrations*.

¹²⁴ S.P.P. *Permanent Secretary to Sesay, Lantern Procession, 22 July 1959*.

activities, particularly during the Ramadan season.¹²⁵ As an Islamic missionary, Sesay often traveled the length and breadth of the Protectorate where he visited with many diverse Muslim communities. He did not restrict his missionary work to Theimne-speaking strongholds in the Protectorate alone. In a letter to the chief of Gorahun Tunkia chiefdom, Southern Sierra Leone, a stronghold of Sierra Leone's second populous ethnic group the Mende, Sesay indicated his willingness to visit with the Muslim communities in the district in 1959:

As my last visit was so much appreciated and the response so remarkable and encouraging, I have thought it very expedient to visit you again for at most two days.... I shall be much obliged if you will inform all prominent Muslims of your district and you kindly convene a meeting against my arrival.¹²⁶

Aside from this trip, he also visited other areas in the interior of Sierra Leone spreading Islam. In Magburaka, north of Sierra Leone, he served as guest of honor at an Islamic festival organized by the Sierra Leone Muslim Brotherhood, where he delivered an address to Muslims on the theme "Brotherhood of Islam." The president of the association, S. I. Kanu, sent a letter requesting Sesay to grace the occasion: "I have the honour to inform you that it has been proposed to hold a general meeting of the Sierra Leone Muslim Brotherhood at Magburaka on Friday 10th July 1959. With due respect [sic] you have been cordially invited to be present at this meeting to address the delegates and to give lectures on the brotherhood of Islam."¹²⁷ In his address, he encouraged Muslims to adhere to Islamic practices such as to pray five times a day, respect the

¹²⁵ S.P.P. *Prime Minister to Sesay: Eid-ul-Fitri, OPM, 37/742 18 February 1961*, Freetown.

¹²⁶ S.P.P. *Sesay to Madam Mamawa Sama, Paramount Chief Gorahun Tunkia Chiefdom, ASGS/12/1959*, Freetown.

¹²⁷ S.P.P. *S.I. Kanu to Alhaji Sheik Gibril Sesay, Invitation As Guest Speaker, July 2 1959*, Freetown.

Ramadan season and avoid fornication and adultery. He referred to these principles as the defining characteristic of good Muslims.

During the International Labour Organization Day celebrations in 1959, Sesay was contacted to participate in the program. The secretary of the organizing committee wrote: "the local committee has accepted a proposal from the African Field Office of the International Labour Organization to include Religious services among its celebrations, and I have been asked to write to you asking you in what way you can help in the fulfillment of the proposal."¹²⁸ It is not clear whether the group comprised other ethnic groups. It is however, clear that the organizers of the Labor Day celebrations included an Islamic event and thus asked Sesay to help draw up a program that would include recitation of the Koran. Why was Sesay chosen over the chief Imam of the Aku speaking mosque or the chief Imam of the Mandingo mosque? It is unclear whether the organizers chose Sesay in his capacity as secretary of the national board of imams or as the chief imam of the Temne mosque. Nonetheless, one can argue that the fact that they chose him over other Imams to participate in such an internationally organized event may be a sign of the wide recognition he enjoyed as a religious leader in the colony.

In addition, Sesay performed other duties outside the province of his religious leadership. He intervened in disputes involving Temne and non-Temne politicians in Freetown. In 1959, an altercation occurred (discussed in chapter 3) between Honorable Kande Bureh and Honorable M.S. Mustapha, an Aku. The latter was a founding member of the SLPP and the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress in colonial Freetown.¹²⁹ Unlike

¹²⁸ S.P.P. S.J.A. *Short to Alhaji Gibril Sesay, I.L.O. Celebrations- Religious Services, 16th July 1959*. Freetown.

¹²⁹ *West Africa*, June 25, 1960.

Sesay, Mustapha was not an executive member of the Congress. In 1953, Sir Milton Margai appointed him Minister of Works and Transportation. Two years after his appointment, Mustapha became a victim of vandalism in the 1955 riots in Freetown.¹³⁰ His loyalty to the SLPP earned him additional responsibilities in government when the Prime Minister appointed him deputy premier in 1960.¹³¹ The dispute between Mustapha and Bureh was both political and religious. The Muslim community in colonial Freetown requested the intervention of Gibril Sesay to resolve the dispute. In convening a meeting between the two Honorable Ministers, Sesay wrote: "I have the honor to invite you to a special meeting which takes place at the Temne School on Tuesday, 28th April 1959... to settle a dispute which took place between the Honourable Kande Bureh, and the Honourable M.S. Mustapha."¹³² It can be concluded from the above letter that the use of the Temne School as a venue indicates that Sesay's role should be seen as part of his efforts to promote peace among Muslims and to also project Temne influence in the Islamic community. It is not clear how Sesay resolved the dispute between the two men but he later received a note from Kande Bureh thanking him for intervening in the crisis. It can be assumed that the dispute must have been resolved amicably.

In addition to the above, when a member of the SLPP, Maigore Kallon, defected to another party, members approached Sesay and Bureh to intervene and persuade Kallon to return to the SLPP. It remains unclear why the SLPP chose Sesay to intervene since he never officially joined the SLPP. It can be assumed that the SLPP asked Sesay to prevail

¹³⁰ *Daily Mail*, February 15, 1955.

¹³¹ *West Africa*, June 25, 1960.

¹³² S.P.P. *Sesay to Chiefs Imams In Freetown, 27th April 1959*. (Freetown). According to these documents the Imams of the Aku, Mandingo, Fula and Limba Muslim Communities were copied and apparently invited to this meeting.

on Kallon in his capacity as chief Imam of the largest mosque and a respected Islamic missionary. Kallon, identified as a Mende-speaker and a Muslim, was disillusioned and unhappy with the leadership of Sir Milton Margai in the SLPP; hence he resigned his membership from the party. Sources among Sesay's papers indicate that Kallon heeded the appeal and returned to the SLPP.¹³³

Though a revered and admired missionary, Sesay had his own detractors. A few disgruntled members of the Temne mosque accused him of favoritism. This dispute led to a violent confrontation between the party in question, Imam Bashr and Sesay. Bashr felt aggrieved and opted out of the Temne mosque between 1958 and 1959.¹³⁴ Sources indicate that Bashr later built his own mosque and never returned to the *Jami-ul-Jaleel*. This shows that even when they disagreed, the Temne played a role in the spread of Islam in Freetown. Bashr's mosque later "surpassed some of the older Temne mosques in terms of population and influence within the Temne community in the late 1970s and early 1980s."¹³⁵ The building of another mosque led by a Theimne speaking imam speaks to the role of Temneness in spreading the religion in Freetown.

In 1959, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service, owned and controlled by the colonial administration, asked Sesay and other imams to participate in radio discussions focusing on different Islamic themes on Fridays. He chaired and led the discussions; the sessions ended with prayers offered for the nation by the chairman.¹³⁶

¹³³ *Shekpendeh*, August – September, 1958.

¹³⁴ Interview, Hajj Bangurah, Freetown.

¹³⁵ Interview, Ambassador Sorsoh Conteh.

¹³⁶ S.P.P. Leslie A. Perowne to Gibril Sesay, SLBS/14/1/175 27th December 1959. (Freetown). Perowne was Director of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service.

Sesay participated in civic matters as well. In 1957, he was appointed to the Freetown City Council by the colonial administration.¹³⁷ As a member of the Council, he represented the Council on Islamic issues, serving as the link between the Council and the Muslim Community in colonial Freetown. When the Mayor undertook trips dealing with Islamic issues, Sesay would usually accompany him. In 1959, he requested permission from the education officer “to enable [him to] accompany His Worship the Mayor of Freetown City Council to Ghana, where he has just been invited.”¹³⁸ Gibril Sesay also represented the City Council on cultural matters. During the royal visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Sierra Leone in 1961, he was part of the delegation to welcome Her Majesty. The Town Clerk asked Sesay to represent the Council “to attend the Royal Show in Kenema on November 28, and subsequent days in honour of the visit of Her Majesty the Queen.”¹³⁹ In 1961, the Town Clerk informed Sesay of his nomination to the Board of Education in the Freetown City Council.¹⁴⁰ Before his term as representative on the board of education expired, Sesay received an international call when the government appointed him as Sierra Leone’s Ambassador to Egypt.¹⁴¹

The analysis above clearly shows the religious leadership and social activism of Gibril Sesay between 1939 and 1961. He served occasionally as guest imam in the Mandingo and Fula mosques where he often advocated the unity of Muslims in Sierra Leone as a whole. Though a national religious figure, Gibril Sesay faced criticism from

¹³⁷ Harrell-Bond et al, *Community Leadership*, p. 180.

¹³⁸ S.P.P. Sesay to the Education Officer, *Colony Office*, 14/4/1959, Freetown.

¹³⁹ S.P.P. J. B. Jenkins-Johnston to Alhaji G. Sesay: *Re Visit of Her Majesty*, 4566/FC/292 10/10/61. (Freetown: 1961).

¹⁴⁰ S.P.P. J. B. Jenkins-Johnston, *Town Clerk to Councillor Alhaji G. Sesay, Board of Education*, 1896/ED/4/38 19/4/61. (Freetown: 1961).

¹⁴¹ Interview, Hajj Bangurah, Freetown.

the press which accused him of fanning the flames of religious tension in colonial Freetown, particularly when he supported Muslim candidates against Christian ones in municipal elections: "Alhaji Sesay in a campaign mood told Muslims in the Temne school that under no circumstances a Muslim should support a Christian against another Muslim."¹⁴² He was also accused of asking "Temne supporters to support Temne candidates in the municipal elections" of 1957.¹⁴³ As the Temne chief imam, he represented the Temne community on official religious ceremonies. In 1950, for example, when the Muslim and Christian communities bade farewell to M.I. Khalil, an Islamic missionary in Freetown, "Mr. Katib Iscandri spoke on behalf of the Foulah Town Community, Mr. Abdulla Betts spoke on behalf of the Fourah Bay Community and Sheik Sesay spoke on behalf of the Temne Community."¹⁴⁴ Sesay's role as a religious leader in colonial Freetown and Sierra Leone as a whole was appreciated among "natives and non natives in Freetown and beyond."¹⁴⁵ It is therefore not surprising that in 1979, i.e. twenty-eight years after Sierra Leone gained political independence, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Islamic Council of the Republic of Sierra Leone nominated Alhaji Gibril Sesay as first Mufti (Bishop) of Islam in Sierra Leone:

Alhaji Gibril Sesay, by dint of his hard work, dedication to public service and independability [sic] of researches (Islamic), Muslims in Sierra Leone automatically regard him not only as National Imam but as International Islamic personality. At the previous meeting of the Central Executive in which delegates were drawn from the twelve districts in the Republican State of Sierra Leone, resolution was made and passed to demonstrate with banners the suitability of the Alhaji for the pending office if the occasion arises.

¹⁴² *Shekpendeh*, October 29, 1958.

¹⁴³ *Shekpendeh*, October 29, 1958.

¹⁴⁴ *SLWN*, February 25, 1950.

¹⁴⁵ *African Standard*, October 10, 1958.

I want to assure you therefore, Honourable Minister, that there was unanimity in favour of creating the office of 'Mufti/Sheikhul Islam of Sierra Leone', when Alhaji will be the first person to enjoy this grace.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the above, in 1986 the ex-President of Sierra Leone, Joseph Saidu Momoh, bestowed the Order of the Rokel, Sierra Leone's highest civil award on Gibril Sesay for his service to Islam in Sierra Leone.¹⁴⁷

From the foregoing, it is clear that Temne institutions and their leaders played a role in spreading Islam. It remains unclear whether Sesay acted as the Temne chief Imam in many of the activities he undertook. However, as chief imam of one of the biggest Islamic institutions, my informants argued that observers and residents largely perceived the activities of Sesay as the "activities of the chief Imam of the *Jam-ul-Jaleel*."¹⁴⁸ Thus, like the Temne Tribal Authority and Temne cultural associations, the Temne Madrasa and the various mosques showed the rise of Temne influence in colonial Freetown. Sources indicate that Temne Muslims organized around these Islamic institutions. These institutions not only served as guides to them, they also served as alternative institutions to members of the Temne community. With the building of a Temne mosque in 1944 and the building of a Temne school in 1943, members of the Temne-speaking community had alternative avenues to preach the gospel of Islam, pray and educate their children. It is clear that the leaders of these institutions proved influential and carried clout within and outside the Temne community in the colony.

¹⁴⁶ S.P.P. S.A. Mansaray to the Honourable Minister of Social Welfare and Rural Development: *Appointment of Mufti and Sheikhul Islam of Sierra Leone*, S.I.C. 206/79 7/6/79. (Freetown: 1979).

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Gibril Kamara. Abdul Bangura and Hassan Kamara corroborate this information during a separate interview. These informants claim that they were present at this ceremony. I did not find evidence of this in the press.

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Abdul Bangura and Sheik Gibril Kamara.

CHAPTER 5

TEMNE WOMEN TRADERS AND COMMERCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY, 1890-1961

This chapter explores the role Temne women and their commercial institutions played in shaping the history of the colony between 1890 and 1961. The chapter analyzes how women described and recorded as Temne engaged in commercial activities, organized around markets and leaders of such markets. As noted in the previous chapters, the rise in Temne population, tension over use of some public space and the fight for influence, encouraged the Temne community to organize around various institutions. The established literature has focused less attention on the rise and role of these Temne institutions in shaping the history of the colony.

This chapter examines the role Temne women played in commercial institutions and how these helped shape the economy of the colony. However, to fully grasp the relevance of these institutions in shaping the colony's history, it will be useful to briefly review the views of many scholars on the role of indigenous women in colonial Freetown. Because of the prevalence of androcentric bias in the literature, many scholars have assumed the task of giving women agency in African history. As Susan Geiger notes, "the accumulation of androcentric bias in written records both primary (produced by colonial officials, missionaries and travelers) and, more recently, secondary (produced by Western as well as African scholars," represents a familiar pattern in African history.¹ That is, the contributions of women in the commercial, religious and political histories of the colony have not been adequately appreciated. The extant literature places too much

¹ Susan Geiger, *TANU Women, Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyika Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth: Reed Elsevier, 1997), p. 9.

emphasis on the role of men in shaping this history. The works of Arthur Porter, Leo Spitzer, Abner Cohen and Akintola Wyse, among others, make little or no reference to women. These works are principally concerned with the view that Creole men, in particular, played a much more significant role in the historical development of colonial Freetown. Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley encapsulates the problem in this fashion: “despite the fact Sierra Leone studies have become more diverse in content and method, the reconstruction of Sierra Leone history has largely remained incomplete. Apart from references to women here and there, the main focus of these have [sic] been male-oriented.”² Other scholars such as Frances White have also drawn attention to the fact that the history of colonial Freetown and Sierra Leone as a whole is incomplete without fully integrating the role of women in the narrative.³

It is clear that where references are made to women in the works of the scholars mentioned above, such references are not situated within a broader context. Women are examined as subordinates to the men who mattered in society.⁴ This approach to the role of women in society prompted feminist scholars such as Frances White, Adelaide Cromwell, LaRay Denzer and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch among others to courageously challenge such scholarship. In their various works, White et al have

² Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley, “Religion, Gender and Education in Northern Sierra Leone, 1892-1992,” in Alusine Jalloh and David Skinner eds., *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone* (Trenton: Africa Press, 1997), pp. 87-88. I have not reviewed her work here because it is principally centered on women in Northern Sierra Leone.

³ Frances White, *Sierra Leone Settler Women Traders: Women on the Afro-European Frontier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987), p.1.

⁴ See Arthur Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society* (London: Oxford University, 1963); See also Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone, Responses to Colonialism 1870-1970* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1970); and Akintola Wyse, *H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990).

highlighted the contributions of Sierra Leonean women in shaping the history of the colony. To thoroughly appreciate the views of these authors, it will be useful to briefly review their works here. A review of these works would help us understand some of the tasks that have been performed by Sierra Leonean women in the history of the colony. Not only that, a review of these works will throw light on their motivation, strength and weaknesses. The works have been thematically reviewed.

While White and Coquery-Vidrovitch have examined the economic contribution of Sierra Leone women, Cromwell and LaRay Denzer have looked at their political contributions in the 19th and 20th centuries. In highlighting their economic role, White argues that the Creole women she describes as settler women frequented the Sierra Leone hinterland with items of trade that were not easily accessible to people living outside the colony. Such undertakings helped them accumulate wealth which increased their standing in colonial Freetown.⁵ In the peninsula villages – York, Regent, Gloucester, and Leicester – Creole women accumulated wealth from trading in raw produce which strengthened their hands to act independently on a wide range of issues. In fact, in the early 20th century, many of these women pursued Western education which expanded their options further. In the Big Market, established as trading center for most residents, many Creole women traders contributed immensely to the life of the Market. White argues that the history of this market parallels the history of Creole women traders in the colony.⁶ This is because these women owned or controlled many of the market stalls and determined the nature of goods traded in the market. Though Creole women and non-creole women

⁵ White, *Settler Women*, p. 6.

⁶ Frances White, "The Big Market in Freetown: A Case Study of Women's Work Place," *Journal of the Historical Society of Sierra Leone* (December 1980), p. 22.

traders crossed paths in the market, the Market formed an important core of Creole society.⁷ Coquery-Vidrovitch reinforces many of these views in her works. She notes in her recent work that Creole women formed part of the social fabric of Sierra Leone society, i.e. these women did not only serve as judges, they also served as hair dressers, washerwomen and seamstresses. In all this, Temne and Mende women played a subordinate role to the Creole. In other words, Coquery-Vidrovitch draws attention to the fact that in commerce and in other occupations, Creole women played a dominant role and thus contributed greatly to the life of the colonial economy.⁸

Socio-politically, Cromwell and LaRay Denzer argue that Creole women also played a leading role. They argue that were it not for the leadership of Creole women such as Adelaide Casely-Hayford and Constance Agatha Cummings-John, it would have been impossible to form a women's movement. In her biographical analysis of Casely-Hayford, Cromwell posits that Hayford helped form and led the Young Women's Christian Association in 1911; an association which provided vocational training for young girls.⁹ Hayford went on to establish a Girls Vocational School to train women in different professions and to enable them secure a livelihood independent of their male counterparts. In 1925, in recognition of her role in promoting female education in Sierra Leone, the government nominated her as a member of the Standing Committee for Social Hygiene.¹⁰ In sum, Hayford, a strong social activist, fought strenuously for the rights of all women irrespective of class or status. Denzer underscores many of the above

⁷ White, "The Big Market," pp. 29-30

⁸ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 175.

⁹ Adelaide Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1868-1960* (Washington: Howard University, 1992), pp. 43-45.

¹⁰ Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist*, p. 96.

sentiments about the leadership role played by Hayford in many of her works. She highlights Hayford's membership role in the National Council of British West Africa (NCBWA) and in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).¹¹ Denzer notes that the views of Hayford influenced political debates. These views may have in some ways led to the expansion of the electoral franchise which granted women with property qualifications the right to vote in the 1930s.¹² Like Casely Hayford, Cummings-John, also described as Creole, played a leading role in organizing women in the colony in the mid 20th century. In 1938, Cummings-John and other Creole women bolstered the standing of the newly formed West African Youth League led by I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson.¹³ As a candidate of the Youth League in the municipal council elections held in 1939, Cummings-John became one of the first women to win a major political office in Sierra Leone. In 1951, she founded the Sierra Leone Women's Movement (SLWM), an autonomous non-political movement devoted to fighting women's issues.¹⁴ The movement sought to unite all women in colonial Freetown regardless of class and ethnic or religious background. The principal aim of the association included the need "to seek female representation on government bodies concerned with education, social welfare and the economy and to improve the status of all Sierra Leone women. It sought to eradicate class and ethnic barriers within the movement."¹⁵ From its inception the SLWM

¹¹ LaRay Denzer, "Women in Freetown Politics: A Preliminary Study," *Africa* 57, 4 (1987), p. 440.

¹² Denzer, "Women in Freetown Politics," p. 442.

¹³ LaRay Denzer, "Towards A Study of the History of West African Women Participating in Nationalist Politics: The Early Phase, 1933-1950," *Africana Research Bulletin*, (July 1976), p. 76.

¹⁴ LaRay Denzer, *Constance Cummings-John: Memoirs of a Krio Leader* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman for Humanities Research Center, 1995), p. xvi.

¹⁵ Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. xlv.

included market women leaders in its central committee and particularly encouraged illiterate women to participate in its general and executive meetings. In brief, the SLWM served as a pressure group for women in the colony.¹⁶ Apart from the SLWM, other organizations which promoted women activities in the 1950s included the National Council of Sierra Leone Women (NCSLW) and the Women's Association for National Development (WAND).¹⁷ In all, Denzer maintains that politics in colonial Freetown were not only the business of men; some women were also active in the political debate as they participated in the political dialogue in spite of the strong opposition they received from their men folk.

As noted earlier, Denzer expressed frustration over the discrimination women suffered in scholarship. She passionately highlights her disappointment in the following comment:

Yet apart from two publications by the author, few scholars have acknowledged her [Cummings-John] achievements. Michael Crowder devotes two paragraphs to his meeting with her shortly after her victory in court against the petition against her election in 1957, describing her as the "woman who defeated Dr. Bankole-Bright in the last election." Yet Bankole-Bright's biographer ignores her role as one of his hero's main adversaries from the time of her victory in the 1938 City Council election in his ward through the 1957 election campaign. Moreover, he fails to mention the SLWM, which surely ranks as an important manifestation of Krio-Protectorate connections, in his rather forced discussions of such links.¹⁸

Clearly, the works reviewed above are relevant in their attempt to give women agency in the colony's history. White and others want to debunk the idea that women played no role or a much lesser role in shaping the colony's economy. They argue that the commercial activities of women helped shape the economy. These arguments are

¹⁶ Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. xlv.

¹⁷ Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. ixvi.

¹⁸ Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. lxx.

compelling; they offer a strong challenge to androcentric views perpetuated in Sierra Leone historiography. However, I find these works problematic because they largely focus on the political and commercial activities of Creole women alone. That is, while these authors have effectively challenged the androcentric literature, their works do not fully appreciate the role played by Temne and other non-creole women in the colony's commercial landscape. Though Coquery-Vidrovitch mentions the presence of Mende and Temne women traders in her work, she focuses much attention on the superior position of Creole women traders. Coquery-Vidrovitch notes that Creole women contributed immensely to shaping colonial Freetown's economy.¹⁹ This gap in Coquery-Vidrovitch's work is understandable given that her work relied heavily on secondary sources with thin evidence of primary research. It is highly likely that these sources may have influenced her thoughts and writings on the agency of women.

Conversely, White's analysis on the Big Market gives the impression that the Market was the only commercial institution which effectively served residents. Though she contends that Temne and Mandingo women broke the Creole monopoly in the Market after the 1950s, White argues that the Big Market formed an important core of Creole society. As a matter of fact, her analysis of the role of the Market in the economy does not take into consideration the existence of markets such as King Jimmy, Bombay Street and Kissy Road Markets, which also served the wider society. Creole women traders shared these commercial institutions, including the Big Market, with non-creole women. The importance of these markets is analyzed below. White points out that "Of those traders left [in the Big Market], about half are non-Krio: Temne and Mandingo

¹⁹ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, p. 175.

women, who with the help of the City Council, broke Krio monopoly on the Market in the 1950s.”²⁰ Did non-creole women traders dominate their Creole counterparts in the Market only in the 1950s? White’s comment suggests that non-creole women became prominent in the Big Market after the 1950s. This claim needs further investigation.

Cromwell’s work on Adelaide Casely Hayford is a biography of a Creole woman. Hayford is portrayed as a successful Creole woman who interacted with poor women from all ethnic groups. The author however, fails to indicate whether women from other ethnic groups, notably the Temne, played a part in the accomplishments of Casely Hayford as a strong feminist. It will be useful to know whether non-creole women formed part of the drive to give women agency in Casely-Hayford’s time. There is no indication of this in Cromwell’s work. In my opinion, the work falls within the category of scholarly works which gives Creole men and women major agency in the making of colonial Freetown. The works of Denzer also suffer from these shortcomings. In an effort to give women agency she overlooked the activities of other women such as those from the Mende, Limba and Temne communities. Did Creole women alone comprise the executive of the SLWM? It is apparent that Cummings-John did not work in isolation; she worked with other women including illiterate women. Denzer did not mention the names of these market women in her works nor did she fully acknowledge them. The names of women mentioned in her works are mostly Creole women. In fact, she alluded to this shortcoming herself: “more research is needed concerning the female leadership of other ethnic groups and their role in politics [in colonial Freetown].”²¹

²⁰ White, “The Big Market,” p. 30.

²¹ Denzer, “Women in Politics,” p. 451.

The failings of the works reviewed above may have been caused by methodological difficulties; many of the documents consulted by both authors document the activities of Creole women. In general, the authors may have also faced difficulties in conducting oral research among non-creole illiterate market women; many may have shown reluctance to cooperate with foreign researchers. In contrast, many Creole women understood some level of English and easily communicated with foreign researchers. Also, it is likely that Creole women willingly cooperated with researchers, particularly if they realized that their story would be told in research projects. It is therefore not surprising that Denzer spoke to Cummings-John alone in writing her (Cummings-John), biography. Second, overlooking the role of non-creole women in the history of colonial Freetown can be viewed as an act of prejudice for Creole women. That is, in an attempt to assess the role of women in the history of colonial Freetown, White, Denzer and others believed that Creole women played a much more active role in this. Since Cummings-John and Casely-Hayford pioneered the formation of women's associations, Denzer and Cromwell believe that the leadership of these women is an outstanding achievement which should be used to show the agency of women in Sierra Leone historiography. Finally, the big picture these works portray is that women also mattered in colonial Freetown and Creole women better represented this agency. But privileging these women over Temne, Mende, Loko and Limba women narrates an incomplete story. The historical records clearly indicate that women traders from the Temne community participated in commercial activities and thus contributed to shaping the colony's history. Though they recognize the presence of these women, the works of these authors largely relegate the role of these women to the background. In her assessment of the SLWM, for

example, Denzer did not mention the names of non-creole women who formed part of the executive of the movement. A careful examination of the diary of the SLWM reveals that Temne women such as Haja Sukainatu Bangura served as one of the vice chairwomen of the movement, at least for a decade.²²

This study therefore shows that not only did Temne women traders contribute to shaping the colony's economy, they also organized around commercial institutions and powerful market women. The economic contribution and rise of these market women is in line with the rise of other Temne institutions analyzed in previous chapters. Many of these traders though illiterate engaged in various commercial activities and used their commercial spaces for "information exchange, social interactions, social control, influence building, and networking."²³ As Falola, one of many who have positively engaged the feminist literature, argues, the very nature of the spaces market women controlled empowered them in society. It gave them a certain voice and leverage. This is evident in the activities of Sukainatu Bangura and Yakaday Kargbo discussed below. Though many of the market women turned out to be successful and powerful, they had to work so hard in spite of the meager resources or rare opportunities made available to them by the colonial government. As Teresa Barnes argues about women traders in colonial Harare, women devised various methods of survival despite the many restrictions they suffered from the colonial government. They cooked, sold handicrafts,

²² *Diary of the Sierra Leone Women's Movement, 1951-1981* (Freetown: 1981), p. 8.

²³ Toyin Falola, "Gender, Business, and Space Control: Yoruba Market Women and Power," in Bessie House-Midamba and Felix K. Ekechi, eds., *African Market Women and Economic Power: The Role of Women in African Economic Development* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 24.

and hawked crocheted doilies and other cloths.²⁴ Though Barnes analysis focuses on how gender and class intertwined in colonial Zimbabwe, her analysis of how women worked so hard to contribute to the Zimbabwean economy has some element of similarity with how women from the Temne communities worked so hard and became influential in colonial Freetown in the late 1950s. Whether they resided in the peninsula villages or in Freetown, many of these traders organized around a leadership they admired and revered. Some of these leaders include among others, Haja Sukainatu Bangura, Mbalu Conteh, and Adama Kamara.²⁵ Bangura became active in promoting credit unions among those in her employ and created job opportunities for others.²⁶

By focusing on the role of these illiterate women and their leadership, this study is in line with the new social history approach advocated by Teresa Barnes, Susan Geiger, Elizabeth Schmidt, and Jane Parpart and Sharon B. Stichter, among many others. Geiger, for example, argues that Western education was not an absolute variable in assessing the importance of women in colonial Tanganyika in the 1950s. She contends that women with little or no Western education contributed immensely to Tanganyika nationalism in the 1950s.²⁷ The author highlights the energy and enthusiasm injected into TANU by an illiterate activist, Bibi Titi Mohammed. Bibi Titi drove TANU to higher heights during the nationalist struggles. She mobilized men, and illiterate as well as literate women in

²⁴ Teresa A. Barnes, *"We Women Worked So Hard:" Gender, Urbanization, And Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), p. 31.

²⁵ Interview, Haja Sukainatu Bangura and Adama Kamara. I interviewed both women separately.

²⁶ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

²⁷ Susan Geiger, "Tanganyika Nationalism As Women's Work: Life Histories, Collective Biography and Changing Historiography," *The Journal of African History*, 37 3 (1996), 465-478. See also Jane L. Parpart and Sharon B. Stichter, eds., *African Women in the Home and the Workforce* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988).

challenging the colonial administration in Tanganyika. In short, women such as Bibi Titi Mohammed were prime movers and shakers in TANU.²⁸ Schmidt uses the same approach in assessing the role of Guinean women in fighting colonialism in Guinea. She argues that women from all walks of life, both illiterate and literate, participated in the *Rassemblement Democratique Africain* (RDA), which helped secure Guinean independence in 1958. Schmidt attributes this achievement to the collective effort made by many women including market women.²⁹ She believes that the agency of women in African historiography is better appreciated when both literate and illiterate female actors are included in the narrative. Similarly, in the Sierra Leone colony, Temne illiterate women not only played a role in promoting the informal economy, they engaged in other activities that promoted the course of women. To fully understand the role women played in shaping the history of the colony, we need to fully incorporate the activities of Temne market women and their motivation in organizing around commercial institutions. To this end, I now examine the activities of illiterate Temne market women 1900-1961.

TEMNE MARKET WOMEN, 1890-1961

Various sources indicate that women principally engaged in the retail business though some also engaged in wholesale commercial activities in the 19th and 20th centuries. Kenneth Little argues that members of the Temne and Fula communities dominated this

²⁸ Susan Geiger, *TANU Women*, pp. 48-52.

²⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, "'Emancipate Your Husbands!' Women and Nationalism in Guinea, 1953-1958," in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi eds., *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 284-289.

occupation.³⁰ Allen Howard, weighing in on this, notes that traders played a huge role in the economic life of the colony. Many of the traders from the hinterland who anchored at the Susan Bay in the 19th century spoke Temne and some form of Bullom.³¹ Apparently, Temne not only served as their medium of communication, it may have served as the language of trade as well. Though the analysis of the authors are not gender specific, it is clear from their accounts that women may have been more active in this kind of trade. These traders operated between Freetown and the interior.

Temne market women, in particular traveled between Freetown and the interior as they operated wholesale and retail businesses; i.e. buying and selling raw produce particularly from the 1920s onwards. I will examine the activities of some of these women later in this chapter. The point to note here, however, is that the economy of Freetown was not agriculture-based. Many commodities, particularly foodstuffs and raw products, had to be imported from the peninsula villages or from the Protectorate to be sold in colonial Freetown. As noted above, Temne women were notably involved in this type of trade. In reinforcing this point, Vernon Dorjahn argues that Temne traders played an instrumental role in promoting a successful trade network between western and northern Sierra Leone in the colonial era: “many staple foods were shipped from Mayoso [a Temne stronghold], to Freetown... for sale – oranges, bananas, peppers, kola nuts,

³⁰ Kenneth Little, “The West African Town: Its Social Basis” *Diogenes: The International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies* (1960), p. 20.

³¹ Allen Howard, “The Role of Freetown in the Commercial Life of Sierra Leone,” in Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds., *Freetown: A Symposium* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University, 1968), p. 47.

coffee and so on.”³² Creole women traders who could not travel to the protectorate to buy these products relied on the supply they received from their Temne, Mende and Loko colleagues. In addition to this, Temne, Mende and Limba women based in the colony engaged in agricultural activities at the micro level, particularly those who lived in the rural areas, i.e. Rokel, Gloucester, Leicester, York, and Rogbarie. Here, an observer noted in 1926, that the “Timne [sic] clean rice per kettle [was] better and lower in price than the Mendi [sic] rice per kettle.”³³ The newspaper report indicates that the rice grown and sold by both Temne and Mende market women contributed to the flow of rice in the economy of the rural areas and to some extent, colonial Freetown in the 1920s.

Apart from engaging in low-scale farming, Temne women also participated in fishing, gardening and trade activities. These women in turn would sell the harvested produce to markets in the colony. In many of these rural communities between 1890 and 1961, the Temne constituted the bulk of the population, the Creoles and others remained in the minority. Table one below gives a clear indication of the demographic make-up of the rural areas; i.e. Gloucester, Leicester, York, Rokel, Lakka, Waterloo and Hastings.

³² Vernon Dorjahn, “African Traders in Central Sierra Leone” in Paul Bohannon and George Dalton, eds., *Markets in Africa* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1962), p. 81.

³³ *West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette*, April 26, 1926.

Table 1: *Demographic make-up of the rural areas in the Sierra Leone Colony: 1881-1947.*³⁴

| Year | Temne | Mende | Limba | Loko | Sherbro |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1881 | 5, 659 | 1,880 | 274 | 1, 235 | 1, 252 |
| 1891 | 3, 728 | 2, 234 | 363 | 624 | 6, 885 |
| 1901 | 4, 263 | 3, 839 | 583 | 699 | 807 |
| 1911 | 8, 194 | 6, 504 | 719 | 1, 821 | 2, 156 |
| 1921 | 10, 336 | 5, 924 | 1, 074 | 2, 471 | 2, 063 |
| 1931 | 9, 929 | 4, 699 | 1, 929 | 3, 583 | 1, 857 |
| 1947 | 15, 767 | 7, 929 | 4, 718 | 4, 705 | 3, 372 |
| Total population and percentage | 48,876 = 39.1% | 33,009 = 26.4% | 9,660 = 7.7% | 15,138 =12.1% | 18,392 =14.7% |

The table above shows that from 1881 to 1947 the Temne constituted 39% of the total population of the rural areas identified above, those recorded as Mende and Limba constituted 33% and 7% respectively. There were no figures available for the Creole population. It is likely that the compilers of the report did not include them in their report or they considered the Creole population too insignificant to be included in the report. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Temne constituted the largest single group in the rural areas from 1881 to 1947. Richardson and Collins, who conducted this research on behalf of the colonial administration in Sierra Leone, did not analyze how they assigned people into ethnic categories. As noted in chapter 2, census taking in Sierra Leone relied on fluid

³⁴ E.M. Richardson and G.R. Collins, *Economic and Social Survey of the Rural Areas of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London: Colonial Office Research Department, Unpublished Report, 1951), pp. 38-39.

variables. The authors of this report note that many of the ethnic groups living in the rural areas were fishermen, farmers and traders.³⁵ They also point out that many of the traders here were Temne women. These traders took their goods to Freetown markets where they accrued bigger profits.

In the colony markets, traders from different communities used the markets as shared spaces where they interacted. These markets include the Big Market, King Jimmy, Bombay Street and others. Temne women traders traded in all these markets and constituted the largest single group in some of these markets where they remained regular suppliers of fish, vegetables and other garden products.³⁶ Writing about the role of markets in the economy of the colony, Osman Newland notes:

Freetown has five public markets: the Vegetable Market in the Water Street, called in native parlance 'Big Market', and dating back to 1861; the Meat Market, called Garrison Street, colloquially named 'Grain Market', opened in 1862; the City Market in Kroo Town Road, erected in 1899, at a cost of £2, 000, by the late Sir Samuel Lewis; the King Jimmy Market in King Jimmy Wharf in Rock Street. There was also a slaughterhouse in King Jimmy Wharf, Water Street.³⁷

Newland notes that King Jimmy Market, known for selling a variety of vegetable and other essential produce, was strategically located. In other words, the proximity of the Market to the port (government wharf) and the Susan Bay areas made it easily accessible to local residents and visitors from the Protectorate as well. J. McKay supports this claim noting that "the market at King Jimmy handles fresh fruit and vegetables" brought from

³⁵ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, p. 396.

³⁶ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, p. 396. Haja Sukainatu Bangura who owned stalls in the market also corroborates this information. The number of stalls she owned increased in the 1950s. She claimed to have inherited some of her business assets from relatives who traded in the Big and King Jimmy Markets.

³⁷ H. Osman Newland, *Sierra Leone: Its People, Products, and Secret Societies* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 17.

the Bullom shore and other areas within the colony.³⁸ In her analysis of the Big Market, White does not mention the centrality of King Jimmy and its role in the colony's economy. It would have been helpful if she noted the existence of this market and others which competed with the Big Market in her study. At the King Jimmy Market, Temne women rallied around the leadership of Sukainatu Bangura and Adama Kamara in the 1950s. That is, Bangura and Kamara would hold bi-weekly meetings with these women and discussed matters central to their economic interests. Usually, at such meetings, "pledges of assistance would be made to colleagues with low returns."³⁹

In addition, Temne women traders also had a significant presence in the various markets in the peninsula villages. Sources indicate that in 1947, in the peninsula villages Temne women constituted the bulk of the population; i.e. their number exceeded those of the Mende, Limba, Loko and Creole. Almost all of these Temne women engaged in some form of trade. This suggests that more women engaged in commercial transactions in these parts of the colony. The table below illustrates this point better.

Table 2; *Population of the peninsula towns in the Sierra Leone Colony in 1947*⁴⁰

| Ethnic Group | Men | Women | Boys | Girls | Total population |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|------------------|
| Creoles | 3, 030 | 3,938 | 2, 045 | 1,706 | 1,719 =21% |
| Temne | 6, 464 | 5, 246 | 1,973 | 1,968 | 15,651=30% |
| Limba | 2, 233 | 1, 256 | 550 | 559 | 4,598 = 8% |
| Mende | 4, 379 | 2, 241 | 726 | 683 | 7, 929 = 16% |
| Sherbro | 1, 213 | 1,073 | 535 | 487 | 3,272 |

³⁸ J. McKay, "Commercial Life in Freetown" in Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds., *Freetown: A Symposium* (Freetown: University of Sierra Leone, 1968), p. 74.

³⁹ Interview, Adama Kamara.

⁴⁰ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, p. 39.

| | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
| | | | | | = 7% |
| Loko | 506 | 337 | 128 | 138 | 1,109 = 3% |
| Others | 4, 118 | 2, 703 | 1, 101 | 1, 033 | 8,955= 17% |

The table above indicates that those who identified themselves as Temne constituted 30% while the Creoles comprised 21% of the population in the rural areas in 1947. Nonetheless, the table above shows that Temne women outnumbered other women in the peninsula towns between 1947 and 1950. In fact, while Temne women constituted about 25% of the population, the Creole women constituted 8%.⁴¹ In most cases, my informants argued, Temne women traders strategized together on commercial ventures, etc.⁴²

The establishment of an Agricultural and Commercial Society aided the activities of Temne and other women; it helped them “sell agricultural produce [to residents of the Colony and Protectorate].”⁴³ The Chairman of the society was placed in charge of “granting seedlings” to Temne and other residents in the rural areas to facilitate their agricultural activities. The establishment of this Society helped in stabilizing agricultural prices through an office created to coordinate the purchase and distribution of agricultural produce. These steps helped promote the commercial activities of Temne, Creole and other women traders in the rural areas. Temne women continued to engage in petty trading by peddling their commodities in Leicester, York and Gloucester. In some instances, while some sold their goods directly in the Freetown markets, others sold their goods wholesale to Creole traders. In the case of rice, one of the principal staple foods,

⁴¹ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, pp. 82-85. The report was completed in 1950.

⁴² Interview, Sukainatu Bangura and Adama Kamara.

⁴³ *SLWN*, July 25, 1931.

“the Temne and Mende rice were often highly consumed” in the colony, more so than rice produced by other communities.⁴⁴

Sources also indicate that Temne women in the rural areas organized micro-credit schemes meant to help each other in terms of bad harvest or poor returns from sales, etc.⁴⁵ Mammy Fatu, a former Temne market woman at Bombay Street Market, whose relatives migrated from Leicester Peak to colonial Freetown in the 1920s, informed me that her grandmother used to head one of the micro-credit schemes. She learnt many skills from her. Thus, when she started her own business in Bombay Street Market, she engaged in similar practices with six of her Temne colleagues in the 1940s. However, in the 1950s, she dissolved the scheme to join a much bigger one run by Sukainatu Bangura.⁴⁶ Also, the table above indicates that contrary to some of the views in the established literature, Creole women living in rural Freetown in the colonial period depended on the cooperation, agricultural skills and business acumen of Temne women traders. In Rokel, one of the commercially strategic peninsula towns, for example, Temne women traders dominated retail trade, at least in 1947. The 1947 census for Rokel indicates that while there were twenty Creole women, nine girls and twenty-eight boys, there were forty Mende women, ten girls and twenty boys. On the other hand, there were one hundred and seventy-five Temne women, fifty six girls and one hundred and eighteen boys.⁴⁷ The report also indicates that majority of Temne women in Rokel engaged in petty trading and small-scale farming. Because of its strategic location residents of Rokel had easier access to the Freetown markets compared to residents in Waterloo. This access

⁴⁴ *SLWN*, September 12, 1931.

⁴⁵ Interview, Mammy Fatu, Freetown, November 1, 2003. See appendix 11.

⁴⁶ Interview, Mammy Fatu.

⁴⁷ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, p. 330.

guaranteed Temne women high income levels as they marketed much of their produce in the Freetown markets, particularly those who sold their goods wholesale.⁴⁸ In fact, Creole women in Rokel also provided markets for Temne women. This is because since Temne women in Rokel produced diverse goods for sale in Freetown markets, Creole women resident in the rural areas did not have to go to the Big Market to buy goods. They obtained the goods from Temne women in their neighborhood. In Gloucester, Leicester, Regent, York and Lakkah, Temne women were also involved in commercial activities.⁴⁹ Those who did not engage in trade occupied themselves with low-scale farming and gardening. Richardson and Collins argue that because of the relatively sufficient income many Temne women accrued from their commercial activities, they did not have to rely on their husbands and others for financial support in the mid 1950s.⁵⁰ This suggests that trade proved helpful to these women and they presumably led better lives.

Richardson and Collins note that from 1947 to 1951 Temne women dominated trade in vegetables and other produce in rural Freetown.⁵¹ Sukainatu Bangura recalled that this trend continued in the 1950s through the 1960s.⁵² Many of these Temne women traders served as major suppliers of raw commodities to other women traders in the Big Market, King Jimmy and other markets in colonial Freetown. It is difficult to determine the extent of the economic power these traders had; but it is clear that their commercial activities contributed to the economy of the colony since the 1950s.

⁴⁸ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, p. 395.

⁴⁹ *West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette*, Freetown, April-June 1930.

⁵⁰ Richardson and Collins, *Economic and Social Survey*, p. 428.

⁵¹ *West Africa Mail and Trade Gazette*, April-June, 1930.

⁵² Interview, Sukainatu Bangura, November 4, 2003.

On a broader level, the analysis above shows that contrary to the received wisdom, no one ethnic group absolutely dominated the economic space of colonial Freetown and its environs from 1890 onwards. In other words, the evidence indicates that market spaces in the colony were not the sole domain of Creole women traders as some feminist scholars' would have us believe. The organization of Temne market women around their micro-credit schemes, which supported their activities, made them influential in the produce business. That is, as Mammy Fatu and Sukainatu Bangura argued, residents in the rural areas and some sections of colonial Freetown relied on the goods of these women. Clearly, the importance of such levels of organization yielded results when Bangura and others persuaded market women to join the SLWM. Bangura's leverage over market women played a role in getting these women to support "Temne" candidates in municipal elections in 1957. On numerous occasions, the celebrated Temne Ruler Kande Bureh, discussed in chapter two, addressed Temne women traders when he canvassed their support for the SLPP. He would tell the women to "ensure support for the SLPP because the party represented the aspirations of all Temne in the country."⁵³

In addition to her role as a lead marketer, Bangura played a recognizable role in other aspects of life in the colony from the 1920s onwards. Her activities impacted the socio-economic and political scene of colonial Freetown. An analysis of her activities will reveal that as Geiger and Schmidt argue, non-Western educated women played an important role in shaping African societies. As a matter of fact, while there have been numerous book-length biographies of Western-educated Creole men and women, there has been no such publication on any illiterate woman in the colony. The story of Bangura

⁵³ Interviews, Mammy Fatu, Freetown, November 10, 2003.

proves that there was a powerful market woman whose leadership earned her a good followership among Temne market women. Through her activities, Bangura and her colleagues helped project the image of Temneness. I analyze her activities and role in organizing Temne women below.

I should point out that much of the data used in assessing the career of Sukainatu Bangura is based on several interviews I did with her, Abdul Bangura (her eldest surviving son), market women and community leaders and chiefs in Freetown. Many of the interviewees knew her one way or the other; i.e. many interacted with her formally or informally in colonial Freetown from the 1940s onwards. Because the press did not cover many of her activities, I could not independently corroborate some of the claims made during my interview with her. However, in 1961, the SLWM established its own newspaper which covered some of the activities of women including Bangura. But the paper was short lived. The Sierra Leone archives at Fourah Bay College also did not reveal any information on her activities. In addition, as already mentioned, the Freetown City Council library which used to house numerous documents on colonial Freetown was destroyed during the 1999 rebel invasion of Freetown. My hope to access information on the Freetown markets in the Council's library was therefore frustrated.

HAJA SUKAINATU BANGURA: TEMNE MARKET WOMAN AND LEADER, 1901-1961.

Haja Sukainatu Bangura (also known as Kai Bangura) was born in Northern Sierra Leone in 1901 to Temne parents. In 1911 Bangura and her parents immigrated to

Freetown.⁵⁴ She started trading in the famous King Jimmy Market in 1919. An enterprising woman, Bangura was revered and admired by her peers at King Jimmy Market.⁵⁵ She started her economic life at sea; i.e. renting canoes for fishing activities. By 1925, Bangura engaged in buying and selling fish in colonial Freetown and its environs. She used the proceeds accrued from this enterprise to engage in the produce business. These included husking and cleaning rice, vegetables, fruits and palm oil from the Protectorate for sale in Freetown at King Jimmy Market.⁵⁶ With an increase in her fortunes accompanied by an expansion of her business, Bangura employed the services of young Temne, Loko and Limba women in the rural areas where the soil was agriculturally fertile to farm products for her. She funded some of the gardening activities of the women in places like Rokel and Lakkah. The women would sell the produce harvested from their gardening activities to her at very low cost and she in turn sold these “goods on a cost recovery basis at King Jimmy Market.”⁵⁷ This account suggests that she did not sell her produce at exorbitant prices. By employing some Temne, Loko and Limba women as farm hands, Bangura was assured of a regular supply of vegetable goods. Through this, she always assured her customers at King Jimmy and Bombay Street Markets of the availability of these goods. Bangura recalled that her customers included Temne, Creole and others.⁵⁸

In the 1940s, Bangura expanded her business. In addition to selling vegetables and other farm products, she bought fishing boats and hired the services of fishermen.

⁵⁴ Interview, Haja Sukainatu Bangura.

⁵⁵ Interview, Chief Alimamy Yenki Kamara.

⁵⁶ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

⁵⁷ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

⁵⁸ Interview Sukainatu Bangura.

Between 1945 and 1948 Bangura claimed to have about five fishing boats which she placed under the command of Temne as well as Bullom men who submitted their returns to her on a weekly basis.⁵⁹ The fish obtained from the activities of her boats enabled her to expand her business further; i.e. she increased the number of stalls she had at King Jimmy Market. Another aspect of her business included the making and selling of dyed cloths (referred to as *Gara* in *Theimne*). She hired skilled women who manufactured and dyed local cloths for sale in colonial Freetown and in the Protectorate. This diversification of her business encouraged her to increase the size of her labor force. Her employees and business partners included Mbalu Conteh, Fatu Bangura, Rukor Koroma, and Gbassay Sesay. She recollected that some of these women later established their own businesses. Apart from employing young women, Bangura also helped colleagues through a loan scheme she established. Colleagues with low returns from their commercial activities would ask her for loans with an agreed payment plan. She noted that this scheme helped many of her friends and close confidantes including Adama Kamara, who later became an activist and a frequent pilgrim to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁰ Apart from Adama Kamara, Nana Turay, a Susu activist, also enjoyed the benevolence of Bangura. Turay would later become one of the most famous female activists. She joined

⁵⁹ Interview Sukainatu Bangura.

⁶⁰ Interview, Abdul Bangura. As noted above Abdul is the eldest surviving son of Bangura. He is seventy years old and a retired sailor. He informed me that as a young man in colonial Freetown he actually wrote some informal loan agreements between his mother and her debtors. He has no records of these receipts he wrote over forty-five years ago.

the Sierra Leone Women's Movement and served as one of its chairpersons and occasionally represented the movement at conferences abroad.⁶¹

In addition to the assistance that Bangura rendered her friends, workers and colleagues, in 1952, she established a cooperative society, referred to as *esusu* in *Theimne*, with Yankaday Kargbo at King Jimmy and Kissy Road Markets. Kargbo was an established Temne woman trader in King Jimmy and Kissy Road Markets in the 1950s. Though illiterate, Kargbo proved enterprising and socially active. A member of the *Alimania* association, Kargbo had in her employ many Temne women who coordinated her businesses; she also had a few young Mandingo and other women. Kargbo became "a prominent Temne business woman dealing in 'Garrah' dyeing with several apprentices from all parts of the city of Freetown" in 1952.⁶² Bangura reminisced that the cooperative she formed with Kargbo served as an informal mini-bank which they tapped during a financial emergency. The society also served as a means to render assistance to the young employees of both women – Bangura and Kargbo – by making loans readily available to them on request. The organization also helped young women traders start their own businesses. The accounts of Bangura and Kargbo reveal that the loans targeted mainly Temne women in King Jimmy, Kissy Road and Bombay Street Markets who formed the bulk of their workforce. The loans did not only alleviate the economic situation of those who received them, they also proved profitable to the two women who ran the fund. However, Bangura noted that though she accrued some profit

⁶¹ *Diary of the SLWM*, p. 9. See also *Madora*, February 16, 1961. *Madora* was a newspaper established by the SLWM to cover its activities because the male dominated press was biased in its coverage of activities of women in colonial Freetown.

⁶² Interview, Ambassador Sorsoh Conteh.

from this, the enterprise largely served as a solidarity gesture to many Temne market women who benefited from the enterprise.⁶³

Abdul Bangura informed me that in recognizing the lead role Bangura played in King Jimmy Market, the Freetown City Council appointed her as coordinator of Temne market women in 1949.⁶⁴ As head trader, she would use the relative leverage she had with the Council to advocate better amenities for traders in King Jimmy Market. As coordinator of Temne market women, she obviously received complaints from these women and would channel them to the Council's supervisor of markets. Usually, Temne women traders had their own section of the market and sold various goods such as ingredients "used in preparing Temne meals."⁶⁵ If, for example, the taps or toilet facilities in the Temne section of the market were broken, the head trader ensured that the Council or relevant department fix them. Like Judy Victoria in the Big Market whom White talked about in her work, Bangura was also a well known figure in King Jimmy Market in the mid 1940s.⁶⁶ Though highly recognized, Abdul Bangura recalled that the government did not only restrict the role of coordinator to Bangura alone. The government also appointed a coordinator among the Creoles in King Jimmy Market as well. He noted that the government extended this opportunity to Temne and Creole market women traders in this market because they formed the bulk of traders in the 1940s and 1950s. Not only did the government appoint her coordinator, she also received

⁶³ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura. Kargbo is deceased. Bangura noted that they were close allies. Also, Ambassador Conteh recalled that he knew Kargbo well because they were all colleagues at the Alimania association though Kargbo was much senior.

⁶⁴ Interview, Abdul Bangura corroborated by Yenki Kamara and Sukainatu Bangura herself. I have found no archival document or press reports to verify this claim. The interviewees were separately interviewed on this subject.

⁶⁵ Interview, Abdul Bangura.

⁶⁶ Interview, Chief Yenki Kamara.

contracts to supply colonial government offices with various commodities in the 1950s. She supplied food to the Police and Prison departments situated around King Jimmy Market and was paid on a monthly basis.⁶⁷ In addition to King Jimmy Market, Bangura also had stalls at Bombay Street Market, where she sold several commodities. The above suggests that in addition to shaping the economy, Temne women traders clearly played a prominent role in the administration of local markets. The coordinating role of Bangura made her a prominent Temne trader in colonial Freetown. It is therefore not surprising that when the idea of forming a national women's movement arose, she became one of the first to be contacted.

When Agatha Constance Cummings-John nursed the idea of forming a broad based woman's movement in 1951, Bangura recollected that she became one of the first business leaders in King Jimmy Market to be contacted.⁶⁸ She informed me that "when Mammy Constance wanted support for the formation of a woman's movement she came to me at King Jimmy Market to sound my opinion. I favored the idea and she extended an invitation to me, asking me to take along as many ladies as I can to the meeting."⁶⁹ Bangura attended the meeting together with other Temne women including Mbalu Conteh, Gbessay Sesay, Adama Kamara and a Susu, Nana Turay. Each attendee was requested to pay ten shillings as a registration fee. This maiden meeting agreed to the idea of forming the Sierra Leone's Women's Movement (SLWM), which has been the heart of

⁶⁷ Interview, Abdul Bangura and Chief Yenki Kamara. I could not verify this information in the archives. The arrangement may have been a low level one or an ad hoc one. I suspect the head of a sub department within the police and prison systems may have entered into this agreement with Bangura. Abdul Bangura claimed that he kept record of some of these transactions.

⁶⁸ Interview, Abdul Bangura and Hajj Bangura.

⁶⁹ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura. Bangura noted that "Mammy" was a title bestowed on Cummings-John by those who respected and admired her.

LaRay Denzer's works.⁷⁰ Denzer notes in her works that Cummings-John and some of her Creole colleagues founded and formed the executive of the SLWM.⁷¹ In all this, the available evidence reveals that Temne and other non-creole women formed an integral part of the association. For the most part, Cummings-John remained the renowned leader of the association. A close examination of the available historical records and data from interviews indicate that the leadership of the SLWM went beyond a single head. Executive members collectively adopted decisions and strategies "having the right to veto or object to any decisions contrary to the spirit of the organization."⁷² Therefore, though Cummings-John remained the official head of the SLWM she was not the sole decision maker. For instance, Bangura and Adama Kamara recounted that when Cummings-John introduced the idea of forming a "women [political] party" in 1953, i.e. barely two years after the formation of the SLWM, "we opposed the idea and she accepted our opposition."⁷³ This evidence is not indicated in Cummings-John's memoirs. The extant literature gives the impression that in the 1950s Creole women entirely controlled women's movements. Denzer claims that the executive enjoyed the broad support of the entire membership of the organization including market women. She however, did not acknowledge the input of other women particularly Temne women like Sukainatu Bangura, and Mbalu Conteh in founding the movement. In fact, Conteh represented the movement at conferences abroad.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

⁷¹ Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. ixl; see also her work on "Women in Politics", pp. 449-449.

⁷² Interview, Sukainatu Bangura. See also *The Diary of the SLWM*, pp. 8-10.

⁷³ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura and Adama Kamara.

⁷⁴ *Madora*, February 16, 1961.

The SLWM had broad aims and objectives which included improving the status of women. It also included seeking representation for women on government bodies and to forge a sense of unity among them irrespective of ethnic origin. The movement also strove towards eradicating ethnic prejudice and barriers within the movement.⁷⁵ Shortly after the establishment of the SLWM over two thousand women demonstrated against the high cost of living in the colony.⁷⁶ In 1953, the SLWM executive founded and registered the Friendly Society of the Sierra Leone Women's Movement on the Law Courts of Sierra Leone. In this same year, the executive started an annual donation of artificial limbs to disabled persons. In addition to donating artificial limbs, the SLWM invited Dr. Ransome Kuti, a successful limb fitter of Nigeria to help see through the exercise with the association bearing the cost alone.⁷⁷ Bangura recalled that she was part of this exercise as many of her compatriots benefited from this.

She related that as one of the vice chairwomen of the SLWM she addressed complaints from many illiterate women. The executive appropriately addressed these complaints at its meetings. In 1954, when the colonial government closed the Princess Christian Maternity Hospital and Children's Clinic, Bangura claimed to have persuaded the executive of the SLWM that they should demonstrate on the streets of colonial Freetown. She averred that "though the government refused to back down immediately, they heard us loud and clear through our street demonstration."⁷⁸ Similarly in 1955, when the labor Unions went on a nation-wide strike, the organizers of the strike asked the SLWM to participate. This is how Cummings-John recollects the incident in her memoirs

⁷⁵ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

⁷⁶ *The Diary of the SLWM*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ *The Diary of the SLWM*, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

when Marcus Grant, the head of the Artisans and Allied Workers Union, entreated their support:

Grant requested a meeting with the executive of the SLWM to discuss the situation and ask us to support the workers in their struggle ... Grant and others complained to us that too much capitalism existed in the country... we women did not create the strike, but it became necessary to back our husbands, sons and brothers. The men provided the organization.⁷⁹

Bangura recounted that when the SLWM executive received the request about supporting the strike, she did not support it at first, fearing police brutality. However, Cummings-John assured her that the role of the SLWM would be to peacefully demonstrate against government policy as they had done in the past. Based on the assurances she received from Cummings-John and others Bangura supported the strike. It can be concluded from one of these instances that Bangura formed part of the decision making process in the SLWM. In fact, when the executive reached a decision that the SLWM should participate in the strike, as head trader at King Jimmy Market, the executive asked Bangura to convince the traders to support the striking workers. In the end, Temne, Limba, Loko and other women came out in force to support the striking workers.⁸⁰ Though the women tried to stay clear of any rambunctious activities, the strike turned out to be a bumptious event. The striking workers took to the streets and prevented government officials, private citizens, Lebanese residents and uncooperative colleagues from conducting their business.⁸¹ Cummings-John notes that the SLWM helped saved Lebanese women and children, because they were friendly to the movement:

My executive did what it could to help alleviate the situation, particularly with the Lebanese. Many of them went into hiding because the looters attacked their

⁷⁹ Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. 104.

⁸⁰ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura and Adama Kamara.

⁸¹ *The Daily Guardian*, February 14, 1955.

shops. Because so many of them had helped the SLWM, we now wanted to return favor by bringing water and food to them. We escorted their women and children to our secretariat where we had established a rudimentary refugee camp.⁸²

She maintains that Creoles impugned the SLWM and its leadership for joining the striking workers. The invectives heaped on the SLWM and its executive by the Creoles did not change the loyalty of the movement to the striking workers. The point to note here is that the support given by the SLWM to the workers in part made the strike a success. Sukainatu Bangura noted that had it not been for the support of the SLWM the strike could not have struck a chord with the colonial authorities.⁸³ Articles about the strike ran in the *Daily Guardian* lending credence to the above point, claiming that the support of the SLWM gave the strike a timely boost.⁸⁴

The SLWM was affiliated to other women's movements at home and abroad such as the All Women's Organization of Sierra Leone created in 1958, later renamed the Sierra Leone Federation of Women's Organizations (SLFWO).⁸⁵ In 1969, the SLWM also played a role in establishing the Women's Labour Union. This was followed by the creation of the Market Women's Association, a distinct association from the SLWM.⁸⁶ In 1960, the SLWM became affiliated with the International Women's Alliance in the United Kingdom, the Federation of Women's Organizations in Freetown and the Associated Country Women of the World in London.⁸⁷ In this same year, the SLWM received invitations to send delegates to the Women's International Democratic

⁸² Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. 106.

⁸³ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura; see *Diary of SLWM*, pp8-9. See also Denzer, *Memoirs*, pp. 105-106.

⁸⁴ *The Daily Guardian*, April 1955.

⁸⁵ *Diary of SLWM*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁶ *Diary of SLWM*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁷ *Diary of SLWM*, p. 6.

Federation in Copenhagen in honour of the 50th Anniversary of International Women's Day. The SLWM selected Dr June Roness and Fanny Thomas as its delegates to the conference.⁸⁸ In 1961, the Women's International Alliance Conference in Dublin, Ireland invited the SLWM. Bangura claimed that she was one of the few women selected to attend but declined the offer in favor of her close colleague Nana Turay. Turay accepted the offer together with Etta Harris and Clarice Norman.⁸⁹ Also, in 1960, the SLWM and the Business and Professional Women's Club sent delegations to Conakry to meet with their counterparts on issues affecting women in the West African sub-region. Mrs. Fanny Thomas represented the Business and Professional Women's Club while Mbalu Conteh represented the SLWM.⁹⁰ On this point Bangura again informed me that she wanted her junior colleagues and assistants to get international exposure. She noted that Mbalu Conteh and other Temne women initially showed reluctance to join the SLWM; she persuaded them to become members. It was therefore gratifying for her to see Conteh get international experience and exposure.

In the mid 1950s, Cummings-John summoned the leaders of market women to a special meeting. Several women including Kai Bangura, Nana Turay, Mrs. Magba-Kamara, Mrs. Marie Tucker and others attended the meeting. Bangura reminisced that Cummings-John raised the issue of women's participation in national politics. Saddened by the indifference women demonstrated toward party politics in colonial Freetown, she wanted women to be pro-active in party politics. At the end of the meeting, Cummings-John and others agreed to form an association that would be affiliated to the ruling Sierra

⁸⁸ *Madora*, January 28, 1961.

⁸⁹ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura. See also *Madora*, February 16, 1961, p. 6.

⁹⁰ *Madora*, July 22, 1961.

Leone Peoples Party (SLPP).⁹¹ Referring to this account in her memoirs, Cummings-John notes, “On August 25, 1955, we formally announced the formation of the women’s section of the SLPP.”⁹² Again as above, the point here is not to argue that the Temne and Creole women raced against each other for leadership positions in the SLWM. The point is that the interests of women in the association were better served when all parties in the SLWM executive agreed to a course of action.

When the SLWM created the women’s wing of the SLPP, the members elected Cummings-John as chairperson, Kai Bangura as Mammy Queen, Nana Turay and Mrs. Magba-Kamara as Secretaries.⁹³ Though Kai Bangura did not serve as head of this political wing, she was clearly in a leadership position in the organization. The market women served as pillars of the SLWM and the female wing of the SLPP as well. During official ceremonies Kai Bangura organized SLWM members in King Jimmy Market. When Cummings-John suggested the idea of a weekly subscription to be paid to the SLWM and the SLPP female wing, “I argued against the idea because it would have been too much for the King Jimmy [sic] women; consequently the idea was dropped and we resorted to the usual monthly subscription.”⁹⁴ The claim above suggests that other executive members of the SLWM influenced Cummings-John and that such views sometimes prevailed. Bangura related that, as Mammy Queen, she received monthly subscriptions from SLWM members in King Jimmy Market and informed them about decisions reached at executive meetings held fortnightly. Her activism in the SLWM was buoyed, in part, by the fact that of the three Temne members in the seven member

⁹¹ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura. See also Denzer, “Women in Politics”.

⁹² Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. 114.

⁹³ *The African Vanguard*, August 1955.

⁹⁴ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura, Freetown.

executive of the SLWM, Bangura remained the most senior among them and they all “looked up to her for guidance.”⁹⁵

This speaks to Schmidt’s point on the relevance of market women in colonial cities in Africa. Schmidt argues that in Guinea Conakry market women formed the bedrock of the RDA.⁹⁶ Though elite and educated women joined the RDA struggle, Guinean market women, cloth-dyers, and seamstresses violated gender norms by embarking on anti-colonial activities. The activities of these women left an indelible imprint on the “RDA, its methods, programs” and general objectives.⁹⁷ In the same vein in the Sierra Leone colony, the appeal of the SLPP broadened when the SLWM joined its ranks. In fact, when the SLPP went out to campaign the women would lead this exercise; they sang and taunted men and women who stayed at home and refused to join their ranks. At speech-giving ceremonies where political parties courted the support of undecided voters, the women would sing to persuade these voters. As head trader, Bangura served as the point woman for the King Jimmy and Bombay Street Markets. Her role on such occasions involved cooking for party members, and together with Mammy Musu, ensured that all female members wore identical dresses commonly referred to as *Arshobie*.⁹⁸ She argued that because of the active role she and others played in the SLPP, the wide appeal of the SLPP depended on the support of women. As Geiger argues in the

⁹⁵ Interview, Adama Kamara. She was also a member of the executive.

⁹⁶ Jean Allman et al., *Women*, p. 283.

⁹⁷ Jean Allman et al., *Women*, p. 283.

⁹⁸ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura corroborated by Mammy Fatu during separate interview sessions, November, 10 and 25 2003.

case of Tanzania, TANU women were a mobilizing force behind the association which eventually led Tanganyika to independence.⁹⁹

In May 1957, general elections were held in Sierra Leone with four political parties fielding candidates. The major political parties included the SLPP and the National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL). Dr. Sir Milton Margai headed the SLPP while Dr. Bankole-Bright headed the NCSL.¹⁰⁰ Cummings-John contested the general elections as an SLPP candidate in Freetown. She relied on her colleagues in the SLWM to campaign for her during the elections. In fact, Cummings-John attributed the success of her candidacy to the support she received from her colleagues, particularly from the SLWM.¹⁰¹ Bangura informed me that she was passionately involved in the campaign of Cummings-John. Apart from the collegueship between her and Cummings-John, Bangura believed a success by Cummings-John at the polls would be a success for women in Sierra Leone and the SLWM in particular.¹⁰² Cummings-John eventually defeated Dr. Bankole-Bright. Dr. Bankole-Bright however, appealed the results. The point to note here is that the SLWM became politically active and relatively influential in the colonial Freetown. The fact that the candidate of the SLPP, also a member of the SLWM, could defeat the leader of a male dominated party in the general elections proved to be a tremendous success for women in the colony. It also showed that when women came together and broke ethnic barriers, they made remarkable gains in an androcentric environment.

⁹⁹ Geiger, *TANU Women*, pp. 66-68.

¹⁰⁰ *The African Standard*, August 16, 1955.

¹⁰¹ Denzer, *Memoirs*, pp. 114-116

¹⁰² Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

In 1960, the SLWM received several guests. The executive of the SLWM invited one of the most widely revered female activists in West Africa, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. The visit of Mrs. Kuti sparked unease in the colonial administration as it opposed the visit. Cummings-John, Sukainatu Bangura and others challenged the government's objection to the visit and insisted that Ransome Kuti honor the visit, which she did. It is unclear why the colonial government objected to Kuti's visit. The movement also invited another high profile guest, Miss Jude of the International Alliance of Women.¹⁰³ Bangura noted that during these high profile visits, she served as vice chairwoman of what she termed the "preparation committee to receive the guests" while Cummings-John served as chairwoman.¹⁰⁴ During the visit of Ransome Kuti, the two sides discussed plans on the formation of a National Union of African Women. The organization was meant to embrace all African women with Ransome Kuti serving as its first president. Before leaving Freetown, Ransome Kuti helped the SLWM develop connections with additional international women's organizations.¹⁰⁵ The visitations made by Kuti and Jude to Freetown inflated the stature of the SLWM among women and men in Freetown and within the sub-region of West Africa as a whole.

As noted in chapter 3, Bangura did not only become a business leader and political activist, she also proved to be a cultural activist. As Mammy Queen in the Alimania, Bangura and her colleagues used songs to tout the principles of Islam. The same was true in the SLWM where she and other women used songs to assert female presence in the colony. In the 1955 demonstrations, for example, Bangura recalled that

¹⁰³ *Diary of SLWM*, P. 7

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura, December 2003. See also Denzer, *Memoirs*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁵ Denzer, *Memoirs*, P. 109.

she and her colleagues used songs to denounce government policies, etc.¹⁰⁶ In sum, sources show that Sukainatu Bangura helped shape events in the SLWM; i.e. she brought out market women to attend mass rallies and she encouraged them to pay their dues to sustain the movement. In addition, she taught some of her SLWM colleagues the value of mutual benefit schemes and savings clubs. In all, Bangura maintained that “she represented the voice of the unheard in the SLWM and in the *Alimania*, particularly the shy and inarticulate ones.”¹⁰⁷

In addition to her roles in the *Alimania* and SLWM, Bangura also helped to broker peace among young Temne men and women. In other words, she acted as a peace broker when married couples faced challenges in their relationships. She forged and organized marriages among young men and women who courted each other in colonial Freetown. “Young boys and girls would always approach me for advice on marital affairs and would frequently ask me to serve as their god parents.”¹⁰⁸ Little reinforces this point when he notes: “the Temne Dancing Compin [sic] helped women to get to know young men personally in a way that might ordinarily be difficult. Through the numerous recreational activities, weekly gatherings, excursions to another town, dancing together, brought the sexes together and enabled courtships to start in an easier atmosphere.”¹⁰⁹ He notes further “the fact that in the mixed associations women frequently shared administrative responsibilities with men is equally important for female morale, particularly in an urban environment.”¹¹⁰ Little pays tribute to women like Sukainatu

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Adama Kamara.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura, Freetown.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, Sukainatu Bangura.

¹⁰⁹ Little, *West African Urbanization*, pp. 134-135.

¹¹⁰ Little, *West African Urbanization*, pp. 135-136.

Bangura when he notes that the role women played in running voluntary associations encouraged and to some extent enabled women to act and behave in a more individualistic fashion than is customary under the traditional system.¹¹¹ As Mammy Queen of the *Alimania*, Bangura recollected that she was part of the executive which helped build the Temne Central Mosque in the 1940s. She supplied the labor force with food and drink using her personal resources. In the course of completing the Temne mosque, Kai Bangura suggested that official quarters be built for the imams and other officials. In the end, the committee charged with completing the mosque could only afford to build one house as official residence of the imam. This is still the official residence of the Temne chief imam.¹¹² Assigning an official residence to the imam, Bangura noted, gave the office a special prestige, honor and boost within the overall Temne community in the colony.

The accounts above reveal that from the 1940s to the end of colonial rule in 1961, Sukainatu Bangura proved to be a powerful market woman who proclaimed her Temneness. Clearly, many of her colleagues perceived her as a substantial market woman and benefited from her skills and leadership. The extant historiography on the role of women in shaping the history of the colony is Creole-centered; adding the activities of powerful market women like Bangura will give us a clearer sense of how various historical actors helped shape the history of the Sierra Leone colony.

¹¹¹ Little, *West African Urbanization*, p. 137.

¹¹² Interview, Hajj Bangura; corroborated by the current secretary of the mosque, Sheik Gibril Kamara though he did not produce any document to corroborate his claim. I am, however, inclined to believe this claim since all three senior officials of the Temne Central Mosque repeated on different occasions, this assertion to me.

All in all, Temne market women traders rallied around their commercial institutions both in Freetown and in the peninsula towns during the colonial period. The various micro-credit schemes they established boosted their commercial activities and made them a force to reckon with, not least in the produce business and in commodities such as rice. Sukainatu Bangura, Yankaday Kargbo and others not only boosted the economic status of these women, they also influenced some of them to join women's organizations or movements. When Cummings-John needed support for her election as mayor, Bangura and some Temne women traders at King Jimmy and Bombay Street Markets were there for her.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION:**RETHINKING THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE SIERRA LEONE COLONY:**

The initial impetus in the historiography of Freetown was nationalist. Fyfe, Porter, Spitzer, Wyse, White, Denzer and others focused on Creole accomplishments to make the case that African agency as well as colonial initiative was important in the making of Freetown. Non-creole groups were left in the background, grouped as “non-colony peoples” or “interior peoples.”¹ Even when other groups came under inquiry, such as women and Muslims, the Creole focus remained. But colonial censuses identify a Temne population which matched the Creole, and the Colonial Government recognized and entrenched Temne Tribal Authority in its structure. Diverse dance societies, mosques and other socio-cultural associations presenting themselves as Temne were, as I have shown, prominent in the social landscape of Freetown, especially from the late 1930s onward. Further, individuals recognized as Temne, such as Sukainatu Bangura, Alhaji Gibril Sesay and Kande Bureh, were prominent leaders among market women and Muslims.

This study aimed at analyzing this case of Temne agency in colonial Freetown to promote an alternative view on the social history of the colony between 1890 and 1961.

¹ Akintola Wyse, *H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), p.17. See also Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University, 1962), Arthur Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society* (London: Oxford University, 1963), Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1974), Frances White, *Sierra Leone's Settler Women Traders: Women on the Afro-European Frontier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987) and her other work, “The Big Market in Freetown: A Case Study of Women's Workplace” *Journal of the Historical Society of Sierra Leone* 4, 1&2 (December 1980) and LaRay Denzer, *Constance Cummings-John: Memoirs of a Krio Leader* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman for Humanities Research Center, 1995).

The study illustrates that cultural organizations, politics, religion, and commerce were not the domain of one ethnic group. It demonstrates that the history of Sierra Leone is much more complex than we have been led to believe. In other words, this study has shown that a diverse cast of historical players shaped the social history of the colony. Certainly, the social history of the colony can be more thoroughly understood when we integrate these various strands of history in the extant historiography. Across a variety of social spaces – the mosque and the cultural associations and tribal administrative functions – the idea of being Temne not only mattered, it also clearly grew in profile and importance over the colonial period, especially from the 1930s and 1940s forward. As noted in chapter 2, with the passing of the 1905 and 1906 ordinances, the Temne Tribal Authority became entrenched and fully operational thus providing various services for its community. It succeeded in organizing the Temne community as a force to reckon with in colonial Freetown. This is evident in the support the Tribal Authority gave to prominent Temne social activists in forming and establishing the *Alimania* and the Temne Progressive Union in the 1930s, the *Ambas Geda* and *Jam-ul-Jaleel* in the 1940s and Boys London and *Ariah* in the 1950s. These institutions gave a stamp of importance to Temneness in the colony.

Though the study focuses on the factors which stimulated the emergence of Temne institutions and their significance to the social formation of Freetown, these observations highlight a number of themes worth attention in future work. Temneness became an attractive identity in mid 20th century Freetown. This was true not only for Temne speaking migrants from the hinterland, but also for some Mandingo, Loko, Limba, Mende and Fula speaking groups, and for the colonial government and the Sierra

Leone Peoples Party. It became a badge of identity and proved important because it strengthened what Frederick Cooper calls “commonality,” “groupness” and “connectedness” in colonial Freetown.² That is, those described and recorded as Temne tried to show group boundedness by drawing, again as Cooper argues, a sharp distinctiveness from non-members and a clear boundary between insiders and outsiders. This means only those who claimed Temneness, either by speaking Theimne or through Temne parentage, gained admission to these associations. Once they became members of the associations they acted collectively to attain their aims and objectives. In short, once Temne and non-Temne Theimne speakers became members of these associations they assumed and demonstrated Temneness publicly. This shows the importance of Temneness to non-Temne groups who had to learn Theimne to get in. Once they got in, they behaved according to the norms of the associations and the Temne community. The point to note here, however, is that Temneness proved important and attractive to non-Temne communities which made them flock to Temne cultural associations. Clearly, the attraction of the associations could be found in the services they provided for their immediate communities. The *Alimania*, for example, built a school for the Temne community in 1943, and contributed to the war efforts during the Second World War. The *Alimania* and other Temne cultural associations also helped raise funds for the building of the Temne Central Mosque and other community mosques for their worshippers.³ The associations also served the larger community by gracing, organizing and arranging marriage ceremonies for Mandingo, Fula, and Limba speakers. Finally, the

² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), p. 75.

³ SLWN, May 1949.

associations helped shape the mores of its members in public, created inter-community visitations and organized sports tournaments and lantern parades, and helped found the All Peoples Congress political party in 1960.

Temneness also proved important to the SLPP which used it as a political asset. During the Creole confrontation with non-creole groups, the SLPP, particularly its leader Sir Milton Margai, identified as Mende, used Temne historical claims to Freetown to bash Creole cultural and political arrogance. As noted in chapter two, Margai impugned the Creole as ingrates who should appreciate the accommodation offered to them by non-creoles. It is clear from the historical records that the Creoles found it hard to fend off such lines of attack. This weapon might have proved effective in demoralizing the Creoles and could have contributed to the gradual decline of their standing in Freetown in the late colonial period. One can assume that the government conscientiously responded to such attacks on the Creoles by its persistence in ensuring protectorate representation in almost all organs of government. When, for example, the Creole establishment attacked local administrations in the colony, the Colonial Government was quick to vigorously defend the institution. It is therefore reasonable to submit that the centrality of the Temne Tribal Authority caused the colonial government to defend the need for this institution against heavy and persistent vilification from the City Council. Since the recognition of a Temne Tribal Headman in the 1890s, the Temne community and the Creole establishment disagreed over the need for the existence of these authorities. While the Temne “never fully forgot that the land which served as the colony settlement originally belonged to them,” the Creole believed otherwise and in fact perceived them and other

non-creoles as “undesirable elements in their community.”⁴ The rivalry between the two communities sharpened after 1940s. During this period, vociferous Temne community leaders refused to give in to Creole assertions of authority. In the market place and in politics the rivalry between the two continued. In all this, the colonial government ensured that the Creole establishment respected the existence of non-creole institutions including Temne institutions which by far posed the greatest challenge to Creoleness and what it represented. From the above, it can be argued that the Colonial Government’s support for the Temne Tribal Authority and other Temne groupings was designed to empower non-creole groups and at the same time limit the power of the Creoles by ensuring that they had rivals.

Not only was Temneness useful to the Mende-led SLPP, it proved useful to certain Creole politicians such as Wallace-Johnson, in his use of Theimne phrases to rally popular support. By his use of Theimne phrases in his campaigns, Wallace-Johnson argued that his organization was inclusive and cut across ethnic lines.

Temneness also became important to provincial migrants who visited the colony in the 1920s and 1930s onward. By associating with Temneness the migrants received benefits from Temne institutions. As stated in chapter two, migration to the colony from Temne strongholds in the Protectorate increased steadily since the 1920s for several reasons. Barry Riddell points out that “a desire by many, especially the young, to break from traditional authority or discipline,” inspired many to migrate to Freetown, in

⁴ Gershon Collier, *Experiment in Democracy in an African Nation* (New York: New York University, 1970), pp. 48-55.

addition to the “quest for higher standard of living.”⁵ When these migrants visited Freetown their first port of call would be the Temne Authority or the various heads of the cultural associations. Officials of these institutions provided a wide range of assistance to these migrants including burying those who died as paupers. Individual Themne speakers such as Sukainatu Bangura provided job training for the migrants and other residents. My informants singled out Bangura for successfully training young girls in the art of business. As the analysis of chapter five indicates, the cooperative society and micro-credit scheme she organized privileged Temne girls over others. More importantly, the micro-credit scheme served as a vehicle of social welfare by encouraging community action, particularly among traders at King Jimmy and Bombay Street markets. These facilities provided by Temne institutions for the members of its community may have served as a nectar of attraction and could have encouraged individuals and groups to identify with Temneness.

It can be argued that the flight to Temneness had tremendous impact on the social history of colonial Freetown. That is, Creoleness was in relation with other groupings in a very dynamic way. It shows that Temneness was different from Creoleness. In other words, Temneness meant not being Creole and vice-versa. Residents of colonial Freetown including the Aku, Mandingo, Limba, Loko, Mende and others, had the option of remaining Creole or adopting Temneness. It is therefore reasonable to argue that Temneness served as an alternative to Creoleness.

The above notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that though the need to show group boundedness and sameness made Temneness distinct, the concept itself was fluid

⁵ Barry Riddell, *The Spatial Dynamics of Modernization in Sierra Leone: Structure, Diffusion and Response* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1970), p. 106.

and malleable. This is because those who became attracted to Temne institutions did what was required to identify with Temneness even when some carried other identities. The Temne Tribal Authority and others served as gatekeepers of Temneness. The Tribal Authority and the executive of the cultural associations to a large extent determined Temneness and provided assistance such as employment, financial aid, and the like to members who ostentatiously organized around this identity. In other words, both the Temne local administrations and cultural associations determined who they identified and endorsed as Temne. The variables used in making such determination remained fluid. It is unclear whether non-Temne Theimne speakers who joined the Temne associations wholly shed their Mende, Mandingo or Limba identities. Since my informants could not clarify this sticky point, one can argue that the new joiners of the Temne associations must have carried a double identity or even multiple identities. By admitting non-Temne Theimne speakers, it is clear that the executives of the cultural associations were devoted to the idea of uplifting and burnishing Temne ethnic pride. Such devotion made them admit people who engaged in activities that gave Temneness a lambent image.

The malleability of Temneness and its institutions in the colony in connection to individual Temne personalities raises some intriguing questions. According to my informants, including Sukainatu Bangura herself, prominent Temne activists such as Bangura and Sesay carried two closely intertwined identities in public. That is, Sesay was a Muslim missionary and Temne leader, Bangura a promoter of women's interests and a Temne. Clearly, my informants did not think of separating these concepts. Their accounts on this subject show their obsession to show the importance of Temneness by attributing the activities of anyone perceived as Temne to be generally acting as its agent. More

research needs to be done to further probe questions relating to how identities based on religion, or social function in the market place, intertwined with ideas of ethnic identification, such as Temneness.

This study has not provided a complete analysis of Temne institutions though it is a major step in highlighting the role Temne institutions played in the social formation of the colony. From the analysis above, although it remains unclear what Temneness is beyond Temne boosterism, it is apparent that adopting a Temne identity in certain contexts provided people with access to urban services, occupations and activities that proved beneficial to them. Anyone who spoke Theimne was considered a Temne and was qualified to become a member of the associations. Since the motive of this study is not to probe the actual meaning of Temneness and how it evolved over time, further work should be done to investigate this issue. Also, from the questions raised in this study, we need more research to find out whether other non-Temne indigenous institutions emerged and challenged Creole cultural and political arrogance in the colonial period and whether they succeeded in this. It will be useful to undertake research that will probe the meaning of “Mendeness,” “Limbaness,” “Fulaness,” and “Mandingoness” and how these not only contributed to the social formation of Freetown but how they evolved over time and how these categories of identity evolved in relation to each other. Did they compete with or complement each other? How did identities such as Muslim or market woman cut across them? How did these relations change over time?

As noted in chapter one, this is a revisionist study that offers a foundation for new approaches to the history of Freetown following the social history agenda advocated by Frederick Cooper, Allen Howard, Jane Parpart and Philip Zachernuk, among many

others. These scholars advocate examining historical issues that go beyond nationalist questions. Though the questions examined by these scholars differ from mine, the approach they adopted in their various works in probing the activities of diverse historical actors in colonial West Africa provided guidance in my quest to analyze the history of colonial Freetown. Zachernuk and others argue that colonial questions are complex and cannot be reduced to simple interpretations. In his groundbreaking work, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas*, Zachernuk argues that the motives and activities of colonial subjects and intellectuals in southern Nigeria were not merely nationalist as some have argued.⁶ Economic factors, power politics and self-aggrandizement influenced the behavior and activities of these subjects. In other words, Zachernuk argues that to situate the activities of the colonial intelligentsia in southern Nigeria within the colonizer and colonized model glosses over complex questions. Like others mentioned above, Zachernuk believes that African history is not all about the European versus African model. In her numerous works, Jane Parpart has shown that African history cannot be understood through the lens of the tension which characterized the colonial moment, rather other questions such as feminism and the development discourse also matter. She argues that African history is richer in content and methodology when we integrate other strands of history beyond the nationalist discourse. Allen Howard makes a similar case in his works. Howard argues that the issue of and fight over space have always characterized African history. His argument meshes well with the questions Cooper et al. raise in their study about “who shaped the city, in what image, by what means, and against what resistance”; the authors advocate a new

⁶ See Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

approach which investigates the “details of life in the workplace, the marketplace, and the residence.”⁷ As stated earlier, the approach of the scholars mentioned above has inspired this study. Therefore, by going beyond nationalist questions, it will be clear that the history of the Sierra Leone colony is not merely about European denigration of Africans which Creoles challenged and effectively blunted through their assimilation of European culture. The history of the colony is much more complex than that. And as Riddell notes, Freetown was not only a Creole town, but also the largest Temne, Mende and Limba town.⁸ We cannot thoroughly understand the history of the social formation of Freetown until we fully incorporate the activities and contribution of Freetown residents in the full complexity of their identities. It clearly can no longer be presented as a story centered on Creoles or Creoledom. Many different organized, vital, and influential groups were part of the story. Locating the rise and influence of groups and people marked as Temne is one step toward achieving this more satisfactory account of this colonial city.

⁷ Frederick Cooper, ed., *Struggle for the City: Migrant, Labor, Capital and the State in Urban Africa* (Beverly Hills, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1983), p. 10.

⁸ Riddell, *Spatial Dynamics*, p. 104.

Appendix 1: Bangura, Abdul.

Abdul Bangura is the eldest surviving son of Sukainatu Bangura and currently a retired sailor. He was born in 1935 in Freetown. Bangura claimed to have written many of the informal agreements his mother made with her debtors who were mostly market women in colonial Freetown. He, however, does not have any records of these agreements he wrote forty-five years ago. Bangura lives in at 14 Garber Lane in Freetown where I conducted about five interviews with him in October and November 2003.

Appendix 2: Bangura, Sukainatu.

Sukainatu Bangura, a major subject of study in this research project was interviewed between the months of September and December in 2003 in Freetown. She was born in Freetown in 1902 and became one of the most outstanding illiterate marketers in colonial Freetown. She was an established business woman who owned stalls in King Jimmy and Bombay Streets Markets. She was a founding member of the Alimania association. A detailed biographical information on Bangura can be found in chapter 5. I interviewed seven times her at her Garber Lane residence in the east of Freetown between September and December 2003.

Appendix 3: Bangurah, Hajj.

Hajj Hassan Bangurah was a member of the Alimania. Born in Freetown in 1933, he was a relation of Alhaji Gibril Sesay. He attended the Imania Temne School in the 1940s. He received a Diploma in Arts and Design from the University of London in 1968. Bangurah was an executive member of the Sierra Leone Football Association in the 1970s. Between 1976 and 1977, he went on a study tour visiting Art Centers and Institutions in

Washington, D.C., New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, Republic of Guinea, Germany and China. Bangurah was appointed by the government of Sierra Leone as Director of Arts at the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Station, Freetown; he also served as member of the University of Sierra Leone Court. Bangurah was also chairman of the Arts and Crafts national committee and served as the president of the Sierra Leone Society for the Promotion of Art Culture. In addition, he served as Visiting Art Teacher of Cheshire Homes. In 1987, the government of Sierra Leone awarded him the Order of the Rokel, its highest civilian award and later served as Sierra Leone's cultural representative in China and Egypt. In the 1980s, he was invited to grace Islamic occasions in the United States and Britain. He taught Arts and Design at the Milton Margai Teachers College from 1980-1987. He was a radio panelist on Temne and Islamic issues in Freetown. I interviewed him five times in Freetown between October and December 2003 in his residence in Freetown. I have been informed he passed in June 2005.

Appendix 4: Buya, Pa.

Pa Buya was born in 1922 in Mountain Cut in the east of Freetown. He co-founded Boys London, a young man's club together with his friend and former boss, Chief Adikalie Gbonko (discussed in chapters two and three). He noted that he was a protégé of chief Gbonko. Pa Buya was not only an original member of Boys London; he was also a central figure of the executive of the association. He most times serviced the meetings of the association at general meetings. Though the duo headed and promoted the activities of their association, they continued to show allegiance to Amba Geda "to help boost Temne pride and respect." I interviewed him in November 2003 at his residence in

Freetown on the activities of the various cultural associations including the one he co-founded.

Appendix 5: Caulker, George Chief.

Chief George Caulker was born in Bo District in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone in 1932. He moved to Freetown with his parents when he was thirteen years old. He describes himself as Mende. During my interview with him, he recollected the “sad moments when ethnic mates would be ashamed to represent their true identity in public.” Caulker explained that young Mende men and women fled to many Temne associations in the 1940s and 1950s; a situation he continues to mourn. He was a court messenger in the Mende local administration in the 1950s; he later rose to the rank of section chief in charge of Lumley, Juba and Pendembu in the west of Freetown. I interviewed him in his office at Lumley in November 2003.

Appendix 6: Conteh, Bai Maro

Bai Maro Conteh was born in Bombali District in northern Sierra Leone around 1929. He immigrated to Freetown with his parents when he was fourteen years old. He has since lived in Freetown, particularly in the central and eastern sections of the city, the stronghold of many Theimne speakers. He describes himself as Temne. He is one of the founding members of Boys London together with his friend and ally, Chief Adikalie Gbonko in Bambara Town in colonial Freetown. He served as chairman of the association and chaired many of its general meetings and closely supervised the activities of the executive. He currently resides at no. 8 Fifth Street in Magazine Cut, Freetown, where I conducted a series of interviews with him in November 2003. He is an old

member of the premier Temne cultural association in colonial Freetown, Amba Geda. He claimed to have been a dancer of the association.

Appendix 7: Conteh, Sorsoh.

Ambassador Sorsoh Conteh was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone in October 1932. He attended the Imania Temne School and the Saint Edwards Secondary School in Freetown in the 1940s and 1950s. He later attended the Fletcher School of Law, Boston University in the 1970s. Ambassador was a founding youth member of the All Peoples Congress Party. His strong support for the party earned him four ambassadorial appointments in Germany, the Soviet Union, Africa and China. He held important positions in the executive of the Jam-ul-Jaleel. He continues to be a key player in Sierra Leone national politics. He was a founding youth member of the Alimania cultural group, which promoted Temneness in the Sierra Leone colony. During the municipal elections in which Temne candidates ran against Creole candidates, Conteh recalled voting for Temne candidates. I interviewed him six times in Freetown between September and December 2003.

Appendix 8: Dumbuya, Mohammed Pa.

Pa Mohammed Dumbuya was born in 1923 in Freetown to Temne parents. He was a trader and Temne activist; he engaged in activities that promoted Temne cultural beliefs among many men and women. He served as the Secretary-General of *Ariah*; he is in fact the only surviving member of the association. Pa Dumbuya passionately related to me that "Freetown would have been taken over by the Creoles if the Temne had not stood up

to them in the colonial period.” He is convinced that the Temne own Freetown and should be central in its administration. He noted that the association he helped found, Aria, played a great role in confronting Creole cultural arrogance. I interviewed in October and November 2003 in his apartment in Magazine Cut in the east of Freetown.

Appendix 9: Dumbuya, Sorie Pa.

Pa Sorie Dumbuya was born in Kambia District in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone in 1930 to Limba parents. His parents migrated to Freetown when he was ten years old. Pa Dumbuya said he was an admirer of the Temne-led Ambas Geda in Freetown but he never joined the association. He noted to me that many young Limba men and women flocked to Temne associations for economic and social reasons. Because he was “a proud Limba who helped maintain discipline” among the Limba community in Freetown, he was elected section chief in charge of Kissy section in 1971. I interviewed in what he described as his “official residence” in Kissy village, i.e. in the east of Freetown in November 2003.

Appendix 10: Fadika, Ibrahim.

Ibrahim Fadika was born in colonial Freetown in 1922 and described himself as Mandingo. Fadika related that he was a member of the Mandingo Tarancis and an active one at that. In 1941, he also claimed to have attended the Madrasa Islamia School based in Foulah Town controlled by the Mandingo. In my interviews with him he explained at length that many Mandingo young men and women flocked to the Temne ethnic group

for various reasons ranging from economic to social. I interviewed him in November in his home in Fisher Lane in central Freetown.

Appendix 11: Fatu, Mammy.

Mammy Fatu was born in 1925 in Kissy village in colonial Freetown. She became a trader at King Jimmy Market after she turned sixteen. Mammy Fatu explained that she quickly became a close ally of Sukainatu Bangura. Together the duo promoted various schemes to help young girls at King Jimmy and Bombay Streets markets. She claimed to have participated actively in the micro-credit scheme Bangura founded. Mammy Fatu was a social activist “who worked tirelessly to promote the image of Temne people in the city.” She was a member of the Ambas Geda. I interviewed her four times in Freetown at her residence in Government Wharf in November and December 2003.

Appendix 12: Gbonko, Adikalie Chief.

Chief Adikalie Gbonko is a section chief in Bambara Town. The Temne Tribal Headman appointed him as section chief in 1975. Born September 2nd, 1933 in Freetown, his ancestors hailed from Northern Sierra Leone but later immigrated to Freetown in the 1920s. The name Gbonko means “Man of the Forest” connoting his depth of knowledge on Temne traditions and folklore. When I paid him several visits at his home where he had his offices, I observed that he was highly revered by his people; he commanded their loyalty and respect. During my first appointment with him, I found him adjudicating a case about witchcraft. A married couple brought an ailing child to the office of the Chief accusing a neighbor of bewitching the dying child. After hours of deliberations in which witnesses from both sides testified, the Chief made a ruling upholding the accusations

made against the accused. The accused was asked to foot the medical expenditure of the sick child and other financial expenditures incurred by the plaintiff with regards to the ailment of the child. The culprit was also ordered by the Chief's court to ensure that the child did not die from the ailment. I observed that all parties obeyed the ruling of the Chief and his court. Though the proceedings were obscure to me, it was however clear that the ruling of Chief Gbonko was final. It was intriguing to see the workings of customary justice. I probed Chief Gbonko further on his criteria in assessing the validity of many of the claims made by the witnesses; he argued that a concoction was administered to all testifying witnesses as an oath to tell the truth. Asked about the potency of such concoctions, he noted, "They were quite effective in revealing a dishonest witness." In other words, the concoction was a lie detector. Clearly, Chief Gbonko came across as an undisputable authority in Temne affairs. I interviewed him between September and December 2003 in his office in Freetown.

Appendix 13: Jalloh, Salieu.

Salieu Jalloh was born in Futa Jallon in present day Guinea in 1932 to Fula parents. He migrated to Freetown at a young age. He was a trader in Kissy Road Market, largely trading in cattle and meat. He claimed to have been active in Fula politics and social activities. Later in the late 1940s to early 1950s, Jalloh rose to the rank of Alimamy within the Fula community in Freetown. He reminisced that many young Fula, Mandingo and others he knew were not Temne by birth flocked to Temne cultural associations for "material benefits." He is no more active in Fula or ethnic politics. I interviewed in his home in Kissy, eastern Freetown in November 2003.

Appendix 14: Kalie, Yamba Pa.

Pa Yamba Kalie was born in Port Loko District in northern Sierra to Temne parents from where they migrated to Freetown in the early 1930s. He does not know his precise date of birth but claimed to be above 75 years. He used events and landmarks to determine his date of birth. He claimed to have been a dancer for the Ambas Geda cultural association. He served as assistant chief whip of the association and noted that his former boss, the chief whip, is deceased. I interviewed him in November 2003 at his Kissy Road residence, in eastern Freetown.

Appendix 15: Kallay, Mohammed.

Mohammed Kallay was born in Freetown in 1941 to people he described as Mandingo, an identity he carries in public. He is prominent business man in Freetown. He was an admirer of the Ambas Geda but he was not a member. Kallay recalled that in 1955 during the wedding of his daughter he hired the Ambas Geda to grace the occasion because of “prestige associated with the association.” He reminisced that he did not hire the Mandingo Tarancis because it was fading in fame and prestige. I interviewed him four times at his Charlotte Street residence in November and December 2003.

Appendix 16: Kamara, Adama.

Adama Kamara was born in Tonkolili District in the Northern Province. She moved to Freetown in 1925 with her grand parents after the passing of her father in the 1930s. She was a trader at the King Jimmy Market in the late 1940s and became strongly affiliated with Sukainatu Bangura, who convinced her to join the Ambas Geda cultural association

to help boost the pride of their “tribe” in the face of Creole cultural assault. She claimed to have been a dancer of the group. During our conversation, she passionately narrated her dancing skills, which she argues boosted the image of the Ambas Geda. I interviewed her at home in central Freetown in November 2003.

Appendix 17: Kamara, Gibril.

Gibril Kamara describes himself as Temne and was born to Temne parents in Freetown on 14 July 1948. He attended the Temne School, Immaniya in the 1960s. His parents were founding members of the Alimania association in colonial Freetown. Kamara is a relative of the venerable Alhaji Gibril Sesay and is the current spokesman and official interpreter of the *Jam-ul-Jaleel* or the Temne central Mosque. In his capacity as spokesman and interpreter, Kamara participates and sits on all committees of the mosque. He is deeply familiar with Temne custom and traditions. He has extensive knowledge on the role the Temne community played in entrenching and disseminating the teachings and tenets of Islam in colonial Freetown. He has some training in pharmacology and is currently a practicing pharmacist in Freetown. I interviewed him five times in Freetown in October 2003.

Appendix 18: Kamara, Morlai.

Morlai Kamara was born in Freetown in 1931; he described himself as a “born Theimne.” His emphasis on “Theimne” is an expression used by people who perceive themselves as true Temne born to Temne parents and with strong affiliation to Temne ancestry. Kamara was a nephew of the venerable Kande Bureh. He noted that he played an active role during the wedding of his uncle, shortly after he ascended the Temne headmanship. He

claimed to having been a regular attendee at the Jam-ul-Jaleel on Fridays. Because he was devoted Muslim, Kamara recalled that he was made a *muezzin* (one who calls Muslims to prayers). I interviewed him at his Fourah Bay Road residence, east of Freetown in November and December 2003.

Appendix 19: Kamara, Yenkin.

Alimamy Yenkin Kamara was born in Freetown in 1918 to people he described as Temne. Kamara was a tailor by profession and was founder of numerous Temne associations including Endeavour and the Temne Progressive Union. He was a founding member of the All Peoples Congress and an organizer of sports tournaments in Freetown. He was elected section chief since the 1970s in charge of Mountain Cut, Circular Road and Kissy Road. See chapter three for a detailed description of his activities. I interviewed him at his Fifth Street residence in Freetown in October and November 2003.

Appendix 20: Kamara, Hassan.

Hassan Kamara is a local historian based in Freetown. He is commonly called Hassan “Nmump.” Born in Port Loko District in 1933, he is highly versed in Temne traditions. He moved to Freetown in 1945 where he has been living. He is highly revered by his peers because of his indepth knowledge in Temne traditions and customs. Kamara served as a frequent panelist at the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) in Freetown where he discussed issues pertaining to Temne traditions and customs. In 1984, he became the first organic historian to be interviewed by the British Broadcasting Cooperation on his works and the culture of the Temne in colonial Sierra Leone. During

my extensive interview sessions with him, Kamara informed me that he has granted interviews to many academic historians and anthropologists on wide ranging issues on the history of Sierra Leone. He has written a lot of unpublished pamphlets on the history of Sierra Leone. I interviewed him between October and December 2003 in Freetown.

Appendix 21: Kamara, Lamin.

Lamin Kamara was born in Kambia District in Northern Sierra Leone but migrated to Freetown in 1931 together with his parents fleeing a rebellion championed by a famous Muslim warrior, Idara Kontofili. In Freetown, Kamara joined the Alimania association and attended an evening school designed for Temne adults and children. Chief Gbonko, who praised him as a Temne activist in colonial Freetown, recommended him to me. I interviewed at his Kissy Road residence in October and November 2003 in Freetown.

Appendix 22: Kamara, Mohammed Sorie.

Mohammed Sorie Kamara was born in Freetown in the 1920s. He claimed to be an old court official in the Temne Tribal Authority. He noted that he witnessed occasions where the Temne Tribal Ruler reversed rulings from lower courts. Kamara also related that he was a member of the Ambas Geda. I interviewed him at his Kissy Road residence in Freetown in November 2003.

Appendix 23: Koroma, Ansumana.

Ansumana Koroma, who could not recall the precise date of his birth, claimed to have been born in Freetown. Using particular events and watersheds to recall the period of his birth, he claimed to be 78 years old. Koroma was a member of the Ambas Geda and a beneficiary of the credit scheme the association ran for an short period. The scheme was

designed to give assistance to members who engaged in commercial activities. Koroma reminisced that he was one of the senior and lead drummers of the Ambas Geda. I interviewed him at his home in Bambara Town in central Freetown. He is also one of the few surviving members of the association.

Appendix 24: Sesay, Brima Chief.

Chief Brima Sesay was born in 1937 in Wellington, east of Freetown. Sesay describes himself as Loko. Though not a former member of the Ambas Geda, he recalled that many young Loko men and women were attracted to the association. As an official of the Loko administration in Freetown, he was appalled at the flight of Loko to the Temne ethnic group which he said changed the demographic dynamic in the city of Freetown. The melodrama and resources of the association drove many Loko joiners to the Ambas Geda. Though he admired the organizational structure of the association, Sesay thinks it was “morally wrong” for members of other ethnic groups to abandon their identity in favor another ethnic identity. He was elected section chief in 1969 in charge of Grafton and Wellington. I interviewed him at his residence in Grafton, east of Freetown.

Appendix 25: Sillah, Usman Alhaji.

Alhaji Usman Sillah is currently the chief Imam at the Jam-ul-Tawid mosque in Bambara Town. He was born in Port Loko District in 1925 but migrated to Freetown with his parents in 1930 where he has since lived. He moved to Bambara Town at age 15 and was a young worshipper at the Aku-run mosque. He was a founding member of the Jam-ul-Tawid and rose to the rank of assistant Imam in the late 1960s and was confirmed chief Imam in the early 1970s. Alhaji Sillah is a member of the board of imams in Sierra Leone

and has officiated numerous traditional marriages held in the Jam-ul-Tawid mosque. He has led Eid-ul-Fitri mosque on behalf of the national board of imams. I held interviews with him in his residence and in his office in Bambara Town in Freetown in November and December 2003.

Appendix 26: Turay, Mohammed.

Moahmmmed Turay was born in Bombali District in Northern Sierra Leone in 1933. He was a member of the *Ambas Geda*. Turay informed me that he was an adept singer and a substitute dancer. In situations where a regular male member of the dancing team was absent, Turay stepped in as substitute. In my interview with him, he dwelled at length on the flamboyance of the costume of the *Ambas Geda*. He noted that the resplendent nature of the costumes accorded the association special reverence and attracted non-Temne Theimne speakers to flock to the association. He recalled that Kande Bureh was a staunch SLPP member who on numerous occasions urged the Temne community to vote SLPP during parliamentary elections. I interviewed at his home in Wellington in eastern Freetown in December 2003.

Appendix 27: Turay, Morlai.

Morlai Turay was born in Freetown in 1931 to parents he identified as Temne. He was court messenger in the Temne Tribal Authority attached to the Bom Wara in the Susan Bay area. He later became a prominent member of the Alimania association because of his strong beliefs in Islam, a value system the association espoused. He claimed to be a drummer of the association. He is one of the few surviving members of the association. I

interviewed him at his Sanders Street apartment in central Freetown in November and December 2003.

Appendix 28: Turay, Saidu.

Saidu Turay was born in Freetown in 1941 to Temne parents in the east of Freetown. A religious and social activist he was a regular attendee at Friday prayers in the Jam-ul-Jaleel mosque on Oldfield Street. Turay related that he was a strong supporter of Kande Bureh, the Temne Tribal Ruler in colonial Freetown. He informed me that he closely followed events in the Temne Mosque and participated in the fund raising activities. He joined the Alimania association when he thought the Ambas Geda was too secular for his comfort. I interviewed at his Bombay Street residence in the east of Freetown in November and December 2003.

Appendix 29: Turay, Santigie.

Santigie Turay was born in Port Loko District; he migrated to Freetown in the early 1920s with his uncle to trade in salt. He noted that his parents passed when he was seven years old and was under the guardianship of his uncle and aunt. Turay was a trader and described himself as a social activist in colonial Freetown. He also noted that he as a devout Muslim and a former member of the Alimania association. Before joining the Alimania, Turay briefly attended the evening school for Temne adults and children in the 1940s and 1950s. I interviewed him in his Mountain Cut residence in October and November 2003 in Freetown.

Appendix 30: Younge, Chief.

Chief Younge describes himself as Mende and currently resides in Ginger Hall, in Freetown, where I held interviews with him. He is the section chief of Mende speakers in eastern Freetown and regularly reports to the Mende Tribal Headman in central Freetown. He was born in 1927 in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone (a stronghold of Mende speakers). He immigrated to Freetown with his grandparents in 1935. He became a social activist in the 1950s and was an associate member of many social organizations. He was first appointed section chief in 1961; he later won election to the post in 1967. In the mid 1970s, he served as chairman of the council of section chiefs. He provided great insight to me on the fluidity of identity in various cultural groupings formed in colonial Freetown in the 1940s and 1950s. He vividly recollected the role he played in fostering good relations among many members of various ethnic groups in the east of Freetown where he had jurisdiction. He recalled that Mende speakers joined the Ambas Geda and other non-Mende cultural groups in the 1950s. He recalled that many of these Mende speakers had to learn to speak Theimne in order to qualify for membership into these Temne dominated groups. He lives in King Tom, central Freetown where I held numerous interview sessions with him in November 2003.

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