Indirect Rule and Social Class Formation in Colonial Sierra Leone

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Abstract:

At independence in 1961, Sierra Leone inherited a social class system that would create a persistent conflict even long after the departure of the British colonizer. The present article focuses on the role of 'Indirect rule', which was applied by colonial Britain to shape the Sierra Leone society. Through a descriptive analytical method, this paper examines how this system, which was based on the role of chiefs as intermediate rulers to dominate the interior regions beyond the coastal areas around Freetown, vertically altered social organization and created new social classes in colonial Sierra Leone. The study reveals that the social class division created by this system was an alien structure that contradicted the traditional social order, paved the way for the formation of an interior educated elite, a proletariat, and a rural class of peasants, and eventually steered the country towards class conflict that manifested in an ongoing struggle between the marginalized classes and those who dominated and hence benefited from the state.

Keywords: Colonial Sierra Leone; Indirect-Rule; British Colonialism; Class; Class Conflict.

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1. INTRODUCTION

By the time African states gained independence, many of them immediately entered into a phase of social class conflict, an inherent phenomenon that most of the continent still undergoes to date hindering its economic development. When it comes to class conflict analysis, there is a strong consensus among Western and African scholars[1] to repudiate the existence of class in Africa and consider it a peripheral determinant of conflict in the continent, considering the 'ethnographic' view as a major explanation to the continent's post-colonial situation. As for the Africans themselves, this tendency to consider class a nationally divisive concept was exploited by post-colonial African political leaders who denied its existence to serve particular ideological functions[2].

At independence in 1961, Sierra Leone inherited social classes that were formed during the colonial rule. This was an obvious prediction that Sierra Leone would be prone to social class conflict. The latter was, indeed, manifested in the form of an ongoing struggle between the marginalized classes and those who dominated and hence benefited from the state. Therefore, the aim of the present paper is to examine how these social classes came to existence as a result of the colonial situation. More particularly, it looks at how Indirect Rule led to social change seen in the formation of distinct social classes.

2. Class Analysis in Africa: A Review

Class analysis in Africa has for long been a contentious subject dominated by the paradigms of Western social science[3]. Although it appeared in a variety of publications on Africa prior to World War II and apart from writings about South Africa[4] studies on social cleavages in contemporary Africa tended to explain the situation rather in terms of ethnicity. Many advocates of this view argued with the 'ostensible' idea of 'classless' Africa[5]. It has been held that ethnicity is more determinative of people's political affiliations than class membership, rendering class a peripheral determinant of conflict in the continent[6]. Likewise, the overwhelming aura of nationalism that

marked the pre-independence period led some to assume that class division did not exist in the continent[7]. However, in the post-WWII period, there appeared a number of studies[8] that systematically analyzed classes in Africa.

In the Sierra Leone context, in his (1948) 'Social Change and Social Class in the Sierra Leone Protectorate' Little depicts the Protectorate's social structure that resulted from colonial cultural impacts as one that is based on class stratification than on family lineages indicating the dissipation of traditional social organization patterns. He describes the dynamic nature of the "acculturation" process viewing Europeanized Creole as the cultural medium that promoted social change and gave rise to a system of social class in the protectorate breaking the intimate ties the individual shared with their tribal group causing them to become hybrid. He concludes that the consequential consciousness these individuals had of their common situation, have given rise to a social structure based on class than on kinship[9].

In his (1955) 'Structural change in the Sierra Leone Protectorate', Little argues that the major social changes African society witnessed are a direct consequence of imperialism and Westernizing influences which transformed the structure of indigenous West African society and peoples' way of life. He argues that the Sierra Leone native society became class-organized, and the hierarchy of prestige became divided into an 'educated' and a 'literate' classes, which had different socio-economic and cultural characteristics. The article depicts their relationships with the Protectorate's traditional society. It explains that the classification of Protectorate people in terms of 'educated' and literate' individuals indicates respective extents of Westernization that resulted from Western education[10].

Moreover, in his 'Underdevelopment and class formation in Sierra Leone: a neglected analytical theme', Mukonoweshuro (1986) argues that during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the debate on underdevelopment and class formation in West Africa has focused on states such as Ghana that represented efforts to implement socialist

strategies, or larger ones such as Nigeria. Research on smaller states such as Sierra Leone, which received little attention, has been somewhat inconsistent and dominated by liberal paradigms. Hence, his paper represents a critique of the modernization theory that dominated studies[11] on class in Sierra Leone, and systematically and critically analyzes class formation in the state. It describes the impact of colonial socio-economic changes on class formation in the state, giving a detailed description of the emergent social classes, which were neither fully indigenous nor completely formed classes[12].

Additionally, Mukonoweshuro's (1993) book *Colonialism, class formation, and underdevelopment in Sierra Leone*, examines from a materialist viewpoint the role colonial capitalist classes played as a driving factor of the state's post-colonial underdevelopment. The author critically utilizes class and ethnicity to analyze political groups' attitudes, economic foundations, and class formation in colonial Sierra Leone stressing the role of colonial dominant classes and the colonial administration and how they contributed in shaping the progress of the decolonization process. He considers class a leading factor of the state's post-colonial social conflict, arguing that the exaggerated tendency to focus on ethnicity to study the state's conflicts undermined the significance of class as a major cleavage[13].

It is true that literature on class analysis, in Africa in general and in Sierra Leone in particular, is largely available, nevertheless, a satisfactory understanding of the issue has not been reached up to now. Consequently, there is still a persistent need to conduct more research on this subject matter. Accordingly, this article's main intention is to further analyze social class formation in Sierra Leone from a historical perspective, with a particular emphasis on the role of the Indirect Rule system in the emergence of colonial social classes that would act roles in the conflict that surfaced on the eve of independence and after.

3. Colonial Rule in Sierra Leone: Direct and Indirect Rule Dualism

Present day Sierra Leone started off in 1787 as a home for freed

slaves, who returned from Britain and were settled in Freetown and the surrounding areas. In 1808, it became a British crown colony[14]. Their descendants became the Sierra Leone Creoles who developed their own language, Krio, and a society that was influenced by Western culture.

In 1896, the British created a Protectorate by extending their rule over the adjoining hinterland which was a very great territory. Since that time, it was socially and administratively divided into two entities, the Colony (Freetown and the adjacent territories of the Western area) and the Protectorate (the interior provincial territory), and were ruled differently[15]. While the coastal Colony was ruled through a direct administration by English law, a ruling system was implemented in the interior which operated through tribal leaders. This system, named later Indirect Rule, would be employed as a low-cost method that allowed the British to control the interior and to collect taxes for the state to be self-financed[16]. The two territorial entities were not officially amalgamated until 1947.

Indirect Rule, as dubbed by the British colonial office, is a system of administration in which the colonial master delegates administration to traditional structures of the local people in British Overseas Territories[17]. The system itself had been already in use, although it has usually been associated to Lord Frederick Lugard, who described it in his 1922 book *The Dual Mandate*, as a rule entailing a system of governance that would facilitate exploiting and extracting resources. Lugard defines it as a single colonial government in which tribal leaders discharge colonial government duties and services in exchange for power[18].

Before the advent of British colonial rule, the interior was made up of small chiefdoms, in which the socio-political system was based on land and family lineage[19]. However, the ruling families were subsequently altered and divided into "Treaty Chiefs" by the British, while the rest who rejected them were displaced to the Liberian borders. After Governor Cardew, governor of the colony at the time, unilaterally founded the Sierra Leone Protectorate in 1896, the

colonial government implemented 'Indirect Rule' as its ruling system in 1898. It depended on institutionalizing the indigenous elite to cultivate the symbiotic relationship between the colonial government and tribal headmen to maintain law, order, and hegemony over the interior; and facilitate extracting resources in the region[20].

Over the next decade, the chieftaincy was established as the system's basic administrative unit with a set of Paramount Chiefs (PCs) as the sole authority of local government and remained effectively as such in the post-colonial period. As a result, the Protectorate was divided into a series of chieftaincies each led by a tribal headman[21]. The system delegated the local government to 'Paramount Chiefs' who were authorized to enforce colonial and customary laws, tax, harness labor and resources for the colonial government, and provide public goods. Additionally, the Provinces Land Act of 1927 made land located in the provinces under the direct aegis of the chiefs, who, on behalf of their native communities, decided upon who could occupy and use these lands. It further placed legal disputes and arbitration, the collection of tax revenues, and people's general welfare in the PCs' hands while undermining many existing checks on their power[22].

On the other hand, they were elected for life with a tribal appearance added to their role to ensure that people would not reject them[23]. Eligibility to stand for elections of PCs was given exclusively to those coming from the ruling families descending from signatories of treaties, which the British acknowledged as aristocrats at the turn of the 20th century, granting them the exclusive right to rule at the commencement of the Indirect Rule system in 1898[24].

The social consequences of Indirect Rule were multiple and complex as the system consolidated the social cleavage between Colony and Protectorate. More importantly, Berberoglu (1994) argues that greater scarification emerged as a consequence of the fact that tribal chiefs were corrupt and became paid agents serving the colonizer (p. 67). Additionally, the system acknowledged the chiefs as a superior class, creating an aristocracy that dominated the land,

means of production, and civil services at the expense of the interior's populace. This led to the emergence of an interior educated/literate class distant from the Colony educated elite, but that would antagonize with chiefs; a proletariat made of excluded interior people, and a peasantry dissatisfied with the dominance of chiefs.

4. Systematizing Colony/Protectorate Social Cleavage

Indirect Rule turned to be a tool that deepened and systematized the social cleavage between Colony and Protectorate. The Creoles already had advantages over the protectorate populace, with social and economic privileges which the natives could not have, but social relations were face to natural developments with no laws as obstacles. With Indirect Rule in practice, the two sides were forcibly segregated. While the non-native Creoles were considered citizens of the colonial government -and hence had access to education, civil services, and positions of authority in the colonial government such as in Sierra Leone's Legislative Council-, the Protectorate peoples were classified as 'protectorate subjects' and referred to as 'natives'. Mamdani (1996) comments that those under Indirect Rule were viewed as subjects under hierarchies of power, and were therefore deprived of citizenship rights and privileges[25].

Additionally, natives were segregated at the level of the Colony. In fact, a form of Indirect Rule was equally implemented in the Colony to maintain, and govern native communities settling Freetown. This segregation is clearly depicted in Harrell-Bond's (1977) "Native" and "Non-Native" in Sierra Leone Law, which reflects such deep-rooted colonial policy of administrative and social and ethno- regional segregation between the Creole and the Natives; which in 1905, was institutionalized providing the means by which to politicize Creole's cultural superiority over the natives[26]. The Tribal Administration Act of 1905 was primarily designed to control and administer ethnic communities settling in Freetown through acknowledging their right to preserve their tribal institutions, giving the governors the authority to acknowledge tribal rulers providing that:

Whenever it is represented to the Governor by petition or other means that any tribe in Freetown possesses a recognised 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 members of the tribe resident in or temporarily staying in Freetown, it shall be lawful for the Governor … to recognise such Chief, Alimamy, or Headman as the Tribal ruler of such tribe for the purposes of this Ordinance[27].

Indirect Rule also separated the natives and the Creoles occupying lands in the Protectorate. The Provincial land act of 1906, privileged the natives over the Creoles in land ownership authorizing tribal Chiefs to seize interior Protectorate lands owned by the Creoles whenever they desired, especially if the land was previously owned by natives. Consequently, and although it aimed at having lands in the provinces used by the natives, it hindered economic investment in the interior providing that the investments of non-native' in the provinces are limited for a certain period, causing them to divert from agricultural investments to mining and trading activities. Section 4, Article 122 of the Provincial Land Act 1906 states that:

No non-native shall acquire a greater interest in land in the provinces than a tenancy for fifty years… nothing in this Section shall prevent the insertion in any lease of a clause providing for the renewal of such lease for a second or further terms not over twenty-one years[28].

Added to that, administrative segregation crystalized in the domain of courts. While common English law was adopted in the Colony, the Protectorate had a mixed system of three categories of the court system as follows: (a) the Court of Native Chiefs was devoted to dealing with issues relating to land and tribal tensions; (b) the District Commissioner Court was authorized to deal with all abuses and offenses; and (c) the District Commissioner and Native Chiefs Court trialed criminal cases on both parties, and had the authority to hand down the death penalty[29]. Aiming at instituting an Indirect Rule

system in the Protectorate, these laws further emphasized the administrative differentiation between Colony and the Protectorate.

The discriminatory setup of Indirect Rule that was based on a rigid discriminatory organization of the Sierra Leone society (Natives vs. non-Natives) discriminated Protectorate people and separated the Colony and the Protectorate at all aspects of the society to facilitate ruling the latter while increasing the extraction of its resources. In the long term, the dynamic of the system radically transformed the social schemata and group dynamics and identities in the country, even in the post-colonial period.

5. The Emergence of an Educated/Literate Class in the Interior

As a part of Indirect Rule policies, the colonial government expanded Western education to the Protectorate to create what was known as 'a good African'. They aimed at creating an educated future elite that would obediently serve the colonial government[30] and facilitate access to the interior and open it for European trade. Their goal was to create future educated chiefs who would serve and advance the colonial project in the area.

Yet, the British had to ensure a complete separation between the Protectorate's educated elite and their Colony counterparts to prevent forming a union between the two elites which would threaten the colonial project. They, hence, established a separate independent educational system in the Protectorate in which education was afforded to a very limited portion of native people, by large to sons of chiefs and ruling families. Among the colonial schools designed for such goals is the Bo School in Koyeima in Sierra Leone's Bo District[31]. The establishment of these schools[32] and the careful selection of pupils indicated the colonizer's strategy of relying on local leaders to promote the Indirect Rule system in the interior, through educating the existing chiefs[33] and their sons to reinforce their status and position within society[34] and to prepare them for future political reforms.

The basic objective behind the established schools was to consign native Sierra Leoneans to an inferior status within the empire.

Therefore, the British founded a number of schools throughout the interior to educate sons of chiefs for positions of inferiority. Over the decades, however, Western education paved the way for the emergence of a new elite of natives, who, due to their education, held good occupations and were able to occupy positions that granted them power and prestige in the changing colonial society. The emergent educated elite struggled throughout the 1940s and the 1950s to assume leadership[35]. Many of them were members of the chiefly families - among whom was Chief Caulker, the first nominated member to the Executive Council, and Chief Bai Koblo, who was a nominated member to the Legislative Council-, and succeeded to become the most legitimate authority in the eyes of the African masses[36].

Thanks to Indirect Rule, the chiefs acquired enormous powers at the local level which enabled them to amass and maintain a wide range of traditional privileges that placed them at the pinnacle of native social hierarchy. However, despite the advantages they amassed, chiefs had their area of weaknesses. Many of them could neither read nor speak English; they badly needed educated members to help them carry on their administrative task[37].

Educated members knew the significance of political and administrative sides, and the role they could play in developing the interior and influencing the socio-political spheres and decision making[38]. Having achieved higher education, they soon realized that the Protectorate was exclusively represented "by illiterate traditional rulers who were unable to bear their responsibilities of representing the people" and were solely executing colonial orders[39], and hence impeded the representation of people's interests effectively. Annoyed by the chiefs' growing power, and the colonial domination over the interior, they stood as a class that rejected and revolted against traditional customary law Indirect Rule imposed on them -which only served the good of the PCs and the colonial officials-, and escaped oppression of the autocratic rent-seeking chiefs who were busy serving the colonial administration, levying taxes and harnessing personal wealth.

Among the most influential interior elite figures was Dr. Milton Margai (1895-1964), and Dr. Albert Margai, (1910-1980). While the former was the first medical doctor to graduate in the Protectorate in 1926, the grandson of a Mende chief, and the leader of the first Sierra Leone political party, the Sierra Leone People's party[40] (1951); the latter was the first lawyer in the Protectorate and one the chief defenders of the Protectorate people's interests[41].

These educated Sierra Leoneans consisted of several thousands of native individuals most of whom were clerks in government offices, teachers, a few lawyers and doctors, nurses, technicians on the railway and in the mines, a number of farmers and traders, and a number of paramount chiefs who dwelled in the chief administrative and commercial centers based on the nature of their occupations. Among the Protectorate towns which had the greatest number of educated individuals than any other place was Bo, the largest and the most important town[42].

Likewise, one can make a distinction between "the educated" and "the literate" classes. The latter was a much larger Westernized group made up of those with a primary schooling[43] and those who could speak and understand English. Like the educated class, they were distinguished from the mass illiterate individuals as having much better living standards and dressing in European style. Most of them gathered in the railways-line areas, worked in stores, as police, taught in primary schools, etc. Among this class, there existed chiefs and several individuals who held chiefdom offices. They differed from the educated class, in that the majority of them were Moslem -rather than Christian[44].

Magubane (1971) argues that individuals in the literate class were forced to adopt cultural traits functional in the new class[45] to attain better occupations independently from the Creoles and the chiefly elite. Yet, in contrast to the educated elite, they had no influence on decision making since they lacked the right to representation which was limited to property owners, to those with literary qualifications, and to the chiefs. Therefore, as a reaction to

expatriates' exploitation of the state's resources at the expense of its people, members of the literate class united in purpose taking a critical position to the Colonial Government and expatriates' authorities[46].

In fact, the 1930s witnessed as well the emergence of the average educated people who were also named 'the sub-elite'. They differed from the Creole elite and from the working class in that they were interested in political issues given their ability to read and understand English which allowed them to understand politics. Added to that, they occupied positions lower than those of the educated elite and better than the workers. Having had a primary or a post-primary education, they were able to attain some government jobs or to work independently from the Colony and the Protectorate elites. Moreover, in contrast to the working class, they were rather skilled workers, school teachers, middle-size traders, etc., and were an emerging class in the native society that resulted from the expansion of primary and post-primary educations[47].

The expansion of Western education provided Protectorate people the means to acquire higher social status and better living standards. Little (1948) argues that English represented a social condition that provided native labors the advantage of communicating with European employers without the need of intermediaries, while primary schooling offered them the opportunity to belong to a higher social class[48]. Nevertheless, the repercussions were equally important. English and primary schooling introduced native individuals with new experiences which were meaningful only through the new political allegiances they acquired, and which broke the intimate bonds and physically and geographically separated them from their native groups. Additionally, while the new social traits[49] they acquired made them conscious of their new social status, the new ties they made with the new class were to an increasing extent vocational rather than intimate and depended on common vocational aims rather than mutual interests and activities[50]. Consequently, it was difficult for these individuals to cope neither with their native group nor with the new one, what effectively created social hybrid individuals.

Indeed, Indirect Rule has created certain social variations within the Protectorate society. Aside from creating a social gap between the native people and their tribal leaders, it emphasized the social superiority of the PCs and the ruling families causing native individuals to seek higher social standards through belonging to higher social classes. The expansion of Western education in the interior, which was meant to enhance the efficiency of the Indirect Rule system and consolidate the role of chiefs as representatives of the colonial government in the interior, eventually bequeathed socio-political changes for the natives.

6. The Birth of a Proletariat

Indirect Rule created in the Protectorate certain levels of inequality in political powers and in social hierarchy. The system effectively placed enormous powers in hands of the chiefs[51] granting them several authorities, most notably the control of land and labor which they seized to amass personal wealth. The chiefs' monopoly of the Protectorate's affairs influenced individuals' opportunities more than human capital or achievements and harmed their economic situation, bequeathing a new social dynamism that contributed to the spread of class consciousness and anti-colonial sentiments. Under such circumstances, chiefdom dwellers were forced to shift to towns as wage earners in mines and government posts or to migrate to Freetown -which, at the time, was an employment center-, in search for equal opportunities and better living standards. While many were attracted by the work opportunities Freetown provided and migrated to the Colony, a part of–the rest who remained in the Protectorate moved to the mining sector and diamondiferous areas[52].

The discovery of diamond by the 1930s strengthened the open space for laborers. The chiefs' control of the diamondiferous areas, diamond mining, and the related businesses gradually created a more open space of freedom. A Sierra Leone Diamond Company recruited workers independently from chiefs, while illegal miners became active throughout the 1940s and 1950s[53].

The rapid expansion of the diamond mining sector provided laborers with opportunities to be recruited as miners, drivers, and road constructors. By 1938, while employing about 13,500 in diamond-related areas, the diamond mining sector recruited 6000 workers[54]. These workers were about to return with a new mindset that challenged the chiefs and redefined their relationships with their rulers both at the local and national levels. The new experiences they developed, due to their common social hardships and by effects of contact with workers in different sectors and from many parts of the country; created a line of solidarity between them and made them conscious of their common status as one social class. This newly emerging class consciousness is among the most generally recognized markers of class formation.

A new class of Proletariat emerged. Compared to those who remained in the home areas, this category of workers was open for new ideas and had more critical attitudes against the traditional rulers and the colonial system. Liberated from the social restrictions imposed on them in their chiefdoms, and sharing identical aspirations, they developed a new socio-political perception and were primarily concerned with ameliorating their living conditions, especially that they could not benefit from the new wealth[55]. Little by little, they became a potential source of political action filled with anti-colonial sentiments. Thanks to wealth some of them acquired, they were able to compete with chiefs over significant positions quickly turning to political channels to strengthen their positions and secure their interests[56].

The movements of this class between 1935 and 1955 reflected the extent of the emerging class awareness and the situation in the interior. They forced colonial policies to change work equipment and threatened to recreate laws which controlled workforce relations. The industry strikes extending throughout Freetown between 1938 and 1939 for instance, which involved the laborers, workers, and the jobless organizing on the basis of common interests, aimed largely at forcing concessions from the colonial administration, fighting for

respectability, their daily production, the right for a just wage and better working conditions, and the right to organize[57].

Added to that, the strikes and riots in the iron ore mines in 1950 and the demand of the miners for higher wages in 1952[58] were demonstrations of people organizing along class lines to meet their demands. In 1955, and due to the unaffordable living costs in the country, workers of the Artisan, Allied Workers Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union started a four-day strike known as 'The Workers Strike of 1955' to demand pay increase, which escalated into a full-scale clash between them and the state security forces. The strike eventually resulted in granting workers an additional shilling a day in wages[59]. Consequently, class consciousness and social classes spread in the native society which became fragmented along class lines.

7. The Status of the Rural Masses

Indirect Rule and the institution of PCs created a large portion of marginalized and deprived Protectorate ordinary people who have been struggling to obtain their socio-economic rights throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. This situation created a social gap within the interior alienating the chiefs from the rural masses, and led to the spread of dissentions across the rural areas bequeathing a class of impoverished rural masses[60].

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and while the economic situation in the rural areas was deteriorating and rural masses' living conditions were getting worst, the chiefs seized their privileges to create more opportunities of personal wealth using a multiplicity of clever methods and techniques, such as illegal taxes, to get additional income. For instance, chief Baï Farima Tass II of Kambia imposed an illicit tax to build a house valued between £10.000 and £15.000[61], while Paramount chief Ali Modu III of Porto Loko increased the chiefdom tax by 5s and imposed an additional levy to finance the construction of a personal property[62].

For the rural masses, lacking connections with the chiefs or the ruling families represented another obstacle which made them

vulnerable and poor[63]. Due to their low status, they were unable to have neither access to resources nor attain respect from others. This category of people included ordinary peasants, the lower ranked chiefdom dwellers, the unemployed who failed to secure jobs, those who remained in the mining areas waiting for occasional work, those with no formal or with low level of education and those who were paid the lowest wages. It was soon to become a significant social class full of discontent.

The institution of the PCs bequeathed inequality and deprivation in the Protectorate, making the social system more or less unequal, not only in terms of outcomes but also at the level of opportunity[64]. Hence, and aware of their common situation, the rural masses organized along class-lines and formed a social class for one cause, which is the amount of oppression they witnessed from the part of the chiefs and the colonial administration. They were ready to protest against the chiefs and the heavy illicit taxations imposed on them, and by the 1920s the rural masses and the proletariat started demonstrating resentment against the taxation system[65], which consequently spread across the rural areas.

Frustrated with their deteriorating living standards and the chiefs' monopoly over all aspects of life, the rural masses turned to spontaneous disturbances, protests, and riots to manifest their dissatisfaction. The Anti-Chief Riots erupted in the Port Loko District as a reaction to Ali Modu III's rise in taxes, which later spread across the Protectorate and lasted for three months, from November 1955 to February 1956[66]. Additionally, given that chiefs built their properties from money they amassed through illicit taxes, further riots erupted in early 1951 in the Soro and Sowa chiefdoms in the South-western province targeting the chiefs and their properties[67].

Riots and disturbances reflected the socio-economic situation in the rural areas and the spread of an unexpected common consciousness that developed due to people's disappointments in their chiefs. They were a means through which the rural masses stood as a class and rejected their current situation. Consequently, the social

structure in the Protectorate effectively started to change with the emergence of the rural masses as a class beneath the educated/literate and the proletariat classes, which had a significant influence on the socio-political sphere. With these classes sharing one common antagonist, chiefs and the colonial administration, even the rural masses were brought to the heart of political conflict since chiefs' corruption reached all chiefdoms across the interior.

In fact, for people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, the Sierra Leone colonial society has been found to be discriminatory and segregated in terms of opportunities for socio-economic advancements. The rural masses did not participate in any sort of production, had no access to any means of production and were distinguished from the Chiefs and the ruling families in that they do not have access to land which has been found to be a major factor contributing to inequality in colonial Sierra Leone, giving rise to intrinsically unequal outcomes, since these people lived on the margins of the native society.

Indeed, Indirect Rule system, created within the interior spaces of social exclusion and marginalization for the common protectorate people, who in those spaces found expression through organizing themselves through class lines to meet their demands and the formation of social classes was on its way. It eventually altered the native society's social schema and dynamics of the system paving the way for the emergence of new social classes, causing the gradual emergence of new social organization pattern, economic, and class differentiations.

4. CONCLUSION

Colonial rule no doubt had a deep social impact on the traditional social system in what is today, Sierra Leone. In particular, Indirect Rule, which was implemented by the British as a colonial administrative system where local rulers were used as mediators to facilitate the ruling of the colonized people, played a leading role in transforming Sierra Leone's social system, which as a consequence led to the emergence of new social classes. By placing the chiefs at the

pinnacle of the interior native social hierarchy, a deep cleavage between westernized Freetown and the more traditional interior society was well consolidated. In the interior protectorate, a separate educational system led to the rise of an educated elite and literate group separately from those of Freetown. Meanwhile, the colonial hardships faced by the interior migrants towards Freetown slowly crystalized a struggling proletariat class that soon expanded to the interior towns as the mining sector flourished. At another level, the rural masses who were crushed by the supremacy of local chiefs gradually composed their own class consciousness. Hence, the colonial social system, inherited by Sierra Leoneans at independence, was based on a shaky balance between classes with divergent interests and aspirations. This class hierarchy and various divergences would in the short run fuel political conflict.

5. Endnotes:

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[41] Cartwright, J. R. (1978). *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone*. pp. 91-100.

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[49] For example, by the reaction of the illiterate people in characterizing them as "white men" and behaving towards them with some doubt and suspicion.

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[55] Fashole Luke, D. (1984). he Development of Modern Trade Unionism in Sierra Leone. *18*(3), p. 434.

[56] Afkir, M. (2007). *Colonial Reforms, Decolonisation Process and Political Conflict in Sierra Leone: a Study of the Period between 1938 and 1967.* p. 175.

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