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Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Early Photography in Sierra Leone

Julie Crooks

Thesis Submitted for PhD  
March 2014

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the practice of Sierra Leonean photographer Alphonso Lisk-Carew (1883-1969). Through an exploration of his photography, it engages the key issues relating to Lisk-Carew's biography, his contribution to Sierra Leonean photography and his photographic practice within a complex multiracial society. In the 1980s, Vera Viditz-Ward's pioneering scholarship introduced the established, yet little-known, histories of photographic practices in Sierra Leone. Her early research on Alphonso Lisk-Carew engendered a new approach to the study of Sierra Leonean photographers. Here, I build on Viditz-Ward's groundbreaking work by investigating a range of photographs and postcards that highlight his photographic ideas and practices in Sierra Leone, and by introducing oral testimonies from some of his descendents and friends as well as local citizens. Moreover, I utilize an extensive body of primary materials found in local newspapers such as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* to contextualize and shed new light on the social, political and economic contexts under which Lisk-Carew built his commercial enterprise. I also consider Lisk-Carew's gendered position, and following on from his body of work, examine his legacy in a 1970 retrospective exhibition.

Subsequent to the aftermath of a protracted civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), both individual and institutional archives were decimated and made vulnerable. In light of this, I consider the reconstituting of photographic archives and address the ways in which the surviving institutional archives in Freetown can be reclaimed, preserved and maintained.

To the loving memory of my parents,  
Evelyn Germaine Gaye (1931-2013) and  
George Jerome Gaye (1925-1997), in  
appreciation for their unwavering love,  
encouragement and support, and to my aunt  
Coretta Isaac (1944-2011), for fostering my love  
for art and art history.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I cherish a particular photograph of my paternal grandmother, Emma Egletine Gaye. She was born in the 1890s in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and the image was taken in the 1920s, soon after my father was born. Grandmother Gaye strikes a formal pose in what seems to be a studio setting, yet she appears poised, self-possessed and at ease with whatever directions the unknown photographer has imparted. There is neither an inscription on the verso of the photograph, revealing little about to whom this portrait was intended, nor any indication of its specific source. The Freetown studio in which it was taken remains unidentified. This image served as one of the catalysts for undertaking this dissertation, galvanising its research and writing.

Along this extensive journey, I have benefitted from the support, patience and guidance of numerous people. First, my most earnest thanks go to my supervisor, Charles Gore. Not only did his unwavering support, sage advice and endless patience carry me through this project, but his extensive knowledge of photography in Africa and years of experience in the field acted a springboard for my own research. I remain indebted to Andrew Lisk-Carew for generously sharing the story of his father's life and career and cherish our friendship that grew over the years. I am thankful to Vera Viditz-Ward, whose pioneering research was an important touchstone and impetus for my project, and to the late Christopher Fyfe, whose words of encouragement at the outset of my research spurred me to pursue my goal. I am deeply grateful to Christraud Geary, Gary Schultz, Terence Dickinson and Isa Blyden for generously sharing their extensive collections of photographs and postcards by Alphonso Lisk-Carew and other Sierra Leonean photographers and for granting me permission to use

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Lastly, my late parents, George and Evelyn Gaye, inspired my interest in Sierra Leone. As a child, both my father's stories of growing up in Freetown and my

mother's experiences as an expatriate in the early 1960s intrigued me, fuelling my imagination and deeply impacting my development in incalculable ways.

## **Introduction**

This dissertation examines the practice of Sierra Leonean photographer Alphonso Lisk-Carew (1883-1969). Through an exploration of his photography, it engages the key issues relating to his biography, his contribution to Sierra Leonean photography and his photographic practice within a complex multiracial society. Most important to this study are the disparate encounters between Lisk-Carew and a range of clients, constituencies and patronage, and the myriad ways in which his photographs were used. Moreover, as I will demonstrate, despite Lisk-Carew's great contributions, his approach in relation to the representation of local Sierra Leonean women shows some limitations. Such limitations are exemplified in the depiction of half-dressed African women, at times with blatant exoticism and heightened sexuality. Such gendered strategies constituted a lucrative part of the photographer's commercial practice by satisfying consumer demand for these images. However, this one aspect of his practice does not undermine his otherwise groundbreaking photography practices. The very nature and content of Lisk-Carew's oeuvre suggest that he was aware of the complexities associated with the imposition of a colonial hegemony and the visual appetites of the consumer.

As a result of Sierra Leone's past civil strife from 1991 to 2002, this dissertation further explores the current post-conflict era and raises questions about photographic archives that have been decimated and made vulnerable. I consider the kinds of re-imagining and reconstituting of institutional and personal family archives that are possible amongst the survivors and in the generations that follow.

## Setting the Stage

In the 1960s through to the early 1980s, African photography in general had not developed into a field of serious scholarship. The primary approach at this time was restricted to the role photography played (if any) in narrating the ethnographic and anthropological histories of Africa. The first dedicated history of photography in Africa was concerned with the position of the European photographer. Hence early accounts, such as Arthur Bensusan's *Silver Images: History of Photography in Africa*,<sup>1</sup> argued that there were no early African professional photographers prior to the 1960s.

One challenger of such narrow scholarship was American photographer and photo-historian Vera Viditz-Ward. In the mid-late 1980s, she published several articles on photography in Sierra Leone from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Viditz-Ward's interest in the subject stemmed from her work as an educator and Peace Corps volunteer in Freetown during the 1970s. Of particular note are "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Creole Photographer," an intriguing introduction into the life of the then little-known African photographer,<sup>2</sup> and "Photography in Sierra Leone, 1850-1918," a pioneering historical survey of photography in Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup> Both of these early inquiries examine the varied social and historical influences that informed photographic practices in Sierra Leone.

Viditz-Ward set the trend for further scholarship in a nascent field by her regional focus on the development of specific photography practices. Her in-depth discussions also revealed the importance of aesthetic impulses related to such

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Bensusan, *Silver Images: History of Photography in Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Creole Photographer," *African Arts*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1985), 46-51.

<sup>3</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Photography in Sierra Leone, 1850-1918," *Africa*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 510-518.

practices. In contrast, scholarly inquiry from the 1990s onward has represented somewhat of a generational and conceptual shift in that the chief concern has revolved around defining early African photography in generalized terms rather than in terms of regional contexts and histories.

My work considers Viditz-Ward's social-history approach. I suggest that the conditions under which African photographers from the 1860s practiced set the stage for post-colonial photographers from the 1960s onward who have been canonized in contemporary scholarship and the international art market. I build on Viditz-Ward's foundational work by employing an extensive body of primary source materials, specifically newly found photographs and postcards that highlight Lisk-Carew's visual documentation of Sierra Leone, oral testimonies from Lisk-Carew's descendants, and data from the popular printed press such as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. Editorials, news items, advertisements and articles about his practice help to contextualize and shed new light on the social, political and economic pressures under which Lisk-Carew built his commercial enterprise.<sup>4</sup> I also turn to a larger theoretical framework based on Michael Baxandall's concept of the "period eye" and R.G. Collingwood's notion of the "historical imagination" to better view Lisk-Carew's practice as firmly rooted in the histories and context of Sierra Leone in the early decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>4</sup> I had many conversations with Viditz-Ward over the life of this study. I often called her for advice on hunting down an elusive image or a particular individual who might be useful to my research. She was particularly helpful in pointing out the places she had discovered photographs outside of Freetown. And while it had been some time since she had published her work, we discussed its relevance to the current project. During our conversations, her special insight and knowledge of Lisk-Carew's photography and the complex nuances of Sierra Leone's history certainly influenced the ways in which I would position and navigate my work.

## Theoretical Framework

### *The Period Eye and the Historical Imagination*

“It is very difficult,” cautions Baxandall, “to get a notion of what it was to be a person of a certain kind at a certain time and place.”<sup>5</sup> Baxandall draws on social contexts and relations to argue that social factors (religious and economic, for example) inevitably influence an artist’s visual style and habits.<sup>6</sup> These factors shape how makers of art think about their task of visualization, and how their audience comprehends the images they make. The period eye is a way of seeing based on shared visual practices specific to a time and place. It is the conceptual equipment that a contemporary public brings to such visual images. It is also governed by the relationship between artists and patrons at a particular time. Baxandall’s concept elucidates how visual ideas and practices are negotiated, how the work image-makers produce is in great part based on the social relationships they maintain with a particular group of patrons, and how these relationships are constructed.

Along with Baxandall’s social-historical concept of the period eye, R.G. Collingwood’s notion of the historical imagination has proven to be particularly useful in my analysis of primary source materials such as photographs. As Collingwood argues, it is “the historian’s picture of the past, the product of his own *a priori* imagination, that has to justify the sources used in its construction.”<sup>7</sup> The historical imagination helps locate the historical subject within the bounds of that historical world and its horizons, so avoiding attribution of present-day notions to the

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 52.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>7</sup> R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: With Lectures 1926-1928*, revised edition, edited with an introduction by Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 245.



subject. Collingwood argues that since we cannot see events that have taken place in the past, we must imagine them. However in imagining we must use sources as evidence in this contextualizing process. For Collingwood, part of this process, involves both an interpolation and interrogation of primary material.

Baxandall's contextualized approach is useful in examining the breadth of Lisk-Carew's images and in showing how they are constructed or negotiated in relation to relationships of patronage with the colonial regime or various individual clientele. Lisk-Carew's shared "visual experiences" of Sierra Leone are illustrated and narrated through the images he produced at various periods. Such familiarity pervades all of his images and goes beyond their simple indexical quality. According to Collingwood's theory, interpolation requires filling in the gaps in the sources in order to construct a whole picture of Lisk-Carew's life and practice. In addition, interrogation of the material necessitates a critical assessment of his life and work.

In turning to Baxandall and Collingwood, I critically and constructively use the visual materials, the oral testimonies and the data from the printed press to understand both the world in which Lisk-Carew lived and the trajectory of his career.

## **Methodology**

*"She Na Salone Pickin."*<sup>8</sup>

In 2005 I began my investigation into Alphonso Lisk-Carew's practice. My decision to study his work was prefaced by my general interest in early photographic practice and my overall interest in the social history of Sierra Leone. This decision to concentrate on Lisk-Carew's work was motivated by my discovery in 2004 of a 5" x

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<sup>8</sup> In Krio; roughly translated into English as "She is a child of Sierra Leone."

7” black and white studio portrait of a cousin as a baby who had died tragically in the early 1970s in Freetown. The small portrait, taken around 1955 and inscribed on the verso with a note to my father by my grandmother, was sent to my father while he was living in London. The portrait was placed in a family photo album and then mostly forgotten. The image has held a special fascination with me mainly because I had only very vague memories of meeting this cousin when I lived in Sierra Leone as a small child. The embossed stamp that read “Lisk-Carew Brothers, Sierra Leone,” piqued my curiosity and thus began my initial investigation into the identity of the photographer.

The gathering of primary source materials related to Lisk-Carew and other early photographers based in Sierra Leone proved to be a daunting and painstaking process. Each new discovery I made (extraordinary photograph, interesting editorial, an informant with an unique connection to Lisk-Carew) led to another turn in the research. I slowly began to piece together Lisk-Carew’s life and practice and the histories of other commercial photographers in operation from the late nineteenth century in Freetown. The various layers of primary source materials that constitute my work are as follows:

- visual materials in the form of photographs and postcards uncovered in Sierra Leone and in various parts of the United Kingdom and the United States;
- oral testimonies from Lisk-Carew’s immediate family members, distant relatives and friends in Sierra Leone and the diaspora, and from local citizens, including photographers based in Freetown; and
- data from the printed press in Sierra Leone.

Taken together, all of these sources helped to layer and build a picture of Lisk-

Carew's life, experience and photographic enterprise from the turn of the twentieth century onward.

### *Visual Materials*

Over the course of seven years (2005-2012), I located and examined photographs and postcards by Alphonso Lisk-Carew in Sierra Leone (Freetown, Bo, Kenema), the United Kingdom (London, Cambridge, Birmingham) and the United States (New York, Boston, New Jersey, Washington, Los Angeles).

Family members and friends of Lisk-Carew brought the photographs and postcards in Sierra Leone to my attention. Lisk-Carew's son, Andrew Lisk-Carew, and Isa Blyden, Edward Wilmot Blyden's great-granddaughter, were two of the main sources who provided family photographs and studio images of local Freetonians. The photographs date from 1905 to the late 1950s. I was also connected to their wide networks in Sierra Leone and the diaspora which facilitated the collection of many wonderful examples of Lisk-Carew's studio portraits and postcards. Ms. Blyden's collection was especially fascinating for offering examples of a range of individuals and groups who represented a cross-section of Freetown's local residents.

But access to photographs and family albums was also limited due to the civil war (1991-2002). Many of my informants had misplaced personal photographs as a result of fleeing Sierra Leone for other regions in Africa and the West. However, despite the exigencies of the conflict, I still found the obligatory large-scale framed portraits (16" x 20"), usually of the patriarch of the household, surrounded by smaller photographs in many of the parlours and front rooms of Creole homes. Photographic

display practices of Creole families seemed to be passed on from generation to generation, forming a recognizable “tradition.” The Creole scholar Eldred Jones commented with sarcasm on such a tradition: “When the family photographs in the parlour are replaced as the standard form of art in Creole Freetown a real revolution will have been achieved!”<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of documentation, I would ask to photograph the display and I was always granted permission to do so. In 2010, while in Freetown, Lisk-Carew’s cousin, Mrs. Bertmina Faulkner, allowed me to visit her on several occasions despite her advanced age. I photographed many framed studio photographs of the family by Lisk-Carew, including a stunning wedding portrait of Mrs. Faulkner’s parents that was taken in the 1920s.

During my first visit to Freetown in 2009, I was eager to spend time at the Sierra Leone Public Archives in what was to be a temporary location at Fourah Bay College. I discovered a limited amount of random photographs (several by Lisk-Carew) housed in a poorly-lit and dusty space and in equally poor condition in the Kennedy Building. Although the large folders held only a small cache, the discovery was significant. The collection contained photographic prints (including perhaps the earliest by Lisk-Carew) that dated back to around 1903. Also part of the archive were large-scale prints by Lisk-Carew that were commissioned by the local colonial government. Others were produced by unidentified photographers for the colonial administration and date to the late 1950s. Most of the images were captioned.<sup>10</sup> The folders were covered with a thick layer of dust and were infested with insects. I documented many of the photographs by taking my own digital images. Since there

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<sup>9</sup> Eldred Jones, “Freetown: The Contemporary Cultural Scene,” in *Freetown: A Symposium*, Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds. (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1968), 204.

<sup>10</sup> I believe they may have been featured in the retrospective exhibition of his work held in 1970 at Fourah Bay College. See Chapter Two.

were very little security measures in place at the time, I feared that the photographs might go “missing.” On my subsequent trips I would catalogue this repository to track any changes and additions to the collection. I would also implore Mr. Albert Moore, the Senior Government Archivist, and his assistant to continue to safeguard the holdings. I was also cognizant of the fact that, as a scholar, I had to be a skilful negotiator (with rudimentary knowledge and skills in Krio) in order to consistently gain access to the state archival collection. In 2012, during my last trip, I noticed that a new document scanner had been donated. Unfortunately the photographs were still badly preserved. For this visit I brought with me a supply of conservator’s gloves and disinfectant for use when handling the photographs. While my visits to the Sierra Leone Public Archives generated exciting finds, the same cannot be said for the Sierra Leone National Museum. Prior to my visits I was told that the Museum held a few, very old photographs produced by Lisk-Carew and other early photographers such as J. P. Decker. On the three occasions I visited the Museum, my inquiry into the whereabouts of these images came up empty.

As a consequence of my research trips to Freetown, I discovered that the bulk of Lisk-Carew’s prints and postcards were held largely outside of Sierra Leone, and mostly in institutional archives and private collections in the United Kingdom. The James Carmichael Smith Sierra Leone Collection at Cambridge University Library has holdings consisting of several albums of original photographs by Lisk-Carew and other Sierra Leonean photographers. The images in these albums date from 1905 to 1910. One of the albums features photographs taken by Lisk-Carew of the 1910 Royal visit by the Duke of Connaught. The Collection also has a fair holding of postcards, some of which are by Lisk-Carew. In 2005, I found an album at the National Archives at Kew containing fine Lisk-Carew prints featuring local pastimes from around 1910

to 1915. The prints were missing Lisk-Carew's stamp and the staff did not know the identity of the photographer. However, the prints had been reproduced as postcards and I recognized the images as being by him. I also found a range of photographs and postcards by Lisk-Carew, or featuring aspects of colonial Freetown and Africa in general, in the collections of other institutions both in the United Kingdom (the Royal Anthropological Society, the Imperial Institute, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Museum, the University of Birmingham and the British Library) and the United States (the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, the Africana Collection at Northwestern University, the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Metropolitan Museum of the Art).

In addition, I was fortunate to gain access to Lisk-Carew's work in several private collections mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States. The collectors, who were generous in their knowledge of Lisk-Carew's work, gave me free reign in terms of access to their collections. Dr. Christraud Geary, a collector and a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, sent me a large number of digital images representing studio images of Bundu women by Lisk-Carew and other photographers. These proved to be pivotal to my research in how local Sierra Leonean women were depicted in early photography. Michael Graham Stewart, a collector and curator who spends his time between New Zealand and South Africa, sent me a few early prints by Lisk-Carew that were rare offerings of the construction of the government hospital in Freetown. Gary Schultz, a former American Peace Corps volunteer in Sierra Leone, has a large collection of Lisk-Carew postcards and a website dedicated to showcasing these images. I was introduced to him prior to embarking on this study and, because of his experience in Sierra Leone and knowledge of Lisk-Carew, he was instrumental in suggesting ways to locate his

images. Of all the collectors, Terence Dickinson in the United Kingdom has the most comprehensive collection of Lisk-Carew postcards. His collection numbers in the thousands and includes many rare offerings. During a visit to his home in Derbyshire in 2011, he and I spent many hours going through his collection while I chose the postcards most useful to my study. He then generously scanned the images for my own records. The collectors' contributions to this study is invaluable. Taken together, their collections represent the multifaceted nature of Lisk-Carew's practice and the continued commitment to safeguard his work.

### ***Materiality and Condition Visual Material***

The materiality and condition of the photographs and postcards scattered amongst the various family members, institutions and collectors also informed my analysis.

Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart describe the value of thinking materially about photography, for it encompasses processes of “intention, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding and recycling” to which photographs are subject.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, as they state, we can learn a great deal about photographs through their material properties:

Marks on the photographic object point to the history of its presentational forms and engagements with them ... For photographs also bear the scar of their use ... Handling damage, the torn and creased corners, fold marks, perhaps text on the back, scuffing and dirt point to the use of images, or indeed, neglect of images.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

This object-based approach to the collections shows key information about the identification of the photographer, in most cases Lisk-Carew, the period in which the photographs were made, how the photographs have been stored and used over time, and potentially, the identity of the subjects featured. Thus a large part of my gathering involved dealing with any texts or inscriptions on the verso of prints. At times it was necessary to decipher illegible and faded text in order to better grasp the historical markers underpinning the photographs. In some instances, Lisk-Carew's stamp is on the verso accompanied by a description by the subject or the owner of the image.

I chose postcards and photographs to assist me in building my analysis of Lisk-Carew based on two criteria: either they represented "iconic" images which are easily recognized as his work and thus ripe for re-interpretation. Many of postcards fell under this rubric. Or, I selected photographs which were newly available and represented significant visual impact. In so doing, my aim is to present Lisk-Carew's evolving practice throughout the years and the images that best represent his prolific output. Moreover, in providing these selections, my aim is also to bring to light aspects of life in Sierra Leone that are conspicuously absent from his photography.



### *Oral Testimonies*

This study is also based on a series of interviews I carried out with Lisk-Carew's immediate family members, distant relatives and friends both in Sierra Leone and the diaspora between 2005 and 2012. In Freetown, many of my informants were quite elderly, that is in their seventies and eighties. Many of them were Creole men who considered me an insider – “she na salone pickin” – by virtue of my own familial ties (through my father) to Freetown. I was also considered a relative insider because of my association with some of the elite families in Freetown who introduced me to key informants (including members of Lisk-Carew's family), thereby giving me entrée to valuable personal narratives as well as visual materials (photography albums, individual portraits and treasured family photography archives).<sup>13</sup> Yet a number of factors still relegated me as an outsider: I am not from Sierra Leone, my Krio is rudimentary at best, I do not live in Sierra Leone and my mother is not a Sierra Leonean. Thus, initially upon being introduced to my informants, I would be asked a barrage of questions (a sort of pre-interview by the informant), including my family name, from where in Freetown did my father's “famble” hail and what secondary school, church and post-secondary institution had he attended. Invariably, the informants knew other members of my family, the area (Congo Town) that my father was from and, in some cases, it turned out that I was a “distant cousin” of the informant.<sup>14</sup> It seemed very important to establish such “shared experience” before embarking on any interview scenario. Once I passed their scrutiny, not only could the

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. Marcella Davis was the first female appointed Chief Medical Officer under President Siaka Stevens from 1970. Dr. Davis introduced me to Isa Blyden, who has an extensive collection of original Lisk-Carew photographs.

<sup>14</sup> There is a saying in Freetown that “all Krio get for related” or all Creoles are related to each other.

interview process begin, but I also forged long-lasting connections with many of my informants.<sup>15</sup>

As I cultivated relationships with my informants, a certain mystique about Lisk-Carew became apparent in terms of how he was viewed. He was constructed as a powerful figure and deemed to be a very important part of the privileged elite Creole professional class whom, according to Abner Cohen, “exercise power derived from their command of the higher posts in state bureaucracy and from the professions.”<sup>16</sup> Since there was a sense of Lisk-Carew as larger than life in terms of his practice and political affiliations, it was important for me to tease this out in my interviews with various informants.

Andrew Lisk-Carew provided me many contacts, including his own family members in Sierra Leone and the diaspora. Ms. Paulina Holland Campbell, a cousin now in Atlanta, Georgia, was particularly knowledgeable about Lisk-Carew’s photography. Her memory and biographical accounts of Lisk-Carew’s life in Freetown were vivid and she was always eager to speak with me. Both she and Ms. Bertmina Faulkner, mentioned above, offered insightful first-hand accounts of Lisk-Carew and his studio/shop on Gloucester Street. Mr. Carlton Carew (the family historian, living in Georgia) was helpful in filling in the gaps about Lisk-Carew’s biography and the intimate details pertaining to the complicated genealogy of the family.

Gathering information on Bundu women proved somewhat challenging.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Andrew Lisk-Carew, to whom I was introduced in London in 2005 while completing my doctoral coursework, has become a close acquaintance and has acted as a guide and useful contact, providing much-needed assistance whenever I was in Freetown.

<sup>16</sup> Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 59.

During a visit to Freetown in 2010 I was introduced to Mrs. Iyana Fofana, the mother-in-law of Professor Ibrahim Abdullah, a friend and colleague. Mrs. Fofana was in her seventies then but she provided many vivid memories about her own initiation experience into the Bundu society. While she was cautious about the information she divulged to me about the initiation process, she was also very animated when I showed her Lisk-Carew's Bundu photographs. The photographs elicited her knowledge on the costumes that the young initiates wore and to what cultural group, based on particular accoutrements, the women might belong.

During my visits to Sierra Leone I also interviewed two groups of photographers: photographers who had been active in the Freetown and the provinces between the 1950s through to the 1990s, just prior to the start of the civil war; and photographers who were born just after Sierra Leone's independence in 1961. Within this range of photographers, I wanted to get a sense of their familiarity with Lisk-Carew's work (if any) and the ways in which it may have influenced their own practices. I interviewed five colourful characters from the older generation. Most of them were flattered that I was even interested in speaking with them about their lives and careers. Our conversations were lively, but always marked by a distinct formality that is evident amongst elderly Sierra Leoneans of a certain stature. They had all heard of Lisk-Carew (one even claiming to have met him as a little boy) and considered him a legend. I also interviewed young men and women of the Sierra Leone Union of Photographers.<sup>17</sup> They too considered Lisk-Carew an important figure in Sierra Leone's photography history but spoke about him with less reverence.

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<sup>17</sup> The Sierra Leone Union of Photographers is a unionized national association that was established in 2005. It is a body dedicated to both the promotion of professional photographers and the training of amateurs. Stephen Momoh, the president of the SLUP who is blessed with an encyclopaedic knowledge of photographers (both past

### *The Printed Press*

Finally, data from the printed press is another pivotal aspect upon which I relied in piecing together Lisk-Carew's practice over the years. I relied on the advertisements, editorials and biographical sketches about Lisk-Carew and other photographers located in a range of Sierra Leonean press materials. Newspapers such as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, the *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, *The Colony and Provincial Reporter* and the *Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Gazette* provided first-hand accounts of the movements of certain photographers, including Lisk-Carew. Most importantly, the editorials often provided valuable clues into the context of many images, including helpful dates, the names of prominent figures, the place or landmark in which the image was taken and crucially the names of photographers. During the early stages of my research, from 2005 to 2008, I searched through the various newspapers pertinent to this study at North London's Colindale Newspaper Library.<sup>18</sup> While combing through various microfilm editions of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, there was no guarantee that the search would be a success. I often came prepared with the date of a specific advertisement or event, only to discover missing or damaged pages. By 2009 this process became a less daunting task as I discovered several North American institutions that held significant microfiche editions of African newspapers. Armed with my University of Toronto or York University library card (depending upon which institution I was teaching) I would request copies of Sierra Leonean newspapers using the university interlibrary loan service.

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and present) in Sierra Leone, provided me with many leads and introductions to photographers in Freetown.

<sup>18</sup> The Colindale is a repository of a large collections of British and International newspapers.

I was assisted in my endeavours by David Easterbrook, a curator and librarian at the Melville J. Herkovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Because the Herkovits Library does not carry the *SLWN*, Easterbrook directed me to the University of Michigan Library and, closer to home, to the Dalhousie University Library in Halifax, Nova Scotia. By 2011 the microfiche quality had improved. As well several issues were digitized and in some cases missing issues became available through the British Library and Colindale. The increased accessibility allowed me to immerse myself into the world of early African photographers from the 1870s through to the 1950s. Thus a large part of the corpus of evidence derives from rich documentation presented in the Sierra Leonean press.

## **Chapter Breakdown**

Chapter One begins with a literature review on early African photography and photography in Sierra Leone and then offers an historiographical overview of the development of Freetown vis-à-vis its importance as a haven or “province of Freedom.” Founded in 1787 for formerly enslaved Africans in the Americas and Europe and later in Africa, it became a vibrant hub for both commercial and visual cultural endeavours. These considerations are followed by a discussion on the range of photographers and myriad of visual practices in Sierra Leone, showing that the earliest engagement in the medium came about fifteen years after its invention in Europe. This chapter is vital for placing into context Lisk-Carew’s career trajectory.

Chapter Two presents a critical biography of Lisk-Carew’s life and practice. This chapter is central to understanding Lisk-Carew’s formal influences alongside the political and cultural context in which Lisk-Carew’s professional career evolved. The biographical data is integral to understanding how professional and personal

associations assisted in the formation of Lisk-Carew's varied approaches to the medium. The chapter is also crucial to situating Lisk-Carew within Sierra Leone's broader social history by examining key moments in his development.

Chapter Three extends the discussion set out in the previous biography chapter. It examines some of the key aspects and specific genres of Lisk-Carew's oeuvre. In this chapter, I have selected photographs that epitomise the ways in which Lisk-Carew expertly represented life in Sierra Leone and in doing so created a lucrative financial venture. The photographs selected (many of them from archives difficult to access) are representative of the studio portraits, government and private commissions and postcards that invoked critical acclaim and fostered his iconic status.

Chapter Four explores Lisk-Carew's gendered position specifically in the context of the Bundu society's commemorative studio photographs and interrogates the commercial appeal of images depicting a range of local representations of African women. Since my aim is to examine the full extent of Lisk-Carew's oeuvre, I present a small sample of Lisk-Carew's portraits that overtly eroticized the African female body. While such images provided financial success, I argue that they also revealed the ambiguities and limitations of his overlapping roles as a successful commercial photographer and enable a discussion on the paradoxes inherent in his practice.

In Chapter Five, the complexities as well as the triumphs of Lisk-Carew's iconic career are examined in the retrospective exhibition of his work held in 1970 at Fourah Bay College. I look at how his work was presented and the public's reception in response to the exhibition. I then trace the legacy of Alphonso Lisk-Carew's practice in association with modern and contemporary image-makers in Sierra Leone. Did Lisk-Carew's practice influence subsequent generations? Does their work in any

way gesture to Lisk-Carew's by appropriating his style and his voracious picture taking of Sierra Leone? Or do contemporary image-makers simply wish to legitimate their work by attaching the notion of his legacy to it? This chapter explores such disjunctures. However, alongside these considerations lay more pressing issues surrounding both the preservation and conservation of photographic archives housed in temporary institutional space in Freetown. The decaying, vulnerable and endangered photo archives in Sierra Leone are a direct result of civil unrest and instability alongside institutional state impotence and neglect. Given some of these preliminary considerations the concluding chapter is also concerned with a reconstituting of these archives in their new forms outside of Sierra Leone and the ways in which the surviving photographic archives in Freetown can be preserved and maintained.

## Chapter One

### Constituting and Contesting Sierra Leone through the Photographic Lens

In Freetown in Clarkson's day – 1792 – the author gives two of the best contemporary views ... in the Freetown of 1894 one discovers the palpable dissimilitude between some of the pictures and the scenes they are said to represent. The author of the work before us declares that hardly anything has been done since Clarkson's day and his word must stand, even if the sun has to be pressed into the service to give misleading photographs. Photographs never make mistakes ... but photographers may misrepresent!<sup>1</sup>

In the above review of Bishop E. G. Ingham's book *Sierra Leone: After A Hundred Years*<sup>2</sup> published in an 1894 edition of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, the anonymous writer expressed his frustration with Ingham's unflattering choice of photographs. He argued that the images depicted Sierra Leone in a negative light. Furthermore, he observed that the entire text was paradoxical since it indicated "wellness, on the one hand and showed ill-constructed buildings and uncivilized ways on the other."<sup>3</sup> Although the vexed reviewer ascribed some blame to the photographers for the misleading images, ultimately he faulted Ingham for his problematic visual choices.

While the review critiqued Ingham's pessimistic and unfavourable view of Sierra Leone, it also exposed some of the contradictions and concerns around late nineteenth century photography in Sierra Leone. The idea that photographs are imbued with the "truth" (that is, the "referent," or photographic representation) is not

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<sup>1</sup> "Bishop Ingram's Book: Sierra Leone After A Hundred Years," *SLWN*, October 6, 1894, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop E. G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone: After A Hundred Years* (London: Seeley and Co., 1894).

<sup>3</sup> "Bishop Ingram's Book," 5.



at stake in the writer's view.<sup>4</sup> Instead, at stake are the practices of the photographer, the circulation of photographs, the precarious encounters and the potential for misrepresentation. There is a tension between the reviewer's defence of "modernity"<sup>5</sup> in Sierra Leone and his uneasiness with the potentially negative consequences of the camera's "truthful" output. The image-makers, their power behind the camera and the representations of Sierra Leone were of utmost importance for the reviewer.

This chapter starts with a review of the literature of photography practices in Africa. It takes into account both the study of the medium that placed emphasis on the representation of Africans within the colonial past and "African photography" in which the approach concerned Africans who took charge of their own representational practices through the medium. It also provides an historiographical overview of Sierra Leone over one hundred years from 1792 to 1900 – roughly the time span of Bishop Ingham's book. It examines the development of Sierra Leone vis-à-vis its importance as a haven, or "province of Freedom," for Black Atlantic slaves, a gateway and lucrative commercial hub for the British Empire and a vibrant cosmopolitan centre. This is followed by a discussion on the range of photographers and myriad of

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<sup>4</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 4.

<sup>5</sup> In deploying the term "modernity," I acknowledge the numerous definitions that it attends and their exclusivity. As Bruno Latour has suggested, "modernity comes in as many versions as there are thinkers ... yet all its definitions point ... to a passage of time. The adjective "modern" designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time." See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10. For Latour, being "modern" is multi-temporal, which allows for a set of interactions and relations globally that manifest at different times and places. Similarly, John Picton's assessment of modernity and visual culture, and Africans' mastery of new technology (such as the camera) is also useful. He too is concerned with the spatial and temporal whereby "modernity is not a complete break with the past ... because [Africans] initiate documentation of that past, sometimes because that past is celebrated in the new visual media and sometimes because the inheritance of the past simply maintains its relevance providing its own interpretation of those developments." See John Picton, "Made in Africa," in *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2005), 49.

practices situated specifically in Sierra Leone, a discussion that shows that the earliest evidence of the engagement in the medium occurred about eighteen years after its public deployment in Europe in 1839.

## Review of the Literature

The review of the literature that follows offers contextual insight into the on going and often conflicting methodological inquires and concerns regarding African photography from the late 1960s onward. It examines the early scholarship that laid the groundwork for the interest in photography in Africa. In so doing, it tracks and comments upon the relative dearth of scholarship prior to the 1990s and the subsequent explosion of the field following. The myriad approaches and trends in the study of African photography were shaped and influenced by scholarship that initially examined colonial encounters with African peoples and other non-western populations within the field of anthropology.<sup>6</sup> For example, in 1992, anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards's *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*, offered an edited volume that examined the range of ways in which Victorian anthropology utilized photography to construct a particular scientific ideology whereby subjects could be objectified, surveyed, disciplined and controlled.<sup>7</sup> Edwards's case studies (using

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<sup>6</sup> Visual anthropology developed as a distinct sub-field of social anthropology in the 1970s. Interest in ethnographic photography in the 1980s opened an avenue for scholars to focus on historical photographs with a view to contextualizing specific cultures. See Johanna Scherer, "Historical Photographs as Anthropological Documents: A Retrospective," *Visual Anthropology*, vol. 3, nos. 2-3 (1990), 131-155.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1992). Several other relevant studies followed Edward's pioneering effort and include: James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*

images housed in the Royal Anthropological Institutes archives) offered valuable insight into the complex historical contexts and practices of early photographers engaged in such ethnographic endeavours. Most importantly, the volume also provided insight to the lives of individuals whom were photographed as part of the anthropological project. In 1997, a pioneering study by anthropologist and art historian Christopher Pinney, explored issues of materiality and the social uses of historical and contemporary Indian photographs in, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*.<sup>8</sup> Pinney's three-part study used a social-historical method to examine Indian photographs and its adaptation in contemporary Indian society. Scholarship and interest in specifically African photography, drew on both Edwards and Pinney's studies as the field developed. Thus a range of disciplines such as history, anthropology, visual anthropology and art history have been instrumental in shaping and configuring the ever-changing discourse on photography in Africa.

### ***First Encounters***

The earliest study on photography in Africa was chiefly concerned with the place of non-Africans and the medium's development. Published in 1966, A. D. Bensusan's *Silver Images: The History of Photography in Africa* provided a survey of photography by early European travellers and settlers in South Africa. The role of African photographers was limited to a brief discussion in which it was determined

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(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Wolfram Hartman, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes, eds., *The Colonizing Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Capetown: University of Capetown Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Elizabeth Edward's study *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg Press, 2001).

that in Nigeria, locals were not introduced to the medium until the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> Though lacking in rigour, Bensusan's work was in many ways an antecedent to the emerging discourse on African photography. In marked departure, Stephen Sprague's 1978 article "How the Yoruba See Themselves" focused on Yoruba lens-based practices.<sup>10</sup> Sprague was one of the first historians to give an account of not only how photography came to colonial Africa, but also how Africans took up this medium, refashioned it and incorporated the technology and modes of practice within the "contemporary and traditional" aspects of their local culture.<sup>11</sup> His essay was an important early contribution to the field in that it privileged the histories, contributions and adaptations of photography among the Yoruba. Sprague not only conducted a pioneering investigation into an African culture's self-representation using the photographic medium, he also asserted that photography made its way to Africa very soon after its invention in the West.

Sprague's study provided an opening upon which Vera Viditz-Ward could build her work on the earliest accounts of local African photography in Sierra Leone. Viditz-Ward, a photo-historian and photographer herself, lived in Freetown in the late 1970s. Around that time she began her research on local photography in Sierra Leone and traced the movements of its early practitioners, supplementing her findings with material from photography and newspaper archives in Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom and the United States. Her article "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Creole

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<sup>9</sup> A.D. Bensusan, *Silver Images: The History of Photography in Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966), 82.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," *African Arts*, vol. 12, no. 1 (November 1978), 52-59, 107.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

Photographer,” published in *African Arts* in 1985,<sup>12</sup> was one of the first to acknowledge the life and work of a significant African contributor to non-western photographic history. Her groundbreaking research illuminated the many facets of the African photographer and the various aspects of his commissions, production and the circulation of his images both in the region and outside of its border. In so doing, Viditz-Ward wrote persuasively about the place of an African photographer as knowledgeable and skilled as any in Europe. Viditz-Ward’s article should have opened up the possibilities for further engagement and linkages along similar lines in a nascent field of scholarship. However, no one followed her lead, which privileged the role of the African photographer in creating their varied practices. Instead there developed another stream of inquiry that was interested in the ways in which “historical” African photographs were entangled with colonial histories or the concept of photography in Africa.

The subject of photography in Africa was championed in 1985 in a special edition of *African Arts*.<sup>13</sup> The publication offered a collection of articles on the usefulness of the camera and photography in general by highlighting various fieldwork initiatives in Africa. Taken together the papers were less about the historical aspects of photography (with the exception of Paul Jenkins and Christraud Geary’s article on the Basel Mission Archives) and more about the methodological and practical mechanics of the use of photography to capture objects and peoples during research in the field.

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<sup>12</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, “Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Creole Photographer,” *African Arts*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1985), 46-51.

<sup>13</sup> Christraud M. Geary, “Old Pictures, New Approaches: Researching Historical Photographs,” *African Arts*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1985), 36-39.

In contrast, Viditz-Ward's "Photography in Sierra Leone, 1850-1918,"<sup>14</sup> published two years later, offered a compelling historical survey of early photographic practice in Freetown, including useful facts that established whom some of the early African itinerant and local photographers were that plied their trade in the bustling port city of Freetown. This influential piece offered another original perspective on the development of photography in Freetown, linking it to the country's unique settlement history. Once again, Viditz-Ward established an approach that was concerned with the characteristics of African photographers and their practices.

The frameworks established by both Sprague and Viditz-Ward in terms of a localizing of photographic practices in specific regions of Africa advocated methods that addressed the cultural practices and the social and historical contexts in which the photographers worked. Their early publications remain deeply relevant in terms of their pioneering scholarship and approaches that are auteur-driven, with much emphasis given to the producers of the images and their individual practices.<sup>15</sup>

In an interesting synthesis of both Sprague and Viditz-Ward's frameworks, Christraud Geary's *Images from Bamum*<sup>16</sup> articulated a methodological application whereby old or historical photography in Africa could be interrogated. Geary's entry point into the discussion is through the lens of colonial missionary photography as a

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<sup>14</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Photography in Sierra Leone, 1850-1918," *Africa*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 510-518.

<sup>15</sup> The interest in colonial representations of Africans from various regions and the history of photography in Africa was developed more broadly in work by Malek Alloua, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Richard Fabb, *Africa: The British Empire from Photographs* (London: Batson, 1987); and Nicolas Monti, *African Then: Photographs 1840-1918* (New York: Random House, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> Christraud M. Geary, *Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915*, exhib. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Published for the National Museum of African Art by the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988).

way of framing historical images of Africans in popular culture. Geary showed the benefits of viewing old photographs as historical records of social relations and material culture in African societies. Her in-depth essay takes account of the ways in which photography, especially those images made under the colonial regime, has played a role in building a mythical image of Africa.

The year 1988 signalled a turning point in the scholarship, invoking new life into old approaches. Historians David Killingray and Robert Young organised the symposium *Photographs as Sources of African History* at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. The international presenters considered multiple approaches to the history of photography in Africa in various area studies. The outcomes and concerns of these papers were then synthesized and published in 1989.<sup>17</sup> The importance of the findings was twofold. First, they offered examples of the history of photography on the continent that prefigured colonialism, thus shedding light on earlier engagements with the medium. Secondly, biographies of individual African photographers were presented, therefore offering a glimpse into their practices and the worlds in which they operated. Although deemed a “modest sketch”<sup>18</sup> of the developments in the history of African photography, the symposium and accompanying publications opened up the possibilities for future research in the burgeoning field.

This period also ushered in a more politicized approach and engendered a pronounced shift in the literature. Inquiries into the ways in which historical photographs could be utilised in studies related to Africa became steeped in

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<sup>17</sup> David Killingray and Andrew Roberts, “An Outline History of Photography in Africa, ca. 1940,” *History in Africa*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1989), 197-208. The Symposium papers were produced separately.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

theoretical and methodological concerns about representation, identity, and the myriad practices of the photographers, the range of consumers and patrons, and the circulation of images. This new approach was grounded in the methodological frameworks initially established by Sprague and Veditz-Ward.

### *From the Studio to the Museum*

In 1991, Christraud Geary observed that the use of structuralist theory provided scholars the opportunity to expand on the ideas that were first explored in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>19</sup> During this period, there had been a growing interest in African photography in two loose areas of concentration and approaches. One area was associated with the global art market and related exhibitions. This new positioning resulted in the canonization of a few African photographers. The curators of such “groundbreaking” shows conveyed indebtedness to realism, issues of identity and the photograph as art object. In contrast, the other stream stemmed from a growing trend that focused on local photographic histories and the continued adaptation of the medium.<sup>20</sup> Here, the practices of local photographers signalled an interest in reconstituting and re-contextualizing photographic practices. Thus by the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, these two streams overlapped and ultimately led to manifold approaches to the discipline.

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<sup>19</sup> Christraud M. Geary, “Old Pictures, New Approaches: Researching Historical Photographs,” *African Arts*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1991), 36-38.

<sup>20</sup> See my discussion further in this chapter on the work of Tobias Wendl, Heike Berhend, Jean François Werner and Liam Buckley.



An instrumental vehicle in the dissemination of contemporary African arts and photography by 1991 was the Paris based journal *Revue Noire*.<sup>21</sup> The arts and culture magazine was co-founded by architects Jean Loup Pivin and Pascal Martin Saint Leon, journalist Bruno Tilliette and writer Simon Njami in May 1991.<sup>22</sup> In December of the same year, the magazine produced its first of several special issues and monographs dedicated to photography.<sup>23</sup> The museum presentation of African photography during the first half of 1990s also served as a catalyst for catapulting some local photographers from the studio to the museum. This paradigm shift resulted in the re-contextualizing of the photograph from studio portrait to art object. In 1992, *Revue Noire* mounted the first exhibition of African photography in Paris at the Centre Wallonie Bruxelles. The show featured 90 photographers including the studio work of Senegalese photographer Mama Casset.<sup>24</sup> A contemporaneous exhibition curated by photography scholar Philippe David at the Goethe Institute in Lomé, Togo featured the photography of Alex Abaglo Acolatse (1880-1975).<sup>25</sup> An accompanying monograph was written by David and published in 1993 entitled, *Alex A. Acolaste: Hommage à l'un des Premiers Photographes Togolais*. David's work on Acolaste and other early Togolese photographers relied on detailed research that was concerned

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<sup>21</sup> The journal published from 1991 to 2001.

<sup>22</sup> See *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media Ltd., 2007), 249.

<sup>23</sup> See *Revue Noire*, no. 3 (December 1991). The issue was a monograph dedicated to the work of Yoruba-British photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode and featured 16 photographers from Africa and the diaspora. Other special issues include no. 15 (December 1994) and no. 28 (June 1998).

<sup>24</sup> See also the monograph on Senegalese photographers *Mama Casset and Precursors of Photography in Senegal* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> David conducted research on the early history of photography in Togo in the late 1990s while stationed in Lomé as a government magistrate. He has also written widely on the work of French photographer Edmund Fortier and his prolific postcard production on Senegal.

with local patronage and practices and less about its reception within the global art market.

In the United States in the early 1990s an alternative approach privileged canon formation whereby select individual African photographers were highlighted. The approach relied on the practices of a few rather than on the nuanced representational practices of the region. A prime example was the rise to fame of Malian studio photographer Seydou Keïta's following the 1991 exhibition *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art* at the Center for African Art in New York. Curator Susan Vogel had collected or "discovered" a number of Keïta's negatives in the 1970s while travelling in Mali. However, by 1991, at the time of the exhibition, she had forgotten the name of the photographer and the photographs were listed as by an "unknown" photographer. Independent French curator André Magnin later travelled to Bamako and determined that Keïta had produced the photographs.<sup>26</sup>

For Magnin, Keïta's "self-taught" status was indicative of an authentic African artist and because of Keïta's own claim that no western photographer had influenced his work.<sup>27</sup> There was also little interest in linking Keïta's work to earlier photographers in the region. As like exhibitions followed so too the scholarship opened up concerns with the postmodern African world, modern African subjects and post-colonial nation building. The photographs and photographers that were representative of such considerations formed much of the new scholarship that emerged at this time.

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<sup>26</sup> Magnin also mounted an exhibition at the Cartier Foundation in Paris. The monograph that was created for the show included a short statement by Keïta. See André Magnin, *Seydou Keïta, 1949-1962*, exhib. cat. (Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> For criticism of Magnin's "neo-primitivist" curating strategies, see John Picton, "In Vogue: The New Way to Wear Black," *Third Text*, vol. 23 (Summer 1993), 89-98.

The 1996 Guggenheim Museum exhibition *In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to Present*, curated by Okwui Enwezor and Claire Bell, is a case in point. The exhibition was regarded as the first major exploration (in the United States) of the work of African photographers and featured a vast range of photographers and over 130 photographs covering six decades. The overarching curatorial vision and discourse was confined to showcasing the African subject whose presence in front of the camera (especially in studio portraiture) constructed new subjectivities and modern identities. The work embodied the identity politics of the time in its hyper-emphasis of the “real.” This approach signalled the continued interest in canonizing a handful of the featured “modernist” studio photographers as a way of legitimizing African photography (especially portraiture) in the global art market. Enwezor dismissed the work of the earlier generation of pioneer African photographers based on what he deemed the limited archival evidence of photography practices that challenged colonial hegemony. As he noted in his curatorial statement:

Since very little early photography by Africans is available publicly, it would be difficult to claim their production as the embodiment of some *counter-discursive* “native” sensibility in an insurgent photographic practice that could have overthrown the imperialist mechanisms of ... superiority. Within artistic practice, the reclamation of African subjectivity, in any considered manner, existed in the practice of painting.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Okwui Enwezor and Octavio Zaya, “Colonial Imaginary, Tropes of Disruption: History, Culture, and Representation in the Works of African Photographers,” in *In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present*, exhib. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1996), 30.

The statement did not take into account the mediated space of the colonial archive which housed the images of pioneer photographers whose practices distinctly provided counter–narratives to colonial misconceptions about Africa.<sup>29</sup>

In 1999, *Revue Noire*'s massive *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* presented an interesting addition to the discourse. The substantial catalogue contained hundreds of examples of African and African diasporic photography. It expanded on the *In/sight* premise by including the work of early nineteenth-century pioneers as well as of contemporary photographers. The contributors' essays also reflected a range of scholarly disciplines that revealed the breadth of approaches to African photography. Thus anthropologists, cultural theorists, art historians, curators and practicing photographers provided a fairly comprehensive survey of differing regional practices of the photography landscape over 100 years. Vera Viditz-Ward's contribution to the book, "Studio Photography in Freetown," focused on Freetown and early photography.<sup>30</sup> In this fusion of her two previous essays, she maps a genealogy of photography in Freetown adding new facts about the earliest studio photographers and their practices. The article provides a good introduction for those unfamiliar with the fledgling field of study on African photographers in Sierra Leone and the historical connections between Africa and the diaspora. Viditz-Ward skirts the critical and theoretical dimensions of her research, however the early history she provided opened the possibilities for further research into African photography in Sierra Leone.

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<sup>29</sup> See Charles Gore, "Neils Walin-Holm Radicalising the Image in Lagos Colony, West Africa," *History of Photography*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2013), 283-300.

<sup>30</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Studio Photography in Freetown," in *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* (Paris: *Revue Noire*, 1999), 36.

### *In the Field*

Outside of the commercial and museum contexts, anthropologists and art historians among others have provided alternative frameworks for the study of African photography. In her 1991 essay “Old Pictures, New Approaches: Researching Historical Photographs,” Geary challenged scholars within anthropology (and the overlapping fields of art history, visual anthropology, history and museology) to reconsider their old approaches and create new ways in which to locate and explore past and contemporary aspect of photography. Geary’s essay prefaced *African Arts*’ second special issue devoted to photography.<sup>31</sup> The contributors – anthropologists, historians and curators – examined various aspects of photography through extensive engagement with archival materials, including postcards. The essays reflected a multidisciplinary approach examining specific missionary archives, African photographers and the photographic work of a European explorer. The special edition demonstrated that the study of African photography would have to address multiple fields of interests and frameworks.

In 1998, Geary’s co-edited *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*,<sup>32</sup> a volume highlighting the ways in which images from various non-western cultures had been mass-produced on picture postcards and then disseminated in the West between 1890 and 1915. Geary’s chapter on African photographic postcard production, “Distant Vision? Postcards by European and African Photographers and their Sponsors,” both draws on and expands the themes that were explored in her previous publication, namely the colonizing gaze and the problem surrounding western constructions of African peoples. However, it also addresses the

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<sup>31</sup> Geary 1991, 36-39.

<sup>32</sup> Christraud M. Geary and Virginia Lee Webb, eds., *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

complex role of local African photographers such as Alphonso Lisk-Carew, who were instrumental in the construction of reifying images of the primitive/exotic/savage and the consumption of these images by western viewers. Geary's close examination of the dynamics between the producers of these images and their clients also opened up new questions and considerations about the "dialogue" between subject and photographer, and issues of agency and self-presentation. Although much of the groundwork had already been laid by Sprague and Viditz-Ward as well as by Geary's own scholarship, *Delivering Views* presented in depth considerations and arguments that set the stage for a broad field of inquiry and challenged other scholars to explore some of the open-ended arguments put forth in this regard.

Several European scholars made contributions to the field that offered alternative methodologies anchored in contemporary examples and specific case studies on local African photographers. In 1998, Heike Behrend and Tobias Wendl curated *Snap Me One! Studiofotografen in Afrika*. The exhibition was held at the City Museum of Munich. Within the accompanying catalogue they presented their fieldwork research along with archival material as a means of exploring photography in Ghana and Kenya. The monograph also provided biographical information on some of the earliest Gold Coast photographers. *Snap Me One!* constituted a new approach that incorporated not only past early histories but also an engagement with contemporary producers who were experimenting with fantasy and realism in the studio setting which also has a long historical trajectory.

In studies subsequent to the 1998 exhibition, Behrend concentrated on specific photographic practices, underscoring the constant adaptation of the medium for local purposes. In *Imagined Journeys: The Likoni Ferry Photographers of Mombasa*

Kenya,<sup>33</sup> Behrend presents a group of photographers whose photographs give their clients access to a wider contemporary world through their resourceful camera technology and use of inventive backdrops. Tobias Wendl utilized a similar methodology to draw attention to both current and past photographic practices in Ghana. In his 1998 film *Future Remembrance: Photography and Image Arts in Ghana*, which signalled an interdisciplinary approach, Wendl documented the trajectory of local photographic practices in Ghana. He highlighted the antirealist approach of the studio photographers who recast their clients as performing new modern identities using fantastical backdrops, attire and poses. In so doing clients emphasise their interconnectedness to the world outside of Ghana. Thus Wendl's film shows that Ghanaian photographers were less interested in depicting existing reality than in idealizing their subjects and imposing upon them new forms of self-presentation.<sup>34</sup>

Wendl's continued insight into such realities and the different readings of local photographic practices have extended the discourse on African photography.<sup>35</sup> His methodological concerns explore photographic traditions that derive from local representational practices based on specific cultural, political and economic factors. To be sure, his work provides an alternative to the discourse that suggests that African photographers' use of the medium was primarily a western construct and preoccupied with truth telling.

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<sup>33</sup> Heike Behrend, "Imagined Journeys: The Likoni Ferry Photographers of Mombasa, Kenya," in *Photographies Other Histories*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 221-239.

<sup>34</sup> Tobias Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, vol. 39 (2001), 97. See also "Portraits and Scenery," *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), 142-157.

<sup>35</sup> Wendl 2001, 78-101.

Jean-François Werner's scholarship takes a similar methodological turn vis-à-vis local praxes and African photography. His work on photography in Ivory Coast problematizes the notion of the portrait through the use of government-issued identification photographs. Werner argues that the ID image, similar to a portrait, places emphasis on the head and torso against a neutral backdrop. And similar to the portrait, the ID photograph recreates the subject's individuation, thereby creating an alternate representation removed from the classificatory purposes of the photograph. In so doing, the portrait is recontextualized for their own use and claims their individuality. Werner's emphasis on contextualizing individual local photographic practices also calls attention to the dangers of imposing western approaches on non-western cultures.<sup>36</sup>

In reviewing the literature thus far, it is evident that the study of African photographic practices in Africa has evolved over the past four decades and now represents a range of approaches and methodologies. The growing scholarship in the field has addressed a multiplicity of photographic practices by African photographers. The divergent disciplines, approaches and scholarly interests reveal the various debates and the contexts of those debates in relation to African photography. These diverse concerns also reveal the potential for overlap, suggesting the mutability of the discipline.

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<sup>36</sup> Werner is emphatic about the folly of imposing such approaches when he notes that the photographer responsible for many of the ID images he researched was Cornelius Augustt Azaglo (1924-2001). He observes that several large-scale versions of Azaglo's photographs were printed and enlarged for the *In/sight* exhibition in 1999. And while he agrees that the portraits have aesthetic value based on the conventions of portraiture, their original contexts are erased and mediated by their placement in museums.



### *African Photographs: New Approaches*

In recent years, this mutability and the overlapping of ideas, concerns and debates have resulted in new scholarship that offers a range of inquiries and approaches related to the histories, practices and broader social contexts and implications of African photography. Similar to the work of anthropologists of the late 1990s, the scholarship is grounded in local photographic histories and its reception. For instance, until recently, knowledge of The Gambia's photographic histories has been quite thin. However, anthropologist Liam Buckley has mapped out the ways in which issues of local modernities and the shifting and evolving of photographic practices have influenced clients, audiences and patrons in the region.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, in her exploration of early Nigerian photography and the Yoruba diaspora, African photography historian Erika Nimis has concentrated her efforts on the local while also paying homage to Stephen Sprague's work.<sup>38</sup> Outside of the anthropological or historical sphere, Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Peterson offered a collection of case –studies covering a broad geographic range and various histories and practices of photography, in the anthology, *Photography's Other*

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<sup>37</sup> Liam Buckley, "Self and Accessory in Gambian Studio Photography," *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2001), 71-91; Liam Buckley, "Studio Photography and the Aesthetics of Citizenship in The Gambia," in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden and Ruth B. Phillips (New York: Berg Press, 2006), 61-85; Liam Buckley, "Photography, Elegance and the Aesthetics of Citizenship," in *Visual Sense: A Cultural Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Kaushik Bhaumik (New York: Berg Press, 2008), 183-192; and Liam Buckley, "Gridwork: Gambian Colonial Photography," *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*, vol. 2 (2008), 40-55.

<sup>38</sup> Erika Nimis, *Photographies d'Afrique de l'Ouest: L'expérience Yoruba*, Hommes et sociétés (Paris: Karthala; Ibadan, Nigeria: IRFA-Ibadan, 2005). Nimis had previously published on contemporary practices in Mali in *Photographies de Bamako de 1935 à nos jours* (Paris: Revue Noire 1998).

*Histories*.<sup>39</sup> They argued that photography and its resultant aesthetic impact on communities must be examined through the local histories of the medium in order to avoid sweeping narratives about a single Euro-American photographic history.<sup>40</sup>

In short, these studies all examine and share similar ground that gesture to earlier forays into the field such as Sprague's underlying the fact that photography depends very much upon the specific context in which it is practiced. Taken together, these works also depend on multiple readings of local representational practices, which assists in creating a platform for a broader and more inclusive conversation on African photography with attention to both its local and global significance.

The period from the late 1960s through to twenty-first century produced an enthralling body of scholarship and innovative exhibitions, and emerging frameworks to the study of African photographic practices and histories. The present study builds upon the seminal work of historians Vera Viditz-Ward and Stephen Sprague: it adopts a methodology that grounds an analysis of Lisk-Carew's photographic practice in the histories and contexts of Sierra Leone, but recognises the pitfalls of such earlier models in their dearth of theoretical frameworks. This study embodies wider theoretical considerations that may open new venues through which to examine African photography in general and Lisk-Carew's work in particular.

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<sup>39</sup> Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Peterson, eds., *Photography's Other Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> The collected essays reflect a broader focus on a range of photographic practices from various international countries.

## Sierra Leone: The First Hundred Years Redux

### *The Development of Freetown*

Examining the role of Sierra Leonean photographers such as Alphonso Lisk-Carew necessitates an overview of the social history and development of Freetown society from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Freetown evolved as a colony through waves of immigration and settlement. This resulted in a “coastal settlement that retained a sharp distinction from Africa proper.”<sup>41</sup> Such a distinction was somewhat based on groups of settlers and their specific trajectories (London’s “Black poor” and Canada’s Black Nova Scotians, among others) whose lives had been shaped in the West.<sup>42</sup> Freetown’s formation was constructed by an exercise in philanthropy steeped in an abiding British abolitionist ideology, with the directive of “sending back to Africa” groups of Blacks that were deemed undesirable and constructed as social misfits in the larger British society.<sup>43</sup> Thus, throughout the 1780s, an unfavourable spotlight was cast on London’s “Black poor” as their numbers swelled, causing both concern and alarm.<sup>44</sup> The “Black Poor” also caught the attention of evangelical Christians who saw them as victims of the evil slave trade, and wealthy

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<sup>41</sup> Kadiatu Kanneh, “Coming Home: Pan Africanisms and National Identities,” in *African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1998), 51.

<sup>42</sup> James Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 5-7. In his discussion on the origins of the “Nova Scotians,” Walker argues that they had been former slaves in the Carolinas and Virginia. He also notes many of the settlers made their way to Nova Scotia via northern cities such as Boston and New York.

<sup>43</sup> This would not be the first call for the deportation of Blacks in Britain. In 1596, Queen Elizabeth issued an open letter in which she proclaims her displeasure with “the diverse blackamoors of which kinds there are too many.” David Dabydeen, ed., *The Black Presence in English Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

<sup>44</sup> Deirdre Coleman, *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

London merchants and bankers who sought to reward them for their loyalty to Britain. The two groups formed the Committee for the Black Poor in 1786.<sup>45</sup> However the Committee could not implement long-term strategies to alleviate the black populations abject poverty and instead recommended resettlement in Africa. In 1787, responding to the hysteria surrounding this growing Black population, abolitionists Granville Sharpe and William Wilberforce founded the Sierra Leone Company in order to create a “self-governing colony ... established for ex-slaves at Sierra Leone to be led by Henry Smeathman.”<sup>46</sup> Between 1771 and 1774, Smeathman, an eccentric British botanist, had travelled to Sierra Leone as part of an expedition to collect plant specimens. Following his expedition, he was eager to extol the virtues of Sierra Leone as a mountain paradise perfect for British colonization. While it is doubtful that Smeathman’s motivations were entirely abolitionist in scope, he was nevertheless, interested in setting up an idealized African “paradise” for a soon to be displaced Black populace.<sup>47</sup> At this historical juncture, for Smeathman and other like-minded champions of the colonization scheme, Sierra Leone offered a geographic space that could approximate, in Michel Foucault’s terms, a “heterotopia,”<sup>48</sup> a useful term for further interrogating the Freetown experiment. Foucault uses the notion of a heterotopian to describe a space of otherness, both real and imagined. Freetown falls

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<sup>45</sup> Stephen Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London’s Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement 1786-1791* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 64-67.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault elaborated the notion of heterotopia (a term in human geography) during a lecture given in 1967. He contested the traditional idea of linear time, asserting that concepts of time have been understood in various ways, under varying historical circumstances. He established two unique sites – utopias and heterotopias – which are linked to other spaces, yet are also in contradiction to those other sites to which they are linked. A utopia is a fundamentally unreal space. In contrast, a heterotopia is a real space, which is simultaneously mythic and real. According to Foucault all cultures are heterotopias.

in line with Foucault's notion of a heterotopian site in that it was a recognizable concrete geographic location outside of England. It was connected to other social spaces but could also be situated as a counter-site. As a counter-site, it would be a perfect multi-racial paradise.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Freetown's potential as a heterotopia offered, in Foucauldian terms, a "real space, as perfect, ... meticulous, ... and well arranged" in contrast to "ours (which is) ... messy, ill construed and jumbled."<sup>50</sup> However, the idea of Freetown as a heterotopian space also magnified the aspect of difference and otherness where it could be used as a site for experimenting with the social ordering of society that is subject to change and uncertain consequences.<sup>51</sup>

For Smeathman, who was not only a botanist but also a collector, a scientist and a self-described humanitarian,<sup>52</sup> Sierra Leone, held the promise for a social, economic and political experiment that could be instigated with willing participants. Thus in 1787, 400 "Black poor" were settled in the colony known as Granville Town.<sup>53</sup> This experiment also set the stage for subsequent immigration, repatriation and deportation schemes, including the repatriation in 1792 of the Black Loyalists (former slaves who had fought on the side of the British during the American Revolution) to Freetown (renamed by the Black Loyalists following the destruction of the earlier settlement which was plagued by financial difficulties, hostility of local groups and the ravages of tropical fever).<sup>54</sup> Also, approximately 500 Jamaican

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<sup>49</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1986), 22-27. See also Kanneh 1998, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Foucault 1986, 27.

<sup>51</sup> Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 12-13, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Coleman 2005, 10.

<sup>53</sup> The original settlement was named after British abolitionist and humanitarian Granville Sharp.

<sup>54</sup> The British promised the Black Loyalists land grants as well as their freedom if they relocated in Nova Scotia. The paltry land delegated, however, was unfarmable.

Maroons, who arrived following a revolt against the British in Jamaica, then followed the trajectory of the Black Loyalists. The Jamaican Maroons were captured and sent to Nova Scotia in 1795. Dissatisfied with their dislocation, the Maroons agreed to settle in Freetown in 1800.<sup>55</sup> However, the largest influx into Sierra Leone were the “recaptive” or “liberated Africans” group who were liberated from illegal slave ships following the passing of the Slave Trade Act in 1807 in Britain and its subsequent blockade.<sup>56</sup> Beginning in 1808, the British Admiralty dispatched two small boats along the African coast to intercept slave ships. By 1811, the number was increased to a squadron of 5 and by the 1840s the number of ships had risen to 20. In May 1807, alongside the initial deployment of British ships, a Vice-Admiralty court was created and given the jurisdiction to deal with slave ships captured by the navy. During their sixty years in the mission of interdicting the illegal slave trade, the both the squadron and the court captured and condemned over 1600 slave ships and freed 150,000 slaves.<sup>57</sup> Once the ships were intercepted, a large number of heterogeneous African groups were settled in the colony. The “recaptives” were settled on the outskirts of Freetown in small parishes where they would live and cultivate small plots of land,

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Conditions such as the harsh winter climate, a highly hostile White population and economic deprivations offered further deterrents for the settlers. When the Sierra Leone Company offered an opportunity to settle in Africa, the Nova Scotians accepted. See “Nova Scotia settlement-George Street east to Hastings” Plan of Allotments, Archives, Fourah Bay College.

<sup>55</sup> Mavis C. Campbell, “The Maroons of Jamaica: Imperium in Imperio?” *Pan African Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1973), 45-55. The Maroon group who settled in Freetown were identified as the Trelawny Town Maroons and engaged the British in what is considered the Second Maroon War in 1795. The Maroons settled in the area of Freetown known as Maroon Town on the east bank of Sanders Brook. Trelawny Street (renamed Lamina Sankoh Street) is located near the original site of the Maroon settlement.

<sup>56</sup> The Atlantic slave trade was suppressed by 1865 and by 1870 the naval blockade was lifted. See Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 331, 377.

<sup>57</sup> James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of the British Slave Trade* (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1994), 309.

which would provide some revenue for the Crown. Villages under the parish system were named after areas in the English countryside such as Hastings, Regent, Wellington and Bathurst, and administered by the Church Missionary Society.<sup>58</sup> As a consequence, the Society's primary responsibility was the spiritual, educational and moral guidance of the liberated or recaptive Africans and their inculturation into the larger settler society. In naming the coastal city in which they landed Freetown, the Nova Scotians claimed the space as free Black citizens. However, as James Walker notes, the Black Loyalists quickly dominated the colony, causing conflict with the indigenous Africans.<sup>59</sup>

By the mid-1870s the identification of newcomers as separate groups, such as Nova Scotians, Maroons, and recaptives, had begun to blur. The term Creole (present-day Krio) came to be applied to all of the settler groups.<sup>60</sup> However, David Skinner and Barbara Harrell-Bond argue that in its present-day meaning, the notion of Creole was only gradually adopted by the government after 1908. They note that there is no evidence that at anytime during the nineteenth century, the society of Sierra Leone either shared a common culture or manifested the solidarity of a unified group. They suggest that such a coalescing of Creole identity, took place from 1880 to 1910 when the "elite members of Freetown attempted to establish some form of cohesive or

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<sup>58</sup> The Church Missionary Society, also known as the Society for Missions in Asia and Africa, was an evangelical missionary society founded in 1799. The group is currently known as the Church Mission Society.

<sup>59</sup> Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1989), 113. In an interesting footnote, Wyse argues that, in fact, many of the Nova Scotians may have come originally from Sierra Leone via South Carolina and therefore were not "the complete strangers that they were reckoned to be, without any connection to Sierra Leone, but they were in fact returnees to their ancestral home."

<sup>60</sup> Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 13.

collective identity in response to increasing racist attitudes and exclusionary tactics by the British regime.”<sup>61</sup>

Sierra Leonean scholar Akintola Wyse challenges such a suggestion and argues that the unique society of settlers and recaptives, who evolved in the peninsula during the early nineteenth century, were identified as Creoles by outside observers during the 1840s and 1860s.<sup>62</sup> And he observes that this group shared common foods, cultural practices and a language (Krio). The tension around the identity of people often labelled as “Creole,” or *krio*, which, the above authors underline, form part of the theoretical debates around the genesis of a cohesive Creole group. However, despite the differences in ethnic, religious and socio-economic make-up, Creoles by the late 1890s sought a unified identity as a response to colonialism and its further annexation of territory.

This grouping known as Creoles included individuals from one of the neighbouring cultural groups, who sought to emulate the “Creole way of life” by adopting the particular conventions and standards of behaviours – European-style dress, a Creole or European name and the cultivation of certain anglicised social manners. By the mid-nineteenth century many groups who were residents of Freetown and influenced by local European officials and missionaries (the Temne, Limba, Mende and Loko, for example), would also shed their indigenous names.<sup>63</sup> Taking on

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<sup>61</sup> David Skinner and Barbara E. Harrell-Bond, “Misunderstanding Arising from the Use of the Term ‘Creole’ in the Literature on Sierra Leone,” *Africa*, vol. 47, no. 3 (1977), 305-312.

<sup>62</sup> Akintola Wyse, “On Misunderstandings Arising from the Use of the Term ‘Creole’ in the Literature on Sierra Leone: A Rejoinder,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 49, no. 4 (1979), 409.

<sup>63</sup> Mac Dixon-Fyle and Gibril Cole, eds. “Introduction,” *New Perspectives on the Sierra Leone Krio*, American University Studies, Series 9 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 2-3. Identification as a British subject was also crucial at this time when slavery and the fear of re-enslavement were realities along the West African coast.



Creole identity gave them a better chance of success in the Victorian milieu of a progressively westernized Freetown society.

By the 1830s, Freetown became a site occupied by the various immigrant or returnee groups, or Creoles, in addition to the European colonial presence (approximately two hundred individuals made up of civilians, merchants, military men and colonial officials)<sup>64</sup> and original hinterland peoples, which resulted in a diverse pluralistic society. Despite this plurality however, Freetown was far from the “utopian” enlightenment dream that Smeathman and subsequent British philanthropists had envisioned. On going competition and the jostling for social position between the groups were crystallized by the mid-nineteenth century, when the liberated Africans began to gain more and more economic and political prominence in Freetown. The 1880s realized an increase in Freetown’s economic growth and general expansion that was fuelled by the settler traders, who established lucrative import-export businesses and commercial networks with the hinterland.<sup>65</sup> Yet the Nova Scotians were imbued with European tastes and habits, and a sense of the decorum and decencies of “civilized” life.<sup>66</sup> In dress and manners they were very much influenced by the colonizers. Such influences were tempered by their own experience of slavery, Christianity and the African scene. However they also maintained a history of dissent from colonial rule, especially in terms of religious affiliation and taxation without representation. When the Sierra Leone Company attempted to charge the settlers rent, or quit-rent, to recoup financial losses, the

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<sup>64</sup> Robert Rene Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, vol.1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 182-187.

<sup>65</sup> Christopher Fyfe, “1787-1887-1987: Reflections on A Sierra Leone Bicentenary,” *Africa*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 413.

<sup>66</sup> James Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 361.

settlers resisted, fearing that any acquiescence to the tax would undermine their newly won freedom.<sup>67</sup>

While the history of the founding of Freetown can be presented as a “heterotopian” and humanitarian project, the deeper economic factors aligned with the creation of the colony remain omnipresent. For one, the satellite villages that were set up point to the inherent economic benefits of the experimental farms for the colonial regime. As a result, the developing colony was required under colonial rule to contribute revenue through imperial taxations and other revenue-generating schemes.

By 1896 Britain declared the hinterland a protectorate (extending more or less to present-day boundaries) in order to stymie French expansion. The colonial designation of paramount chief replaced localised elite rankings. Thus, following the declaration, all chiefs were subject to the will of the Governor, who could depose, reinstate or choose each paramount chief. As a result, the British created two cultural and administrative regions – the Crown Colony of Freetown and the protectorate. The protectorate was divided into districts (headed by a British District Commissioner) and the districts further divided into chiefdoms.<sup>68</sup> The seeds were thus sown for future dissent. In 1898, Temne leader Bai Bureh led forces from several chiefdoms in the Hut Tax War. Their defiance centred on a tax levied on houses that would help to support the colonial administration. The violent and protracted campaign (the uprising against the British lasted for nine months) killed nearly one hundred people, including missionaries and colony traders.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Fyfe 1962.

<sup>68</sup> Arthur Abraham’s notes that the creation of Native Administrations in 1937 was “an attempt to introduce Lugardian style Indirect Rule.” See *Mende Government and Politics Under Colonial Rule: A Historical Study of Political Change in Sierra Leone 1890-1937* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1978), 241.

<sup>69</sup> Arthur Abraham, “Bai Bureh, The British and the Hut Tax War,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1974), 99-106.

Despite on going political and economic fissures, by the late nineteenth century, Freetown was a city associated with “the dynamic of modernity, education and progress.”<sup>70</sup> Hence, from the moment of settlement, the Nova Scotians were adamant about providing education to their community, knowing that the impact of a western-style education would assist in differentiating them from the indigenous African peoples.<sup>71</sup>

The urban Creole population also expanded exponentially with the addition of thousands of liberated Africans to Freetown who were receptive to both Christianity through missionary evangelization and education as a means of social and economic elevation within the society. The Church Missionary Society (CMS)<sup>72</sup> in 1827 founded Fourah Bay College. The sole institution of higher learning in West Africa until the 1920s, Fourah Bay was considered a citadel of learning, offering a curriculum that placed a strong emphasis on the classics. Known as the “Athens of West Africa,” Fourah Bay attracted eager students from the region, abroad and other areas of West Africa such as from what is now known as The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria.<sup>73</sup> In 1876, the College was affiliated with the University of Durham in

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<sup>70</sup> Alfred Zac-Williams, “Freetown: From the Athens of West Africa to City Under Siege,” in Okwui Enwezor, ed., *Under Siege: Four African Cities Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Lagos* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 292.

<sup>71</sup> Walker 1999, 202-204. Walker notes that the “Sierra Leone Company recognized the necessity of improving settler education in Freetown if they were to become collaborators in the ‘civilization’ of Africa, and so the company sent a European schoolmaster to the colony.” Starting as early as 1793, the Nova Scotians had established independent schools that served their own interests as a separate community and not those of the Europeans. By the end of 1793, all of the colony children and some parents were receiving a formal education in Freetown in one of eight established (private) schools.

<sup>72</sup> The Church Missionary Society was instrumental in educating the majority of Creoles starting in 1816 with the founding of the Christian Institution in Leicester village.

<sup>73</sup> Daniel J. Paracka, Jr., *The Athens of West Africa: A History of International Education at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone*, African Studies (New York: Routledge, 2003),

England, thus becoming the only institution of its kind in West African to offer a full degree.

The CMS also opened the Grammar School, the first school for boys in sub-Saharan Africa, and the Annie Walsh Memorial School, the first for girls, in 1845 and 1849 respectively. The Roman Catholic Mission echoed the efforts of the CMS and opened St. Edward's School for boys in Freetown, starting with a primary division in 1865 and a secondary division in 1922; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny established the St. Joseph Convent in 1866. Not to be outdone, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society provided a secondary school for boys in 1874 – the Methodist Boys' High School – and one for girls in 1901. The United Methodist Church opened the Albert Academy for boys in 1904 and the Prince of Wales School, a government-sponsored school, was established in 1925.

The provision of institutions of formal education was instrumental in the continued development of the Creole community. Education brought with it a great sense of pride, honour and accomplishment. One woman in her late 70s, a former headmistress in the 1960s at the government-run Freetown Secondary School for Girls (est. 1926), stressed that in Freetown, “the school one attended was instrumental to shaping one's path in life. The more established and prestigious the school, the more a family's status would be elevated.”<sup>74</sup> Education became a cult for Creoles and was synonymous with upward mobility for one's children and social recognition within the community.<sup>75</sup>

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5. Paracka also notes that the term “Athens” was used originally as an analogy to refer to the educated and cosmopolitan citizenry of Freetown, but eventually became associated with Fourah Bay College. It has been difficult to trace the exact origin of this distinction or to whom it is credited.

<sup>74</sup> Mrs. Cassandra Garver, pers. comm., May 14, 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Wyse 1989, 33.

The rise of the printed press also played an influential role. Starting in 1801 through to 1862, several newspapers were launched.<sup>76</sup> Concomitantly, there was a rise in Creole entrepreneurship as trade in the enclave expanded, further consolidating the economic primacy of the Creoles during this period. The “civilizing” mission of the “founding fathers” for the settlement was extended with the increasing African presence in local government, such as the mayoralty and the establishment of a municipal corporation in 1893.

### *Early Cultural Production in a Cosmopolitan City*

By the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Freetown’s reputation as the “Athens of West Africa” extended outside of the realm of education. An increasingly busy port and growing mercantile trade contributed to the city’s role as a vital hub for local, colonial and international economic interests, thereby broadening its status regionally and on the world stage.<sup>77</sup> During a visit to Freetown in 1884, noted Pan-Africanist Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden recognized the city’s exponential growth and cosmopolitanism: “Sierra Leone has been called the Liverpool of West Africa ... by increasing and developing its wealth, by its schools, by its press, by its commerce, wielding a controlling influence for good along the entire coast and far into the heart of Soudan.”<sup>78</sup> The elite community also contributed to this comparison by emulating many of the latest forms of entertainment that might be found in European and

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<sup>76</sup> See sub-section, “The Development of the Scene” in this chapter for a more detailed examination of the press in Sierra Leone.

<sup>77</sup> Archives Fourah Bay College, Census Returns 1881, Enclosure No. 1, Dispatch to Secretary of State, July 12, 1881. The Census returns for 1881 indicate that the population of Freetown had increased by 5,000, that no other Colony contained so mixed a population and that there were “some 60 languages are spoken on the streets of Freetown.”

<sup>78</sup> Edward W. Blyden, “Dr. Blyden on Sierra Leone,” *SLWN*, September 20, 1884, 5. By the late nineteenth century, Freetown had been displaced by Lagos and Accra in terms of economic prowess.

American centres at the time. In 1886, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reported that a Fancy Dress Ball was held at the Model School.<sup>79</sup> The Ball featured elite guests from both the African and European communities, including Sir Samuel Lewis, a successful lawyer who served as the first mayor of Freetown and became the first African to be knighted in 1896.<sup>80</sup> Such events dated back to at least 1859, but this one was reported to be a “grand success.”<sup>81</sup>

The opening of the Wilberforce Hall in 1887 offered a new venue for a range of dance events, dramatic productions and concert performances.<sup>82</sup> The Hall became the central meeting space until it burned down in 1959. Various performance practices and conventions contributed to Freetown’s cosmopolitan sensibility and early cultural production in the late nineteenth century. These practices and conventions were often shaped by the presence of European military and the flow of international travellers. A striking example was captured in an 1888 edition of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. The paper reported that a “black-faced” minstrel group called the Icarian Troupe had performed at Wilberforce Hall. The Troupe was made up of European personnel commissioned on the HMS Icarus.<sup>83</sup> By all accounts the audience, which included the African elite of Freetown and a visiting American consul, enjoyed the Troupe’s

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<sup>79</sup> “The Fancy Dress Ball,” *SLWN*, January 9, 1886, 5.

<sup>80</sup> See J. D. Hargreaves, *A Life of Sir Samuel Lewis*, West African History Series (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*; and *SLWN*, January 9, 5

<sup>82</sup> Various meeting rooms and halls in schools were used in Freetown before Wilberforce Hall was built.

<sup>83</sup> The minstrel genre in the United States was started in the mid-nineteenth when Whites acted as Blacks using stereotypes based on the behaviour and culture of plantation slaves in the South. Following the Civil War, Blacks also entered the minstrel field as a way of gaining acceptance on the American stage. The genre also became popular in England and throughout the British Empire. See Robert C. Toll, *Blackening Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

“white-eyed” performance.<sup>84</sup> While there is no mention of any displeasure by the audience at the content of the performance, such complacency was not always the case. In 1892, at a performance by the Black Pearl Minstrels at the Educational Institute in Freetown, the paper noted that following “the usual minstrel dialogue business,” the mainly African audience members rattled on the floor with their boots and became very noisy, forcing “the curtain to be dropped during their dialogue.”<sup>85</sup>

The minstrel performances and other manifestations of performative culture such as in the period leading up to the twentieth century are useful for understanding specific aspects of the cultural and intellectual milieu of the time. Many of the concerts and European-derived musical performances formed the centre of the elite’s social life in Freetown. There was a general interest and eagerness to support locally what was established in an international cultural context. Thus despite the shortcomings and problematic histories associated with entertainment such as minstrelsy, the value was in a wide range of like theatrical and musical events. Such forms of entertainment allowed a particular segment of society to keep abreast and maintain cultural ties with Europe and North America. In June 1902, an acrobatic show run by an American named Charles Elie performed gymnastics, trapeze and “step” dances at Wilberforce Memorial Hall.<sup>86</sup> And in 1906, a local group called the Excelsior Choir and Dramatic Society advertised a selection of musical comedy that included an act called the “Black Lunatics at Moyamba.”<sup>87</sup> These examples and many

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<sup>84</sup> “The Icarian Troupe at the Wilberforce Memorial Hall,” *SLWN*, January 14, 1888, 7.

<sup>85</sup> “Concert at the Wilberforce Hall,” *SLWN*, June 2, 1892, 4. I found several advertisements for minstrel performances in *SLWN* from the late 1880s into the 1920s in which local performers had appropriated the genre and several international troupes.

<sup>86</sup> “Acrobatic Performances Wilberforce Hall,” *SLWN*, June 14, 1902, 8.

<sup>87</sup> “The Excelsior Choir and Dramatic Society,” *SLWN*, November 24, 1906, 12.

others as reported in the Sierra Leone press suggest a vibrant cosmopolitanism that was inscribed into the visual culture of Freetown well into the twentieth century.

### *The Decline of the Creoles*

By the turn of the century, cultural and political divisions and the ensuing tensions profoundly marked Freetown. While musical theatre events and society balls remained an integral part of Freetown Creole elite's cultural landscape, into the twentieth century, their overall influence significantly declined. For example, a variety of groups immigrated from the protectorate, lured by the prospects of better education, and subsequently attained jobs heretofore reserved for Creoles.<sup>88</sup> The influx of a large number of Syrian and Lebanese merchants to the protectorate also contributed to the decline of the Creoles. The merchants, who spoke Arabic, developed a range of relationships with Protectorate traders and European firms, effectively shutting out Creole merchants from the market share.<sup>89</sup> It was also evident that the so-called "superior culture"<sup>90</sup> of the Creoles and the "tribal inclinations" of the protectorate groups contributed to the myths aggravated by the imperial regime that exacerbated cultural distinctions.<sup>91</sup>

European merchants and trading companies such as the United African Company (UAC), the Société Commerciale de L'Ouest Africaine (SCOA) and Compagnie Française de L'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) amongst others, used their access to greater financial resources and capital to leverage out local Creole

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<sup>88</sup> Shortly after the 1898 Hut Tax War, which Creole government workers had been accused of inciting, Creole appointments to government service were greatly reduced.

<sup>89</sup> Walker 1999, 382.

<sup>90</sup> Wyse 1989, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Bill Ascroft, "Resistance," *Post Colonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 21.



merchants and gain a monopoly.<sup>92</sup> The establishment of the Government railway between 1895 and 1890 also meant that European companies could tap wholesale produce directly within the protectorate thus effectively minimizing the role of established Creole traders.<sup>93</sup> Further, the commercial banking system was controlled by the Bank of West Africa, which was established in 1894 to bolster the capital of the European firms and provided banking services for the colonial administration.<sup>94</sup> Local Creole merchants who lacked suitable security to secure loans and extended credit through the bank experienced further stagnation in their enterprises.

Alongside the unfavourable economic decline, the majority of Creoles insisted that their children engage in professional studies in Europe rather than entrepreneurial pursuits in Sierra Leone. For Blyden, such habits and customs were affectations and “out of keeping with the surroundings.”<sup>95</sup> By 1903 Blyden’s admiration for Sierra Leone as the “noble and legitimate city” had morphed into a scathing renunciation of the Creole group. He now considered them mere mimic men which resulted not in “new national community but to a grotesque parody of England.”<sup>96</sup>

While the British authorities rejected the Creoles and their continued demands for self-governance the protectorate’s educated elite grew steadily. The Bo School was established in 1905 to educate the sons of chiefs. By 1910 missionaries expanded education in the protectorate by establishing more than seventy schools. Many of the graduates continued their education at Fourah Bay College and institutions abroad,

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<sup>92</sup> See Allister MacMillan, *The Red Book of West Africa: Historical and Descriptive Commercial and Industrial Facts, Figures and Resources* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1920). MacMillan documents a range of both African and European firms based in Freetown many of whom had been established during early the twentieth century.

<sup>93</sup> Eliphas G. Mukonoweshuro, *Colonialism, Class Formation and Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone* (London: University Press of America, 1993), 23.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>95</sup> “Banquet in Honour of C.E. Wright,” *SLWN*, November 28, 1903, 7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

which would form the beginnings of a new protectorate intelligentsia by the middle of the 1920s.<sup>97</sup> Photography in Sierra Leone, as outlined below, coincided with these crucial shifts and changes across the region and, most significantly, in Freetown.

## **Photography in Freetown**

### ***The Development of the Scene***

Given the unique circumstances of Freetown's founding and its diverse communities, itinerant local and resident photographic enterprises began to emerge in the colony at various moments from the late 1850s onward. The documentation of such enterprises in local Sierra Leone Press is at times uneven and fragmented, and therefore it is difficult to reconstruct a complete history of photographers and their practices.

However, the role of the printed press in Sierra Leone was seminal to the history of photography in Freetown. The first printing press was available in Freetown two years following the arrival of the Nova Scotian settlers in 1794. Still, it was not until 1801 that the first newspaper, the *Sierra Leone Gazette*, was printed. By the mid-century, several African-owned publications appeared on the market, including *The New Era* in 1855 and *The African Sierra Leone Spectator* around 1858.<sup>98</sup> By 1890 ten

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<sup>97</sup> Sir Milton Margai, Sierra Leone's first prime minister, was born in Bonthe in 1895 and was the beneficiary of such missionary education. He became the first individual from the protectorate to receive a university degree from Fourah Bay College. See Wyse 1989, 46, and Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics, and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 45-46.

<sup>98</sup> See Christopher Fyfe, "The Sierra Leone Press in the Nineteenth Century," *Sierra Leonean Studies*, n. s. 8 (1957), 228-230. In it he notes that many of the newspapers of the 1850s and 1860s were "ill-written, carelessly produced and sometimes ... scarcely legible" but that "newspapers founded in the 1870s and 1880s set a higher standard." *African-Caribbean settler William Drape started The New Era*. However, it was forced to shut down around 1858 by the administration.

newspapers had been established, including *The Independent* (1874) and the popular *Sierra Leone Weekly News* (1884).

Sierra Leone's press was vibrant, providing newsworthy items from abroad and acting as the voice for literate African communities. The pages of the publications were filled with advertisements, glimpses into the life of the African elite, public notices, local news and, at times, government propaganda. Early photographers working along the coastal regions often used the press as a prime outlet to announce the various aspects of their professional lives and photography businesses. From the late 1850s onward, photographers were often documented in newspaper advertisements and editorials as they flocked to Freetown, reflecting the port-city's cosmopolitanism. These intrepid image-makers travelled to Freetown from the Gold Coast, Liberia, the United States, Britain and France. Their peripatetic travels also resulted in multiple practices that included portraiture, landscapes, views and "types" genres sustained by a range of clientele, commissions and patronage. These itinerant photographers working in urban areas of the West African coast utilised a variety of innovations in photography technology, including the early daguerreotypes of the 1850s and the wet plate collodion method of the early 1860s, which produced multiple albumen prints and sharper picture quality. However, even with such innovations, processing materials such as chemicals and paper required expert handling within the African climate, and equipment remained cumbersome.<sup>99</sup>

The print culture in mid-nineteenth Sierra Leone has been crucial for documenting the mobility of both local and visiting photographers. As a result, extant newspaper records provided a valuable "voice" to the unfolding photographic

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<sup>99</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Photography in Sierra Leone: 1850-1918," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 512.

histories of the time. Photographers working in Freetown and borne out in the Freetown press reveal their corresponding practices to some measure. These practices were also subject to and influenced by the differing political, social and economic contexts of both pre-colonial and colonial West Africa.

In 1853, African American daguerreotypist Augustus Washington (1821-1875) immigrated to Liberia to escape the brutal conditions under which blacks lived in the United States.<sup>100</sup> While in Liberia, Washington travelled to Sierra Leone and briefly opened a studio in Freetown in 1857, which may have been the first, or at the very least one of the first, in the city.<sup>101</sup> Washington's experience in photographing well-to-do Americo-Liberians in Liberia no doubt drew him to Freetown, with its population of settlers from the Atlantic new world and the recaptives. Here, Washington's elegant daguerreotypes would have been highly sought after by an African elite population eager to present itself as modern. There is scant extant evidence of Washington's enterprise in Freetown since very few Sierra Leonean daguerreotypes have been discovered. While Washington placed advertisements in the *New Era*, we do not know if he placed them in other publications. Washington had returned to Liberia by 1858.

Washington's brief sojourn and presence in Freetown is significant in that it played a role in distinguishing Africans as photographers and not merely the objects of photography. In 1869, ten years following Washington's enterprise, African

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<sup>100</sup> Ann M. Shumard, *A Durable Memento: Portraits by Augustus Washington, African American Daguerreotypist* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1999), 2. Washington was born in Trenton, New Jersey, and operated a successful daguerreotype studio in Hartford, Connecticut. He was also an itinerant photographer, travelling to other areas on the West African coast including The Gambia and Senegal.

<sup>101</sup> See Fyfe 1962, 306. He notes that, "Save for the Sawyerr's and the occasional visits of a Liberian photographer, business meant retailing from stores which ... might sell anything."

photographer J.P. Decker<sup>102</sup> was commissioned by the Colonial Office to document colonial buildings in Freetown,<sup>103</sup> offering illuminating snapshots of the development of Freetown. Decker's work reveals an early interest in capturing Freetown as a vibrant and dynamic space with its heterogeneous mix of people.<sup>104</sup>

Francis W. Joaque was born in Freetown (1845-1893). Based on the number of photographs that have been attributed to him, most of his archive is located outside of Sierra Leone. Joaque worked as a ships purser in 1869 but soon left Freetown for Fernando Po.<sup>105</sup> Local missions and patrons in Gabon, Fernando Po and the Congo commissioned the majority of his photographs. Joaque returned to Freetown around 1890 for the second reunion of the Freetown Grammar School;<sup>106</sup> whether he opened a studio and continued his photography remains unknown. So far the research does not support this idea.<sup>107</sup>

By the late 1870s and into the 1880s, the number of photographers in Freetown increased dramatically. It reflected a wide range, indicating an ever-increasing clientele in Sierra Leone who were captivated by the popular technology. Some local photographers catered to morbid curiosity, public indignation and their

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<sup>102</sup> John P. Decker.

<sup>103</sup> Fyfe 1962, 362. Fyfe claims that Decker was Gambian. However, Viditz-Ward is unclear about Decker's place of origin and notes only that he practiced in Freetown for a time. Viditz-Ward 1987, 513.

<sup>104</sup> Photographs by Decker were assembled into two albums. One, now missing, was kept at the Sierra Leone Museum; the other is seemingly kept at the School of Oriental and African Studies Library as part of the Methodist Missionary Archives, which I was unable to locate even with the assistance of the archivist. I was able to locate a few single photographs which are held in the Royal Commonwealth collection at Cambridge University.

<sup>105</sup> Jürgen Schneider, "The Topography of the Early History of African Photography," *History of Photography*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2010), 138-139.

<sup>106</sup> "2<sup>nd</sup> Reunion of Freetown Grammar School Concert," *SLWN*, January 4, 1890, 2. Christopher Fyfe notes that Joaque worked on naval ships as a purser but disappeared from Freetown in 1869 following allegations of fraud, only to return twenty years later. See Fyfe 1962, 343.

<sup>107</sup> Fyfe 1962, 343.

own personal showmanship. For example, in 1876, a photographer named S.T. Thorpe took out a large advertisement in the *Independent*<sup>108</sup> announcing the sale of a photograph of the execution of “Mormordoo” for the 1875 murder of Charles Saville Smith, a British police official stationed in Freetown (fig. 1.1).<sup>109</sup> Thorpe’s photograph was available as a commemorative souvenir at his studio on Percival Street. Such extreme events and their accompanying images appear to have been rare in Freetown at the time. However, African and European photographers soon became interested in observing and recording local peoples and their activities and events. The inherent international conditions of the city’s makeup also resulted in a decidedly cosmopolitan mix of photographers who were eager to capitalize on this growing marketplace and advertised their travels in and out of Freetown in the local press.

Consequently established African photographers for example itinerant photographer, Fredrick Grant (originally from Accra), travelled from the Gold Coast and advertised his temporary services in the newly established *Sierra Leone Weekly News* from 1884 to 1885.<sup>110</sup> European photographers who epitomised adventurous itinerancy were also present and took advantage of the expanding photographic possibilities. In 1886, F. Bonnevide,<sup>111</sup> a French photographer, indicated a month-long stay in Freetown, procuring a temporary studio on Howe Street where he offered “raised enamelled cards.”<sup>112</sup> In a similar fashion, in 1888, the established Gold Coast firm Gerhardt Lutterodt and Sons opened shop on Rawdon Street, offered their services for a few days as they passed through Freetown.<sup>113</sup> The firm ultimately

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<sup>108</sup> Advertisement, *The Independent*, April 13, 1876, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Fyfe 1962, 455. Fyfe writes of the spectacle “an enthusiastic crowd collected outside the gaol to watch one of the culprits being publicly hung.”

<sup>110</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, December 18, 1884, 1, and June 20, 1885, 1.

<sup>111</sup> Felix Bonnevide.

<sup>112</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, January 16, 1886, 4.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1889, 6.

extended its presence in Freetown until 1893 to take advantage of the lucrative local demands for photography.<sup>114</sup>

Shadrack Albert St. John may have been one of the first local Freetonians to take up photography and advertise his services in the local press. In October 1884 he placed a large advertisement in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in which he announced his services as a “photographic artist.”<sup>115</sup> In his notice, St. John highlighted his association with the successful British photography firm Maull and Fox.<sup>116</sup> As documented in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, St. John recorded several important local events around Freetown and environs, and from 1891 to 1892 he was described as an “army and navy photographer,” which suggests that he may have held an official position in the military.<sup>117</sup>

Subsequent to St. John, other local photographers began to master the medium. Nicholas May placed a prominent advertisement in an 1885 edition of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in which he called attention to his new “gallery” at Charlotte Street.<sup>118</sup> May was from an elite Creole family whose elder brother was J.C. May, the first principal of CMS Grammar School and one of the founders of the *SLWN*.<sup>119</sup> May’s privileged pedigree allowed him entrée to Freetown’s exclusive society families and choice commissions such as society weddings.<sup>120</sup> In contrast, E.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., April 15, 1893, 11.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., October 4, 1884, 1.

<sup>116</sup> Maull (1829-1914) was a celebrated photographer who specialised in portraiture of famous individuals in Britain.

<sup>117</sup> “The Second West India Regiment: Theatrical Performance at Tower Hill Barracks,” *SLWN*, August 29, 1891, 5.

<sup>118</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, December 12, 1885, 4.

<sup>119</sup> See Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil and West Africa 1780-1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Spitzer offers an insightful case study on the May family.

<sup>120</sup> For instance the wedding of Mr. Rowland May, a prominent member of the Creole community. See “Marriage of Mr. Rowland May and Miss. J.C. Collier, at Bonthe, Sherbro,” *SLWN*, March 24, 1888, 3.

Albert Lewis was a local trader and photographer who advertised for a brief period in 1888<sup>121</sup> only to reappear in the Freetown press advertisements around 1907 as an auctioneer.<sup>122</sup> Coinciding with Lewis's short-lived practice, J. Nutwoode Hamilton, another Freetown-born photographer, established a studio dedicated to portraiture and landscapes. The lack of continuing advertisements indicates that Hamilton did not sustain his establishment through to the late nineteenth century or that he simply chose not to advertise.

On the basis of newspaper reports and advertisements, it is clear that by the turn of the century in Freetown, several local African photographers had opened small studios and shops. Judging from the advertisements, photographers also had access to London and the newest camera supplies, equipment and chemicals. Thus, they offered their clients the latest in photographic services and were well versed in contemporary European formats of *carte-de-visite* and hand-tinted photographs; and most also offered the sale of landscape views, scenes from Freetown and the accoutrements associated with photography such as albums and raised enamel cards for placement of images.<sup>123</sup> It is difficult to identify photographers from this period, as images often were not signed and bear no trace of the producer's hallmark.

Photographs produced by Freetown photographer Z. Dionysius Leomy are one exception. Leomy was not a Freetonian by birth and his origins are unknown.<sup>124</sup> He may have started as an itinerant photographer in the mid-1880s since photographs taken by him can be dated to that time. In contrast to many of his competitors, he identified his photographs, inscribing his name the on the right-hand side. Leomy

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<sup>121</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, May 8, 1888, 6.

<sup>122</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, January 26, 1907, 10.

<sup>123</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, January 5, 1886, 2.

<sup>124</sup> See Vera Viditz-Ward, "Studio Photography in Freetown," *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1998), 38.



made his livelihood mainly through government sponsorship and commissions (fig. 1.2).<sup>125</sup> He continued freelance state commissioned photography into the 1900s.

The practices and approaches in the development of photography in Freetown as reflected in the nineteenth century press reveal the uneven and varied trajectories of photographers in Freetown. The details of their photographic careers, confirmed in editorials of the time, indicate the ways in which these individuals balanced the business of making images, while seemingly finding the aesthetic value in the subjects that they photographed. Increasing competition also required in some instances involvement in other sources of income-generating activities. Ultimately the evolving photography scene from the late 1850s reflected various spheres of activity for myriad constituents. Early photographers created new ways of seeing Freetown, combining modes that were at times aesthetic and at other times documentary. These varied styles, which included studio portraiture, post-card images, which illustrated “ethnic types,” landscape views and government sponsored photographs, contributed to Sierra Leone’s photography history and were instrumental in shaping the development of future photographers such as Lisk-Carew.

### ***W.S. Johnston***

Photographer W.S. Johnston<sup>126</sup> prefigured Lisk-Carew’s career and deserves special attention in terms of his unique contributions to the development of photography in Sierra Leone. Johnston, a pioneer in the field who had a prodigious and longstanding

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<sup>125</sup> Examples of Leomy’s photography are held in an album in the James Carmichael Smith Sierra Leone Collection, Royal Commonwealth Society Library, and Cambridge Library. Leomy also opened a thriving watch and musical instrument repair firm under the name of Z. Dionysius Leomy. See *SLWN*, June 7, 1890, 6. By 1893 his advertisements read “Dead Pianos Back to Life.” See, for example, *ibid.*, November 4, 1893, 7.

<sup>126</sup> William Stephen Johnson.

practice in Freetown, secured his place as one of the city's leading photographers with his sophisticated portraits. Johnston was born in the Gold Coast and worked there as an itinerant photographer prior to travelling to Freetown in 1893 offering "landscapes, views of Lagos and Sierra Leone."<sup>127</sup> That year he settled in Freetown with his family and opened a studio in his home on Howe Street.<sup>128</sup> A year later, perhaps following his positive reception in Freetown, he moved his enterprise to busy Kissy Street and then to Garrison Street, both of which were situated in an area near to Lisk-Carew's childhood home.<sup>129</sup> The description of Johnston's business, as found in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* and the *Sierra Leone Times* from 1894 onward, suggests an eclectic practice that catered to multiple clients and their interests. The views of various coastal regions and "native type" images featured on his postcards formed a large portion of Johnston's output and generated income for his business. However, as part of his practice, he also engaged in artistic studio portrait work and personal commissions, such as compelling and thoughtful portraits of well-known African families and personalities. Johnson's range of techniques also reveals an artistic flair in studio portraits of Bundu women following their successful initiation into the society.<sup>130</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, Johnston had popular appeal in the Freetown photography scene and was thus called upon by members of the city's social elite. These connections and the attendant admiration for his work was recounted in a 1904 *Sierra Leone Weekly News* item detailing the wedding of a

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<sup>127</sup> Advertisement, *Sierra Leone Times*, May 27, 1893, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Johnston travelled with his two young children – his son, W.S. (Kewsi) Johnson, and his daughter, Catherine.

<sup>129</sup> See Chapter Two for more details on W.S. Johnston and his relationship with Lisk-Carew.

<sup>130</sup> See a more detailed discussion on Johnston's Bundu photographs in Chapter Four.

prominent society couple<sup>131</sup> By 1910 through to 1911 his advertisements recalled his longevity in Freetown (for example, “The old established photographer to the Imperial Government”) along with a long list of accomplishments and patronage (such as “Patronized by Messrs. Elder Dempster and Co. and by various missionary societies.”)<sup>132</sup> It seems that Johnston trained his son(s) in photography, since by 1912 a new crop of advertisements in the *Sierra Leone Times* announce a change of address to Garrison street and the addition of “and Sons” to the business name.<sup>133</sup> While the plural “Sons” had been used in the title of his expanded enterprise, I have found no extant evidence to suggest that Johnson indeed had more than one son. Coincidental with this move, the hallmark placed on the back of postcards read intriguingly “W.S. Johnston and Sons, *Art Photographers* [my emphasis].” The heir(s) to Johnston’s business continued to distinguish themselves within a competitive market by relying on reputable long-standing business, and placing emphasis on the creative aspects of their practice. Business must have increased at the new location, since by the following year a help wanted advertisement was placed in the *Sierra Leone Guardian* that required “Two smart young men as learners of photography.”<sup>134</sup> In 1915, however, after more than twenty years as a photographer in Freetown, Johnston moved back permanently to the Gold Coast, where he became a publisher at the *Gold Coast Nation* newspaper and served as secretary to the Aborigines Society. Subsequently, the Johnston name was associated with photography through to at least

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<sup>131</sup> “Wedding, Palmer-McCormack,” *SLWN*, February 20, 1904, 5. The paper reported that “the Bride and Bridegroom and the party then walked out to the garden to be photographed by the well-known artist, Mr. W.S. Johnston.”

<sup>132</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, March 12, 1910, 12.

<sup>133</sup> *The Colony and Provincial Reporter*, September 21, 1912. In addition, similar newspaper accounts reveal that he had attended the Annie Walsh School at the junior level. See the unfortunate death notice of Catherine Cato Johnston, W.S. Johnston’s only daughter, “The Late Mrs. Catherine Cato,” *SLWN*, July 24, 1915, 13.

<sup>134</sup> Advertisement, *Sierra Leone Guardian*, September 5, 1913, 10.

1919 whereby his son W.S. (Kwesi) Johnston was mentioned as a reputable photographer in several news editorials.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, Johnston's impressive patronage, repertoire of photographs and mentorship, as well as the widespread distribution of his work, helped to distinguish him and place him in a central position in the development of photography in Sierra Leone.

Prior to the colonial presence in Sierra Leone until the turn of the twentieth century there emerged a range of local and foreign photographers, some itinerant and others permanent, who were engaged in a plethora of practices and genres. Local commissions and patronage shaped these photographic practices. The turn of the century reflected the establishment of additional African producers in Freetown such as W.S. Johnston who, along with Lisk-Carew, were engaged in actively constructing the image of "modern" Freetown and its inhabitants, and used their own individual aesthetics to mediate this image for viewers. To be sure, photographic histories and practices in Sierra Leone were shaped and influenced within local contexts using modern engagements with the medium, which went beyond a simple mimicking of Western practices.

This chapter began with a literature review. A historical overview of Sierra Leone followed which presented a wide trajectory of photographic practices operating in Freetown. It also underscored the myriad conditions under which early African photographers practiced and outlined the influential photographic heritage to which Lisk-Carew was not only the beneficiary, but also drew upon. In the chapter that follows, I propose a short biography of Lisk-Carew's life and work, exploring the prolific nature of his enterprise, his political activism and his multifaceted oeuvre. The

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<sup>135</sup> "The Agent Elder Dempster and Co., Ltd.," *SLWN*, December 27, 1919, 11.

breadth of Lisk-Carew's photographs gives testament to how he trained his lens on the fluid and developing life in Sierra Leone. In so doing, it is my contention that Lisk-Carew's practice constituted acts of counter-discursivity that functioned as a bulwark to colonial superiority and that such acts belie Okwui Enwezor's claim professing the lack of an "insurgent photographic practice" on the continent before the 1940s.

## Illustrations

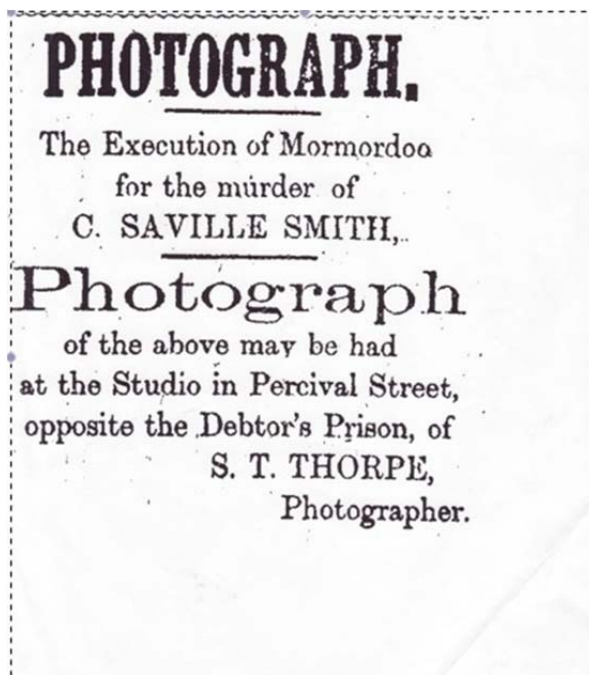


Fig. 1.1. “The Execution of Mormordoo,” advertisement, *The Independent*, April 10, 1875, 3.



Fig. 1.2. Z. Dionysius Leomy, *A Panoramic View Taken from the Tower of St George's Cathedral*, 1890, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.

## Chapter Two

### Alphonso Lisk-Carew's Life and Work

Through his lens, he captured many facets of Freetown life in the first half of this century – its tastes, amusements, social customs and buildings ... Particularly interesting is his grasp of what could best represent Sierra Leone's traditional and contemporary culture in the photographic medium.<sup>1</sup>

There is probably no establishment in Freetown that is visited by more passengers from the steamers than that of Messrs. Lisk-Carew Brothers ... Photography in its highest phases emerges from the plane of mechanical operation, into a realm of art far beyond the commonplace of ordinary achievement, and it is the aim of Messrs. Lisk-Carew Brothers to exemplify in their portraiture all those pleasing details which, whilst apparently casual, are the outcome of long experience and close study of the best means and methods of securing superlative results.<sup>2</sup>

These two epigraphs testify to Alphonso Lisk-Carew's prolific and diverse photographic enterprise that spanned more than 50 years. The first quotation recounts Dr. Edward Blyden III's observation on Lisk-Carew. It is taken from a catalogue for an exhibition of his work at Fourah Bay College's Institute of African Studies in

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<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Blyden III, "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: The Man and His Work," in *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970* (Freetown: University of Sierra Leone, 1970), 2. A more in-depth biography can be found in the exhibition catalogue presented by the Institute of African Studies, Fourah Bay College, British Council Hall, and December 5 to December 12, 1970. The catalogue was produced to accompany a temporary exhibition of Sierra Leone's social and political development over seventy-five years. Lisk-Carew's life and photography were highlighted under the subheadings "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: The Man and His Work" and "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: The Artist."

<sup>2</sup> Allister Macmillan, *The Red Book of West Africa: Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial Facts, Figures and Resources* (London: Collingridge, 1920), 267.

1970, one year after his death. The second draws from Allister Macmillan's commercial and business directory, *The Red Book of West Africa*, published in 1920. Macmillan's *Red Book* offered a profile on Lisk-Carew's studio and described Lisk-Carew as a "clever exponent of photography in all its branches" and one of several photographers who had "the distinction of the use of the Royal coat of arms, as they were appointed photographers to H.R.H, the Duke of Connaught."<sup>3</sup>

This chapter provides a biography of Alphonso Lisk-Carew. It illuminates the trajectory of his work as well the manner in which he navigated the complex power dynamics of the colonial regime. It also explores the tensions and ambiguities between his standing as a professional photographer with a large clientele drawn from the colonial regime and his position as one involved in the early Pan-Africanist movement in Sierra Leone. As will be demonstrated, Lisk-Carew's career was also informed and shaped by other modes of visual and popular culture, namely early bioscope and film presentations, community dances and music hall productions. Lisk-Carew charted his career across all of these fields during his professional life despite their different institutional contexts.

Much of the available information about Alphonso Lisk-Carew's personal and professional life originates from oral family histories, newspaper editorials, articles, Macmillan's *Red Book*, government documents and evidence gleaned from Lisk-Carew's studio photography and that of his contemporaries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. In his write-up on the business, Macmillan erroneously notes that Arthur was part of the business in 1904/1905 when Alphonso first opened his studio.

<sup>4</sup> The lone portrait photograph of Alphonso Lisk-Carew can be found in the *Red Book* on page 233. The photograph may have been taken around 1918, when Lisk-Carew was in his mid-thirties.



Macmillan's endorsement of Lisk-Carew as one of the photographers of choice in 1920 Freetown highlighted his prominence as a photographer. The 1970 retrospective exhibition also puts Lisk-Carew life and work into context and reveals the ways in which African photography in Sierra Leone had evolved since then. The following biography documents the varied events that took place in Alphonso Lisk-Carew's life and work.

### **Early Life in Freetown**

Alphonso Sylvester Lisk was born into a middle-class Creole family on September 8, 1883,<sup>5</sup> at 3 East Brook Lane, Freetown. The area where he was born was known as Overbridge,<sup>6</sup> a predominantly Creole enclave at the time located in the northeastern section of the city.<sup>7</sup> The early history of Alphonso Lisk-Carew is not documented, but oral accounts from his descendants fill in the gaps (keeping in mind their own positionings) in the official record.<sup>8</sup> Alphonso's mother, Paulina Sabina Carew (or "Mama Carew," as she was known), was born in Freetown in 1856. She first married

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<sup>5</sup> During my first fieldwork visit to Freetown in 2009, a distant uncle of Lisk-Carew's accompanied me to Lisk-Carew's grave site, known locally as "race course" cemetery because of its close proximity to an old race course. The grave marker indicates he died in 1969 at the age of 86.

<sup>6</sup> Overbridge is located at the bottom of East Brook Street and is named for the bridge suspended over Nicol's Brook. The wider area is also known as Gibraltar Town, founded in 1819 by returning soldiers who had served in Gibraltar.

<sup>7</sup> The East End of Freetown encompassing the area in which Lisk-Carew's family lived is considered the gateway to the city from the hinterland. Increasing migration to Freetown, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, created intense overcrowding in the East End. When I visited East Brook Lane in 2009, I was told very few Creole families remained in the area and many of the houses there had been destroyed during the rebel occupation of Freetown in 1999.

<sup>8</sup> I was able to obtain information from several sources, including from his mother's great-granddaughter, Paulina Holland-Campbell, who is in her early 70s, from his nephew, Sekoyeo Carlton-Carew, aged 91, and from an article published in a 1912 edition of the *SLWN* that editorialised his life and included a brief biographical account. See also "Bestowal of Royal Patronage on the Firm of Messrs. Lisk-Carew Brothers, Photographers, Sierra Leone," *SLWN*, May 18, 1912, 7.

Thomas Carlton-Carew, with whom she had two children – Thomas Daniel and Paulina. After her husband died in 1881, Mama Carew married a Mr. Lisk, with whom she had two other children – Alphonso, born in 1883, and Arthur, born around 1890. Following Arthur’s birth, Mr. Lisk disappeared<sup>9</sup> and Thomas Daniel, as the eldest brother, became the man of the house. He added the Carew name to the boys’ surname and paid for both Alphonso and Arthur’s education at the Methodist Boys’ High School.

Lisk-Carew’s surname was in line with the Creole naming practices of the time and reflected social strategies of the shifting Freetown milieu. Thus such adaptation in relation to naming was linked to a selection of ethnic, class, and familial and individual choice in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Freetown. Creole men could choose to adopt the family name of their father or mother, and usually selected the one, which brought them the higher prestige.<sup>10</sup> In some cases they adopted both names, linking them with a hyphen. This naming practice, as noted by Samuel Johnson, may have begun with the colonial British in Sierra Leone who “abolished native names wholesale, considering them ‘heathenish,’ and substituted European names instead.”<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that by the mid to late 1890s, West Africans in Sierra Leone, in response to increasing exclusion and discrimination from colonial administrations, began to change and substitute Anglophone-derived names for “African” derived names, particularly Yoruba, as their interests became allied with

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<sup>9</sup> Mr. Sekoyeo Carlton-Carew did not recall Mr. Lisk’s first name. Pers. comm. August 18, 2012; however I came across a death notice for a Henry Lisk on page 11 of the March 15, 1890, issue of the *SLWN*, but I cannot verify he was the father or even a relation.

<sup>10</sup> Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 38.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: Routledge, 1921), 87.

local populations.<sup>12</sup> Increasingly disillusioned with the colonial regime, Creoles changed their names as part of a range of resistance strategies.<sup>13</sup> Such strategies mark the fluid identities of the Freetown scene.

As with many of her Creole Freetown contemporaries who took advantage of the ease of steamer travel from the 1850s,<sup>14</sup> Mama Carew was an entrepreneur. She mounted and ran a successful business trading in cloth in the provinces, Bathurst and Conakry.<sup>15</sup> During her business excursions by steamship, she traded European and local textiles for palm oil, rice and groundnuts, which she would then sell in Freetown.<sup>16</sup> Coastal women had long been intermediary traders, linking the interior of Sierra Leone with goods coming from long distances.<sup>17</sup> Many successful women secured stalls in the *Big Market*, located in Freetown's central business district near the busy wharf area. However, Mama Carew's great-granddaughter insists that her venture was strictly small-scale and outside of the Big Market. Mama Carew's

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<sup>12</sup> Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism 1870-1945*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974), 117.

<sup>13</sup> Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1989), 52. Wyse also notes that part of an earlier strategy was the creation of the short-lived Dress Reform Society in 1887. The Society's membership donned "native-inspired" attire only and changed their anglicised names to African ones.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Lynn, "Technology, Trade and 'A Race of Native Capitalists': The Krio Diaspora of West Africa and the Steamship, 1852-95," *Journal of African History*, vol. 3, no. 33 (1992), 426.

<sup>15</sup> Paulina Holland-Campbell. pers. comm., October 24, 2008. Holland-Campbell said that Mama Carew continued in this enterprise until well into her old age.

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed discussion on Creole women traders, see E. Frances White, *Sierra Leone's Settler Women Traders: Women on the Afro-European Frontier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 379.

enterprise was of a type well established by an earlier generation of settler women<sup>18</sup> who had a reputation for their fierce independence and business acumen.

The Lisk-Carew's had a large extended family that comprised uncles, aunts and cousins who resided both within and outside of the borders of the Overbridge community. Many of the immediate family members lived near the family home, including a younger half-brother, Dan Carlton-Carew, who was born in Nigeria and lived at 15 East Brook Street. At approximately the turn of the century, the Lisk-Carew's moved from the smaller house at 3 East Brook Lane to a larger three-storey home at 20 East Brook Street, where, as Mrs. Holland-Campbell remembers, some photography took place at the ground level. This might have been a temporary move, as it seems that the original house at 3 East Brook Lane was retained by the family, added on to and a larger house constructed. Mounted photographs by Lisk-Carew were stamped on the front: *3 East Brook Lane & Corner of Gloucester Street and Westmoreland*. This suggests that Lisk-Carew retained the East Brook Lane studio since there are prints with that stamp up to 1910.<sup>19</sup> The family was part of a typical complex network of relationships rooted in friendships, ritual brotherhood, old school links and fraternal societies such as the Freemasons. Another important aspect of the family was the "cousinhood" that is maintained by frequent, extensive and expensive family "ceremonials."<sup>20</sup> For Creoles, such extensive ceremonials, which commemorated events such as births, deaths and marriages, were vital to strengthening and maintaining social and economic links with other members of the Creole community.

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<sup>18</sup> Settler women generally describe women who were part of the successive waves of immigration to Sierra Leone, namely the Nova Scotians, Maroons and liberated Africans.

<sup>19</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., October 24, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen 1981, 62.

By the late nineteenth century, around the time of Lisk-Carew's birth, the urban centre of Freetown consisted of an amalgamation of several ethnically and faith-based neighbourhoods which were still evolving. While the early settlers would take up a large portion of the city centre, Indigenous groups (mainly non-Creoles) were pushed to the margins of the city. This spatial dispersal reflected distinctions based not only on ethnicity but also on "class, status and privilege."<sup>21</sup> Understanding the cartography of Freetown and its environs is essential for examining Lisk-Carew's extensive photographic coverage of the city's cultural groups and the spaces they inhabited, as well as his lifelong documentation of urbanisation, whose implications will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Overbridge had its share of both mosques and churches. The Lisk-Carew's participated actively in their church community, and Mama Carew was a well-respected member of the Methodist Gibraltar Church on Kissy Street<sup>22</sup> as one of the original congregants.<sup>23</sup> While the Lisk-Carews, like many Creoles in Freetown at the end of the nineteenth century, were rooted in the city's fast-paced urban life, that life was tempered by membership in one of the numerous churches or mosques that could be found in the city's core and its outskirts.<sup>24</sup> Despite all the churches and mosques, Freetown, given its multi-ethnic and immigrant settlement histories, fostered a range of religious practices that was in fact quite fluid. Creole culture reconciled Christian

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur T. Porter, "Religious Affiliation in Freetown, Sierra Leone," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1953), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., October 24, 2008; Andrew Lisk-Carew, e-mail correspondence with the author, March 15, 2007. Mama Carew was very active in her church and known in the area for her "adoption" of several "ward" children from the protectorate, which was established in 1896. Mama Carew's influence may also have derived from her role as a businesswoman with many contacts in both the protectorate and the wider Freetown community.

and African cultural practices, in particular those of the Yoruba, in family rituals such as baptisms, funerals and marriages.<sup>25</sup> An interesting aspect of this melding of religious practices was the participation of some Creoles in the Ojeh and Hunting societies.<sup>26</sup>

The boundaries distinguishing Creole allegiance to different sets of religious practices have always overlapped. The same cannot be said of their deep and profound respect for Western-derived education. The nineteenth-century settlers revered education, a view that was rooted in their histories as former slaves and then as free people in the “New World.” Education was seen as crucial to entrepreneurship and professional employment with the colonial administration and in areas where there was potential for political and economic interaction between European and Africans.

The Creoles (especially those who had been recently liberated) were acutely aware that educated men of the enlightened classes of Britain were active in the abolitionist movement and operated on high moral values and deep religious beliefs.<sup>27</sup> With these Enlightenment ideals and the awareness of the Enlightenment’s

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<sup>24</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *Freetown: A Symposium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 8.

<sup>25</sup> John Nunley, *Moving with the Face of the Devil: Art and Politics in Urban West Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 36; see Arthur T. Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 111-118. Many of these rituals are found in the present day. For example, in 1997, my father died rather suddenly while on holiday in Freetown. My mother and I made the trip to Sierra Leone for his funeral at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church at Brookfields. He was buried at Brookfields Cemetery in the vicinity. Although my father was Creole, with Nova Scotian ancestry, many of the rites associated with the ancestors were conducted prior to and following his burial, including Awujoh, or Awoojoh, a traditional meal to honour the dead that is celebrated on the third, seventh and fortieth days, as well as one year after the death.

<sup>26</sup> Wyse 1989, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Cream Wright, “Cultural and Political Influences on the Development of Education in Sierra Leone,” *Handbook of Educational Ideas and Practices*, ed. Noel Entwistle (London: Routledge, 1990), 186.

humanitarian effects, the Creole community held education as a priority. Paulina Holland-Campbell offers interesting insight based on her own memory of Lisk-Carew. She remembered that he was passionate about his photography and his work, and that he always carried a camera wherever he went. She also describes him as a “dandy man and a bit of a ladies’ man”<sup>28</sup> who was always well dressed, exceedingly polite, handsome and well read. She also recollected that “he encouraged us to speak *proper* English and not Krio in the house and we were always expected to exhibit proper decorum and manners in his presence.”<sup>29</sup> Such an emphasis on the difference between English and Krio was typical amongst many professional Creoles at the time.<sup>30</sup>

The ability to read and write was considered a prerequisite for acceptance in the church where a Christian-based education contributed to class and ethnic distinctions between, for example, the literate Christian Creole and the so-called illiterate non-Christian “Native.” These distinctions were emphasised in 1890 as a result of the *Annual Report on the Progress of the Colony*. Parts of the report, editorialised in the *SLWN*, noted that “the aboriginal tribes ... do not seem capable to grasp the importance of education hence we have constantly advocated ... that the education of children should now be made compulsory.”<sup>31</sup> Education was also linked to direct economic benefits in the vibrant coastal trading centre of Freetown where those who were literate could be considered for non-manual labour.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., March 12, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> In the 1930s, the well-known Sierra Leonean playwright Thomas Decker was at the forefront of attempts to make Krio the national language. See Daniel J. Paracka, *The Athens of West Africa: A History of International Education at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 192-194.

<sup>31</sup> “Annual Report on the Progress of the Colony,” *SLWN*, July 19, 1890, 5.

<sup>32</sup> See Paracka 2003, 193.

Alphonso Lisk-Carew's education began with his entrance to primary school at the Government Model School. He then attended the Methodist Boys' High School from around 1896.<sup>33</sup> The school's curriculum, which enlisted the classics, equipped him with the basics of a much-coveted western-style education. Photographs of student bodies of Freetown's elite academies, such as the Annie Walsh School, the Methodist Boys' High School and the CMS Grammar School, were an important record of accomplishment for students, as well as vivid enticement for African and Creole families.

Educated Creoles held key posts as missionary clergy and as senior civil servants both in Sierra Leone and in other British colonial regions. Akintola Wyse writes that these hierarchical positions ranged from "those of medium status, foreman, senior clerk, chief clerk ... to more elevated positions such as Assistant Colonial Surgeon, Assistant Postmaster General to Member of the Legislative Council."<sup>34</sup> From the period between the 1850s and the late 1880s, Creoles were conceived of as African "pioneers" in these professions, and as Wyse notes, "even sons of merchant moguls abandoned the world of commerce for the wig and stethoscope."<sup>35</sup> While the vast majority of graduates found work in low- to mid-level clerical positions in the

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<sup>33</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., November 10, 2008; Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., London, October 8, 2007; Mr. Carlton-Carew, pers. comm. September 10, 2012. School registers for MBHS have been maintained since its opening in 1874. However, many of these early records have been misplaced or have succumbed to inadequate storage.

<sup>34</sup> Wyse 1989, 41. Wyse also offers a critique of such designations and senior posts since often the incumbents did not receive the necessary power and authority that usually accompanied such positions. He argues further that it was British policy from the 1890s onward to secure senior government positions for Europeans only. See also Cecil Fyle, *The History of Sierra Leone* (London: Evans Brothers, 1981), 110. Fyle notes "Krios gradually lost their favoured position in the colonial hierarchy. Whereas in 1892, Krios held 18 out of about 40 senior positions by 1912, when these appointments had exceeded 90, Krios only held 15 and 5 of these were abolished in the next five years."

<sup>35</sup> Wyse 1989, 35.



colonial administration in Freetown and in other coastal regions, educational opportunities gradually increased to allow employment in other posts: newspaper editors, customs clerks and registrars general.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the 1891 *Census Returns for Sierra Leone* reported the following in its breakdown of occupations: 1176 government officers; 114 ministers of religion and members of the legal and medical professions; and 578 merchants and clerks (many of whom were African).<sup>37</sup>

Despite its absence in the census, another respectable position was that of photographer. Considerable reference was made to photography and photographers in editorials, articles and advertisements in Sierra Leone newspapers from the mid-nineteenth century and into the early twentieth. Sententia, a frequent correspondent to the *SLWN*, nevertheless lamented the lack of representation by local photographers at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London. Though Lagos and The Gambia included photographs as part of their exhibits, the same could not be said of Sierra Leone. He noted, “the natives of this colony stand in the foremost ranks on the coast in photography ... Had the local affairs for the Exhibition been properly conducted, the photographers could have furnished a good collection of interesting views of sceneries.”<sup>38</sup> Sententia’s comments not only revealed his frustration with the under-representation of Sierra Leonean photography at the exhibition, but also highlighted the prominence of photography in Freetown.

Professional photographers in Freetown were regarded with a measure of respect, and their presence at an event often highlighted their importance. There are numerous examples in the Freetown press whereby the individual photographers

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<sup>36</sup> Jonathon Derrick, “The ‘Native Clerk’ in Colonial West Africa,” *African Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 326 (1983), 64-68.

<sup>37</sup> “A Few Facts from the Census Report of 1891,” *SLWN*, January 4, 1892, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Sententia, “The Sierra Leone Exhibits at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *SLWN*, September 11, 1886, 3.

covering particular events – society weddings, private parties, high-profile government affairs – were often included in such reporting for an added measure of prestige. The presence of a particularly noteworthy photographer further increased the profile. For example, in 1890, it was reported that the “esteemed” Mr. Lutterodt photographed the key guests at the Anniversary Meeting of the Native Pastorate Church.<sup>39</sup> In a later example, from 1907, a writer reporting on the wedding of Miss Clarissa B. Lewis and Mr. T.A. Godfrey reflected on the notable status of photographers, claiming “how lucky it was that” Mr. J.W. Paris was present to take photographs of the bridal party.<sup>40</sup>

Lisk-Carew began his career as a photographer whilst still in secondary school, for financial aims,<sup>41</sup> travelling to unknown regions along the “leeward coast.”<sup>42</sup> Upon his return to Freetown, he apprenticed<sup>43</sup> for a period of two years with W.S. Johnston, who had established studios first on Kissy Street and then on Garrison Street from 1893 to 1897, before settling on Howe Street in 1897.<sup>44</sup> Johnston was

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<sup>39</sup> “Anniversary Meeting of the Native Pastorate Church,” *SLWN*, May 3, 1890, 5.

<sup>40</sup> “Marriage of Miss. Clarissa B. Lewis and Mr. T.A. Godfrey McCarthy,” *SLWN*, February 2, 1907, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Elderly informants Yemi Holland, Paulina Holland-Campbell and Cassandra Garver, and other relatives and friends of the Lisk-Carew family, were unable to offer any credible information as to the exact origins of his interest in photography. They do however agree on the point that he began whilst he was still in secondary school.

<sup>42</sup> “Bestowal of Royal Patronage,” 7. This and other details of Lisk-Carew’s early life (including confirmation of his year of birth) and career appear in this article.

<sup>43</sup> Due to the growing demand for their services, photographers in Freetown often advertised for the assistance of younger photographers. Vera Viditz-Ward, “Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Creole Photographer,” *African Arts*, vol. 19, no.1 (1985), 47. Viditz-Ward discusses an advertisement for two apprentices in an October 1885 issue of the *SLWN*. In a May 1893 issue of the paper, the Royal Photographic Gallery, a temporary studio opened by the Gold Coast photographers Lutterodt and Sons, advertised for “two intelligent and well-conducted youths to learn the art of photography.”

<sup>44</sup> “Bestowal of Royal Patronage,” 7. Johnston’s first studio on Kissy Street was located directly across from Gibraltar Church to which the Lisk-Carew’s were congregants.

described by Freetown observers as a “master in the art of Photography, a native of the Gold Coast, but who has practically made Sierra Leone his home.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Photography and Experience, 1903-1910**

Lisk-Carew’s development and subsequent images evoke the social experience of Sierra Leone at various periods and owe a debt to his early training with W.S.

Johnston. As an apprentice, Lisk-Carew was witness to the ways in which patronage operated in Sierra Leone. By the time he entered Sierra Leone’s photography scene at the turn of the twentieth century, there were many opportunities for local Africans to observe and participate within a range of representational conventions.<sup>46</sup>

Most scholars up to now have relied on early postcards dated 1905 as evidence for the opening of Lisk-Carew’s studio.<sup>47</sup> My own research pinpoints its opening to an earlier date based on an article published in a 1912 edition of the *SLWN*, which states that Lisk-Carew began his photography business at his residence at East Brook Lane in 1903. The writer of the article observes that, from the beginning, Lisk-Carew “steadily and gradually worked his way by diligent and careful execution” and that his “artistic touch and finish ... and last but not least, his politeness and courtesy soon brought him into recognition and won for him popular favour.”<sup>48</sup> In an early image dated about 1903-1907 (fig. 2.1), Lisk-Carew captured the homes along East Brook

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Christraud Geary, *In and Out of Focus: Images from Central Africa, 1885-1960* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2002), 107.

<sup>47</sup> See Vera Viditz-Ward, “Photography in Sierra Leone 1850-1918,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 510-518; Christraud Geary, “Different Vision? Postcards from Africa by European and African Photographers and Sponsors,” in Christraud M. Geary and Virginia Lee Webb, eds., *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 169-170.

<sup>48</sup> “Bestowal of Royal Patronage,” 7.

Lane<sup>49</sup> from a vantage point that may include the family home. Most of his early work was taken with an 8 x 10-inch view camera.<sup>50</sup> With the cumbersome view camera, the photographer could preview an upside-down version of the image through the lens on the viewing screen on the back. This feature also allowed the photographer to adjust the focus and composition before taking the picture.<sup>51</sup> During this period, while keeping up to date with photographic technologies, Lisk-Carew must have started to build his clientele, hiring his services out to locals and visitors alike.<sup>52</sup> His descendants agree that he must have been the sole operator and proprietor at the East Brook Lane studio.

In September 1907, Lisk-Carew placed an advertisement in the *SLWN*, in which he thanked his clients for their patronage of his business.<sup>53</sup> It was the first year that he placed an advertisement in the *SLWN*. Lisk-Carew was also keen to acknowledge the African community by stating that, alongside his extensive patronage by colonial officials, he “also fully appreciates the recognition of his own people which he is determined to secure in a greater degree.”<sup>54</sup> Thus included as part of a later advertisement are testimonials from his clients on the calibre of his work that were representative of both Creole and European communities. For example, John Eldridge Taylor of the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce supported him

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<sup>49</sup> I shared this image with several of my older informants who were familiar with the area and they all agreed that the photograph was taken from the bridge (Overbridge) that intersects the area.

<sup>50</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, pers. comm., March 20, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Part of the commercial photographers’ attachment to view cameras was that the large glass plates or sheet-film negatives produced crisp and detailed prints. See Brian Coe and Paul Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph: The Rise of Popular Photography, 1888-1939* (London: Ash and Grant, 1977).

<sup>52</sup> However, once the business had expanded to the second, busier location, he hired additional employees.

<sup>53</sup> “Photographs, Photographs, Photographs,” *SLWN*, September 7, 1907, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

enthusiastically, claiming he was “the best photographer in Freetown.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Colonial Secretary E. Evelyn showed appreciation for Lisk-Carew’s work to record views of Freetown avenues.<sup>56</sup> These candid endorsements give an indication of the kinds of early patronage he managed to secure from a variety of constituents.

In exploiting newspaper advertisements as a means to bring more attention to his business, Lisk-Carew would also include some of his more high-profile commissions as evidence of his success. For example, Lisk-Carew outlined the “Twelve Genuine Truths”<sup>57</sup> of patronising his business. Along with “Hours of Sitting” and “Fashion and Style,” at number six he listed “Recognition of Good Work,” wherein he highlighted his 1907 commission by Governor Leslie Probyn to photograph members of the Legislative Council of Sierra Leone (fig. 2.2). The group photograph features the predominately European members of the council. Item number seven, “Evidence of Good Work,” included a written endorsement by T.J. Alldridge who observed, “I have recently received from the Governor your excellent Photographic group of the Legislative Council, which I should like to include in my new book.”<sup>58</sup> Lisk-Carew’s early commissions by various divisions of the colonial regime reflect his ties to the local administration and his early understanding of the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> These images were submitted in 1905 as part of a commission for the Guardian Assurance Company.

<sup>57</sup> “The Season’s Opportunities,” *SLWN*, October 26, 1907, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Alldridge was a Victorian writer and colonial administrator in Sierra Leone from 1871 to the 1910s. In 1889, he was appointed the first travelling Commissioner to the Mende-speaking peoples in the interior. He was the author of two books in which he provided a European perspective with colourful descriptions of the Mendiland and its people. The first, entitled *The Sherbro and Its Hinterland*, was published in 1901; the second, a follow-up entitled *Sierra Leone: A Transformed Colony in 1910*, was written and published nine years later. Lisk-Carew’s photograph of the Legislative Council was not reproduced in the text.

types of images that would be appealing to both local and overseas audiences.<sup>59</sup> It is significant that the image of the Legislative Council would be produced as a postcard which ensured even greater circulation. In keeping with the period, such photographs served as official images of imperialism during the early years of the twentieth century in Sierra Leone.

Lisk-Carew's advertisements in the *SLWN* highlight the key components of his photographic enterprise, suggesting the competitiveness of the market, and how he responded accordingly. Some of the noteworthy features of his business included the sale of picture postcards (an indication that he was actively producing his own) as well as the developing and printing of film. His ads emphasised his professionalism and character, a factor that no doubt further assisted in attracting customers, while also embellishing the aura of exclusivity that attended photographs bearing his stamp.

Extant images by Lisk-Carew from 1903 to 1907 encompass a range of subjects, including local Freetown sitters in their homes. There are also good examples of studio portraits featuring African clients that can be dated from this period, based on the modes of dress as well as the painted backdrops.<sup>60</sup> Street scenes, social events and scenic vistas of Freetown, including its harbour and bustling marketplaces, are also part of his early oeuvre.

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<sup>59</sup> John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>60</sup> Lisk-Carew interchanged three distinct painted backdrops that were evident in his studio work from the Gloucester period. The backdrop used most frequently featured a wainscoting panel with a dark curtain draped to one side. One that seems to be an example from 1919 through the 1950s features a very plain white or off-white panel; another backdrop, used less frequently in extant studio photographs, features the painted setting of a Victorian-styled sitting room complete with fireplace and mantle. See Chapter Three.

As indicated above, it is evident that Lisk-Carew was able to parlay his early commissions within the colonial government into repeat contracts. Advertisements and newspaper editorials written by Lisk-Carew and others reveal an established and on-going patronage by Governor Charles King-Harmon (1900-1904), Acting Governor Brigadier General Frank Graves (1904-1905) and Governor Leslie Probyn (1904-1910). In his later years, he developed similar relationships with Governor Edward Merewether (1911-1916), Governor Joseph Byrne (1916) and Governor Arnold Hodson (1931-1934).<sup>61</sup>

By following established conventions, Lisk-Carew could rely on continued contacts and allies with future colonial administrations. In fact, by 1912 he was described as “practically THE Government Photographer.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, when we look at Lisk-Carew’s oeuvre over the decades, we must pay as much attention to what is included as to what absent.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, some of his future colonial contracts are marked by choices fuelled by shifts in the socio-political climate in Freetown.

Increasing opposition to colonial rule in Sierra Leone now manifested itself in a number of initiatives. Editorials in the Sierra Leonean press energized local African frustration and led to criticism of colonial rule.<sup>64</sup> This frustration resulted in the formation of various cultural initiatives and organisations, including the Dress Reform Society (1887), the Sierra Leone Native Defence Force (1908), the Negro Progressive Society (1908), the Rate Payers Association (1909) and the short-lived Sierra Leone Inter-Tribal Association (1909). These schemes provided a platform from which Creoles could question and challenge colonial rule and press toward self-

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<sup>61</sup> A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *A Biographical Dictionary of the British Colonial Governor, Volume 1: Africa* (Stanford: Hoover University Press, 1980), 220.

<sup>62</sup> “Bestowal of Royal Patronage,” 7.

<sup>63</sup> I offer examples and analyses of these absences in the next chapter.

<sup>64</sup> On the changing British attitudes toward the Creoles, see Wyse 1989, 64.

governance.<sup>65</sup> However, many of these groups failed to make any significant political impact because membership was limited to the Creole elite.<sup>66</sup> Lisk-Carew was present to photograph all sides of the complex narratives that was unfolding in Sierra Leone.

The social distance between the European population and the Creole elite also increased, as colonial administrators encouraged more Europeans to settle in Freetown to fill administrative positions that had been previously held by educated Creoles. As the European communities expanded the need for more healthy and sanitary living conditions increased. In 1904, Governor Sir Charles King-Harman (1900-1904) recommended and then implemented the building of a European-only area so that Sierra Leone could be transformed from a “blot on the Empire” to the “bright jewel of the Crown for which its natural wealth and capabilities be fit it.”<sup>67</sup> The area chosen was a plateau overlooking Freetown. The residences faced north and were raised high above the ground on columns. Similar to its counterpart in India, the area was named Hill Station.<sup>68</sup> Tied to the physical and social dislocation away from Freetown, the relocation of the European population also meant an economic shift for many local Creoles who had relied on the Europeans to rent their properties. Since the mid-nineteenth century, a wealthy Creole rentier class had emerged in Freetown as settlers invested profits gained from competitive trading in land and homes.<sup>69</sup> Often, these large homes were well appointed with the latest imported furnishings and rented to the colonial government for use by their employees. The relocation of the majority

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Earl Conteh-Morgan, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 53-54.

<sup>67</sup> Leo Spitzer, “The Mosquito and Segregation in Sierra Leone,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1968), 55.

<sup>68</sup> Spitzer 1974, 57.

<sup>69</sup> See also J. D. Fage and John Oliver eds., “Social Change and the Creole Diaspora,” *The Cambridge History of Africa From c. 1790 to c. 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 186-187; and Wyse 1989, 63.



of the European population to Hill Station affected the continued revenue stream from rental property owned by Creoles.

A small narrow gauge railway was built for the convenience of the inhabitants of Hill Station. However, by 1905 the Sierra Leone Railway was completed and provided a new form of mobility for the wider population, with access to areas outside of Freetown. It proved beneficial to most commercial enterprises, including local and itinerant photographers working in Freetown.<sup>70</sup> Such opening up of the country increased the number of potential clients for Lisk-Carew in the provinces and along coastal areas.

Lisk-Carew continued to make significant gains in Freetown's increasingly competitive photography market. He steadily built both a diverse client base made up of British colonials, travellers, missionaries and private individuals, and a reputation that involved the production, sale and distribution of photographs and postcards. Examples of his diverse client base and his peripatetic movement around Freetown photographing local events and personalities are well documented in the newspapers of the time. Thus, in March 1907, Lisk-Carew was on hand to photograph the centenary celebrations of the abolition of the slave trade. The celebrations commenced with a church service at St. George's Cathedral, followed by a social gathering at Wilberforce Memorial Hall. Lisk-Carew was instructed to take photographs of the planning committee and of the decorated marble bust of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton located in the foyer of the cathedral.<sup>71</sup> In 1908, an article in

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<sup>70</sup> During most of the nineteenth century, "bush path" roads, which were wide enough for hammock transport, were the main arteries (hammock roads) connecting the peninsula and the hinterland.

<sup>71</sup> "Centenary Celebrations of the Abolition of the Slave Trade," *SLWN*, March 30, 1907, 4. The bust of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was originally placed in the cathedral by recaptives who wanted to memorialise him and his role in the abolition of the slave trade.

the *SLWN* reported that Lisk-Carew was both a guest and the designated photographer at a picnic to celebrate King Edward VII's birthday. Although the celebration was organised by a core group of influential Creoles, amongst them the elderly photographer Shadrack Albert St. John, it also included many Europeans amongst the invited guests.<sup>72</sup>

By November 1909, a series of advertisements ran in the Saturday edition of the *SLWN* announcing Lisk-Carew's new and expanded studio and shop on a busy main thoroughfare at 30 Westmoreland Street at the corner of Gloucester Street. The clever headlines read "Artistic Permanent" and "Specially Patronised by the Colonial Government" and were evidence of Lisk-Carew's marketing skills.<sup>73</sup> As part of this marketing scheme, he made known that his decision to expand was motivated in part by "the earnest desire of his numerous customers for him to establish a depot in the centre of the City."<sup>74</sup> Thus, he highlighted not only the success and popularity of his business, but also the eagerness of his loyal clients to see his studio expand beyond the confines of the residential East Brook Lane locale.

The new studio, with its adjoining shop, was located strategically near to what is known as the Government Wharf, visible to clientele walking to and from the busy harbour. The shop carried a range of material, including "fancy goods," postcards and photography supplies, and offered services such as the production of lanternslides, prints, copies and enlargements.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, it was easily accessible for many travellers and visitors en route to the major hotels in the area – the City Hotel, located on Oxford Street (now Lightfoot Boston Street), and the Grand Hotel, at the time located on Westmoreland, virtually across the street from his business. As one

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<sup>72</sup> "Picnic on King's Birthday," *SLWN*, November 14, 1908, 3.

<sup>73</sup> "Artistic Permanent," *SLWN*, November 6, 1909, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Macmillan 1920, 267.

informant stated, “one of the keys to my uncle’s success was the close proximity to the wharf during the [First] World War. Man o’ War [*sic*] ships would offload soldiers and other personnel and they would pose for a portrait or buy souvenir postcards of Freetown and ‘up-country’.”<sup>76</sup> This strategic location on the corner of a busy thoroughfare allowed him to take advantage of the substantial traffic, both urban and seagoing passers-by, whereas most of his competitors were located further inland within the city. In a photo taken around 1912-1914, Lisk-Carew documented the location of the new studio (fig. 2.3).<sup>77</sup> He captured the bustling streets filled with local shoppers and military personnel walking by the studio/shop. While increasing his earnings at the new location, Lisk-Carew also benefitted from ease of travel to the provinces due to the railway. He also hired an assistant for the shop and travelled within Freetown’s communities, building up his already extensive catalogue of images.

Despite this ideal location, Lisk-Carew faced heavy competition from both established and young photographers operating in Sierra Leone.<sup>78</sup> These included the Creole Nicol brothers,<sup>79</sup> J.W. Paris, a Creole merchant who operated as a photographer from around 1904,<sup>80</sup> and Jumbo studios, most likely an itinerant company without a permanent studio address that operated from approximately 1910

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<sup>76</sup> Yemi Holland, pers. comm., October 26, 2007.

<sup>77</sup> A Dan Lisk-Carew owned the entire building, and several families occupied the upper levels, including Lisk-Carew’s sister and his favourite niece, Admira. Bertmira Faulkner, pers. comm., May 10, 2010. The photograph captures the front entrance to the shop on Westmoreland (now Siaka Stevens Street). The entrance to the studio was on Gloucester Street.

<sup>78</sup> See Chapter One for a more comprehensive exploration of some of the photographers operating in Sierra Leone from the mid-nineteenth century onward.

<sup>79</sup> The Nicol brothers were part of a well-respected Creole family with a history of entrepreneurship dating back to the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>80</sup> His shop on busy Oxford Street supplied photographic services and postcards, and his landscape views of Freetown are found mainly in postcard form. A small album of postcards by Paris is held at the Royal Commonwealth collection at Cambridge University.

to the mid-1930s. European firms, such as Pickering and Berthoud and Raphael Tuck and Sons, also contributed to the scene.

Newspaper advertisements ran intensely from 1909 to 1912, and it seems that Lisk-Carew's most aggressive competitor during this period was his former mentor and teacher W.S. Johnston. Most advertisements placed in the *SLWN* between 1909 and 1910 were for the establishments of Lisk-Carew and Johnston. Johnston's advertisement flaunted his longevity and his government patronage. He proclaimed his studio as "Johnston's ... The Old Established Photographic Studio ... for Several Years Photographers to the Imperial Government"<sup>81</sup> and assured his public that he was also connected to "all branches of indoor and outdoor photography."<sup>82</sup> His announcements often ran next to Lisk-Carew's, a situation that produced a healthy rivalry between mentor and former trainee. By March 1910, a third eager competitor appeared on the scene, and he too placed several advertisements in the *SLWN*. Tom McCaulay's business was located at 18 Westmoreland Street, just steps away from Lisk-Carew's establishment and in the general vicinity of Johnston's. But his presence there seems to have been short-lived.<sup>83</sup>

As a result of the heightened competition during this time period and the multi-dimensional scope of Lisk-Carew's practice, it is not then surprising that the new studio had to adapt to the changing needs and interests of both local and international consumers. In this regard, Lisk-Carew followed a business model similar to most colonial period photographers who hoped to maintain a competitive edge by his placement of advertisements in the local press which promoted a range of products

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<sup>81</sup> "Artistic Permanent," *SLWN*, March 12, 1910, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> "Tom McCaulay," *SLWN*, March 12, 1910, 12. No further notices ran after March 1911. There are no extant photographs resulting from McCaulay's enterprise that I know of, and few of my elderly respondents had knowledge of him though they were familiar with Johnston's name.

such as postcards and albums for sale and services such as commissioned images for the colonial regime and studio portraits featuring both European and African sitters.

### **Picturing a Royal Visit, 1910**

European and African photographers produced images that featured the colonial regime and its military presence as well as visiting dignitaries. However, there are few images of visiting royalty in Freetown prior to 1910.<sup>84</sup> In 1860, Queen Victoria's son Prince Alfred visited Freetown as part of his tour of West Africa. Although a successful state visit, there are no extant photographs commemorating his brief stopover. The scarcity of images of British royalty in Freetown also suggests that visits by members of the royal family did not occur as often as in other colonial zones. Local photographers had very few opportunities to immortalise such events.

The Duke of Connaught's visit in 1910 offered a rare occasion where local Sierra Leoneans as well as colonial personnel could witness the spectacle of the royalty of the British Empire. The visit was not designated "official," but was a stopover by the royal family en route from a state visit to South Africa.<sup>85</sup> Regardless of its lack of official designation, it was a tremendous opportunity for photographers to gain further recognition for their skills. According to the *SLWN*, Lisk-Carew had asked and been granted permission by the Acting Governor G.B. Haddon Smith (1905-1911), to take photographs of the royal party and events connected to the visit.<sup>86</sup> Lisk-Carew's extensive documentation of the Connaught visit was met with

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<sup>84</sup> Both W.S. Johnston and Lisk-Carew were hired to capture the sporadic visits of British dignitaries such as the Prince of Wales, who visited Freetown in 1925.

<sup>85</sup> See Thomas Nelson Goddard, *The Handbook for Sierra Leone* (London: G. Richards, 1925), 43.

<sup>86</sup> "Bestowal of Royal Patronage," 7.

much enthusiasm.<sup>87</sup> The year 1910 also marked negotiations in Lisk-Carew's personal life as well.<sup>88</sup>

While Lisk-Carew was experiencing on-going success in his business enterprise, the continuing regime of divisive colonialist policies and exclusion was endemic. The policy to hire Europeans over Creoles for government positions was vigorously enforced, and in 1909, the Secretary of State for the colonies ruled that "no coloured doctors could get a post in the recently formed West African Medical Service."<sup>89</sup> A similar policy (possibly de facto) was also imposed on Creole lawyers and people working in the civil service. Amongst Lisk-Carew's clients who had experienced such exclusionary tactics was the well-known lawyer Ernest Samuel Beoku-Betts. From the 1910s onward, few jobs were given to African lawyers. It was not until 1937 that Beoku-Betts was appointed to the judiciary – the first African to be so.<sup>90</sup> Other, subtler forms of exclusion were also put into place. For example, when E.M. Merewether was installed as governor (1911-1915), he quickly cancelled the customary "At homes" social events at Government House to which members of the

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<sup>87</sup> See Chapter Three for an extensive account of Lisk-Carew's coverage of the event.

<sup>88</sup> His first child, Josephine Europa Aina, was born on July 6, 1910. While Lisk-Carew did not marry Minnie Pedro, the child's mother, it seems the child and her mother nevertheless was absorbed into Lisk-Carew's larger family network. According to Galba-Bright, Lisk-Carew had numerous liaisons of this nature. See Jacob Galba-Bright, "Lisk-Carew: Vital Statistics," personal unpublished document, 2007. Abner Cohen notes that, at this time in early-twentieth-century Freetown society, there was some stigma attached to the offspring of such liaisons. However, by the mid-twentieth century, such attitudes began to shift and "today these 'outside' children are given the name of the genitor ... and most high-status Creole men have 'outside' children who publicly bear their names." See Cohen 1981, 63.

<sup>89</sup> Adell Patton Jr., *Physicians, Colonial Racism, and Diaspora in West Africa* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>90</sup> Wyse 1989, 62-63. E.S. Beoku-Betts was born in Freetown and studied law at the University of London. He served as the mayor of Freetown from 1923-1925 and was knighted in 1957. Informants noted that Betts was a frequent client of Lisk-Carew's in Freetown and that they were life long friends.

Creole elite would often be invited. His excuse for doing so was based on his own deep-seated mistrust and dislike for the Creoles.<sup>91</sup>

As a response to such systemic discriminatory practices, many Creoles, including Lisk-Carew, joined ratepayers' associations, which were unofficial political forums. Lisk-Carew eventually served a term as president of his local association. His youngest son, Andrew, recalls how his father saw his involvement as a form of activism, a way to represent the Creole community, a community that had lost ground and seemed to have little or no representation:

Certainly my dad felt the effects of British racism if not overtly, definitely through his friends whose professional status was impeded by colonial policies of exclusion. What I find so interesting about my dad is that he began to work both covertly around World War One and more overtly after World War Two to expose some of the inequities experienced by Sierra Leoneans under the British.<sup>92</sup>

Any "activist" participation at this time was quite low key, and as his son suggests, covert. Thus, despite the success of his numerous government commissions, Lisk-Carew was increasingly moving in oppositional circles. Yet his photographic responses to the vagaries of colonial rule were multiple. Lisk-Carew's advertisements addressed such responses where he thanked his colonial clients for their generous patronage. At the same time, he acknowledged "the recognition of his own people which he is determined to secure the best results for his patrons."<sup>93</sup> Thus his approach was always mediated by concerns such as race, economics and affiliation to the local African community.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>92</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., October 22, 2005 and November 15, 2007.

<sup>93</sup> "Photographs, Photographs, Photographs," *SLWN*, July 27, 1907, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain 1919-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 16.

### **Bestowal of Royal Patronage, 1912**

By 1911 Lisk-Carew's business expanded beyond the scope of what he could handle alone, so his younger brother Arthur joined the enterprise as a partner. Arthur held a role as administrator and shopkeeper in his brother's absence.<sup>95</sup>

It was at this time that Lisk-Carew must have applied (as was the protocol) for a royal warrant.<sup>96</sup> The royal warrant conferred the imprimatur of the British royal household, an extremely useful validation and a perfect tool for advertising purposes (such that the stamp acted as a marketing and publicity device which would assist in generating new clientele). In May 1912 a royal warrant was awarded to Lisk-Carew, making his business one of the first in the region to secure such an honour.<sup>97</sup> The stamped line "Patronized by H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught" or simply "By Royal Warrant" accompanied by the royal arms became the hallmark on all his subsequent photographic prints and postcards.<sup>98</sup> The royal stamp allowed Lisk-Carew greater opportunities and possibilities for patronage, especially from both the higher echelons of Creole society and representatives of the empire stationed in Freetown.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Viditz-Ward dates Arthur's inclusion into the business to 1914 based on stamps bearing "Lisk-Carew Brothers," which appeared around this time, and on her research. See Viditz-Ward 1987, 515. Christraud Geary, on the other hand, dates it to 1918. See Geary in Geary and Webb 1998, 168. I have suggested the earlier date of 1911 based on advertisements. These 1911 advertisements refer to "Messrs. Lisk Carew and Bro." Informants, for the most part, were unsure as to the exact date of Arthur's involvement, but all were aware of his early connection to the studio.

<sup>96</sup> There is no extant documentation (to date) of when or where Lisk-Carew made application for the royal warrant.

<sup>97</sup> "Bestowal of Royal Patronage," 7.

<sup>98</sup> This latter wording seemed to appear more often on mounted prints; the more formal wording was issued on some postcards printed after 1910.

<sup>99</sup> It is of note that while W.S. Johnston photographed parts of the tour; he does not appear to have pursued the royal warrant.



### **The *African Times and Orient Review*, 1912**

Lisk-Carew welcomed and understood the benefits that the distinction of the royal seal on his photographs would bring to his business. However, according to one informant, he subdued his reaction to this honour and continued to pursue other opportunities.<sup>100</sup> Also, Lisk-Carew's nationalist proclivities became evident in 1912 in his association with the radical Pan-African and Pan-Asian journal, the *African Times and Orient Review* (*ATOR*). John Eldridge Taylor, a Sierra Leonean businessman and journalist who had been living in London since 1911, conceived the magazine.<sup>101</sup> Taylor, a former client and early supporter of Lisk-Carew's work,<sup>102</sup> entered into partnership with Duse Mohamed Ali, an Egyptian journalist with Sudanese roots, who became the journal's editor. The principle concerns of the *ATOR* were to act as a galvanising force for all African and Asian peoples against European imperialism by spotlighting art, politics, literature and commercial concerns. The first issue of the magazine was published in July 1912, and in his inaugural editorial Mohamed Ali expresses the journal's main doctrine:

[The journal] arrogates to itself no pretensions of superiority, neither does it gird itself with weapons of offence ... [The] recent Universal Races Congress, convened in the Metropolis of Anglo-Saxon world, clearly demonstrated that there was ample need for a Pan-Oriental, Pan-African journal at the seat of the British Empire which lay the aims, desires, and intentions of the Black, Brown and Yellow races – within and without the Empire.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Bertmira Faulkner, pers. comm., Freetown, May 10, 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Ian Duffield, "John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria," *African Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 280 (1971), 255. Taylor, the son and grandson of Anglican Clergy in Freetown, was part of the upper echelons of Creole society. Taylor was also an early supporter of Lisk-Carew's work.

<sup>102</sup> See his endorsement of Lisk-Carew's work in the *SLWN*, cited in note 57 above.

<sup>103</sup> Duse Mohamed Ali, *African Times and Orient Review*, July 1912, iii.

Given the journal's "radical," anti-imperial concerns, the Colonial Office expressed both fear and hostility toward the journal, targeting Mohammed Ali especially. While he and Taylor are credited with setting up the journal's early framework, by mid-August 1912, due to some financial improprieties,<sup>104</sup> a group of men who represented the educated elite and aristocracy of West Africa forced Taylor out of principal ownership of the *ATOR*.

The group hailed primarily from Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, and for the most part, shared the same background. Furthermore, they all attended the same schools in Sierra Leone – either the CMS Grammar School or Lisk-Carew's alma mater, the Methodist Boys' High School. In some cases, members of the group also shared familial links. For example, amongst the Sierra Leoneans were the brothers Frans and Fred Dove, and C.W. Betts, the father of E.S. Betts. Conversely, J.E. Casely-Hayford, Dr. Quartey-Papafio and E.J.P. Brown were all from the Gold Coast.<sup>105</sup> The group supported the *ATOR* because it was a critical site of opposition to British imperialism, both overt and covert. It also highlighted examples of racist imperialism. The controversial Zaria case was one such example.<sup>106</sup> Some members of the group, such as Fred Dove and Casely-Hayford, played significant roles in

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<sup>104</sup> Duffield 1971, 259.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 259.

<sup>106</sup> In May 1912, two women were seen leaving the servants' quarters of the house of the British Assistant Resident of Bauchi Province in Nigeria. They were arrested and sent to be tried by the chief *qadi* (Islamic judge). The *qadi* convicted the women of stealing and of being prostitutes, sentencing them to six months' imprisonment and twenty-four lashes. In 1918, an article appeared in the *African Telegraph* (a short-lived newspaper founded by Eldred Taylor in the same year), which stated that, based on eyewitness accounts, the women had been flogged in the "open market" while "stripped entirely naked." The newspaper further claimed that the lashes had been imposed at Fitzpatrick's behest. Once the story broke in the press, it quickly travelled to London, leading to questions in Parliament and increased anxiety of the Colonial Office.

forming the early nationalist association, the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), in 1920. Most significantly, this group of African elites recognised the importance of being associated with a radical African-owned and operated journal in the heart of the empire that contributed to the ideals of a Black Atlantic community.<sup>107</sup>

Lisk-Carew may have been familiar with the names of the Creole financiers, although there is no direct evidence linking him to them. However, he did have links to James Carmichael Smith, a colonial official and frequent contributor to the Journal. Carmichael Smith was born in the Bahamas to a European father and a mother who was of Black French Antillean or Bahamian origin. He became active in the local politics of the Bahamas and was dedicated to the issues of justice and equality for the Black and “Coloured” populations.<sup>108</sup> It is quite likely that Carmichael Smith’s radical outspokenness may have been the catalyst for his removal from the Bahamian House of Assembly by 1890 on trumped up legal charges.<sup>109</sup> In 1896, the Colonial Office offered him the position of Assistant Postmaster in Freetown. In 1900 he was made Postmaster General and then held several other senior posts during his time in Freetown.<sup>110</sup> In 1910, Lisk-Carew produced a series of photographs that featured several family portraits at Carmichael Smith’s house in Hill Station, images of Freetown’s general post office and key moments of the 1910 royal tour.<sup>111</sup> It is interesting to note that in the third issue following the journal’s takeover in mid-

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<sup>107</sup> Duffield 1971, 260.

<sup>108</sup> Robin Themistocleous, “Coloured Members of the Bahamian House of Assembly in the Nineteenth Century,” *College of the Bahamas Research Journal*, vol. 10, no. 17 (2001), 17.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Donald H. Simpson, “Mr. Smith of the Colonial Service,” *Library Notes: The Royal Commonwealth Society*, no. 181 (May 1972), 1.

<sup>111</sup> In 1972, Carmichael Smith’s daughter, Kathleen Walton Smith donated his photograph collection (mainly albums), books and pamphlets to the Royal Commonwealth Library, Cambridge University. Most of the photographs in the albums of Freetown are by Lisk-Carew, including a portrait of Carmichael Smith in colonial uniform.

August 1912, a photograph taken by Lisk-Carew showing a paramount female chief accompanies an article written by Carmichael Smith.<sup>112</sup> While the article seems to extend the notion of the colonising mission, it also reveals Carmichael Smith's overt appreciation and admiration of African peoples who attempted to preserve their cultural institutions in the face of European rule. Lisk-Carew's association with Carmichael Smith reflected the range of positionings he took on in the pursuit of his photography.

Some of these positionings are evident in three photographs of Sir Edward Merewether, accompanied by the governor of Nigeria and entourage, that were published in the *ATOR's* 1912 *Christmas Annual*. Merewether had distanced himself from the Creoles early in his term and resented their status as intellectuals and elites. According to the Merewether, "The young men who are educated in England work hard when they are there and many obtain good degrees ... but when they return to the coast, racial characteristics appear to be too strong for them and they sink to a level of hopeless mediocrity, and not to say incompetence."<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, even some members of the Colonial Office branded the governor as a "Negrophobe."<sup>114</sup>

The inclusion of Lisk-Carew's photos of Merewether and other like images shows the complexity of this strident journal while also underscoring the importance

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<sup>112</sup> During his fifteen years as an agent of the colonial regime, Carmichael Smith seemed to take a genuine interest in the plight of African peoples in Sierra Leone. The article "West African Marriage Customs" is one in a series published in the *African Times and Orient Review* from September 1912 (vol. 1, no. 3) to September 1913 (vol. 1, no. 15). The photograph by Lisk-Carew that accompanies the first article is captioned "Madam Homo'nyah and her attendants. Paramount Chieftainess of Kenema in the Sierra Leone Protectorate." Carmichael Smith was a frequent contributor who wrote from a sympathetic perspective as an European interpreter, intermediary and one with deep "local knowledge" of African cultural practices.

<sup>113</sup> Festus Cole, "The Sierra Leone Carrier Corps and Krio Responses to World War I," in *New Perspectives on the Sierra Leone*, ed. Mac Dixon-Fyle and Gibril Raschid Cole (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 55.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

of the *ATOR* as a vehicle through which the ubiquitous colonial presence could be scrutinised, surveyed and ultimately exposed. Lisk-Carew signalled his awareness of such tensions at the early stages of his involvement in national politics.

## **Photography Outside of Sierra Leone**

### ***Liberia, circa 1912***

Since the late 1850s, itinerant photographers in West Africa travelled to coastal towns to document people and places outside of the urban areas.<sup>115</sup> While many local African and some Europeans photographers relied heavily on their itinerant practices, Lisk-Carew, by comparison, did not. His sporadic trips suggests that the strength and density of his patronage in Freetown, along with his impressive professional reputation, created less need to travel outside of Freetown seeking commissions.

In 1912, the year his first son, Madrick, was born, Lisk-Carew expanded his business opportunities farther afield.<sup>116</sup> At some point between 1912 and 1913, he journeyed to Liberia for a short stay, taking advantage of the regular steamship service that provided for easier and faster movement along the coast. During his trip, he most likely took more photographs, including six that were produced as postcards, two of which are reproduced in the next chapter.<sup>117</sup> While the circumstances under

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<sup>115</sup> Viditz-Ward 1987, 510-517.

<sup>116</sup> The identity of the child's mother is unknown. Madrick is buried in the same grave as his father in Freetown.

<sup>117</sup> The postcards were brought to my attention by collector Terence Dickinson and form part of his extensive and comprehensive collection of postcards from several areas in West Africa, including Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone.

which these photographs were taken are unknown, the series is featured in an article on Liberia in the April 1913 issue of the *ATOR*.<sup>118</sup>

### ***The Gambia, 1914***

In 1914, just prior to the start of World War One, Lisk-Carew travelled to The Gambia on an assignment, possibly commissioned by Sir Henry Galway, governor of The Gambia at the time.<sup>119</sup> Twenty-one photographs of this project are extant. His reputation as a skilful photographer, with a royal stamp of endorsement for his work, no doubt helped to attain this lucrative contract. Galway presented a set of the photographs to the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1914.<sup>120</sup> The photographs highlight the enormous growth of Bathurst under European colonial rule and the various structures that represent such progress.

While Lisk-Carew took advantage of opportunities offered by colonial patrons outside of Freetown, he also continued to be a fixture in the local scene, where his services were highly sought after. For instance, in the May 23, 1914, issue of the *SLWN*, two editorials are dedicated to a commemorative event acknowledging the political significance of the Carpenters Defensive Union (an important African

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<sup>118</sup> "Liberia," *ATOR*, vol. 1. no. 10 (April 1913), 298. The photographs resurface once again on postcards from around 1916 and feature Lisk-Carew's stamp.

<sup>119</sup> Galway's term ran from December 21, 1911, to April 24, 1914. Prior to his posting in The Gambia, Galway had been the Deputy-Commissioner and Vice-Consul of the Oil Rivers/Niger Coast Protectorate from 1891 to 1897, and instrumental in the British Punitive Expedition of 1897 against Oba Obamrawren of Benin in Benin City. See A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans: 1487-1897* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1969), 272.

<sup>120</sup> The notes in the Royal Geographical Society catalogue state the following: "Twenty photographs of Bathurst, Gambia, taken by Lisk-Carew brothers, photographers, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Presented by Sir H.L. Galway, K.C.M.G., D.S.O. in 1914. Silver Prints measuring 5 x 8. No. 1 consists of two photographs joined together, and gives a very good general view of Bathurst and the River Gambia."

association in Freetown) and its longevity – nineteen years. The central components of the commemoration were the speeches by the president of the union, Mr. David Parker, the mayor of Freetown, J.J. Thomas, and the fact that “the popular photographer Mr. Lisk-Carew was on scene in order to memorialise the event of the day.”<sup>121</sup> Lisk-Carew’s presence at the commemoration was strategic as it also aligned him with certain groups with whom he felt a strong affiliation.<sup>122</sup>

In an important image of Lisk-Carew’s Westmoreland studio from around 1914- 1916 (fig. 2.4), European and African officials, local residents and a group of boy scouts are shown proudly standing at the storefront. Various items offered in Lisk-Carew’s store, such as Christmas cards and related photography based merchandise, and are visible in the window. The image is symbolic of Lisk-Carew’s practice at this time, whereby he catered to the broad concerns of his diverse clientele while being acutely aware of the types of personalities and references that would also appeal to the visual appetites of the day. The newspaper editorials , advertisements and other accounts point to the fact that he enjoyed the continued patronage of the colonial administration as well as private commissions and postcard production until the beginning of World War One.

### ***London, 1917-1919***

According to ship records, on the July 4, 1917, Lisk-Carew boarded the Liverpool-bound ocean liner *Abinsi* at Freetown at the age of thirty-three.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, the

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<sup>121</sup> “Carpenters Defensive Union,” *SLWN*, May 23, 1914, 8.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., November 11, 2005.

<sup>123</sup> Charles Gore brought Lisk-Carew’s early travel to London to my attention. The *Abinsi* was part of a fleet of steamers and liners run by the African Steam Ship

*Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails* carried a small notice in their weekend edition stating, “amongst the passengers for England are the Hon. J.C. Newton ... and Lisk-Carew the photographer of Westmoreland St.”<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately, unlike most of the other passengers listed on ships registry, no forwarding address was given, information, which would have helped to ascertain where and when in London Lisk-Carew first settled. By travelling to London Lisk-Carew was following in the footsteps of a much earlier generation of Sierra Leoneans who sought educational advancement in Britain.<sup>125</sup> From 1880 to 1920, Sierra Leoneans in Britain were a small group predominately consisting of students, expatriates and short-term visitors. Few traces of Lisk-Carew’s two-year London sojourn remain, however. The only clues into the nature of Lisk-Carew’s business in London come from interviews with a distant cousin, Yemi Holland, who recalled that he “was planning a trip to London, to Ilford to conduct business for photography supplies as well as Manchester to do some training.”<sup>126</sup> It is likely that Lisk-Carew’s contacts in London, which may have included individuals involved with the *ATOR*, may have encouraged him to travel there. Lisk-Carew also had ties with the “old boy” network of Sierra Leoneans in London, as demonstrated in an intriguing photograph, published in the July 1919 edition of the *African Telegraph and Gold Coast Mirror*, showing a group of Sierra Leonean men, most of whom represented the networks of the elite Creole

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Company that made frequent scheduled stops from ports along the coastal West African regions to Liverpool.

<sup>124</sup> “Passengers for England,” *Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails*, July 6, 1917, 6.

<sup>125</sup> Christopher Fyfe, “Sierra Leoneans in English Schools in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780-1950*, ed. Rainer Lotz and Ian Pegg (Crawley, England: Rabbit Press, 1986), 25-31. Fyfe gives a brief survey of Creoles in the early nineteenth century who followed a European pattern of sending their children to be educated in England.

<sup>126</sup> Yemi Holland, pers. comm., July 12, 2006.



establishment.<sup>127</sup> Taken in 1919 by an unknown photographer in London, it includes prominent Creoles alongside Eldridge Taylor, the founder/editor of the *ATOR*, and photographer and merchant J.W. Paris. The photograph is a clear indication of the close ties that were maintained between Freetown Creoles and those living in the British metropolis. It also situates London as the prime site for Black internationalist activity where people of African descent gathered to discuss ideas and raise their consciousness as oppressed peoples.<sup>128</sup>

One of the key reasons for Lisk-Carew's journey to Britain may have been to develop new economic links in London with the aim of strengthening his business in Freetown. Since Lisk-Carew's shop carried both photographic equipment and supplies, it is reasonable to conclude that he hoped to forge or maintain commercial relations in London, where Ilford Photo, a major photography supply and training facility, was located.<sup>129</sup> It is also quite possible that Lisk-Carew went to Harrow, Middlesex, to visit Kodak Manufacturing, source new products and keep abreast of changes in photographic technology. In an advertisement placed in the *SLWN* from 1919 onward, he assures both would-be clients and amateur photographers seeking his guidance that he had received training in certain materials and camera technology at "the research and testing laboratories at Kodak Works, Harrow."<sup>130</sup> The ability for an African photographer to receive such training at Kodak facilities is indeed significant for this time period and certainly would have made an impression on the public.

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<sup>127</sup> Christopher Fyfe and David Killingray, "A Memorable Gathering of Sierra Leoneans in London, 1919," *African Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 350 (1988), 41-46.

<sup>128</sup> Winston James, "The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain," in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 348.

<sup>129</sup> Founded in 1879, Ilford Photo was best known for its supply of photography materials. Photographers and dealers in Ilford film or dry plates were often given training in the handling of specialised products and materials.

<sup>130</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, December 6, 1919, 11.

Although a wide assortment of photography equipment had been imported into Freetown in the mid-nineteenth century, Lisk-Carew's presence in Britain may still have been warranted if he wanted to develop favourable links in the retailing of photographic goods and other merchandise. Ever the self-promoter, and possibly armed with a portfolio of his work bearing his royal endorsement, it is also probable that Lisk-Carew used the opportunity to solicit future patronage and business based on prior relationships established in Freetown. Lisk-Carew remained in the London area for two years before leaving on January 29, 1919.<sup>131</sup>

During his stay in London, Lisk-Carew quickly connected with a number of communities and individuals. With Ethel Patience Ross, he fathered another son. Anthony Lisk-Carew was born on September 15, 1918, and died May 5, 1991, in London at age seventy-three. Little is known about his mother aside from the fact that she was English and that she and Lisk-Carew were never married. Anthony's birth certificate indicates that he was born at 19 Dinsmore Road in Balham, South West London.<sup>132</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew remembered speaking with Anthony on two occasions: "He had sought me out in the 80s ... He tracked me down in Birmingham since there are not that many of us Lisk-Carews. We were very wary of each other. I was not that keen on meeting him, although by that point he was an old man. I knew little about him except that his mother was English."<sup>133</sup> Little is known about Anthony's life, except for sketchy details about his membership in the British Army

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<sup>131</sup> Once again, ship records indicate that Lisk-Carew left Liverpool on the *Abinsi* for Freetown. His occupation was still listed as "photographer" and his age was given as 35.

<sup>132</sup> Birth Certificate for Anthony Ross Lisk-Carew, September 15, 1918, file no. BXCF 585072, England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes, General Register Office, London. Certified copy in possession of author. The certificate also indicates Lisk-Carew's occupation as photographer and that he and Ethel Ross lived at 19 Dinsmore Road.

<sup>133</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., October 23, 2007.

and that he may have paid a visit to Freetown to meet his father sometime during the late 1940s, a visit those family members vividly remember.<sup>134</sup> This glimpse into Lisk-Carew's personal life suggests that, for the short time he lived in London, he was socialised into the various London communities in which he found himself.

What, then, can we make of Lisk-Carew's years in Britain? Photography styles and trends would certainly have influenced his practice upon his return to Freetown. At the same time, his exposure to African and Caribbean intellectuals and activists in the U.K., particularly in relation to the *ATOR*, may have consolidated Lisk-Carew's politics around colonial reform and been instrumental in his role as a future activist back home in Freetown. Finally, in economic terms, his stay in Britain enabled Lisk-Carew to explore prospects with commercial interests that could bring new opportunities and merchandise to his flourishing business enterprises, including those related to photography and others he felt would be marketable back home.<sup>135</sup> As we will see, the lack of written documentation, however, provokes more questions than answers.

### ***The Red Book of West Africa, 1919-1920***

Given his high profile in Freetown, the wealth and scope of his images, and his existing business ties to the colonial administration, it is not surprising that soon after his return to Freetown in 1919, Lisk-Carew was asked to contribute to Allister Macmillan's ambitious *Red Book of West Africa*. Pioneered by Macmillan, the *Red*

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<sup>134</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., March 5, 2010; Yemi Holland, pers. comm., October 23, 2007; Bertmira Faulkner, pers. comm., May 10, 2010. All three informants recollected his visit to Freetown, which apparently caused quite a stir amongst the family.

<sup>135</sup> For example, as I examine later in this chapter, by the late 1930s Lisk-Carew had expanded and diversified his enterprise to include cinema and the first motorbikes imported to Freetown.

*Book* encapsulated the businesses, social ties and successes across West Africa's urban mercantile and political communities. This commercial directory of facts, Macmillan claimed in the preface, was the first ever to be produced in West Africa.<sup>136</sup> The claim is not unwarranted, considering Macmillan had commissioned some of the most well-known professional West African commercial photographers to take the images that illustrate the various regions covered by the book.<sup>137</sup>

Within the pages of Macmillan's *Red Book* one finds the profiles of prestigious expatriate and African firms, as well as the biographies of prominent West Africans and Europeans operating along the Anglophone West African coast between 1918 and 1920. The *Red Book* also featured the photographs of prominent West Africans and noteworthy individuals, along with dispassionate descriptions of their business. Photography played a key role in the colonial period when it was pressed into service, and supplied by local African and European photographers to further legitimise a "regime of truth,"<sup>138</sup> in this case British interests. Macmillan was an intrepid observer, narrator, compiler and archivist who combined his skills to create illustrated guide books detailing general facts about imperial regions.<sup>139</sup>

Commissioned by the local European Chambers of Commerce, they were meant as

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<sup>136</sup> Macmillan 1920, 3.

<sup>137</sup> Photographer George DaCosta worked with Macmillan, providing many of the images for the Lagos section. Both F.R.C. Lutterodt (listed as a Government Photographer in the *Red Book*) and father and son team J.A.C. Holm and N.W. Holm contributed several photographs that can be found in the "Gold Coast" section of the book.

<sup>138</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Random House, 1995), 136, 170-187.

<sup>139</sup> Macmillan edited eight other guides, starting with *The West Indies Illustrated* (1912), featuring a rare biography on the Jamaican father and son photographic enterprise of A. Duperly and Son, followed by *Mauritius Illustrated* (1914), *Malta and Gibraltar Illustrated* (1915), *Extracts from the Seaports of India and Ceylon*, *Seaports of the Far East* (1925), *East Africa and Rhodesia: Historical and Descriptive* (1931), *Rhodesia and Eastern Africa* (1931) and *The Golden City: Johannesburg* (1934).

informal travel guides and directories for European businesses, promoting the success of the business endeavours of particular individuals and establishments. By way of comparison, at around the same time that Macmillan's *Red Book* was published in 1920, Duse Mohammed Ali published the *West African Directory and Year Book 1920-1921*. Mohammed Ali's *Directory* was created as a guide to investors and businessmen for the "trading communities in Europe, Africa and America."<sup>140</sup> While offering seemingly factual information, such guidebooks were part of a specific colonial discourse on commercial enterprise.

Macmillan presented Freetown as a prosperous colonial enterprise and Alphonso Lisk-Carew as a key player in the on-going progress, documentation and development of Sierra Leone. He capitalised on Lisk-Carew's prominence, popularity and reputation, and included the studio and shop in a section on Freetown's African-owned businesses. He commissioned Lisk-Carew to take several views of the urban and rural landscape or selected images he had already produced to illustrate the *Red Book*'s section on Freetown,<sup>141</sup> reinforcing Lisk-Carew's reputation amongst his colleagues and rivals. In that section, Macmillan affirms his admiration of Lisk-Carew's work and speaks of his ability to deliver photographs of the highest technical standards:

Although the numerous accessories invented during recent years for simplifying photography enables people ignorant of even the first principles of the art to produce pictures, there is a great barrier between mediocrity and excellence that can only be surmounted by laborious study and practice; otherwise, such excellent productions as those emanating for instance from

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<sup>140</sup> Advertisement, *ATOR*, October 12, 1918, 48.

<sup>141</sup> Macmillan 1920, 3. Macmillan thanks "the photographers who so zealously gave their services."

studio of Messrs. Lisk-Carew Bros. would provide no standard to which aspiring amateurs might direct their efforts.<sup>142</sup>

The marketing of African photographers often included such distinctions between professional and amateur, and artistic and commercial photographers.<sup>143</sup> Certainly Lisk-Carew was considered a commercial professional by all standards, yet his studio work also reflected his ability (and perhaps desire) to render images with an artistic flare that moved beyond simply made-to-order commissions. As I explore in subsequent chapters, he often captured his subjects in a composed, nuanced manner, skilfully applying framing and lighting techniques to enhance the artistic quality of the print. In so doing, he captured the admiration of Macmillan, who refers to Lisk-Carew's studio work and, as a result, succeeds in setting the photographer apart from other local professionals.

The images that Macmillan chose for his book had a strictly limited range of subjects and were concerned with the accurate representation of a viable commercial

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>143</sup> The debate and divisions around artistic photography versus commercial photography was pronounced in Europe and the United States. In the United States, one of the arch proponents of photography as art was Alfred Stieglitz, who broke from the photography club set to form the Photo-Secession, thus implying there was something special about what he and his affiliates were doing with the camera. Stieglitz was adamant about distinguishing between the work of a commercial nature, popular amateur uses of the camera, and pictures by serious photographers who aspired to artistry by endowing the photographic image with expressive qualities. In Freetown, photographers often incorporated such hallmarks as "Art Photographers" and "Artistic Permanent" onto their stamps and newspaper advertisements. Both Lisk-Carew and W.S. Johnston were often referred to as artists in terms of their superior skills and the techniques attached to their work. However, it is not clear, given extant newspaper articles and advertisements, to what extent either photographer considered himself an "artist." However, both approached their photography, especially studio portraits, using artistic conventions, which in turn produced images of high aesthetic quality.

centre in West Africa. The Nicol brothers are credited with photographs of European officials and staff of the leading commercial enterprises in 1919 and 1920, as well as with interesting views that highlight Freetown's "exotic" vistas and modern architecture. These images indicate the strategic choices Macmillan made in consultation with the photographers he hired. Lisk-Carew's inclusion and active participation in this discourse shed some light on his ambivalent position vis-à-vis colonial power structures and relations. Yet, the photos also record a dynamic society structured by the institutions of church, education and commerce.

### **The Winds of Change, 1920**

Power was not shared with the colonized, even though they might be British subjects.<sup>144</sup>

During the interwar years, from 1918 to the mid-1920s, Sierra Leone saw a more organised political agitation to campaign for representative government. In 1918, several committees in Sierra Leone were set up to discuss the organisation of a West African Conference that would represent the union of Britain's four West African colonies. By February 1919, the Sierra Leone section of the delegation had been established and included notable members of the Freetown elite, such as E.S. Beoku-Betts and T.J. Reffell. Reffell was amongst the group of prominent Sierra Leoneans photographed in London that year.<sup>145</sup>

The National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) grew out of a conference held in Accra in March 1920. Delegates from the Gold Coast, Sierra

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<sup>144</sup> Akintola Wyse, "The Dissolution of Freetown City Council in 1926: A Negative Example of Political Apprenticeship in Colonial Sierra Leone," *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 438.

<sup>145</sup> "A Memorable Gathering of Sierra Leoneans in London," *African Telegraph and Gold Coast Mirror*, November 1919, See my previous discussion of this photograph above.

Leone, Nigeria, and The Gambia called for constitutional reforms, greater commercial development and the creation of a West African university. Dr. Herbert Bankole-Bright, an influential and outspoken doctor and politician, and F.W. Dove, a prominent Creole businessman, barrister at law and one of the Sierra Leonean shareholders of the ATOR, headed the Sierra Leone delegation.<sup>146</sup> The NCBWA, whose leaders came mainly from the educated African intelligentsia, formed the “first modern pan West African political movement.”<sup>147</sup> For Creoles at the end of World War One, the organising of the NCBWA came at a moment of growing political dissatisfaction, galvanised by their exclusion from active service in the war. They now sought ways to engage actively in the decision-making processes. Historians have narrated this activism in a number of ways. While some have argued that it was part of a legitimate anti-colonial struggle, others have suggested that it was never a strong threat to the colonial regime, insisting that many worked in tandem with the regime to save their own commercial interests. Abu Boahen, for example, has suggested that the NCBWA consisted of the “self-serving nationalist petite-bourgeoisie” whose main objectives were to protect and expand their interests while leaving the colonial system intact.<sup>148</sup> In fact, while the resolutions passed at the Accra conference asserted “the right of the people to self-determination,”<sup>149</sup> the NCBWA also affirmed its loyalty to the British Empire, declaring that its “policy is to maintain strictly and inviolate the connection of the British West African Dependencies with the British Empire, and to

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<sup>146</sup> Bankole-Bright and Dove held the first meeting of the National Congress of British West Africa in Accra, where the Sierra Leone contingent was represented. Both Lisk-Carew and Bankole-Bright attended the Methodist Boys’ High School around the same period.

<sup>147</sup> Wyse 1989, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Adu Boahen, *Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 634.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.



maintain unreservedly all and every right of free citizenship of the Empire.”<sup>150</sup>

However, as result of the constant pressure applied by the organisation, in 1922, the colonial government did concede the right to elective representation on the legislative councils.<sup>151</sup> Despite such concessions, for the most part, the NCBWA was a failure as a full-fledged anti-colonial movement.

Despite the NCBWA’s ideological fissures, Lisk-Carew was drawn to this first wave of nationalist politics. He followed closely the movements of the local Sierra Leone branch but never participated actively.<sup>152</sup> He was torn by its ideals, which sought to advance, to some degree, a say in how the colony was run – but only by Creoles. Yemi Holland has suggested that his cousin’s reticence to commit himself fully to the NCBWA was partly due to its overwhelming Creole membership: “He was bothered by this and only wanted to be part of a process of change which included the ‘native’ up-country as well.”<sup>153</sup> This rationale was also espoused by Andrew Lisk-Carew, who suggested that his father, “due to the numerous times he spent in the hinterland taking photographs, was quite familiar with the people of the provinces and was convinced that the future of Sierra Leone had to take into account this multi-ethnic makeup of the country ... he was also very sensitive to his own make-up on the Carew side of things as well.”<sup>154</sup> The NCBWA’s leadership, which

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<sup>150</sup> J. Ayo Langley ed., “Resolutions of the National Congress of British West Africa and Constitution of the National Congress of British West Africa,” *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought* (London: Rowen and Littlefield, 1979).

<sup>151</sup> Ehiedu Iweriebor, “Nationalism and the Struggle for Freedom, 1880-1960,” *The Foundations of Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Toyin Falola*, ed. Adebayo Oyebadé (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 89.

<sup>152</sup> Yemi Holland, pers. comm., November 23, 2007.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ronald Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., November 20, 2007.

steadfastly refused to have representation from the protectorate on the basis that it was considered a foreign colony, frustrated Lisk-Carew.<sup>155</sup>

For these reasons, Lisk-Carew remained on the fringes of this movement. Rather than becoming involved in the lofty political rhetoric swirling around him, he continued to focus his lens on a more democratic expanse of Sierra Leone and mundane moments of its social life using a conventional approach. At the same time, he looked at ways to adapt and expand his business by incorporating the global popular culture of the 1920s into the context of Freetown. In early 1920, Lisk-Carew launched himself into the medium of cinema.

### **Phantasmagoria Cinema Shows in Freetown, 1920-1930**

Of all of the marvels that have recently been brought to light in the way of photography the “Cinematographe,” which reproduces photographs of actual scenes and persons from life –moving breathing, in fact living pictures –is the most startling and sensational. It is the most perfect illustration that has heretofore been attempted in photography ... pictures are thrown on a screen through a medium of the “Cinematographe” with realism that battles description.<sup>156</sup>

The cinematograph, cinema’s key innovation, was viewed as a welcome extension of photography, totally revolutionising through its capacity to render movement. The Frères Lumière patented a combination of camera and projector, the cinematograph in 1895, and in a few short months, Louis Lumière made his first film, *La sortie de*

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<sup>155</sup> Akintola Wyse, *H.C. Bankole-Bright and the Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 36. Wyse observes that NCBWA membership consisted entirely of coast dwellers in regions such as Accra, Lagos and Bathurst (Banjul); in these areas great strides were taken to form linkages with hinterland dwellers while in Sierra Leone such links between colony and protectorate were missing.

<sup>156</sup> Anon. *St. Paul’s Magazine*, March 7, 1896, 9.

*l'usine Lumière*. By 1896, the cinematograph had reached African regions with large European populations, chiefly South Africa. Between the turn of the century and 1903, the new, dynamic medium had extended to areas on the west coast of the continent, in particular Senegal and Nigeria.<sup>157</sup> Whereas photography became available in Sierra Leone fairly shortly after its invention in Europe, it took more than a decade for the first cinema show to emerge in Freetown with the arrival of Culver's Cinema Company in 1912.<sup>158</sup>

A European-based travelling cinema show, Culver screened "Historical, Dramatical [*sic*], Magical, Humorous and Topical" films over a two-month period at Wilberforce Memorial Hall.<sup>159</sup> While there is evidence of earlier screen practices, such as lantern slides shows (specifically church related) and panoramic displays, the arrival of cinema in Freetown produced a distinctive and new kind of entertainment for audiences.<sup>160</sup> According to reports, Culver offered the latest in modern technology, "using oxy-Hydrogen and having obtained the latest in improvements in this system, it will do as well as Electricity."<sup>161</sup> Such technological marvels created a phantasmagoria cinema that enthralled local spectators.<sup>162</sup> Despite the slight lag in

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<sup>157</sup> James Burns, "Cinema and Censorship in Southern Rhodesia, 1914-1940," *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>158</sup> "Culver's Cinema Coy," *Colony and Provincial Reporter*, October 19, 1912, 9.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> "Grand Panorama," *Sierra Leone Times*, December 28, 1895, 3. The Panorama was a nineteenth century exhibition medium and the precursor to cinema. Large paintings were arranged in a circular fashion and shown to audiences. Some Panorama's incorporated motion and music to enhance visual appeal. See Stephan Ottermann, *Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (New York: Zone Books, 1997).

<sup>161</sup> "Culver's Cinema Coy," 9. The term oxy-hydrogen references limelight, a form of illumination that made the dissolves, or visuals between images, smoother and created a brighter consistent beam on the moving image.

<sup>162</sup> Governor Merewether displayed the regime's interest and support of this cinematic enterprise by giving his patronage of the shows. Walter Benjamin used the term "phantasmagoria" to apply the Marxist notion of mass consumption. The phantasmagoria involved a first digression of the aura; since the projected image is

cinema's initial entree into Freetown, from 1912 onward, both African and European showmen announced their travelling cinema shows in Sierra Leone newspapers.

In 1915, several advertisements and reviews of N.D. Nicol's "Electric Bioscope Entertainment" at Wilberforce Memorial Hall were published in local newspapers.<sup>163</sup> James Burns describes bioscope shows as "urban spaces in the British colonies that were dedicated to regular film screenings" versus other venues where films were occasionally shown."<sup>164</sup> Nicol, a Creole, had worked in 1907 as an agent for British merchant Mead Cycle in Porto Novo and Lagos.<sup>165</sup> His Freetown screenings were described by observers as "one of the best that has ever exhibited in the City."<sup>166</sup> Such reviews in the *SLWN* illuminates the enthusiasm with which these shows were met.

Lisk-Carew was keen to the excitement generated by these new cinema screenings, a gripping entrance to the already fascinating entertainments that circulated through Freetown. During his previous years living in London, Lisk-Carew further considered the breadth of themes cinema offered its audiences: content filled with social commentary and political and cultural observations. He was thus fully cognisant of the international appeal of cinema as a modern entertainment experience. In 1920, Lisk-Carew emulated showmen Culver and Nicol, and organised film performances or shows at Wilberforce Hall, naming his enterprise the Freetown

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separated from its real source it is thus alienated and creates a fetish. The mass audience who partake in the film experience creates the phantasmagoria.

<sup>163</sup> "Cinematograph Show at Wilberforce Memorial Hall," *SLWN*, September 4, 1915, 7. N.D. Nicol and his brother also ran a photography studio in Freetown from 1915 to 1920.

<sup>164</sup> James Burns, "The African Bioscope? Movie House Culture in British Colonial Africa," *Afrique & histoire*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2006), 68. The cinema show practices in Sierra Leone reveal localised practices that used the bioscope in a more fluid sense that encompassed film spectatorship both within dedicated spaces such as Wilberforce Hall and other venues such as schools and church halls.

<sup>165</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, October 26, 1907, 10.

<sup>166</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, August 21, 1915, 10.

Cinema Theatrical Company. According to Burns's criteria of regular screenings, Lisk-Carew's film show could be considered an example of an African bioscope experience.

Every week Lisk-Carew included a roster of various films including Charlie Chaplin slapstick comedies that at the time had universal appeal. In a large advertisement The Lisk-Carew brothers announced that the Freetown Cinema Company would be showing Chaplin's *The Masquerader* (1914) with the headline, "If it is laughter you want come and see Charlie."<sup>167</sup> Admission prices ranged from one to three shillings, and could be purchased in advance at Lisk-Carew's store. London was the *entrepôt* for films to be shipped to other regions in the colonial world. Since Lisk-Carew could not afford the expensive first-runs and new prints for screening, he cut costs by purchasing older films and "junk" films (films reels which had slight physical damage).<sup>168</sup> Similar to the business of photography, Freetonians enjoyed a wealth of cinematic options, with itinerant and local projectionists vying for patrons. But competition was fierce. Thus, Lisk-Carew created innovative strategies to draw a diverse audience to his screenings. In an attempt to increase his competitive edge, in 1921 he invited several prominent Paramount chiefs to a special "cinematograph performance" featuring a roster of 1911 one-reel silent films. He screened *The Inner Mind*, a short drama, and *A Comrade's Treachery*, a war film set in India.<sup>169</sup> The audience marvelled at the films and their response, according to contemporary reports, comprised "admiring amazement."<sup>170</sup> Encouraged by such

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<sup>167</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, May 7, 1920, 9.

<sup>168</sup> See Burns 2006, 73; see also James Burns, "Watching Africans Watch Movies: Theories of Spectatorship in Colonial Africa," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2000), 197-211.

<sup>169</sup> *The Inner Mind* was directed by filmmaker Otis Turner and *A Comrade's Treachery* by H.O. Martinek.

<sup>170</sup> "The Cinema World," *SLWN*, June 18, 1921, 16.

positive reactions, Lisk-Carew issued an invitation to the chiefs for like screenings to take place weekly. Through this gesture, Lisk-Carew secured a loyal repeat clientele who actively participated in the experience of cinema as moviegoers while profiting from their curiosity and newfound pleasure. His profitable film venture became a permanent fixture in Freetown through to the mid-1930s and his growing family also garnered his attention.<sup>171</sup>

### **“A Willful Perversion of the Truth,” 1930-1934**

According to his family and friends, Lisk-Carew was considered a “powerful” man, a retrospective judgement based upon his business achievements and his well-regarded entrepreneurial spirit. “He was such a successful businessman,” one informant remarked, “that he could more or less do what he pleased ... He was not beholden to anyone – not even the British.”<sup>172</sup> As his business continued to grow, so did his need of more employees. In 1934, Lisk-Carew placed a help wanted advertisement in the *SLWN* for a young woman wishing to train in the photography business while fulfilling the role of receptionist.<sup>173</sup> That which was perceived as “power” had more to do with his economic success and the social status he had built in both African and European colonial communities.

However, such status was presumably tested in 1934 when he was compelled to write a series of letters to the editor of the *SLWN*. The letters describe the history of

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<sup>171</sup> He had two more children: Femi, born in 1923, and Ulrica, born in 1927. He married the children’s mother, a Miss Smith, soon after the children were born, but the marriage was short-lived.

<sup>172</sup> Yemi Holland, pers. comm., November 20, 2007.

<sup>173</sup> Advertisement, *SLWN*, November 17, 1934, 7. Lisk-Carew’s niece Admira assisted him in the studio. It is possible that following the start of her family, she was less able to work and he was forced to hire an assistant. There is no evidence to suggest that Lisk-Carew trained a young woman as a photographer.

his unfolding conflict with Freetown's City Council. In his missives, Lisk-Carew positioned himself as an ambitious businessman, loyal friend of the regime and to the local African population political player, and vocal challenger of the inequities in local politics. The eloquently written letters, spread over several pages and editions of the paper, are his public response to a perceived slight to his impeccable reputation by a Creole member of the City Council, G. Eleady-Cole. In his introductory letter, entitled "A Wilful Perversion of the Truth" and written while he was still a member of the Freetown Ratepayers Association, Lisk-Carew explains that he wished to

controvert a statement by Councillor G. Eleady Cole as published in the Minutes of the City Council in your latest issue to the effect that he was attacked by me in the street. This has taken the breath out of me; for no greater perversion of what actually occurred could have been made. I flatter myself to state that from the nature of my profession having to deal with all classes in the community, rich or poor, high or low, I have invariably won their esteem and good manners.<sup>174</sup>

Lisk-Carew called upon locals' knowledge of his professionalism as a businessman and as a photographer to help set the record straight. The incident (which I abbreviate here) occurred following his request sometime in 1930s to the City Council to show films on Sundays in Victoria Park rather than in Wilberforce Memorial Hall.<sup>175</sup>

His request was slow in being granted and dragged on over a period of months and years, but not before he confronted Cole about the delay.<sup>176</sup> Lisk-Carew may have

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<sup>174</sup> Alphonso Lisk-Carew, Letter to the Editor, *SLWN*, November 17, 1934, 6.

<sup>175</sup> Since the mid-nineteenth century, Victoria Park (located in the centre of Freetown) has been the site for events and celebrations associated with the local municipality.

<sup>176</sup> Akintola Wyse, "The Dissolution of Freetown City Council: A Negative Example of Political Apprenticeship in Colonial Sierra Leone Africa," *Africa*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1987), 433. The allegation of abuse (whether verbal or physical) cannot be substantiated, so it is necessary to examine the nature of the City Council at the time. By 1931, at the time of Lisk-Carew's editorial campaign, the Council was made up of a majority of European members. Successive governments blamed the Creole community for conflicts such as the 1919 Syrian Riot and the Railway Strike in 1926.

finally received support in 1932 from Governor Arnold Hodson, with whom he was acquainted,<sup>177</sup> and an agreement was struck to exhibit films in Victoria Park. By the time he wrote the letters, and coincident with the last months of Hodson's tenure as governor, the council terminated its agreement with him, and his Sunday film shows were cancelled. Lisk-Carew's subsequent letters on the issue displayed his annoyance and disappointment with the decision, as well as his concern with the spirit of free enterprise:

It behoves [*sic*] us therefore, to think seriously how to promote the welfare, and safeguard the interest of the coming generations. We need to take a larger view of life and look upon ourselves as a great organic whole, serving a useful purpose in the life of the community, as the unit is no longer the individual but the race.<sup>178</sup>

Lisk-Carew's response was seemingly directed to Cole as a fellow Creole who he viewed as shortsighted and petty. Yet his response moves beyond merely being shut out of a business venture; it is also concerned with building support and alliances amongst Africans from all social and economic strata.<sup>179</sup>

### **The West African Youth League, 1938-1943**

Comrades and Friends – We the officers of the Youth League respectively decided to stage this meeting in the interest of all sectors in the community ... We the people have never at any time been

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Later in 1926, as a punitive measure, the African-governed City Council was abolished and replaced with mainly European members appointed by the governor.

<sup>177</sup> Alphonso Lisk-Carew, Letter to the Editor, *SLWN*, November 17, 1934, 7. In a letter from Government House, Hodson confirmed his attendance at a film event in the park.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Lisk-Carew encountered the most resistance amongst the African members of the council. In 1934, following the suspension of the agreement, he wrote, "How true then it is that there are some people who are good friends and bad foes; and there is no wonder that we are regarded by some European element among us as a people whose mentality is peculiar." *SLWN*, November 17, 16. 1934,



called together by our Leaders to educate us in matters affecting our interests ... that must change.<sup>180</sup>

The perceived threat to Lisk-Carew's reputation may have helped to fuel his subsequent involvement with a more "radical" nationalist movement, the West African Youth League (WAYL). The league was founded by the Creole Marxist trade unionist I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson.<sup>181</sup> Wallace-Johnson travelled to Freetown from the Gold Coast on May 4, 1938, for a short visit and to give a series of lectures at Wilberforce Memorial Hall that he hoped would build a mass movement across class and "ethnic" lines in Sierra Leone.<sup>182</sup> On May 12, 1938, the WAYL's Sierra Leone branch was inaugurated. Wallace-Johnson attracted and received the support of mostly working-class Creoles, or the "sub-elite,"<sup>183</sup> and those politically isolated in the provinces.

The inclusion of all Sierra Leoneans across class and ethnic lines seemed to appeal to Lisk-Carew. Wallace-Johnson's ideology called for Pan-West African unification, which was a source of inspiration for young people and offered new hope for an older generation who looked for changes in the colonial political landscape.<sup>184</sup> Lisk-Carew was of that slightly older generation. Perhaps the rejection of his Sunday film project left lingering negative feelings (and possible resentments) and spurred

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<sup>180</sup> "West African Civil Liberties and National Defence League Incorporating the West African Youth league," *SLWN*, June 4, 1938, 4. This speech was delivered by Lisk-Carew at Wilberforce Memorial Hall on May 8, 1938.

<sup>181</sup> LaRay Denzer and Leo Spitzer, "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League: Part II. The Sierra Leone Period, 1938-1945," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1973), 565-601.

<sup>182</sup> "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson to Visit Freetown," *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, May 4, 1938, 5.

<sup>183</sup> See Martin Kilson, "The Emergent Elites of Black Africa, 1900 to 1960," in *Colonialism in Africa*, vol. 2. *The History and Politics of Colonialism 1914-1960*, ed. Gann and Duignan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 383.

<sup>184</sup> LaRay Denzer, "Wallace-Johnson and the Sierra Leone Labor Crisis, 1939," *African Studies Review*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1982), 170.

him to join the newly formed Sierra Leone chapter during Wallace-Johnson's visit and become the branch's first president.

As he stated in his fiery inaugural speech, "It makes us happy to realise that you have all come forward to work in the interest for the amelioration of the conditions of your country in particular, and your race in general,"<sup>185</sup> He also went on to note that "the League was formed to correct the wrongs of the old guard,"<sup>186</sup> referring to the failings of the defunct NCBWA and its leadership. The colonial regime branded the WAYL as a Communist organisation, ignoring the diverse range of political positioning held by its new membership. Wallace-Johnson was also viewed as a Marxist-Leninist, an easy designation to give to individuals who were drawn to or who had prior associations with Communist groups.<sup>187</sup>

Despite Lisk-Carew's attraction to the mass movement (the political organisation of a cross-section of the population who were exercising their right to self-government), his political affiliations and the on-going needs of his business collided. Some informants have referred to this period in Lisk-Carew's life as indicative of his "fearlessness" and his ability to "thumb his nose at [the British] while they continued to give him work."<sup>188</sup> Lisk-Carew's prominent position within the WAYL did not escape the gaze of the authorities who described him as a "half-rogue."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> "Inauguration of the Youth League Movement: Speech by the President," *SLWN*, May 21, 1938, 9.

<sup>186</sup> Despite the WAYL's nomenclature, the association appealed to Sierra Leoneans of all ages, including elders, as evidenced by Lisk-Carew, who would have been in his early 50s at this time.

<sup>187</sup> Denzer 1982, 164.

<sup>188</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., November 11, 2005.

<sup>189</sup> CO 267/332208, National Archives, Kew. Lisk-Carew is mentioned in a memo from the Acting Commissioner of Police to the Governor Jardine, June 20, 1938.

The WAYL's political agenda won widespread support amongst the working class in Freetown and won an overwhelming victory in the city council elections of 1939. However, despite its popularity and passionate rhetoric, it was doomed to suffer the fate of many early anti-colonial movements. It failed to win the support of the elite and was thus deemed an illegitimate movement by the colonial regime.<sup>190</sup> In 1939, at the outbreak of World War Two, the British summarily quashed it with the imprisonment of Wallace-Johnson (for a term of four years). Many members resigned or switched their allegiances, and the government's continuous harassment of its remaining members hindered any sustainability of the movement amongst Sierra Leoneans. The disruption of the WAYL halted what many considered the first, albeit short-lived, radical political organisation of West Africa.<sup>191</sup>

Several of Lisk-Carew's closest friends were imprisoned in Freetown by the colonial authorities, including Sydney Maurice Oluwole Boyle (also known as S.M.O.), secretary of the Freetown branch from 1938 to 1943.<sup>192</sup> Although Lisk-Carew was never arrested, his name can be found on a list of named "agitators" and "associates" of Wallace-Johnson.<sup>193</sup> Lisk-Carew, who had enjoyed decades of commissioned work from the colonial state, experienced a decrease in contracts.<sup>194</sup> The anecdotal evidence is strong that he received fewer business opportunities from subsequent administrations following Governor Hodson's departure.<sup>195</sup> Such

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<sup>190</sup> Wyse 1989, 92.

<sup>191</sup> Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 474.

<sup>192</sup> Sydney Maurice Oluwole Boyle, "Prelude to Freedom" (unpublished manuscript, 1975). Mr. Boyle was also Lisk-Carew's best man at his wedding in 1945.

<sup>193</sup> CO 267/670, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>194</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., November 20, 2007.

<sup>195</sup> Governors who made up subsequent administrations include: Henry Monck-Mason Moore, 1934-1937; Douglas James Jardine, 1937-1941; Hubert Craddock Stevenson, 1941-1947; and George Beresford-Stooke, 1947-1952.

vulnerability was perhaps directly related to his involvement in this nationalist movement.

### **World War Two, 1939-1945**

After the dismantling of the WAYL at the outbreak of World War Two, nationalist organisations were seen as an increasing threat to the British government. Throughout the colonial empire, the invocation of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act effectively shut them down. This legislation gave the authorities power to arrest and detain any person without reference to *habeas corpus*. Freetown's harbour was declared a protected strategic port and became a vital base for guarding trade routes and supply lines for war material and foodstuffs for the army. Ordinary Sierra Leoneans joined in the war effort with the Royal West African Frontier Force and fought the Japanese in Burma. Wartime propaganda was disseminated through the *SLWN* and other local newspapers in weekly serial form to highlight the brave exploits of the colonies' military units in combat. In one 1944 edition of the paper, a British officer observes that, "though the enemy Japanese are skilled, the West Africans match such skill and with equal cunning."<sup>196</sup> Other propaganda initiatives, such as film programs and photographs in support of the war, also served to familiarise Sierra Leoneans with the war effort and broaden their understanding of it and their own contributions to the Allied Forces.<sup>197</sup>

Lisk-Carew's participation in wartime initiatives included working with the colonial regime to produce a series of propaganda postcards with messages that aimed

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<sup>196</sup> "Officer Brings First-hand Story of Burma Fighting Flies from Front to West Africa," *SLWN*, March 4, 1944, 9.

<sup>197</sup> Sierra Leonean photographer Alaji Magba-Kamara fought in Nepal during the War in Burma and was an embedded photographer with the signal unit. His photographs capture the West African soldiers during the Burma campaign (1943-1945).

at mobilising local support for the British cause. He also took several images of Freetown's harbour with allied ships in the distance. It is difficult to measure Lisk-Carew's commitment to the war effort given his previous attachment to the WAYL and the group's nationalist leanings, but it once again marks the peculiar ambiguous situation in which he found himself. On the one hand, he was a nationalist whose political organising had been quashed; on the other, he continued to draw from and be patronised by an oppressive regime with the visual propaganda efforts of the war machine. One could also argue that he was also putting the needs of his business first by satisfying public demand for postcards, which conveyed the war effort to both local buyers and soldiers. West African nationalists noted the inherent contradictions in supporting a war where the objective was to secure the rights individual freedom, when the right to self-determination was denied under British colonial rule.<sup>198</sup> While Lisk-Carew may have seen his images as an extension of a wider and continued movement for democracy in Sierra Leone, he also took advantage of a lucrative commercial opportunity.

### **New Ventures, 1945-1948**

Lisk-Carew's post-war career was significant not only for his continued photographic achievement, but also, as the years went by, for his innovations in other enterprises.<sup>199</sup> He imported the first motorbike to Sierra Leone, and he bought the first car in the

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<sup>198</sup> Bonnie Ibhawoh, "Second World War Propaganda, Imperial Idealism and Anti-Colonial Nationalism in British West Africa," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2007), 238.

<sup>199</sup> In 1945, Lisk-Carew married Olawole Ojufemi Esther Bright, with whom he had three children: Adelina Ibiola, Admira Helena and Ronald Andrew Samuel Lisk-Carew. Olawole, a nurse midwife, was much younger than Lisk-Carew. Andrew Lisk-Carew explained that "my mother's father had died and she was looking for a father figure when she met my dad."

Lisk-Carew family.<sup>200</sup> He also moved to a larger home – Miraville, named after his favourite niece Admira – on Signal Hill, one of Freetown’s wealthy Creole enclaves. At some time in the early 1940s,<sup>201</sup> fostered by his early film enterprises, he returned to cinematic ventures by taking over the short-term management of Freetown’s first film theatre, the Walled City Kinema.<sup>202</sup> He parlayed his screenings into a more profitable venture in this larger venue. The origin of the Kinema is unknown, although at the time, most film theatres were opened by Indian, or most commonly, Middle Eastern entrepreneurs.<sup>203</sup> Because cinemas were seen as a standard form of urban development in a modern metropolis such as Freetown, the establishment of such businesses elicited little attention from municipal authorities, which meant that city council officials would not have taken particular notice of Lisk-Carew’s new venture.

Lisk-Carew linked the public enjoyment of photography and cinema ventures to other areas of popular entertainment, and became a sort of impresario of public entertainment in his advanced career. Taking up the tradition of grand dances, a popular entertainment at both private parties and community events in Freetown from the late nineteenth century, Lisk-Carew followed suit from civic organisations such as the Young Men’s Literary Association, the Musical Society and the Progressive

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<sup>200</sup> Paulina Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., November 14, 2007, she remembered that the car was an Austin (model unknown) with the licence plate number F1771. She recalled the car brought great excitement to the family. She noted that “if we children were good and helped him out in the studio, he would take us for a ride which would be a great treat.”

<sup>201</sup> The exact date is unknown; the approximate date is based on informants’ recollections.

<sup>202</sup> The Walled City Kinema may have taken its name from the *Walled City of West Africa* exhibit at the 1924 and 1925 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. See also *SLWN*, June 27, 1925, in which an advertisement announced the screening of a film about the exhibition at Wilberforce Memorial Hall. It is unclear whether this was an initiative of the Lisk-Carew brothers but they are named as sponsors.

<sup>203</sup> Burns 2000, 199.

Society.<sup>204</sup> Lisk-Carew's masterstroke was to combine many forms of entertainment into a single event. Such a lavish event might include a card tournament known as a whist drive, a dance and a stage production accompanied by local musicians, all taking place at Wilberforce Memorial Hall.<sup>205</sup> These intense events, offering something for everyone, enjoyed great popularity amongst all strata of Freetown society. They also proved a profitable economic venture for Lisk-Carew.

In the 1940s, political changes were afoot, conceding more representation from the colony. Interestingly, these changes came about alongside the central administration's increased efforts to use film and photography in documenting the colony. Lisk-Carew, like photographers all over West African colonies, played an instrumental part in such opportunities, while others were sidelined. Lisk-Carew's photography business shifted as the relationship between the regime and its citizens changed. Colonial officials were well aware of the rising tide of anti-colonialist activity across West Africa. As a result, some political concessions were made whereby unofficial members would make up the majority of the legislative council.<sup>206</sup> This reconstituting of the council was also designed to increase representation from the protectorate and the electoral base in Freetown. However, as such measures for heightened political autonomy were enacted, the regime's presence was equally promoted through film initiatives.

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<sup>204</sup> There are numerous advertisements in the *Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails*, the *Sierra Leone Times* and the *SLWN* that announced these events.

<sup>205</sup> According to informants, such events would continue well into the next morning and were considered one of the highlights of social events in Freetown. The whist drive encompassed the earlier part of the evening.

<sup>206</sup> Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, "Decolonization and the Making of a Post-Colonial State," in *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 60.

Such initiatives included the screening of newsreels produced by the Public Relations Office (PRO) and the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) using a mobile cinema van in Freetown. The footage often featured imperial governance and official events with the potential to reach a mass audience.<sup>207</sup> The van would be set up in an open area and the public encouraged to bring their own seats to the evening show.<sup>208</sup> In 1948, a photographer with the West African Photographic Service in Accra and a colonial administrator toured Sierra Leone, taking images of Freetown's Community Centre, Power Station, Odeon Cinema, Union Training College and Lungi Airport. Constructed for educational purposes, such government-sponsored films and photographic documentation assisted in reaffirming the larger colonial project and the status quo using new media technology. Local studio photographers like Lisk-Carew were no longer awarded lucrative government photography commissions.

As the demands for photography grew smaller, its contexts changed with the times. While the number of new photography studios increased in Freetown, most proved to be short-lived ventures.<sup>209</sup> From 1938 onward, there was a significant decline in the amount of advertisements placed by local photographers in Sierra Leone newspapers. Thus, between 1939 and 1948, Lisk-Carew scaled back by only

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<sup>207</sup> *Colonial Annual Reports, Sierra Leone, 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), 56-58. Following World War Two, the primary responsibility of the Colonial Film Unit was to produce instructional films for Africans. Since Sierra Leone was a small country it did not have its own unit, but cameras and film were supplied to the PRO who would then shoot their own short films. See Rosalynn Smith, "The Post War Effect of the Colonial Film Unit in Africa: 1946-1955," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 12 (1992), 166.

<sup>208</sup> Jocelyn Greene, pers. comm., September 9, 2012.

<sup>209</sup> Nigerian-owned studios (many short-lived) started to crop up in the mid-1950s, including that of the highly skilled and well-respected Jonathan Adenuga, whose studio practice I explore in greater detail in the final chapter.



placing sporadic advertisements in issues of the *SLWN*.<sup>210</sup> The late 1940s also saw a decline of the postcard industry and by the mid-1950s, the late colonial period, only a few local photographers were granted government contracts to cover civic events and official state business. In 1958, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was created and comprised three departments: the Government Information Services, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Services/TV and the Government Printing Department. Part of the Government Information Services included a photographic services division.<sup>211</sup> The in-house photographers would at times work alongside freelance photographers, who were hired for large State celebrations. As a result, only three or four photographers covered vast parts of the country. Government support changed the landscape for photographers as far as civic and public subjects for photography were concerned.<sup>212</sup>

Because of these changes in the photography market, Lisk-Carew began to devote more time to his studio photography<sup>213</sup> by means of which he continued to play an active role in the production of portraits.

## **To the End**

In failing health, and with no one to take over the business, Lisk-Carew closed his studio around 1958-1959.<sup>214</sup> He passed away on July 7, 1969. In 1970, to

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<sup>210</sup> In scanning the issues within this range, one can see that Lisk-Carew bought smaller advertising spaces than in the 1920s and early 1930s. These spaces coincided with seasonal holidays such as Easter and Christmas.

<sup>211</sup> Arthur Abrams, *Cultural Policy in Sierra Leone* (Paris: Unesco, 1978), 17.

<sup>212</sup> Many of the in-house state photographers, such as Mr. Yaskey, who died in the late 1970s, were influenced by Lisk-Carew. In the final chapter, I explore the next generation of Freetown photographers who followed Lisk-Carew, their experiences working with the post-independent administrations, their studio practices and the traces (if any) of Lisk-Carew in their work.

<sup>213</sup> Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., June 5, 2011.

commemorate and honour Lisk-Carew's key role and contribution to the development of photography in Sierra Leone, the Institute of African Studies at Fourah Bay College mounted a retrospective exhibition of his work. Revering Lisk-Carew's legacy, Edward Blyden noted that "his energetic life and work will long be remembered and the treasures of his collection will help us to remember our nation's history."<sup>215</sup>

In this chapter, I have detailed the trajectory of Lisk-Carew's life as a professional photographer. Through detailed periodisation, I have uncovered and examined substantive evidence of Lisk-Carew's fifty-year career, from his apprenticeship with W.S. Johnston, to the early work outside of Sierra Leone and development of his studio enterprise, to his interest in politics and Pan-Africanism. I have emphasised how Lisk-Carew's trajectory was complex, seldom straightforward and necessitated much negotiation with numerous constituencies. To this end, a viable framework for situating Lisk-Carew's multifaceted practice emerged through an examination of the range and specificity of the social, political and economic contexts in which he operated.

Situating Lisk-Carew in his historical context has been key to this biography: tracing his life led to deciphering how his practice was embedded in a range of cultural and political milieus throughout his professional life. Lisk-Carew's career path suggests an approach to photography that was informed and purposeful. While his practice was initially shaped by a previous generation of photographers in Sierra

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<sup>214</sup> I was told of one young man who had apprenticed under Lisk-Carew and eventually travelled to London to pursue a career in photography. He died in the 1970s. My informant could not recollect his name.

<sup>215</sup> Blyden 1970, 2.

Leone, he forged a unique path that did not shy away from the political and social challenges of his era. Public recognition and his many successes insured his place as one of the renowned luminaries of Sierra Leonean society, then and today. In the next chapter, I will chronicle and examine key moments of Lisk-Carew's practice toward further illuminating his vast photography archive.

## Illustrations



Fig. 2.1. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *East Brook Lane, Freetown, Sierra Leone*, ca. 1903-1907, postcard, [www.Decampe.net](http://www.Decampe.net).



Fig. 2.2. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Members of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Sierra Leone*, 1907, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickenson.



Fig. 2.3. Alphonso Lisk Carew, *Lisk-Carew Studio*, Corner of Westmoreland and Gloucester Streets, Freetown, ca. 1912-1914, silver print, courtesy Gary Schultz.



Fig. 2.4. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Lisk-Carew Brothers Studio*, ca. 1914–1916, silver print, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.

## Chapter Three

### In and Out of Sierra Leone through Lisk-Carew's Lens

In the previous chapter, I traced the trajectory of Alphonso Lisk-Carew's life and the ways in which local conditions – political, social and economic – helped to shape his successful commercial enterprise. The purpose of the present chapter is to further examine the conditions of Lisk-Carew's production, particularly the specific formats and genres he adopted to forge his unique aesthetic. Following John Tagg, I will explore the “socially structured ways of seeing and specific genres of image making in which they are realised,”<sup>1</sup> putting into context the multi-faceted nature of his output. Accordingly, I mine the complex relations between Lisk-Carew and his various patrons and clients, the economic factors and the demands of the photography market, and the particular tastes and preferences of his consumers. While pursuing his own aesthetic impulses, Lisk-Carew combined these myriad factors in building his photography practice.

In determining his visual production, I examine an early cabinet card<sup>2</sup> that dates from around 1903, as well as studio portraits up until the mid-1920s wherein

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<sup>1</sup> John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Amherst: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 171.

<sup>2</sup> The cabinet card format was popular from the 1860s, but its usage waned by around 1906 with the introduction of larger-format studio portraiture and the formation of more portable camera technology such as Kodak's Brownie Camera. The Brownie Camera was introduced in 1900 as a simple point-and-shoot camera that was very user friendly. The affordability and accessibility of the camera meant that the general public – particularly children – could produce their own photographs. The Brownie was introduced to African regions en masse by the late 1920s and into the 1930s. Seydou Kieta recalls that his first camera was a Brownie, given to him in 1935 by his uncle.

subjects wholeheartedly engage in modes of self-fashioning. I then explore the official commissions that cover a range of state and private sponsors that reflect a regime of visibility controlled by the colonial government. Finally, I interrogate Lisk-Carew's prolific photograph and postcard production at the early to middle stages of his career (1905-1910). These include second editions, at times marked "Lisk-Carew Brothers" (1911-1916), and later editions from the late 1920s to the late 1940s numbered or marked simply "L-C Bros." I query which subjects he chose to document and how he chose to present them. In so doing, I examine the breadth of his extensive output, ranging from chance encounters on Freetown's busy streets to elegant portraits featuring paramount chiefs and children.

My exploration of key examples of his copious and varied output will be discussed within an overall chronological framework and subdivided by genres. His output, which is now located in a range of institutional and personal archives, took on numerous roles as both commodities and objects with aesthetic appeal. Thus, Lisk-Carew's studio portrait work initially appealed to wealthy local patrons. His aesthetic, while appropriating European portrait conventions, also reinforced the African client's autonomy as subjects. His government-commissioned images entailed an approach with varied degrees of creative control depending on commissioning agent. Such photographs ultimately mirrored like images of the time. And the images replicated in postcard form further reflected the diversity of approaches based on patron and consumer demand. Some of his images in their various modes circulated through publishing and distribution networks that included international journals, books, colonial guides and travel memoirs. As will become clear, one cannot view Lisk-Carew's oeuvre as monolithic, comprising a singular vision, style or form.

Rather, one must look at his output as heterogeneous, encompassing multiple and overlapping intentions, approaches and outcomes.

Of most import, for the purposes of this chapter, are the ways in which Lisk-Carew's photography was characteristic of the times in which he produced, often creating paradoxes within his practice. Such contradictions comprised the necessary challenges of a local modernist photographer. Therefore, as some of the images discussed in this chapter reveal, Lisk-Carew's photography focuses on the African body, representing it as hyper-concealed or hyper-revealed, as subjugated or liberated, as participant in the larger colonial society or bystander relegated to the margins.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, his photographs of colonial officials and sites show the extent to which the imperial agenda was constantly reinforced and recycled by adopting familiar visual tropes.

### **A Cabinet Card**

A cabinet card from around 1903-1905 (fig. 3.1) provides a good starting point on the many dimensions of photographing African bodies in Freetown. It is indicative of the ways in which Lisk-Carew's commissions for an African clientele involved a different set of approaches than those requested by the colonial administration.<sup>4</sup> Thus for the elite African client concerned with displaying their status, Lisk-Carew made certain aesthetic choices to depict such visual cues. This badly damaged and

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<sup>3</sup> Hudita Mustafa, "Fashioning Selves in Dakarois Popular Photography," in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Post Colonial Africa*, ed. Paul Landau and Susan Griffin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 172. See also Allen Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. R. Bolton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 376.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 5. Baxandall notes that different types of commissions entailed different types of control, depending on who was initiating the contract.



deteriorating albumen print cabinet card, portions of which have been eaten away, portrays a group of four smartly dressed unidentified Creoles or African elite.<sup>5</sup> Two members of the group sit in a “jinrickshaw” while the puller stands in the foreground right of centre of the composition. The image offers a compelling view into two sectors of Sierra Leonean society. The clients captured in these types of photographs represented communities who had experienced and responded to local conditions at the time. They were exemplary of the entanglements of local and foreign elements and histories in Sierra Leone.<sup>6</sup>

The cabinet card bears a partial stamp that reads *3 East Br.* While the remainder of the hallmark has rotted away (fig. 3.2), it appears to be that of Lisk-Carew’s early home studio address at 3 East Brook Lane. Lisk-Carew’s stamp is not visible and may have succumbed to the damage along the deteriorated portion of the card.<sup>7</sup> Lisk-Carew has competently staged the image using conventional poses and motifs. For example, the young woman standing to the left of the jinrickshaw uses it to rest her hand. The jinrickshaw in fact became a prop in a well-established portrait genre of the colonial settler or visitor and their “exotic” mode of transport. Images dating back to the mid-1880s of European men and women being transported in

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<sup>5</sup> This image has barely survived its unfavourable conditions in the Sierra Leone Public Archives at Fourah Bay College. During my fieldwork in 2009 in Freetown, I spent hours in the poorly lit, hot and dusty resource room where the small collection of photograph is housed on the campus. In 1999, during the war, the photography holdings were relocated to FBC from a main government building in central Freetown. The images range from portraits, including of protectorate chiefs, views of Sierra Leone and representations of the country’s material culture. While the collection has not been catalogued, labels pasted on the back of the cardboard mounts provide short descriptive textual information. See the conclusion in this present dissertation for a more detailed interrogation of Sierra Leone’s “endangered” photography archives

<sup>6</sup> John Picton, “Photography, Textiles and African Inventions of Modernity,” *IFRA Ibadan Newsletter*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2002), 13.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Two in which I establish that Lisk-Carew operated a studio at his childhood residence around 1903 at the early stages of his career.

variations of the “rickshaw” by their “native carriers” became a common visual trope of the British Empire.<sup>8</sup> Elite local Africans in Freetown and other regions also used this mode of transport as a sign of social status.

In this cabinet card, the clients presented themselves in the manner in which they wanted to be seen and are constructed as members of the African elite or, at the very least, as well-to-do men and women, judging by their modern manner of dress. Their appearance acts in sharp contrast to that of the puller. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Freetown, the act of self-fashioning, or what Stephen Greenblatt has called the “self-conscious fashioning” or “forming of a self,”<sup>9</sup> became an established dimension amongst the Creole group. Such forming of self was also concerned with “shaping a distinct personality ... a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving.”<sup>10</sup> One of the distinct personality traits for the Creole group involved the adoption of European styles of dress and mannerisms. It became a highly loaded cultural signifier. While other Africans along the coastal areas of Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Senegal similarly appropriated European dress, the Creoles were regarded as the most ostentatious in their display of European finery. Such excess was often criticised and satirised in the Sierra Leonean press.<sup>11</sup> During a trip to Freetown, a European traveller observed, “the imitation European clothes affected by the Negroes,

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<sup>8</sup> James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 11. See T.J. Alldridge, *Sierra Leone: A Transformed Colony* (London: Seeley & Co., 1910), 68. Alldridge marvels at the new modes of transportation such as the “jinkshaw” which he notes is “a comparatively new importation ... still rare and principally used by the missionaries from the United States of America.”

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See “Degeneracy and Decay of Africans,” *SLWN*, October 31, 1906, 8. The writer, E.B. Wright, blames the wearing of European dress by Africans for the breakdown in morality in Freetown.

some of the latter appearing in top-hats on the hottest days ... Their importance is amusing.”<sup>12</sup> An example of such mockery in visual form is evident in a postcard from Conakry produced around 1900-1905 (fig. 3.3) entitled *Habitants of Sierra Leone*. While the illustration seems to indicate the subtle caricature of an African couple outfitted in well-appointed European fashions, it is also a signifier of Atlantic cosmopolitanism. The woman is seated holding a parasol while reading a large book. Her partner stands and poses facing the viewer with an air of dandified elegance.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted that for the early Nova Scotian settlers to Freetown in the late eighteenth century, the act of forming a Nova Scotian self or identity was deeply connected to a concern with one's outward appearance and a fidelity to education, Christianity and notions of individualism. They were eager to stand in contrast to the indigenous “others” who lived in Sierra Leone. Therefore, by the mid- to late nineteenth century, dress codes played a very important role whereby the newly liberated recaptive or returnee groups were also encouraged to adopt Western ideals and attire as a measure of their full assimilation into the society. Arthur Porter notes that a proclamation issued in 1834 required “all Managers of Districts and Justices of the Peace within the Colony [to] ... strictly prohibit all Liberated Africans under their *superintendence* and *observation* from assuming any other dress than usually adopted

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<sup>12</sup> “First Impressions Gleaned on a First Trip to West Africa,” *Sierra Leone Times*, August 18, 1900, 2.

<sup>13</sup> The Creole couple pictured in the postcard image bears a striking resemblance to a pair photographed in 1900 by M. Roux, a French colonial agent. By the mid- to late nineteenth century, Sierra Leoneans were attracted to the economic possibilities offered by Conakry but retained their links with Freetown. See Odile Goerg's fascinating study, “Sierra Leoneans in Guinea: An Introduction,” in *Sierra Leone Studies at Birmingham*, ed. Adam Jones and Peter Mitchel (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1987), 13. Goerg notes that “the photograph of the Sierra Leonean couple bears witness to the manner in which the Sierra Leoneans were seen and the image which they wished to show themselves: the style of clothing, the presence of the book, an implicit monogamy. All elements contributed to the perception of Sierra Leoneans ... as ‘Civilised Blacks.’”

by Europeans.”<sup>14</sup> The pronouncement used a panoptic metaphor as a strategy for the surveillance of returnee and local Africans, and insured that Western dress became a sign of order, respectability, prestige and aspiration to membership of middle- and elite-class status in Freetown.<sup>15</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, authorities implemented a number of strategies of control in the form of proclamations and dress ordinances, including one issued in 1845 which was prompted by Europeans who witnessed “indecent scenes of nudity in our streets.”<sup>16</sup>

### Studio Portraiture

The preceding edict on the importance of dress, prestige and order was inextricably bound up in the politics of visibility<sup>17</sup> and the importance of how one was seen in a colonial society.<sup>18</sup> Such attitudes held fast in Freetown at the turn of the twentieth century. In his early studio photographs, which date from approximately 1903, Lisk-Carew demonstrated not only an evolving style in his technique and compositional strategies, but also an acute awareness of the persistence of Western ideals and specificities towards dress and social status held by the Creole group. In these commissioned portraits, Lisk-Carew featured subjects who affirmed their group

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<sup>14</sup> Arthur Porter, *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 101.

<sup>15</sup> See Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October*, vol. 39 (Winter 1986), 9. Sekula notes that Foucault’s “panopticism” provides the central metaphor for modern disciplinary power based on isolation, individuation and supervision.

<sup>16</sup> Porter 1963, 102.

<sup>17</sup> Visuality is apt in this context in terms of seeing and being seen – visibility and aesthetics. Most importantly, it is linked to an idea that contrasts with Baxandall’s period eye whereby vision was considered “a skilled cultural practice.” See Chris Jenks, “The Centrality of the Eye in Western Culture: An Introduction,” in *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 10.

<sup>18</sup> Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 208-209.

identity and agency as elite Creoles (and those aspiring to be). A number of his clients were local Africans who used their engagement with photography to reflect their social and professional networks and their family and business aspirations.

In the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, the rising middle classes eagerly embraced photography. Photographs immortalised their achievements, acted as a means of self-expression and were a status symbol.<sup>19</sup> In the context of Sierra Leone, and particularly as it applied to the Creole and African elite communities, participation in many of the conventions of formal portraiture helped to reinforce their positions in the higher echelons of Freetown society. Four photographs (figs. 3.4-3.8) exemplify many of the complex aspects of dress, class and self-fashioning expressed in Lisk-Carew's studio portraiture. One photograph taken around 1903-1905 (fig. 3.4) depicts an unidentified Creole woman elegantly dressed in an elaborate gown. Her jewellery, though understated, testifies to her elite status and she is posed before Lisk-Carew's elaborate painted backdrop. The young client wears a sombre but dignified expression as she leans upon an ornate pedestal. Barely discernible and folded neatly under her hands is a newspaper that signifies her engagement with the conditions of modernity. She may have been educated at one of the elite mission schools that catered to cosmopolitan Creole group or at a European institution, for example the African Training Institute at Colwyn Bay in North Wales.<sup>20</sup> The formality and careful composition of the image suggest that it was taken to commemorate a special milestone or achievement.

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<sup>19</sup> Tagg 1988, 37.

<sup>20</sup> The African Training Institute at Colwyn Bay, North Wales (1890-1912) that catered specifically to the training of Africans and Africans in the diaspora as missionaries. See "Rules for the Management of the Sierra Leone Auxiliary of the Congo Training Institute, Colwyn Bay, North Wales," *Sierra Leone Times*, July 7, 1894, 3.

In a photograph taken around 1911-1912 (fig. 3.5), Lisk-Carew captured a distinguished, unidentified man in the studio. The framed portrait features the same pedestal as in figure 3.4, but bears a more muted backdrop. This alteration may have reflected the client's taste or Lisk-Carew's aesthetic choice. The client's pose draws attention to his fashionable European-styled suit and expensive shoes that evoke the nuanced swagger of a wealthy patron and socially elevated Creole personality.<sup>21</sup> Both portraits, created for private commemoration, utilised an overall schema,<sup>22</sup> combining choice of attire, props, staging (pose) and lighting. Such schema assisted in conveying the individual's social status and affirmation as a member of a progressive community in Freetown.

Lisk-Carew's schema introduced common narratives across time and was evident in earlier work and work done later in his practice. In some studio portraits from 1912 onward, Lisk-Carew also introduced a single emblematic prop as a motif that, when held by his sitters, reflected the subject's mood or a specific quality he wished them to impart. In one example from the early 1920s (fig. 3.6), the unknown subject is representative of a younger generation of Creoles who were asserting a cosmopolitan and worldly sense in their fashionable style and presentation of self.<sup>23</sup> The young woman captured in this portrait wears the fashionable "shorter"-length dress complimented by her very stylish shoes. The simple informal backdrop allows

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<sup>21</sup> See Andrew Wilton, *The Swagger Portrait: Grand Manner Portraiture in Britain from Van Dyke to Augustus John 1630-1930* (London: Tate Publications, 1992), 17. Wilton's definition of swagger is applicable to Lisk-Carew's depiction of his wealthy Creole clients. He notes that "swagger" implies a degree of self-consciousness on the part of the artist, if not the sitter, which causes the portrait to transcend the private statement and address itself to the public at large.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 38.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that during the 1920s, fashion entered a new era as Western women gravitated to less restrictive styled clothing such as shorter dresses and skirts. Western fashion was quickly adopted in colonial zones, including Sierra Leone, amongst young affluent women who wished to emulate the trends brought over by friends and relatives who had travelled abroad.

the personality of the sitter to come to the forefront, as exemplified in her open engagement with viewers. She confronts the viewer with her confident gaze. The young woman holds a prop reflective of refined elegance – in this case a handkerchief. Her pose and accompanying prop recall the hallmarks of African American photographer James Van Der Zee who actively fashioned his subjects so that each pose, props, outfit and background would tell a specific narrative.<sup>24</sup>

A specific narrative is also constructed in an image of a young Muslim man (fig. 3.7), taken around 1920-1925,<sup>25</sup> perched on the side of a divan, with one leg partially elevated in a relaxed comportment. He looks squarely at the lens with an air of self-assurance and sophistication. His floor-length tunic and accompanying cloak, or *balmus*, with matching fez-like hat are well tailored and showcase his status as a young man of some means. His affluence and worldliness are also noticeable in his choice of Western footwear, since the usual pairing with such an outfit would have been locally made or imported leather slippers. Equally part of the narrative is the diploma or rolled certificate that references his education. Through his skilful staging, Lisk-Carew provides a portrait of his young Muslim subject as learned, well-travelled and prosperous. Similar to the portraits featuring Creole clients, where individual styling was crucial to differentiating the subject's higher social position, so too Lisk-Carew has called attention to the importance and tangible affirmation of the young man's Muslim identity through his attire.

Lisk-Carew's group studio portraits often portrayed the cohesive dynamics of Freetown's most eminent families from the mid-1910s through to the early 1950s. For

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<sup>24</sup> Miriam Thaggert, *Images of Black Modernism: Verbal and Visual Strategies of the Harlem Renaissance* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 157.

<sup>25</sup> Allen M. Howard, "Trade and Islam in Sierra Leone, 18th-20th Centuries," in *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone*, ed. Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1997), 21-52.

middle-class and elite Creoles, the presence of a family portrait in the household was seen as a necessary part of the family's social biography and lineage. Thus, the parlour area was reserved for family photographs that were either displayed prominently or housed in special albums. The Creole elite appropriated the Victorian notion of the parlour as a "public" space where family values and a collective identity were put forward for visitors.<sup>26</sup> Lisk-Carew's family portraits were also in service to a Christianised ethos in which monogamous church marriages were the only acceptable form of union within Western colonial ideology.<sup>27</sup>

In an image from the 1930s (fig. 3.8), Lisk-Carew captured Reverend Edward B. Cole and his family. He and his wife are presented in the foreground, with Cole slightly elevated in his chair. Lisk-Carew used a strategic visual device to represent the generational and gendered hierarchies in the family by placing the reverend and his wife centrally in the frame and subdividing the children; the girls, from the youngest to the eldest, are in the centre of the composition, providing a barrier between the youngest and the eldest male sibling. Lisk-Carew also placed Reverend Cole in a prominent place in the composition where he is thus afforded parental and spiritual authority over the group. The Cole family portrait is another compelling example within Lisk-Carew's practice showing his appropriation of the Western conventions of the genre while injecting his own aesthetic tropes such as creative compositional elements, poses, framing and a distinctive use of lighting to enhance the details of the portrait. Lisk-Carew's photography of African clients highlighted their self-fashioning often as elite, educated and well-travelled citizens of Freetown. It

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<sup>26</sup> Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 27.

<sup>27</sup> Lisk-Carew also photographed various African families in village settings who did not confirm to such Christian ideology.



enabled his clients to claim a tangible space in the society and created recognisable narratives for those who viewed the photographs.

### **Official Commissions**

Lisk-Carew's studio photographs were based on clearly defined social and economic relationships between himself and his African clients. The contractual agreements between Lisk-Carew and the European visitors or employees of local European establishments were also concerned with a fashioning of the European colonial body. Photographs in the form of official images or personal mementos allowed representatives of the regime to assert both their presence and their authority in Sierra Leone.

In an early example from 1904, Lisk-Carew displayed his technical expertise in the handling of a large group shot (fig. 3.9). The official image featured Governor Sir Charles Anthony King Harman (seated in the front row, sixth from the left) with an expatriate community at a garden party at Government House.<sup>28</sup> The photograph was taken on the eve of the completion of his four-year term as governor of Sierra Leone. Lisk-Carew crafted an image that showcased both his early skills as a photographer and the large community of colonials and expatriates who made an effort to maintain their close social and cultural ties in Freetown. The assembled men and women dressed in their finery claimed their identities as agents of British imperialism. They participated in social practices such as garden and tea parties that evoked a distant homeland but was quite removed from any interaction with the local African communities. In fact, the identifying features of Freetown as the locale in this photograph is notably erased from the background of the composition, save for the

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<sup>28</sup> General News, *SLWN*, May 2, 1904, 5.

generic foliage. Through such narratives, the British replicated the social experiences of their upper-middle-class counterparts in Britain.<sup>29</sup> The photograph symbolised for those back home both the exotic nature of their lives and the ways in which they had adapted. Lisk-Carew's commissioned image was symbolic of the pretensions of imperial authority and also highlighted the sharp boundaries of race.

Such boundaries seemed to be transgressed in a group shot of the Acting Governor Brigadier General Graves taken around 1905 (fig. 3.10). The image also conveys a sense of Lisk-Carew's developing style in his approach to such commissions.<sup>30</sup> Graves's tenure as governor was short-lived. However he was featured in a few significant images by Lisk-Carew. The photograph captures a group of colonial administrators, local Sierra Leonean staff, visiting dignitaries and the main subject of the photograph: Governor Graves (seen in the middle row holding a cane). Similar to the preceding King Harman image, this photograph contains the elements of a formal group portrait, which appealed to a colonial clientele; it also provides a visual document of colonial authority and foregrounds the status of elite representatives and key officials. This image also takes into account Lisk-Carew's knowledge of the specific visual cues of the time. As Elizabeth Bigham has observed, "Commercial portrait photography is profoundly focused on its readers: They are its patrons, subjects and viewers."<sup>31</sup> Due to the dispersal of such photographs, African and European viewers were very aware of the symbols and social contexts associated with such images.

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<sup>29</sup> See Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hills Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 1-38.

<sup>30</sup> Graves served as Acting Governor for Sierra Leone for only few months before becoming ill and dying sometime in 1905.

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Bigham, "Issues of Authorship in the Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keïta," *African Arts*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1999), 57.

The arrangement of the group in a hierarchical manner depicts General Graves as a dignified, outgoing leader surrounded by his loyal staff. For instance, while the assembled group is clearly representative of Freetown's cosmopolitan multiracial and multi-ethnic composition, non-Europeans are either grouped sitting on the ground or standing in the last row behind Graves and other high-ranking officers. The increasingly racialized hierarchies of colonial rule are visually revealed and enforced. This seemingly commonplace group portrait, although registered "objectively" by Lisk-Carew, offers a critical space to consider a historical moment where the citizens of Sierra Leone were still under the control of the governor and legislative council, with no rights to elective representation.<sup>32</sup> Lisk-Carew's image of the outgoing governor reinforced and reproduced the messages of colonial rule and perhaps made a sly statement about the subordinate positions of colonial subjects. Unlike the King Harman photograph, where the upper echelons of European society segregated themselves from the surrounding community, this photograph captures Freetown as a contested site, with various factions vying for position. Despite the potential for alternative readings of such images, Lisk-Carew was tied to the government's imperial agenda because of the patronage to which he hoped to be a frequent beneficiary.

Lisk-Carew took advantage of small commissions such as this to secure larger assignments. Governor Graves, in particular, seemed interested in the use of photography to publicise the projects in which he was directly involved or, at the very least, those he endorsed. One such project involved the building of the Sierra Leone

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<sup>32</sup> Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1989), 66.

Government Railway.<sup>33</sup> In 1898, Governor Frederick Cardew pushed for the construction of the railway, which would run from Freetown to the hinterland provinces, in order to “boost British industries.”<sup>34</sup> The main line was completed on May 1, 1899; it ran from Freetown in the west to Makeni in the north and Pendembu in the south, stretching for 227 miles. The final branch of the line was completed in September 1905, and Lisk-Carew was hired as the official photographer to document this great achievement. In this role as travelling photographer, he was part of Graves’s entourage and was on hand to photograph each terminal along the line. This promotion of British technological progress was evident in several images featuring Graves. In *Crossing the Moa Bridge* (fig. 3.11), he is featured sitting at the engine of the cargo train after crossing the Moa Railway Bridge. In the reporting of the momentous event, it was observed that once the train crossed the bridge, “His excellency the Governor next re-crossed the Moa and then back to the centre of the bridge for photographs to be taken by Mr. Lisk-Carew in the Engine which had been detached from the other carriages.”<sup>35</sup>

The carefully staged image of Grave’s posing triumphantly at the controls of the powerful locomotive reinforced and advocated new forms of innovation with the reduction of travel time and the further expansion of mercantile activities in the provinces and other regions.<sup>36</sup> The ease of travel also shifted segments of the

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<sup>33</sup> Governor James Hay Shaw first tabled the idea for the railway during his first term in 1886 and 1887. However, it was under Frederick Cardew that the idea became a reality in 1896.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Corby, “Bo School and Its Graduates in Colonial Sierra Leone,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 15 (1981), 323.

<sup>35</sup> “Opening of Railway Bridge Across the Moa River,” *SLWN*, September 2, 1905, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 17. Giddens notes that this collapsing of time and space with railway expansion not only affected the perception of the physical landscape but also the social relations of the society.

population from rural to urban, creating new social realities that altered not only the perception of geography but also preconceived notions about the various groups inhabiting the protectorate.<sup>37</sup>

Lisk-Carew's early and on-going association with members of the European colonial sector revealed his own immersion into a world whose lived experiences and accomplishments in the name of empire he was often paid to capture. His commissioned portraits depict the range of professions, such as civil servants, high-ranking officials, businessmen and army officers, who shaped their communities. The European population was also highly transitory and forced to be seen as publically cohesive while privately hierarchically differentiated.

During the early years of Lisk-Carew's career, Creoles in the civil service and the professional fields met with increasing discrimination. The settlement of a segregated (European-only) Hill Station area in 1904, under the guise of medical and sanitary concerns, proved disastrous to European-Creole relations. Few Africans were invited to join social events in the mountain enclave, which fuelled their resentment. A deepening racial divide set into the fabric of Freetonian society, so that by 1908, a writer in the *Sierra Leone Guardian* observed with bitterness that, "Segregation is so well carried out in the Colony today; we observed it in the Church, in the matter of special seats, in the graveyard wherein portions of land are in reserve, in the City, to wit, special Club Rooms, recreation grounds, amusements with music and dances and

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<sup>37</sup> See Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 78. He notes that a stereotypical image by the Creoles of "up-country" inhabitants as "uncivilised" had been reinforced through British colonial influence. He notes that it took "conscious efforts to modify or alter it – even by those most ready to view with sympathy and learn the manners and customs of their hinterland neighbors."

‘At Homes’ to which no Native or black man is being invited.”<sup>38</sup>

Lisk-Carew was no doubt keenly aware of some of the infractions to which the writer referred, and perhaps he too had been subject to European racism. Yet at this stage, his career aspirations were inextricably linked to and dependent on increasing contacts with members of the European community. These affiliations provided security especially at the onset of his practice. Thus despite the widening gulf created by the regime’s racist policies, contact and engagement with the coloniser was constant. As Simone AbouMaliq notes, “In that constancy, negotiation and engagement were necessary. Europeans and Africans had to ‘borrow’ incessantly from each other if they were to be engaged with each other.”<sup>39</sup> Lisk-Carew’s patronage by members of the European community guaranteed the continual production of images of colonial authority, which circulated locally and abroad. His images offered multiple representations of this presence in Freetown.

In 1909 Lisk-Carew produced a compelling photograph that marked a departure from the familiar portraits of stiff colonials and expatriates in conventional poses emblematic of imperial power. *A Group of European Men* (fig. 3.12) captures a dapper trio – evidently men employed with the colonial government or with one of the many European companies based in Freetown at the time – in Freetown’s lush tropical setting. Their informal manner reflects their ease with the casual snapshot approach of the session and an elimination of the social distance usually associated with such images. With the resulting photograph, Lisk-Carew produced one that memorialised Freetown for his clients, and one in which viewers both locally and

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<sup>38</sup> “The System of Segregation,” *The Sierra Leone Guardian*, April 10, 1908, 4-5.

<sup>39</sup> Simone AbouMaliq, “On the Worlding of African Cities,” *African Studies Review*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2001), 19.

abroad had visual access.<sup>40</sup> Lisk-Carew encased the photograph in an elegant cardboard frame bearing his name which served the dual purpose of personalising the memento for the client(s) and marketing his business.

At times, Lisk-Carew's patronage by European officials involved commissions outside of normative photographic genres. In 1908, such a contract included a set of images depicting an ailing horse belonging to a Major Oswald Smeaton, a British soldier stationed in Freetown with the Royal Artillery. In one photograph (fig. 3.13), Captain Frederick Harvey<sup>41</sup> is shown holding Sewi, the ailing horse suffering from trypanosomiasis, or sleeping sickness. In another photograph, entitled *Cure* (fig. 3.14), taken approximately four months later, Sewi appears to have been cured of the disease, and Harvey proudly displays the healthy horse before Lisk-Carew's lens. Records filed with the Copyright Office (the Stationers' Company in London) indicate that there was an official agreement between Smeaton and Lisk-Carew. The records filed on February 25, 1908, and then again on June 27, 1908,<sup>42</sup> show that, although Lisk-Carew held the copyright as the producer of the two photographs, Smeaton requested the copyright. This gave him the sole ownership of the photographs.<sup>43</sup> Smeaton could freely use the images in publications. Lisk-Carew

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<sup>40</sup> See Baxandall 1972, 151-153. Baxandall discusses the ways in which images can serve as windows into social history.

<sup>41</sup> Captain Frederick Harvey served as a doctor with the Royal Army Medical Corps in Sierra Leone. The images were published in an article by Harvey entitled "Report on Diseases Affecting the Troops and Animals of Sierra Leone" in the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps* in January 1908 (pages 12-23) and republished in the same journal in August of the same year (pages 145-148).

<sup>42</sup> Copy/518/182 and Copy/522/368, National Archives, Kew. Photographs registered at the Stationers' Company, 1908.

<sup>43</sup> At this time, copyright was secured through the Stationer's Company by registration. The Copyright Act of 1862 afforded some protection for a photographer's work, although photographers were still required to register with the Stationers' Company. It was not until the 1911 Act, which gave them rights for fifty years *from the end of the year in which the photograph was taken*, that photographers

was nevertheless proactive in asserting his role as the author of the images: his signature is clearly in evidence. The example of the Sewi photographs illustrates the myriad types of patronage and commissions experienced by Lisk-Carew and the range of positions he was forced to take in order to satisfy the demands of his clients and publics.

The catalogue of diverse photographs visualising colonial successes, members of the regime and other sectors of the European population in Freetown, shows their active patronage and support of Lisk-Carew's photography. He built a reputation through his on-going official commissions, which assisted in expanding his practice amongst ordinary Sierra Leoneans. In order to secure this growing position as a much sought-after photographer, he concentrated his efforts on creating photographs that adhered to client specifications, which at times stood in ambivalent juxtaposition, given the period of increased exclusion felt by his fellow Creoles and other Africans in Freetown.

### **The Royal Visit**

In November 1910 the announcement that HRH, the Duke of Connaught would travel to South Africa created a sense of anticipation in Freetown.<sup>44</sup> While Sierra Leone had not been the beneficiary of frequent tours by the British Crown, the few examples demonstrated a central vehicle – such as a tour – through which local citizens expressed their loyalty and admiration, and the crown's influence could be displayed. For example, in 1860, Queen Victoria's teenage son, Prince Alfred, paid a short visit

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no longer needed to register everything with the Stationers' Company. Photographers who were commissioned were not considered to be "Authors of their own work" until 1988.

<sup>44</sup> "King's Brother in Africa," *SLWN*, November 26, 1910, 5.



to Sierra Leone as a part of a longer tour to the Cape of South Africa. While there is no photographic evidence of the visit, other forms of visual documentation – sketches, drawings and eyewitness accounts for missionary journals such as *A Quarterly Token*<sup>45</sup> – helped to vividly recount the spectacle and warm reception with which the prince was received by his African subjects. Therefore, on December 10, 1910, when the *SLWN* announced that the Duke of Connaught and royal party would make an impromptu landing in Freetown, the entire population began to prepare for the event.<sup>46</sup> A group of chiefs from the protectorate were invited to Freetown to meet the royals, and one hundred members of the West African Frontier Force were to take part in the military arrangements.<sup>47</sup> The day of the duke's arrival was proclaimed an official public holiday. Lisk-Carew made a request of an official in the British administration that he be allowed to cover the momentous event as the official recorder.<sup>48</sup> This commission signalled his ability to move between differing modes of photographic representation, and thus to respond effectively to market forces and opportunities.<sup>49</sup> The strict itinerary allowed Lisk-Carew a number of photo-worthy opportunities for documenting and commemorating the occasion.

When the Duke (Prince Arthur) and the Duchess of Connaught arrived in Freetown on 15 December, 1910, they were greeted with as enthusiastic a reception as

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<sup>45</sup> A publication for young people produced by the Church Missionary Society.

<sup>46</sup> "Visit of the Duke of Connaught and Royal Party to Sierra Leone," *SLWN*, December 10, 1910, 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> See Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 83. There is evidence to suggest that HRH The Duke of Connaught was interested in skilled "native" photographers, and members of his staff sought them out in the areas of the empire where the duke had been or was scheduled to tour. In 1887, Indian court photographer Deen Dayal acted as the official photographer to the Duke. The Duke observed that Dayal was "decidedly the best native photographer I have seen in India." See *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

was evident fifty years earlier.<sup>50</sup> In the tradition of royal tours of the British Empire, the imagery related to the event was replete with the pomp and circumstance associated with such official visits. Unlike Prince Arthur's tour, however, the monarchy capitalised on the power of photographs to report the tour extensively. The images helped to reinforce British colonial rule and the notions of empire, which emerged in the late 1890s onward.

As the official photographer sanctioned for the tour, Lisk-Carew was given extraordinary access to the royal party. One photograph (fig. 3.15) offers a rare glimpse into the behind-the-scenes activities. Here, Lisk-Carew captured a calm moment as various high-ranking members of the colonial regime await the arrival of the royal party. The figure looking directly at Lisk-Carew's camera is James Carmichael Smith.<sup>51</sup> Lisk-Carew depicted the first moments of the royals in Freetown and henceforth accompanied them as part of the retinue allowing for the in-depth visual coverage of the tour.

In *Officials Being Introduced to HRH* (fig. 3.16), European officials greet the duke at Government Wharf, which had been decorated for the occasion. These images of the colonial regime provided an opportunity for a European audience abroad to engage with the royal spectacle in an African metropolis. Concomitantly, for local spectators, these tableaux, that at times featured local Black officials interacting with the colonial authority, drew attention to the range of political positioning taking place

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<sup>50</sup> T.N. Goddard, *The Handbook of Sierra Leone* (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1925), 42. The duke and duchess were returning to England from South Africa, where he had opened its first parliament.

<sup>51</sup> This photograph, the only one framed in the albums, features Lisk-Carew's embossed signature and studio address on the front. Carmichael Smith may have been the commissioner of the photographers or at the very least acted as a mediator to have Lisk-Carew as photographer.

within the colony.

The overall style of this grouping is typical of the royal tour photographs, as it reflected the nature of the commission, which was to capture the duke's tight itinerary and the euphoric responses by the local crowds. A commentator for the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* described the scene as one of "great rejoicing as thousands of school children all dressed in white, lined both sides of the road and were protected by the soldiers of the West African Frontier Force."<sup>52</sup> During this goodwill visit, Lisk-Carew concentrated on recording imperial display and the duke's royal duties and accompanying ceremonies.

Lisk-Carew highlighted the royal tour both from the standpoint of the local colonial administration and from the point of view of the Creole establishment and the African elite, many of whom are featured in the range of the Connaught tour imagery. For example, in *Address by the Freetown Freemasons to HRH the Duke of Connaught* (fig. 3.17), Lisk-Carew captured a group of Creole representatives of the Freemasons, who were given the opportunity to address the duke upon his arrival.<sup>53</sup> This intriguing image underscored the complex dynamics and social relationships between Creoles and the British colonial elite. Lisk-Carew has positioned the Creole Masons as supporters of the empire, as well as wholly westernised in their costume and in their fervent association with a longstanding European institution of which both he and the

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<sup>52</sup> "Their Royal Highnesses, The Duke and Duchess of Connaught in Freetown," *SLWN*, December 17, 1910, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Cohen 1981, 109. Cohen notes that Creole professional men were very drawn to membership in the Freemasons because of the emphasis on rank and patronage. He observes that many of the country's most important judges, lawyers, permanent secretaries, doctors and engineers were members of the Masonic lodges in Freetown. And since selection is based on economic and social status, he further states that "the Creoles generally see in Masonry a mechanism for the development and maintenance of the 'mystique' which marks and enhances their communal development."

duke himself were members.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, during a stop on the lawn at Government House, representatives from the African Ladies society (a group of mainly elite Creole women) were given the opportunity to meet and address the Duchess of Connaught and Princess Patricia one by one (fig. 3.18). As part of this presentation, the princess was given distinctly local items, such as textiles and baskets. Alongside these items she was also presented with “three albums of views of Sierra Leone” as mementos of their visit.<sup>55</sup>

The royal visit further stimulated Lisk-Carew’s already successful practice where he captured the multiple viewpoints and sectors of Sierra Leonean society as subjects under the empire, as well as individuals in a stable West African colony. In doing so, Lisk-Carew had set the stage in establishing a plurality of images that created a compelling narrative on the duke’s visit. The tour images formed a large part of James Carmichael Smith’s album and that would ultimately make an impact in the marketplace as stand-alone framed photographs, as prints to be placed in commemorative albums or as postcards.

While Lisk-Carew was the official photographer of the royal visit and approved by the state, other photographers also contributed images that provided

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<sup>54</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm. October 18, 2007. Andrew confirmed his father’s membership in the Freetown Lodge No. 1955, one of the oldest, dating to 1882, but was unaware of when he joined. I also found materials, including a letter of October 1921 from a Mr. Porter, the head of the lodge, to Lisk-Carew expressing regret that he had fallen ill.

<sup>55</sup> “Royal Visit to Sierra Leone,” *SLWN*, December 24, 1910, 7. From the mid-nineteenth century on, it had become a practice for governments to give visiting foreign heads of state and royalty collections of photographs as mementos of the place they had visited. The single “views” would usually be mounted in a leather case or album. Two of these albums contained photographs taken by Lisk-Carew, and mostly images (although unknown at this time) taken prior to the visit. A correspondent with the *SLWN* provided a detailed overview of the extraordinary access granted to Lisk-Carew in his role as the “official photographer.” He observed that of the “three albums presented to the Princess Patricia [by the African Ladies] two were the special presentation of Lisk-Carew.” The location of the three albums is unknown.

alternative views of the tour, although not officially sanctioned. For example, one of the photographs by W.S. Johnston (fig. 3.19) captures an aspect of the tour that was slightly removed from Lisk-Carew's embedded position. The colourised postcard shows the bedecked façade of the Wilberforce Memorial Hall with its prominent display of a banner that reads, "Cordial Loyal Greetings." A small group of locals have assembled in front of the building in anticipation of the arrival of the royal party. Given the number of local and itinerant photographers operating at the time, Johnston's image highlights the competition for taking the coveted images and also the competition for the accompanying notoriety.

It appears that Lisk-Carew's iconic photographs outweighed those of his competitors in terms of their ultimate exposure to public view. As the official photographer of the tour, Lisk-Carew would produce images that were guaranteed widespread distribution and circulation. Overall, his style within the breadth of the royal tour imagery can be characterised as largely imbued with a photojournalistic approach. Often taken from mid-distance or further, they created the appropriate deference reserved for the royals while also creating a measure of access for viewers. The photographs presented the royals in a manner in which they are accessed but without interference.

Evidently, the documenting of the Connaught visit represented a significant shift in Lisk-Carew's professional life. It became the leverage by which his cachet within the colonial regime and amongst a wider, more prestigious clientele. Pierre Bourdieu observed in his 1960 study of French photographers that the enduring acclaim derived from a photographic practice often included contact with prestigious professional groups and an opportunity to photograph valorised objects. He also observed that the photographers' major specialisation is defined by the importance

and nobility of the object photographed; so much so that a change in status may be accomplished by a change in specialisation.<sup>56</sup>

The period immediately following his royal assignment and the notoriety of this photographic accomplishment marked one of the most prolific periods in Lisk-Carew's practice. Members of the British civil service living in Freetown called upon his services for private assignments. Such is the case of James Carmichael Smith, pictured with his wife, Hattie, and unnamed group around 1911 (fig. 3.20).<sup>57</sup> Lisk-Carew took several portraits of this family, including one captured inside of Carmichael Smith's Hill Station bungalow. Once again, and similar to the royal images, he maintained a certain distance and formality when shooting these portraits, as evidenced in the stiff countenances of his subjects before his camera. That Lisk-Carew's early professional connections to Freetown's colonial governing officials and elite played a contributing role in his ongoing success cannot not be overstated. The eventual bestowal of the royal patronage was seen as a gift not only to Lisk-Carew "but to the whole colony."<sup>58</sup> As a result, his business and future successes became inextricably bound with the larger communities.

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<sup>56</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle Brow Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 163.

<sup>57</sup> This portrait features James Carmichael Smith and members of his family. It seems that Carmichael Smith was given or purchased from Lisk-Carew several images (38 in total) of the Connaught tour as well as unrelated images of Freetown which can be found in a large album in the Royal Commonwealth Collection at Cambridge Library. One large album dedicated to the Connaught tour features full coverage by Lisk-Carew.

<sup>58</sup> "Bestowal of Royal Patronage on the Firm of Messrs. Lisk-Carew Brothers," *SLWN*, May 12, 1912, 7.

## The Gambia

Lisk-Carew travelled outside of Sierra Leone as an extension of his practice, and in 1914 he travelled to The Gambia. No doubt his reputation as a skilled photographer, with a royal stamp of endorsement on his work, assisted in a lucrative contract to photograph specific government sites in The Gambia. This body of work is an important photographic survey of the colonial capital of Bathurst produced with the distinct “optic of the colonial state.”<sup>59</sup> The photographs of European-style municipal buildings, straight boulevards and sites of religion and industry document the progress and continued economic potential of West African colonial zones. Lisk-Carew’s approach vis-à-vis a specific set of visual practices and taxonomies is further established and validated by a regime that required constant reinforcement of its successes through a number of visual clichés, or tropes. Such tropes also appeared throughout Macmillan’s *Redbook of West Africa*, which was published in 1920 and using statistics from around 1918.<sup>60</sup>

Hence, the images, particularly those depicting colonial structures, expressed great concern with order, control and space. Lisk-Carew’s pictorial approach in the Bathurst images may have been guided by Galway; as the patron and government representative, he would surely have designated the sites worthy of documentation. This scenario is probable since in The Gambia, as in other colonial sites, the Senior Commissioner for the colony usually chose both the topics to be photographed and

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<sup>59</sup> See Jens Alderman, *The Optic of the State: Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 7 Alderman describes the optic of the state whereby photography and other forms of visual techniques were utilised to shape and control citizens and the spaces they inhabited.

<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note that although none of Lisk-Carew’s images of Bathurst were used in the *Red Book*’s section on Gambia, another photographer covered many similar sites.

the photographer.<sup>61</sup> Private individuals and the colonial government in the region relied on itinerant photographers from other coastal zones, including Sierra Leone, to fill this gap in service. In *Square and Barracks* (fig. 3.21), Lisk-Carew used a longer vantage point to capture the military barracks. The square is devoid of people, except for a distant figure posed to the right of the large tree. Overall, the image assisted in the marking of these sites as ordered, controlled and secure. These stylistic and compositional aspects are consistently played out in many of the photographs of Bathurst.

These images focused mainly on sparse streets, allowing more emphasis on the colonial structures (mainly institutions) in the foreground. One photograph shows a lone police officer, captured in Lisk-Carew's frame as he walks by the Old Military Hospital (fig. 3.22).<sup>62</sup> In *Wellington Street* (fig. 3.23), the streets surrounding each structure are either virtually empty or lightly populated with pedestrians. Together, the images suggest a construction of the colonial city as transformed and therefore an improvement on the cluttered, disorderly and uncontained pre-colonial state.<sup>63</sup>

Lisk-Carew emphasised this notion of improvement in *Wellington Street*, where some local officers are seen standing in front of Government House near a Model T Ford. The Ford car proved to be suitable to West African conditions because they did not destroy the existing roads and could more easily travel on roads that had

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<sup>61</sup> Liam Buckley, "Gridwork: Gambian Colonial Photography," *Critical Interventions*, vol. 2, nos. 1-2 (2008), 42.

<sup>62</sup> In several street scenes of Freetown and Bathurst, Lisk-Carew captured either posed or random subjects that become integral parts of the composition. It is difficult to ascertain if these are deliberate interventions on his part or random encounters.

<sup>63</sup> See Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).



not yet been paved.<sup>64</sup> The car's convenient (or perhaps staged) location, in front of the governor's official residence also suggests that it may have belonged to Governor Galway or a senior official in the administration, and therefore conveyed their status and power.

Taken together, the content of this series is concerned with foregrounding the presence of European social and technological advancement in Bathurst. Yet, within this body of work is a small subset that depicts the vibrancy of crowded African marketplaces. Both *Fish Market* (fig. 3.24) and *Bathurst Market* (fig. 3.25) offer nuanced studies of such ubiquitous and iconic African sites of trade. The markets comprised local economic activity and products in which the colonial regime took a keen interest.

Lisk-Carew's Bathurst commission revealed all of the hallmarks of the relationship between commercial photographers and government clients that was manifested in much of the work by local African photographers of the time. While the administration's control was wielded in terms of the subject matter, or what Baxandall refers to as "the weight of the client's hand,"<sup>65</sup> Lisk-Carew's control and artistry in the execution of the images is also in evidence. It is not then surprising that the Bathurst prints were presented to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in 1914 by Galway and most probably temporarily displayed in relation to presentations he gave about Africa at a range of institutions in the United Kingdom. As James Ryan

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<sup>64</sup> Elder Erdmute, "Motorization and Colonial Rule: Two Scandals in Dahomey, 1916," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1(2002), 85-86. Erdmute observes that, "During the First World War, the first cars (Fords and Citroens) appeared [in West Africa] albeit in small numbers, on new roads which were in constant need of repair, but cars were not yet the colonial officers' usual means of locomotion. Only 15 years later, colonial rule was to be fundamentally based on car transport, and after the Second World War, cars were to become part of everyday life."

<sup>65</sup> Baxandall 1972, 5.

explains, the RGS played “a central role in conditioning the making, consumption and survival of the imperial archive ... and the simultaneous positioning of the RGS in the domains of science, journalism and colonial officialdom also made it an important venue for the display of photographs.”<sup>66</sup> Lisk-Carew’s Gambia photography project is symbolic of the power relations that were consolidated in the metropolis/centre and inflected back again to the periphery. Thus, the circulation of these photographs buttressed and fuelled the colonial imaginary across continents and acted as validation for the state optic.

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<sup>66</sup> Ryan 1997, 22.

## Postcards

In Anglophone West Africa from 1898 onward, professional photographers began to offer a large assortment of picture postcards, which became a mainstay of their businesses. Within Lisk-Carew's practice, such postcards represented local views of Sierra Leone that reflected picturesque landscapes; buildings and landmarks; the colonial forces; European enterprise; the bustling streets of Freetown and a range of local peoples in the ever-expanding region. The postcards, in turn, launched a new focus in his work from around 1905: the detailed mapping of Sierra Leone and its inhabitants.

The postcard was a popular commodity amongst a variety of consumers, and the period from 1895 to the end of World War One is generally considered its Golden Age.<sup>67</sup> Lisk-Carew did not have a monopoly on this market, and he certainly experienced competition from other producers, including his mentor and professional rival, W.S. Johnston. Since Johnston was amongst one of the earlier photographers working in Freetown and his business overlapped with Lisk-Carew's, it is not then surprising to find some duplication in images.<sup>68</sup> Given the increase of postcard production, it is clear that images were shot with the intent to produce postcards of the highest quality along with captivating subject matter. The quantity and variety of subjects and his established status within the business eventually gave him a competitive edge. Created for both foreign and local markets, Lisk-Carew's image

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<sup>67</sup> Lisk-Carew's production of postcards was so prolific that their popularity extended well beyond this period and into the 1940s, as I explore further in this chapter. Due to his large and extensive output, it has been difficult to assess the exact number of postcards he produced, not including reissues. However, judging by the collections I have perused, I would estimate his production to comprise over 3,000 postcards.

<sup>68</sup> One of the most intriguing examples is of an image of Wilberforce Street (the main street in Freetown) where both photographers have taken the photograph from an almost identical vantage point.

production responded to commercial needs. While Lisk-Carew produced and sold his postcards, he was most likely assisted in the business by local jobbers, or “runners,” who acted as agents between the publisher and the photography studio.<sup>69</sup> His postcards circulated widely as commodities in these markets, and during the early period from approximately 1905, he marked his cards “A. Lisk Carew, Photo. Freetown, Sierra Leone.” The imprint would usually appear on the white border on the bottom of the card and just above the caption using a distinctive italic lettering.<sup>70</sup> As I explore below, from around late 1910, this identifying imprint would undergo numerous changes.

In viewing Lisk-Carew’s copious postcard production from early in his career and into the 1940s, it is important to note the complexity of his approach and the ways in which he, like other African producers, played a central and conflicting role in constructing and disseminating “images of Africa.” The postcards, with their apparent verisimilitude, captions, cropping and format, were circulated across borders to multiple viewers, audiences and open to a myriad of interpretations and usage. Their deployment as documents of “truth” was significant, and damaging images of “Natives” had devastating and enduring repercussions. Writing about the evolution of photography in the nineteenth century, Tagg notes that the construction of this new photographic knowledge “released new effects of power, just as new forms of the exercise of power yielded new knowledge of the social body which was to be transformed.”<sup>71</sup> While such perspectives informed the circumstances of early postcard

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<sup>69</sup> See Howard Woody, “International Postcards: Their History, Production and Distribution (Circa 1895 to 1915),” in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*, ed. Christraud Geary and Virginia Lee-Webb (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 22-24.

<sup>70</sup> In some cards printed around 1900-1910, a wider border is used on the right-hand side of the card and the imprint is stamped at the very bottom.

<sup>71</sup> Tagg 1988, 6.

production in Sierra Leone, Lisk-Carew's postcards provided a lucrative trade, an outlet for creative expression and a portable document that could be used for the staging of specific visual narratives. The potency of narratives was still subject to the viewers' (buyers') understanding of what postcard imagery from African regions should communicate at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>72</sup>

### *Early Postcards*

Lisk-Carew's early participation in a range of modernist photographic practices gave him seemingly free reign vis-à-vis subject matter. Thus, some picture postcards were instrumental in constructing and disseminating an image of Sierra Leone that symbolised "progress and enlightenment." Representative examples are found early in his career from around 1905 when he began producing postcards of various missionary schools in Freetown.<sup>73</sup> The first secondary schools in Freetown were the CMS Grammar School (est. 1845) and the Annie Walsh Memorial School for girls (est. 1849). The images of the various elite educational institutions either commemorated the buildings, special occasions in the schools' histories or simply captured the daily experience of the students. Most importantly, the images were concerned with the investment in and promotion of education as part of Creole identities and found a ready local market in the ex-students of these establishments. In an intriguing postcard image taken around 1905 (fig. 3.26), Lisk-Carew provided a rare glimpse of the interior of the Annie Walsh School for girls where some of the

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<sup>72</sup> See Erin Haney, *Photography and Africa*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2010) and Christraud Geary, "Different Visions? Postcards from Africa by European and African Photographers and Sponsors," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*, ed. Christraud Geary and Virginia Lee-Webb (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 170.

<sup>73</sup> By 1840 there were fourteen government schools and twenty-eight missionary based schools in Sierra Leone.

students were gathered.<sup>74</sup> He captured the commodious schoolroom and students at their desks engaged in schoolwork or being instructed. The scene was shot in a way that divided both sides of the large room, allowing for a complete and almost panoramic view. The photograph enhanced the orderliness of the students in relation to their impeccable classroom and their teachers.

Neither teachers nor students seemed distracted by the camera's presence. The image thus conveys a strong sense of decorum, discipline and, of course, order. It is also significant that the teachers seem to blend into the *mise en scène*; even the lone European teacher, in the middle ground right, is not immediately obvious.<sup>75</sup> The Annie Walsh School postcard addressed a range of patronage. For parents of pupils, it served as a commemoration of their children's social biography and legitimised their place within the colonial structures. The postcard would have circulated both locally and internationally to demonstrate the benefits afforded by a solid missionary schooling under the strict tutelage of European teachers, and thereby also validating the colonial "civilising" project.

Mission-based schools, however, were the target of some criticism: while the colonial regime felt that the English classics-based curriculum favoured the advancement of an African elite who could potentially develop political resistance to

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<sup>74</sup> The Annie Walsh Memorial School was established in 1849, thus making it one of the oldest girls' schools in Africa. The main philosophy was to train girls "to become integrated members of their communities and as real partners to their men folk." See Adelaide Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford* (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 20-28.

<sup>75</sup> See A.B.C. Sibthorpe, *The History of Sierra Leone* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), 425.

Since the founding of the school, all of the headmistresses were European. The first African appointed headmistress was in 1961. There were also very few African teachers during the school's early history.

British political control,<sup>76</sup> Africans felt that the curriculum did not teach practical skills. Thus, such wariness for the western-educated African prompted the idea of establishing a boys' school in the provinces, where "native simplicity of manners uncontaminated by pretensions to intellectual superiority" could be retained.<sup>77</sup>

Opening a school in Bo, a provincial capital in a Mende-speaking area along the railway line, was in large part the instigation of Sir Leslie Probyn, governor of Sierra Leone from 1904 to 1911.<sup>78</sup> The mandate of the Bo school, whose student population was comprised mainly of the sons and nominees of local chiefs, was to "introduce their people to better agricultural methods, health improvements and other British-inspired changes but were not, as a result of their education, to aspire to leadership above the local chiefdom level."<sup>79</sup> Thus, as implied by the school's prospectus, the emphasis would not be on literary education, as was the case for middle-class and affluent Creoles in Freetown. Locating the school in Bo placed importance on an industrial education where protectorate boys could remain confined to an inferior position within the empire.<sup>80</sup> The railway clearly facilitated the expansion of Lisk-Carew's photographic repertoire beyond Freetown.<sup>81</sup> In *H.E.G.B. Hadden-Smith and Protectorate Chiefs of Sierra Leone at Foundation Stone Laying for Bo School, 13 September 1905* (fig. 3.27), Lisk-Carew captured the first stages in

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<sup>76</sup> For a detailed discussion on European resentment of Western-educated Creoles see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 614-620.

<sup>77</sup> Corby 1981, 326.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 326.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Corby posits that Probyn's main model for the Bo school was the Hampton Institute, established in 1868 in Virginia by General Samuel Armstrong, and the Tuskegee Institute, founded in 1881 in Alabama by Booker T Washington, which provided an "industrial education system for Blacks For further discussions of Booker T. Washington's philosophy, see Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. See also Fyfe 1962, 616.

the building of the school, commemorating a significant historic moment in Sierra Leone's education history.

The Bo image bore the conventions of the archetypal colonial group photograph that is framed around an official event. An assemblage of European representatives featured alongside the elite members and dignitaries associated with the African communities typically characterised such iconic images. Lisk-Carew has collected and posed the individuals in a conventional portrait formation, highlighting for the viewer the importance of certain players. Positioned at the focal point of the composition are four European administrators.

The photograph was taken at a longer distance in order to accommodate the entire delegation that has gathered for the occasion. Haddon-Smith sits squarely in the middle of the composition flanked by the chiefs on either side, highlighting his importance as a high-ranking colonial representative and his endorsement by local Africans. The “ceremonies” and official gatherings featuring government representatives contained a theatrical aspect, as various characters, such as government representatives, colonial subjects and, at times, onlookers and bystanders, became part of the spectacle vying for attention in front of the lens. This spectacle is highlighted further by the presence of a European missionary, positioned at the apex of the composition. It is interesting to note that Madam Yoko (Mammy Yoko), the powerful female leader of the Kpa-Mende chiefdom is part of this delegation (seated fifth from the right).<sup>82</sup>

Lisk-Carew's picture postcards of mission schools with neat classrooms and attentive students, and the consecration and ground-breaking commemorations of schools such as Bo, captured significant changes in Sierra Leone's educational

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<sup>82</sup> Mammy Yoko was featured in a postcard run of an image by W.S. Johnston.



system. As a successful and educated Creole, Lisk-Carew may have been drawn to such commissions based on his own biography and a sense of place within the burgeoning establishment. While such images are not exhaustive, they are illustrative of his early postcard practice, placing into sharp focus the varying and competing power relations between Christian missionary and secular state elements in Sierra Leone at the turn of the twentieth century.

### *An African Flâneur*

Lisk-Carew's postcards featured the many aspects of rural life in colonial Sierra Leone in terms of its inhabitants, their interactions with the colonial regime and their domestic lives. They also presented a highly subjective account of the provinces at the early portions of the twentieth century. *Building Native Houses* (fig. 3.28) and *Cleaning Rice* (fig. 3.29), from 1905-1910, depicted a tableaux of protectorate peoples in the commission of everyday domestic practices. This series of postcards depicting scenes located in the protectorate constituted part of a government commission to which Lisk-Carew referred in a 1907 advertisement.<sup>83</sup> It is also evident that, throughout this period until just prior to his departure for London in 1917, local views on postcards formed the heart of his business. This is marked in the many reproductions he made of local areas taken at different times that documented Freetown's swelling population and an urban landscape that was consumer driven. The primary focus was on the dynamic and cosmopolitan nature of Freetown that offered an urban counterpoint to his rural views.

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<sup>83</sup> "Season's Greetings," *SLWN*, February 9, 1907, 10. In the advertisement, Lisk-Carew mentions a variety of views of Freetown and the protectorate that were specially selected by Governor Leslie Probyn for the Home Exhibition in London slated to open in 1908.

As a result of Lisk-Carew's peripatetic travels around Freetown's urban landscape, many of his postcards feature views of an over-inhabited and lived-in city. The images capture the well laid-out and grid-like streets of the Central Business District (CBD) and domiciles just outside of the CBD from a range vantage of points. These postcard views reflect a panoptican perspective through which optimum surveillance and containment of the city is achieved. This notion of surveillance is important when examining Lisk-Carew's depiction of the city, since Freetown's planning and its spatial policies were hinged on this principle of the panoptic that ensured control and order over its inhabitants. Yet the over inhabitation and intimacy of close living suggest that local populations were also undermining the systems of colonial surveillance through their living patterns. For example, *Central View* (fig. 3.30), from about 1905-1910, offers a bird's eye view of a section of the city that exemplified neatly laid-out streets and buildings and offered a clear view of Mount Aureole in the background.<sup>84</sup> As Christopher Fyfe observed, "Freetown has always been a planned city...As the city expanded, straight, wide, formal streets were laid out by government surveyors according to deliberate plans ... Wide, parallel streets are easier to police than narrow lanes where the houses are all crammed in."<sup>85</sup>

The majority of Lisk-Carew's postcards featuring Freetown were produced as a way of bolstering his business to travellers and visitors. While this also allowed

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<sup>84</sup> This image was cropped for the postcard version and actually part of a larger original panoramic photograph taken by Lisk-Carew. The original is reproduced in Goddard 1925, 124.

<sup>85</sup> Christopher Fyfe, "The Foundation of Freetown," *Freetown: A Symposium*, ed. Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1968), 3-4. See Vera Viditz-Ward and her discussion of Freetown photographer Dionysius Leomy whose images of Freetown in the late nineteenth century offer interesting panoramic views of the city, including one taken from the tower of St. George's Cathedral in 1890s. Along these lines, there are also two photographs from the mid-nineteenth century by Leomy which offer birds-eye views of Freetown's central core with its wide and parallel streets and neatly positioned dwellings. These photographs were most probably commissioned by the regime.

Lisk-Carew some flexibility in his approach and offered a range of potential sites in the city and subjects to photograph, he also anticipated his customer's viewing preferences.<sup>86</sup> However, while the city may have been heavily surveyed for top-down control, most of Lisk-Carew's images are rooted firmly on the ground and offer an engagement from the perspective of the pedestrian walking through the city, thus giving viewers the experience of "being there." Michel de Certeau has argued that walking in a city gives its inhabitants the power to destabilise the legible order imposed on cities by official planners and surveyors in order to escape the "imaginary totalisations" from above.<sup>87</sup> Hence, for de Certeau, it is the walkers, on the ground, who give meaning and context to a city.

Lisk-Carew walked and navigated the streets of Freetown as he photographed the city's unique character. By focusing on heavily populated major streets, such as in *Regent Road on a Saturday* (fig. 3.31), from around 1905, and busy commercial hubs, such as in *Susan's Bay* (fig. 3.32), also from around the same era, he exposed the frenetic activity and dense human traffic of the city. In both photographs, Lisk-Carew shot from a medium range in order to capture the movement and details of local colour. The depiction of such scenes assisted in piquing the interests of foreign consumers, who wanted to buy postcards in order to share their "exotic" experiences back home.

In some respects, given his wide and varied coverage of Freetown's urban spaces, Lisk-Carew can be recast as a *flâneur*,<sup>88</sup> or in his case, an African *flâneur*. The

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<sup>86</sup> See Baxandall 1972, 40, wherein he notes that the "public's visual capacity must be the painter's medium."

<sup>87</sup> Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1993), 153.

<sup>88</sup> The *flâneur* or *flânerie* is a literary construction of the nineteenth century based on the male figure created by the poet Charles Baudelaire's essay "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863). The *flâneur*'s main role, as defined by Baudelaire, is as

notion of Lisk-Carew as an African *flâneur* and observer was taken a step further through his use of the camera as a tool through which to contextualise Freetown's bustling streets, marketplaces, sites of interest and myriad individuals who inhabited the city. The application of the *flâneur* to Lisk-Carew is also apt given the recollection of informants. Mrs. Holland-Campbell recalls, "My uncle never left the house without his camera ... unless it was on a Sunday and he was headed to church."<sup>89</sup> Mrs. Faulkner observed, "He really liked to roam the streets and was very knowledgeable of the lesser known areas ... also many people knew him to be a photographer ... and would ask him to snap them."<sup>90</sup>

Some of the lesser-known areas (for Creoles) to which Mrs. Faulkner refers were also considered of ill-repute where "decent" and more well-to do citizens would rarely frequent. Kroo Town and surrounding communities<sup>91</sup> were densely populated areas, with residents living in close quarters alongside traders and numerous shops, including liquor shops. Kroo Bay was situated in a neighbouring community that borders on the coastline. This area was deemed unsanitary and unsafe, prompting calls by the larger community for greater surveillance and control from the colonial

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observer, commentator on life in the streets of Paris. At the heart of this construction is the idea that, while engaged in *flânerie*, the walker celebrates the energy and spectacle of urban life. Walter Benjamin popularised the *flâneur* figure in his work on modernity, urban spaces and the act of uncovering meaning in these urban spaces in nineteenth-century Paris. See Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>89</sup> Mrs. Paulina Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., October 30, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Bertmina Faulkner, pers. comm., May 14, 2010

<sup>91</sup> The Kroo Town area in the west end of Freetown was settled in 1816 mainly by Kru seamen who migrated from Liberia to work on the ships entering Freetown's busy harbour. From the 1880s onward, Kru men were joined by their wives and families; however, they were still viewed as immigrants and transient by the majority of Freetonian residents. By the 1950s, other groups from the hinterland began to settle and work in the community. Today, Kroo Town Bay is regarded as a "slum" settlement and its residents continue to experience social and economic hardship. See Diane Frost, *Work and Community among West African Migrants Workers Since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 115-121.

authorities. One writer in the *SLWN* noted that “Kroo Bay is always thickly populated by various classes of people, and therefore requires the careful attention of authorities.”<sup>92</sup> *Kroo Bay* (fig. 3.33), from about 1909, captures a group of children. Lisk-Carew positioned himself at a higher vantage point in order to situate the surrounding points of interest such as the small bridge like structure upon where some of the children are posed. Despite the negative perception associated with Krootown and its surrounding districts, Lisk-Carew offers a quaint portrait of the youngest members of the beleaguered community who eagerly engage with his camera.

In *Howe Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone* (fig. 3.34), from around 1905-1910, Lisk-Carew reveals his intimate knowledge of the important business hubs. Located at the heart of CBD, Howe Street experienced a high volume of pedestrian traffic because of its concentration of small shops alongside the larger European-owned department stores. Lisk-Carew’s photograph captures Howe Street with spontaneity. It reflects an African *flâneur*’s response to the teeming street scene that features a range of pedestrians, including two colonial officers seen in the foreground of the composition. Lisk-Carew produced a wide-angle view that incorporated as much detail as possible within the limits of the frame. In this candid shot, the large building that housed the European establishment Pickering and Berthold is also seen in background.

Lisk-Carew’s wanderings around the city also took him to the urban spectacle of specific marketplaces. These marketplaces were captured as sites of great activity that featured the flow of commodities and people. In these images,<sup>93</sup> the marketplace

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<sup>92</sup> “The Sanitary Situation of Kroo Bay,” *SLWN*, May 9, 1908, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Lisk-Carew made a number of postcards featuring market scenes, produce sellers and street vendors as well as more intimate portraits of the working poor in Freetown and their dwellings. It is interesting that the latter seem to occur much less in Lisk-Carew’s oeuvre.

is constituted as a central component of African life. In *Native Produce Sellers* (fig. 3.35), from about 1910-1911, and *Market Day* (fig. 3.36), from about 1905-1910, Lisk-Carew has trained his lens on the intense negotiations, movement and flow of the busy area where both the market's women sellers and consumers seem to converge. Both images depict fleeting exchanges and are indicative of Lisk-Carew's overall interest in the relationship between people and place. The postcards also highlight the ways in which inhabitants in the African city eked out their livelihoods in often hectic and crowded locales. Through his unique encounters as *flâneur*, Lisk-Carew laid bare the realities of the African marketplace for the consumers of such postcards.

Alongside the postcards depicting the hustle and bustle of the city, Lisk-Carew also photographed identical streets and other vistas featuring sparse or empty thoroughfares. In *Regent Road* (fig. 3.37), from 1903-1905, he has taken the same area from a similar position but at a different moment. In this version, he has photographed the street on a quiet period of the day with little traffic. The mountainous terrain in the distance provides a backdrop for the cityscape below, offering an interesting visual parallel. *Rawdon Street* (fig. 3.38), from around 1905, provides another example of the picturesque within the city wherein Lisk-Carew has used the sparsely populated street in order to draw the viewer's attention to the quaint architecture of the surrounding structures in the frame. Such framing is in marked contrast to his studio photography in which the subjects were staged directly in front of his camera. Lisk-Carew revealed Freetown, and Sierra Leone in general, as an ever-evolving space within the empire. The favourable reception of such visual tropes created new opportunities to extensively document the area over a period of time.

Taken together, this body of work provides a wide array of subjects, locales and contrasts. The narratives in his postcards present Freetown and environs in a

constant state of flux and transformation, not as single monolithic sites where the individuals were depicted only as “types” conducting “authentic” activities. Yet such narratives were also widely circulated and embedded within a colonial discourse whereby the subjects and locales featured were viewed as static, timeless and unchanged. In so doing, the postcards reinforced such stereotypes. Despite such readings, these urban postcards created a lucrative market whereby Lisk-Carew was able to balance financial gain with his authoritative representations of the city as experienced through the *flâneur*’s technique of directness and close observation.

### *The Liberian Postcards*

What is striking about Lisk-Carew's body of work is its sheer diversity. As I outlined in the Gambian example, Lisk-Carew undertook commissions outside of Sierra Leone, and the photographs were published in different places with different identifications. Such diversity meant that some images that materialised as postcards might also be found in other sources, such as commemorative albums, books and journals, including the *African Times and Oriental Review (ATOR)*. Images reconstituted as documentary news photographs in the *ATOR* raise an important issue about the multipurpose nature of Lisk-Carew's images. Lisk-Carew's signature in terms of formal aspects was in evidence despite the range of products and subject matter.

In 1912, while in Monrovia, Lisk-Carew produced several photographs dated December 1 in the captions. The published images (six in total) captured different aspects of an official celebration. The captions on three of the postcards also identify the images as part of official events associated with "Emancipation Day" commemorations. However, these captions are misleading. December 1 had been celebrated as a national holiday since 1823, in honour of a Liberian heroine named Matilda Newport.<sup>94</sup> The December 20, 1912 issue of the *Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails* carried an editorial recapping the "program of exercises" related to commemorating Matilda Newport Day. The event took place on December 1,

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<sup>94</sup> Matilda Newport was an Americo-Liberian woman who is purported to have defeated Indigenous warriors in 1822 during the battle of Crown Hill. The battle was supposedly fought between the Americo-Liberian settlers and Bassa, Dey and Gola groups at Cape Mesurado in present-day Monrovia over land ownership. For over a hundred years, the anniversary was marked with civic celebrations. In 1980, following a bloody military coup in Liberia, Matilda Newport Day was abolished.



1912.<sup>95</sup> Lisk-Carew recorded the pomp and spectacle surrounding the holiday, and depicted members of the Liberian Army and dignitaries at various moments during the day at local sites of significance (figs. 3.39 and 3.40). Similar to the Connaught tour imagery, Lisk-Carew's key vantage points captured the ceremonies associated with the day's events. Yet, in contrast, these images are presented as "snapshots" where portions of the finished product are blurred or out of focus. The details of the spectacle have been compromised and reflect a more spontaneous quality. Writing in the 1950s, the Liberian historian Nathaniel Richardson recounted the day's events, which mirror, to some extent, Lisk-Carew's images. He observed: "The Commissioner of the Commonwealth District of Monrovia arranges a special program for the occasion, at which time a distinguished citizen delivers an address appropriate to the occasion, and the Liberian Frontier Force parades through the streets. After the program, the Commissioner holds a reception for the guests. In the evening the celebration is climaxed by a grand ball."<sup>96</sup>

Since no such commemorative holiday called "Emancipation Day" ever existed – contrary to what the captions on the postcards say – Lisk-Carew may have designated the views as simply part of a generic annual national day, forgoing further elaboration. It is difficult, without the benefit of concrete evidence, to ascertain why he produced these postcards. He likely took the photographs as part of a commercial endeavour at the behest of the local authorities in Monrovia, yet his generic captions would have posed an issue for a local patron eager to highlight a national folk heroine.

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<sup>95</sup> "Old Lady Matilda Newport's Day, Program of Exercises," *Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails*, December 20, 1912, 9.

<sup>96</sup> Nathaniel Richardson, *Liberia: Past and Present* (London: The Diplomatic Press, 1959), 125.

Lisk-Carew, always the astute businessman, offered a set of images to his customers that reflected a different region, thus maintaining fresh pictorial inventory while expanding his practice outside of Freetown. In the April 1913 edition of the monthly *ATOR*, the Liberia images were replicated in an article entitled “Liberia” by the African-American writer and playwright Henry F. Downing.<sup>97</sup> The article is a descriptive piece on the history and progress of the Americo-Liberians, but Downing does not reference the photographs. While the Matilda Newport Day photographs are not remarkable in terms of their overall aesthetic or artistic distinction, they do offer further insight into the range and scope of Lisk-Carew’s practice.

### ***Lisk-Carew Brothers***

By 1911, Arthur Lisk-Carew joined Alphonso as a partner in the business and his association with the studio was also indicated in the new inscription “Lisk-Carew Brothers” on all subsequent postcards. Another notable change was the addition of the word “Registered ” on some postcards. This is an indication that Lisk-Carew was proactive in ensuring the copyright of his work and therefore taking the necessary steps to register his postcards.<sup>98</sup> The images that bore the new imprint continued to depict several aspects of life in Sierra Leone and represent a range of subject matter and locales.<sup>99</sup> Thus, images created between 1905 and 1910 were also reissued after

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<sup>97</sup> Downing lived in Liberia for several years in the late nineteenth century. He moved to London in 1895 and lived there for twenty-two years, writing for various publications including the *ATOR*. Downing’s last works were *Liberia and Her People* (New York: s.n., 1925) and *A Short History of Liberia* (n.d.).

<sup>98</sup> It has been difficult to trace how Lisk-Carew secured the copyright on his postcards. While it is likely that he secured his registration through the Copyright Office (The Stationers’ Company in London), I have found no extant evidence.

<sup>99</sup> See David Proshaska, “Fantasia of Phototèque: French Postcard Views of Senegal,” *African Arts*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1991), 44. Proshaska examines the work of French postcard producer Edward Fortier who engaged in a similar practice in Senegal.

1910 using the Lisk-Carew Brothers' stamp. Such reproducing of a particular image was also tied to the popularity of the postcard and how well it sold in the marketplace.

### *A Series of Chiefs*

In studying Lisk-Carew's development over the years, it becomes clear that he returned to various subjects throughout his career, including a number of portraits of protectorate paramount chiefs.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps Lisk-Carew was eager to gain a cachet amongst the local chieftaincy similar to that granted by his association with British royalty. And since African rulers had been early patrons of pioneering African photographers and readily embraced the medium for their own purposes, it is not then surprising that their portraits form a somewhat homogenous body of work by Lisk-Carew.<sup>101</sup> The examples that follow evoke a sense of Lisk-Carew's commercial motivations in the form of postcards and an acute awareness of to whom they would appeal. The images also reveal his personal interest in documenting the chiefs' unique personalities for a wider market.

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<sup>100</sup> Individual rulers governed the pre-colonial kingdoms of Sierra Leone. In 1896, when the British declared the interior as a protectorate, they also designated rulers as paramount chiefs. The main duties of the chiefs were perfunctory. Under indirect rule, these leaders were viewed as intermediaries between locals and the colonial regime. In 1898, the paramount chiefs led a revolt against colonial taxes which the British quelled. As a result of the Mende rising, as it is commonly known, those chiefs who took part in the revolt were ousted and replaced by "approved," or colonially sanctioned, paramount chiefs. These political shifts assured governance for life as long as the paramount chiefs did not oppose the British colonial government. See Kenneth Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

<sup>101</sup> This body of work representing chiefs includes group portraits, or chiefs surrounded by members of the court, family members or their wives, as well as portraits featuring particular chiefs. See also Erin Haney, *Photography and Africa* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 71; Christraud Geary, *Images of Bamun: German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988); and Vera Viditz-Ward, *Paramount Chiefs of Sierra Leone: Photographic Portraits* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

In *Nondi Chief* (fig. 3.41), Lisk-Carew has taken a compelling image of paramount chief Famayaneh. The portrait was captured around 1910-1911 and features Famayaneh's direct and intense gaze at Lisk-Carew's camera. The chief's likeness also became ubiquitous within Lisk-Carew's oeuvre and was recreated in several forms.<sup>102</sup> The most striking element of this formal portrait is the chief's embellished headgear, complete with strings of pearls – an element that is indeed emphasised on a later version of the postcard.<sup>103</sup> While one cannot be sure of the kinds of negotiations that took place during this photographic encounter, the chief presented himself as a willing participant in the process.<sup>104</sup> It is likely that the image also served as a political statement in a colonial state where the paramount chief's institutional powers had been greatly increased by the British. Thus, given the overall popularity and interest in photography in Sierra Leone, Famayaneh willingly displayed his flamboyant headdress, with its European flourishes, which successfully integrated into his own unique form of expression. The postcard proved popular amongst buyers, since it was reissued from 1910 into the 1930s and with a range of different descriptive captions. In so doing, Lisk-Carew attracted the buyer by offering multiple textual readings of the postcard and increasing his sales.

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<sup>102</sup> I discovered several versions of this portrait and other examples of Chief Famayaneh featured in postcards taken by Lisk-Carew. In an image taken around 1910, Famayaneh is captured with a group of protectorate chiefs who have gathered to greet the Duke of Connaught during his visit to Freetown. However, perhaps because of his unique attire, Lisk-Carew singled him out for the portrait study. As a result of the peculiar headdress, he is easily identifiable since the other chiefs wear the traditional fez-like hat, which has its roots in the Muslim North. A large-scale print version with the identifying text is located in the Sierra Leone National Archives at Fourah Bay College.

<sup>103</sup> In a postcard reissued in the early 1930s, the caption reads "Native Chief with Significant Headgear."

<sup>104</sup> See Elizabeth Bigham, "Issues of Authorship in the Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita," *African Arts*, vol. 32, no.1 (1999), 56-67.

In *Protectorate Native Chief* (fig. 3.42), another compelling example of around the same time, Lisk-Carew captured an unknown paramount chief in a generic village setting. The chief, standing in a full-length pose, displays his ceremonial regalia, including a long staff topped with a brass knob bearing the British coat of arms and a large iron sword in its sheath strapped around his shoulder. Once again, the chief's unique headgear creates a key leitmotif in the photograph as he proudly holds a cocked hat (or bicorn) with ostrich feathers affixed to the top. This added prop, perhaps a personal or borrowed item, seems incongruous as it was usually worn as part of the dress uniform of British colonial governors.<sup>105</sup> The additional detail of a leopard skin upon which the chief stands creates a visually engaging staged portrait that showcases Lisk-Carew's adept skills at composition. In this image, appropriated prestige symbols of the British colonial regime became part of a complex attempt to create a unique visual identity under specific historical and political conditions.<sup>106</sup>

While Lisk-Carew reissued a large number of postcards marked with the Lisk-Carew Brothers stamp, he continued his exploration of individuals and places within rural and urban areas and produced new photographs reflective of his travels in the protectorate. His movements between the provinces and Freetown may have increased due to Arthur's management of the studio in his absence thus building on the material in his oeuvre.

As a means of bolstering his enterprise, Lisk-Carew developed the idea of offering his customers souvenir postcard albums (fig. 3.43). The album offered a collection of twelve images which included his most popular studies of local cultural

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<sup>105</sup> I have encountered a number of photographs of paramount chiefs taken by other photographers wearing the bicorn, a replica English crown or a similar symbol of European authority.

<sup>106</sup> Pinney 1997, 97.

practices in the provinces as well as the railway port and commercial activities in Freetown. Such postcard albums provided collectors and travellers a durable object for their pictorial memories of foreign lands. Lisk-Carew's albums provided both the repository and the images in the form of a "ready made" collection of photographs and postcards for the consumer. He produced a range of these postcard albums.

### *Portraits of Children and World War Two*

In assessing Lisk Carew's imagery, in particular his prolific postcard production, it is useful to mark the period from the late 1920s to the 1950s when Lisk-Carew exhibited a familiar singularity of style, particularly in his photographs of children in connection with World War Two and studio portraits in general. Also during this period, his postcard stamp had been modified once again. The hallmark now read "L-C Bros." and the word "Registered" is absent. There is no extant documentation that explores the rationale behind the paring down of the hallmark. He may have desired a more abridged identifier thus the use of only the initials in his last name. The various name changes during Lisk-Carew's career also illustrate how photographers navigated the competitive postcard industry by utilising different strategies at various times and under different circumstances. One of these strategies was the introduction of a streamlined system. This allowed him to catalogue his postcards in terms of when they were issued, provenance and time period. Thus, postcards marked with the latest commercial imprint, along with the printing series code or number, allowed both collectors and Lisk-Carew to organise images in a more efficient manner.<sup>107</sup>

The portraiture of children from infancy to pre-adolescence made up a distinctive aspect of Lisk-Carew's portfolio. Early in his practice, it is evident that

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<sup>107</sup> Woody, in Geary and Lee-Webb 1998, 21.

Lisk-Carew had a special interest and skill in photographing both women and children. Newspaper advertisements from 1907 described Lisk-Carew as a specialist of children's photography.<sup>108</sup> Over the course of his career, he continued to develop his photographic studies of children both in his studio in Freetown and in the city's outer districts. The portraits can be considered standard mementos of childhood, and Lisk-Carew was able to showcase his skill where children exuded a radiant presence even when they looked away from the camera.

For example, *Off to the Farm* (fig. 3.44) features a little girl in a nondescript rural setting. The image was produced first as a single print around 1930-1935 and then issued as a postcard.<sup>109</sup> Lisk-Carew catches the girl's shy smile as she looks away from the camera. Her relaxed and natural response to having her photograph taken adds to the overall appeal and strength of the photograph. Perhaps the most captivating aspect of this portrait is the attention given to detail, such as the basket she carries around her head and her unique attire, while not compromising her individuality and her particular lived experience. This was a delicate balance to strike given the deluge of "type" images that continued to be prevalent and representative of particular viewing practices of the time.

In subsequent portraits of children, besides the commemoration of a special milestone, Lisk-Carew also sought to capture the unique personality of the child. *Childhood Study* (fig. 3.45) may have been taken at approximately the same period, that is around 1930-1935, and commissioned by the child's parents to memorialise a significant moment in his development. In contrast to the previous portrait, the young subject is posed nude except for the string of beads around his body and gazes shyly at the camera from his position on a bare table. The portrait is simple and unadorned –

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<sup>108</sup> See one such example in *SLWN*, April 20, 1907, 9.

<sup>109</sup> The original large print was located in the Sierra Leone Public Archives.

no props, costumes or elaborate backdrop. Lisk-Carew has captured the baby's somewhat reticent expression which he maintained in position for the entire length of the exposure. Through his skilful techniques in the studio and darkroom, Lisk-Carew produced the quintessential "baby picture" portrait. It is one which would have appealed to both his African clientele as well as Europeans living in Freetown.

In these examples, Lisk-Carew demonstrated his sensitivity to his young clients and his exposure to the general local photographic practices around childhood in parts of Sierra Leone.<sup>110</sup> Ultimately, in these carefully constructed images of childhood, he has captured the colonial imagination, local appetites and foreign consumers by offering nuanced portraits representing both universality and difference within a single frame. These images which oscillated between private photographs and public postcards presented Lisk-Carew's understated style and assured aesthetic. Mainly concerned with simple compositions, he frequently took portraits at three-quarter length, using sharp focus to highlight the details. Through his strong skills in lighting, he captured his subject's open engagement with the viewer.

Lisk-Carew extended his skills in studio depictions of children by also utilising them as subjects in a series of commissioned "propaganda" postcards that illustrated the war effort during World War Two from around 1940-1945. These studio portraits featured young children, either with adults or posed alongside other children. Slogans superimposed as captions on the postcards were meant to provoke the social consciousness of Africans by demonising the enemy while also displaying their loyalty to the empire. There was an element of the theatrical in these staged images, thus also occupying the space between private and public visual domains. The

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<sup>110</sup> Since many of these portraits were reissued as postcards, they were inevitably sold to local consumers as well as foreigners who could then share with others various aspects and representations of childhood in the West African context.



propaganda depicted on the cards played to specific local conditions which, was used to effectively “sell and support the war.”<sup>111</sup>

In one example, a baby and its mother are featured with a persuasive slogan that appealed to local patriotism and honour (fig. 3.46). The caption reads, “Daddy is away fighting a great battle with a ruthless enemy,” evoking the duty of a father to protect his family (and country) from evil. Dramatic lighting enhances the dark background and emphasises the subjects’ poses and their relationship to each other within the composition. The mother appears in profile, looking devotedly at her child, while the child looks straight at the camera, acknowledging it. Lisk-Carew’s control over the image is palpable, as the two seem to mimic a classic Madonna and Child imagery common throughout the history of Western art, an association which may have added greater commercial appeal to the postcard.

In another example in this series (fig. 3.47), two young children are co-opted into the war effort with the use of a carefully crafted caption honouring the various branches of the armed forces involved in the conflict. The postcard’s message is used as an appeal for more African manpower and participation in the war.<sup>112</sup> At the same time, the children are used as signifiers of innocence and sentimentality. Lisk-Carew’s production of war propaganda images, alongside the captions, dovetail neatly with his own involvement and commitment to the ideals of the West African Youth League (WAYL), whose motto was “Liberty or Death.” The wartime postcards draw on his

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<sup>111</sup> Bonny Ibhawoh, “Second World War Imperial Idealism and Anti-Colonial Nationalism in British West Africa,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2007), 223.

<sup>112</sup> Wyse notes that “Sierra Leoneans believed that the war was their own ... Krio boys did get into West African regiments and the Sierra Leone Infantry did legion service in Burma and other theatres of war and received glowing tributes from their commanders.” See Akintola Wyse, *H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 133.

experience as an artful portraitist, and his commitment to fulfil the ideological needs of the imperial government and local Sierra Leoneans who were in support of the overall war effort. Most importantly, these postcards also represented some of the most distinctive photographs of his professional practice.

### ***Picturing Landscapes: Rural and Urban***

From 1903 through to the 1930s, Lisk-Carew's affiliations with a variety of officials and special interest groups provided lucrative commissions and the opportunity to photograph a wide range of subjects. Many of the original photographs were reproduced as postcards, popular with consumers. A series of postcards from the 1930s graphically represents his creative techniques, along with a changing style and evolving interests. These visual reinterpretations of the symbols of Sierra Leone's progress and industry and of the unique "traditional" dwellings located in the countryside convey a sense of his connection to Sierra Leone's diverse and changing landscapes, both urban and rural. Lisk-Carew also revisited the bustling core of Freetown's busy Central Business District to witness its continuing economic expansion. These postcards are symbolic of the last phase in the era of the genre's popularity in Sierra Leone.<sup>113</sup> Lisk-Carew's movement both geographically and aesthetically over his career are thus reflected in this grouping that also considers changing social contexts in Sierra Leone.

In this series, Lisk-Carew employed a range of strategies to photograph Sierra Leone's environs and sites. In *The Dam, Regent* (fig. 3.48), taken around 1930-1945, he photographed the dam from a high vantage point in order to capture the imposing nature of the structure's oval form. His preoccupation with the dam's form and shape

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<sup>113</sup> Although Lisk-Carew continued to produce postcards for local buyers, his overall production had waned by the 1950s.

and his ability to capture the structure's spatial qualities render a sense of tranquillity to the photograph. At the same time, the image is noteworthy, as it puts into context the concrete symbols of technological advancement in Sierra Leone.

In another example (fig. 3.49), he depicted the impressive Congo Town Bridge, also from an elevated perspective, that includes the winding road, which intersects shrubbery and a lone hillside dwelling. Lisk-Carew's framing lends a rhythm through the undulating shapes of the road and highlights the strong formal elements of the scene. And in *A Pretty Little Village – Bungalows* (fig. 3.50), Lisk-Carew's keen sense of design is evident once again; he has chosen a scene featuring homes constructed of mud, wattle and thatched roofs representing common architectural forms and building materials found in rural areas of the region. By taking a wide, almost panoramic shot, he was successful in capturing the distinct individual triangular shapes of each structure while also emphasising the geometric balance of the entire composition and giving all of the structures equal visual weight. As in the Congo Town Bridge scene, humans are dwarfed by the landscape and, in this case, the structures that surround them. Through its subtle and sophisticated compositions, this group of imagery showcased Sierra Leone's vast and wide-ranging geography for an international audience. Finally, in *Gloucester Street*, taken around 1935-1945 (fig. 3.51), Lisk-Carew revisited the busy area that housed key businesses such as the central post office, the City Hotel<sup>114</sup> and, barely visible in the frame, his shop directly across from the hotel.<sup>115</sup> He captured a familiar thoroughfare where the commercial enterprises expanded and changed Freetown's urban landscape.

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<sup>114</sup> The City Hotel was one of the oldest establishments in Sierra Leone and made famous in Graham Greene's 1936 novel *Journey without Maps*. It was burnt to the ground in 2000 during the civil war.

<sup>115</sup> See figure 2.3 in Chapter Two for an earlier photograph of Gloucester Street from a different vantage point that includes a clear view of the shop.

As I have suggested, Lisk-Carew's comprehensive and encyclopaedic knowledge of Freetown and the protectorate resulted in a vast amount of images. Many of these images reflected his aesthetic interests wherein he used various vantage points and composition patterns, which were certainly modernist in style.<sup>116</sup> Lisk-Carew's postcards created an iconography of Sierra Leone and its people that resonated widely. At the same time, his images were rooted in the period, giving consumers a sense of the country's energy. Most notably, they offered a vision of the range of possibilities that constituted Sierra Leone. Given the copious nature of his postcard output, it is useful to view his approach in this genre as one that was continually adapted and refined to new concerns and conditions.

### **The Absences**

By mining through Lisk-Carew's photographic corpus and practice, and despite his almost obsessive need to document various aspects of life in Sierra Leone, it is evident that Lisk-Carew produced works that were largely mitigated, constrained and constituted by a rapidly changing social, economic, geographical and political landscape. Since the context of his work was clearly so important, continuities and contradictions as well as the lack of certain subject matter in the archive are also important. For instance, missing from his oeuvre are photographs related to his political work associated with the WAYL, protest actions, strikes, large town-hall meetings and the more prominent members of the league such as I.T.A. Wallace

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<sup>116</sup> See Woody, in Geary and Lee-Webb 1998, 21. In the West between 1931 and 1945, there was advanced technology in postcard production with the introduction of linen-type paper stock. This paper was seen as an improvement in terms of colour saturation that was much cheaper to produce than the white-border postcard. However, Lisk-Carew continued to use the white-border format, perhaps due to an aesthetic preference and the limited or lack of availability of the new technology in Sierra Leone.

Johnson and S.M.O. Boyle. This troubled period in Sierra Leone's history has not been documented by Lisk-Carew or, for the most part, by any other photographer of the time.<sup>117</sup> Lisk-Carew was considered high risk and identified as an agitator by the colonial authorities and thus, while he continued to actively take photographs, he was careful not to document the burgeoning movement.

Alphonso Lisk-Carew's range of subjects are extensive, yet there are no extant images of Syrian or Lebanese traders or families either from the protectorate, where the community was most active in business, or in Freetown, where there was a smaller population.<sup>118</sup> Nor did they seem to seek him out. This lack of the Syrian presence within his oeuvre suggests that Lisk-Carew was more interested in photographing the African populations whose range of "types" was perhaps more interesting to overseas consumers.<sup>119</sup> It is possible that the longstanding contentious history between Africans and Syrians in Sierra Leone and the lingering resentment over the 1919 Syrian riots engendered in Lisk-Carew an unfavourable view of the community, thus ensuring that they did not appear in any of his photographs or postcards.

There is also a dearth of studio portraits of Europeans. In most instances, when commissioned to take a portrait, Lisk-Carew would travel to the home of the European family – often in Hill Station. Was there a reluctance by Europeans living on the outskirts of Freetown to travel to the city to have their portraits taken by Lisk-Carew? Did European conceptions of Freetown as a dirty, overcrowded city that bred disease provide the basis for such reticence and fears? *The Era of the Raj* (fig.

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<sup>117</sup> There are images of Wallace Johnson at a rally in Freetown in the 1950s, which may have been taken by the local press writer and photographer, and photographs of a rally in Freetown in support of the league, which are housed in the National Archives at Kew. The photographer of this group of images is unknown.

<sup>118</sup> The Syrians arrived in Sierra Leone in the 1890s as petty traders and peddlers.

<sup>119</sup> Although Orientalist imagery of Syrians were readily available in colonial Africa at the time, the popularity of the images of Africans in Sierra Leone seems to far outweigh that of the Lebanese.

3.52),<sup>120</sup> taken around 1910-1911, is a compelling example of a studio image of a high-ranking British colonial officer in full dress uniform. It is also a provocative reminder of the colonial presence in Sierra Leone. Further, the peculiar caption that references the British Raj suggests the linking of various colonial histories and experiences under the Empire.

This limited presence of European subjects in Lisk-Carew's photography archive cannot be accounted for with certainty; however, what is clear is that later in his career he exercised a measure of control over the inclusions and exclusions of certain images, which were imbued by specific tensions, power relations and histories.<sup>121</sup>

In this chapter, I examined aspects of Lisk-Carew's vast practice and extensive oeuvre. While exploring moments in this trajectory, along with select images, I considered the evolution of his commercial enterprise in terms of his studio practice, commissioned work for the state, prolific postcard production and the development of his aesthetic. At the same time, I showed that the work inhabited several distinct but overlapping cultural, social and political arenas: the British colonial administration, the protectorate's populace and landscape, and the commercial hub of Freetown with its demand for studio portraits. These varied forms of patronage overlapped and constituted two conflicting visual discourses: a colonial discourse that reinforced the colonial project and an African discourse that stressed the agency of the local

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<sup>120</sup> The British Raj refers to the periods from 1858 and 1947 when the British ruled India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

<sup>121</sup> This portrait and a studio portrait of Chief Justice Phillip Crampton Smyly (1901-1911) were discovered at the Sierra Leone Public Archives and both were included as part of the 1970 retrospective of Lisk-Carew's photography. See Chapter Five for more a more detailed account. Both images offer vivid illustrations of Lisk-Carew's close ties to the colonial regime.

population and the documentation of day-to-day life in Sierra Leone. As a result of these competing interests, Lisk-Carew's images captured the complexity and contradictions of Sierra Leonean society into the late 1940s. These contradictions are taken up further in the next chapter, where Lisk-Carew's gendered images and photographs of particular rites of passage are examined.

### Illustrations



Fig. 3.1. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Group with Jinrickshaw*, ca. 1903-1905, albumen print, courtesy of the Sierra Leone Public Archives, Fourah Bay College.



Fig. 3.2. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Group with Jinrickshaw* (detail), ca. 1903-1905, albumen print, courtesy of Sierra Leone Public Archives, Fourah Bay College.





Fig. 3.3. Habitants of Sierra Leone, ca. 1900-1905, lithograph postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.4. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Unknown Woman*, ca. 1903-1905, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.5. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Unknown Man*, ca. 1911-1912, silver print, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.6. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Unknown Woman*, ca. 1920-1925, silver print, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.7. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Muslim Man*, ca. 1920-1925, silver print, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.8. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Reverend Edward B. Cole and Family*, ca. 1930-1935, silver print, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.9. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Governor Sir Charles Anthony King Harman (seated in the front row, sixth from the left) with expatriate community*, 1904, silver print, courtesy of Gary Schultz.



Fig. 3.10. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *General Graves*, ca. 1905, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.11. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Crossing the Moa Bridge*, ca. 1905, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.12. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Group of European Men*, ca. 1909, silver print, courtesy of Gary Schultz.



Fig. 3.13. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Sewi*, ca. 1908, silver print, courtesy of the National Archives, Kew.



Fig. 3.14. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Cure*, ca. 1908, silver print, courtesy of the National Archives, Kew.



Fig. 3.15. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *James Carmichael Smith and Officials*, 1910, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.16. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Officials Being Introduced to HRH*, 1910, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.17. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Address by the Freetown Masons to the Duke of Connaught*, 1910, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.18. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *The African Ladies Group Greet the Duchess of Connaught and Princess Patricia*, 1910, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.19. W.S. Johnston, *Wilberforce Memorial Hall*, 1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.20. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Portrait, Hill Station* (James Carmichael Smith), ca. 1911, silver print, courtesy of Cambridge University Library, James Carmichael Smith Collection.



Fig. 3.21. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Square and Barracks*, 1914, silver print, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.



Fig. 3.22. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Old Military Hospital*, 1914, silver print, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.



Fig. 3.23. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Wellington Street*, 1914, silver print, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.



Fig. 3.24. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Fish Market*, 1914, silver print, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.



Fig. 3.25. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Bathurst Market*, ca. 1914, silver print, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.





Fig. 3.26. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Interior of the Annie Walsh School*, ca. 1905, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.27. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *H.E.G.B. Hadden-Smith and Protectorate Chiefs of Sierra Leone at Foundation Stone Laying for Bo School*, 13 September 1905, postcard, courtesy of Gary Schultz.



Fig. 3.28. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Building Native Huts*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.29. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Cleaning Rice*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.30. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Central View*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.31. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Regent Road on a Saturday*, ca. 1905, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig. 3.32. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Susan's Bay*, ca. 1905, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig.3.33. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Kroo Bay*, ca. 1909, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.34. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Howe Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.35. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Native Produce Sellers*, ca. 1910-1911, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.36. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Market Day*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.37. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Regent Road*, ca. 1905, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.

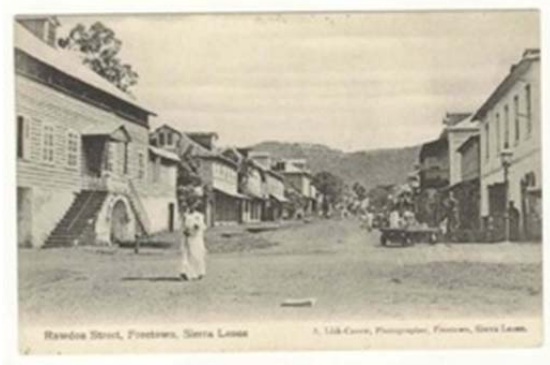


Fig. 3.38. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Rawdon Street*, ca. 1905, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig. 3.39. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Emancipation Day Celebration, December 1st, Monrovia, Liberia*, ca. 1912, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.40. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Liberian Army Marching*, ca. 1912, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.





Fig. 3.41. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Nondi Chief*, ca. 1910-1911, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.42. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Protectorate Native Chief*, ca. 1910-1911, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.43. Lisk-Carew Brothers Souvenir Postcard Album, ca. 1910-1911, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.44. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Off to the Farm*, ca. 1930-1935, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.45. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Childhood Study*, ca. 1930-1935 postcard, courtesy of Gary Schultz.



Fig. 3.46. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Mother and Child, Daddy is away Fighting...*, ca. 1940-1945, postcard, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.47. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *The World is at War...*, ca. 1940-1945, postcard, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.48. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *The Dam, Regent*, ca. 1930-1945, postcard, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 3.49. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Congo Town Bridge*, ca. 1930-1945, postcard, courtesy of Gary Schultz.





Fig. 3.50. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *A Pretty Little Village – Bungalows*, ca. 1930-1945, postcard, courtesy of Gary Schultz.



Fig. 3.51. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Gloucester Street*, ca. 1935-1945, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 3.52. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *The Era of the Raj*, ca. 1910-1911, silver print, courtesy of the Public Archives of Sierra Leone.

## Chapter Four

### Bundu Girls, Creole Brides and *Yooba* Women: Lisk-Carew's Gendered Images

I have shown thus far that Lisk-Carew was a preeminent photographer who built a successful career based on the construction of skilful image production and on astute business acumen. Such practices were also conditioned by patron and consumer interests, which imposed certain contradictions and limitations on his approach and methods. Lisk-Carew's oeuvre also featured a range of female subjects. From the start of his practice in 1903 through to the mid 1950s, women are consistently represented in images in the protectorate and in "urban" Freetown.

Lisk-Carew's studio photographs include female chiefs with their attendants, the wives of male protectorate chiefs, market women and elegant cosmopolitan Creole women. In this chapter, I extend my examination of Lisk-Carew's practice by looking at his gendered images and portraits. While the range of photographs of Sierra Leonean women is more extensive, I have created three classifications which exemplify the various shifts in his practice: Bundu girls; Creole brides; and the *yooba*<sup>1</sup> woman. In the photographs in which these women are featured, dress, costuming and attire were integral components of Lisk-Carew's staging. I go on to show how his postcard images of the so-called *yooba* woman are typical of representations that depicted African women as eroticized in colonial era representations. These types of images stands in sharp contrast to his studio images. Unlike the Bundu girl and

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<sup>1</sup> A *yooba*, or *yooga*, is the Creole name for a buzzard, but it also refers to a woman of loose morals or a prostitute. See Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974), 22. See also Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 464.

wedding portraits, women in provocative poses were employed as objectifying visual strategies to generate a variety of male consumer interest. The three classifications, which I employ, are highly suggestive as they show once again Lisk-Carew's astute commercial sensibilities to negotiate images to different audiences. Lisk-Carew's representations of women also mirror the editorials and raging debates from the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century that held prominence in Sierra Leone's thriving newspapers such as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* and the *Sierra Times*. The predominately male privileged Creole writers (although women often contributed letters to the editor) evoked a host of debates around such topics as the "women's question," Christian versus polygamous marriages, the "evils" of the Bundu secret society, and dire warnings for the questionable morals of the women who became or were in danger of becoming a *yooba*. For the most part, such commentary reflected a male Christian-Creole-educated discourse,<sup>2</sup> thus calling attention to Lisk-Carew's paradoxical position as a visualiser of such standards who at times leveraged compromising images of local women for his economic advancement. Through the observations in this chapter, I hope to deter from a linear assessment of Lisk-Carew's gendered images to one that is driven by the generative aspects of his multifaceted, negotiated practice in colonial Sierra Leone. Ultimately, this chapter's central tension focuses on how Lisk-Carew navigated between the needs of the marketplace, the needs of his African female subjects and his personal political codes and aesthetics.

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<sup>2</sup> A special column called "The Ladies Corner" was started in the *SLWN* in August 1886. It ran until January 1887. In the inaugural column, the male writer, "Nyanga Boy," encouraged the young women of Freetown to contribute ideas to the column. He implored them to "think of the advantages you enjoy over the young ladies of ten years ago ... so endeavour to improve our advantages by giving The Weekly News the benefit of your ideas every week." See *SLWN*, August 7, 1886, 4.

## **Bundu Girls**

### ***Bondo in the City***

The figure of the Bundu girl and the ritual practices associated with the Bundu secret society was generally characterized with contempt and fear mongering in the mid- to late nineteenth century in Freetown. Bundu<sup>3</sup> is a women's cultural society in the Upper Guinea coast region in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. It is prevalent amongst Mende speakers along with the Temne, Sherbro, Vai, Lokko and Susu groups. Though often called "secret," the ritual is made up of both public manifestations and aspects in which the public is excluded. The Bundu society is considered secret in that its rites and symbols, which are believed to retain special powers, are kept from non-initiates and all initiates are vowed to "secrecy." The society has been in existence at least since the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Through its rites and prohibitions, the Bundu society regulates who is considered a marriageable adult woman. Part of the initiation into such full adult status involves a series of staged rituals through which young women are transformed into adults. Young girls are initiated between the ages of thirteen and sixteen.

During the first stage of initiation, girls are taken into seclusion and ritually circumcised, which is believed necessary for them to achieve full womanhood and fertility.<sup>5</sup> During this stage, the girls are kept away from men and usually only

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<sup>3</sup> Sierra Leone's secret society is called Sande in the south, and Bondo, or Bundu, in the north. See J.V.O. Richards, "Some Aspects of the Multivariant Socio-Cultural Roles of the Sande of the Mende," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 100 (1975), 103-104.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Richards also notes that a Dutch geographer, Olfert Dapper, may have used the name Sandy in his account of the ritual practice in Liberia and describes it as such in a seventeenth-century publication, *Umberständliche und Eigentliche Beschreibung von Afrika Anno 1668*.

<sup>5</sup> Other explanations given for the operation are an emphasis on the promotion of modesty in terms of women's sexual behaviour and the morality of women.

partially clothed. In the second stage, a transitional stage, they are permitted to move around and visit their parents under the supervision of the *ligbas*, or attendant. At this stage, the initiates are instructed in domestic duties such as childcare and sanitation ethics; the girls are considered to be in a liminal state. As a result, they require protection from potential harmful forces. White chalk or alternatively *wojeh*, or clay, is smeared on their bodies.<sup>6</sup> The third stage involves a ritual cleansing through ceremonial washing. This purifying assists in removing all vestiges of childhood.<sup>7</sup> The fourth and final stage of initiation into Bundu is a procession whereby the women, dressed in their best clothes accompanied by female relatives and Bundu officials, return to town as adult women and eligible to be betrothed.<sup>8</sup> A *sowei ndolimo*, or masked dancer, who symbolizes the ancestral spirit of the Bundu, performs special dances as part of the “coming out” or “pull Bundu” ceremony.<sup>9</sup> This brief description highlights the unique features of a complex woman-centric association whose central duty is to support the spiritual, domestic and extra-domestic spheres of women. It also offers a context for the ways in which Lisk-Carew approached the studio images of successful celebrants.

The influence of the Bundu society was mainly experienced in the rural areas of the protectorate and far removed from Freetown. However, in the late nineteenth

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. See also, M.C. Jedrej, “Structural Aspects of a West African Secret Society,” *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 32, no.3 (1976), 234-245.

<sup>7</sup> Carol P. MacCormack, “Sande: The Public Face of a Secret Society,” in *The New Religions of Africa* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Pub, 1979), 31.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Day, *Gender and Power in Sierra Leone: Women Chiefs of the Last Two Centuries* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Several writers have examined the role of Bundu societies as great patrons of the arts in relation to the skill and variation of the wooden *sowei* helmet masks. See Sylvia Arden-Boone, *Radiance from the Water: Ideals of Feminine Beauty in Mende Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); and Ruth Phillips, *Representing Woman: Sande Masquerades of the Mende of Sierra Leone* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Art, 1991).

and into the twentieth centuries there was growing anxiety and fear in the urban spaces of Freetown about the increasing presence of Bundu women and their practices. The discourse generated around the Bundu in the local press was couched in questions of immorality and notions of what constituted “civilized” behaviour. There was mounting fear of the encroachment of urban public space by women involved in Bundu practices and unwanted contact with other citizens of Freetown. Thus, a correspondent with the *SLWN* reports his encounter with a Bundu procession along Kissy Road:

The procession was elbowing every person it met making walk on the edge of the street or in the gutter including the young ladies of Annie Walsh Memorial School who were also in procession about this time ... The Native ceremonies are not always harmless to the uninitiated and warnings should be given to prevent women from coming into contact with them.<sup>10</sup>

The complaints levelled by the correspondent highlight the ways in which any encounter with the Bundu society in the thoroughfares of the city was perceived as an assault on the morals of the Creole citizenry. The fear concerning Bundu practices around the city also stemmed from heightened concerns that Creole girls were vulnerable to kidnapping by Bundu women and initiated against their will or, in rare instances, that they voluntarily joined the Bundu society. An example of the former received much media attention and public indignation in 1888. The sensational case of Adeline Fowler in Freetown further entrenched in the imaginations of Creole residents’ misleading representations of Bundu women as dangerous and uncivilized. Adeline (her age is not given) was sent to get water and on her way was distracted by a “Bundu camp” on nearby Kissy Road. According to the report, senior Bundu women kidnapped her and proceeded to initiate her. Her

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<sup>10</sup> “The Morality of Sierra Leone: Who is Responsible?” *SLWN*, April 25, 1903, 6.

mother called the police and five Bundu women were arrested and jailed. The writer notes that, although authorities had been alerted to other similar occasions, little had been done to “give a death blow to this infernal institution and to wipe it off entirely from the settlement or from the city at least.”<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to ascertain the facts within the hyperbolic prose and sensational journalism.

However, the general claims of dangerous Bundu women snatching unsuspecting and innocent Christian girls gained popularity within the larger community. These reactions also served to reify a notion of Creole elites bound up with Christianity.

In a scathing editorial written ten years later in the *Sierra Leone Times*, the writer recalls Adeline’s case and the apparent rash of other like incidents.<sup>12</sup> In one such case, both a mother and her daughter were allegedly kidnapped and held against their will in a “bondoh bush.” Six women were arrested including the Bundu “queen” and sentenced to lengthy jail terms.<sup>13</sup> Once again, it was contact with the Bundu society within the scope of Freetown’s environs that raised the ire of the writer. He observes, “We find ourselves surrounded by them and our mothers, sisters and daughters find it unsafe to travel alone in some streets of Freetown for fear of being dragged into the Bondoh bush.”<sup>14</sup>

In a curious twist, there were also reports of Creole girls who opted to join the Bundu society of their own free will.<sup>15</sup> These were most probably isolated incidents in which the facts may have been exaggerated in order to incite the fear and anger of readers. Nevertheless, such narratives help to contextualize the ways in which Bundu women were vilified. They also highlight the pronounced

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<sup>11</sup> “Bondo in the City,” *SLWN*, May 12, 1888, 4.

<sup>12</sup> “Bondohism,” *Sierra Leone Times*, March 18, 1899, 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> “Are We Going Forward?” *Sierra Leone Times*, December 17, 1898, 7.

divisions fuelled by a local discourse that invoked “Native” heathenism versus Creole Christianity and civility.

### ***Photographing the Bundu Girls***

The negative discourse on Bundu women and their practices that circulated in the press and in Freetown communities in general continued well into the mid-twentieth century. However, in other regions along the West African coast, the Bundu women became a particular subject of interest for fascinated western observers such as European photographers and their overseas consumers. Local African photographers also exploited the opportunity to photograph the Bundu women and girls. The images generated by these photographers gave rise to a specific genre of portrait photography featuring Bundu (or Sande) initiates. The various stages of Bundu, both secret and public, shared similarities but were also subject to regional adaptations, which created a range of attire, costumes and accoutrements. The ritual aspects and artistic expression associated with the society also created a particular visual discourse amongst curious observers, colonial representatives and local photographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries onward. In the mid-nineteenth into the twentieth century, differing groups and individual Bundu girls, exploited the modernity of photography to their own ends. Such photographs taken by itinerant and local photographers captured the celebrant following her successful transformation into womanhood and her new status as eligible for marriage.

The resulting images were also subject to disparate regional proclivities and interpretations by individual photographers. For example James Alphonso Genrrucio, also known as A. James (1882-?), was a photographer and postcard publisher working



in Conakry, Guinea, at the turn of the century.<sup>16</sup> His studio photographs record the diverse set of practices related to commemorating the Bundu rites of passage. In *Jeunes Filles Soussous de Conakry (Guinée Française) durant les fêtes de l'excision et leur Prétendant* from around 1910 (fig. 4.1), a male suitor (or fiancé) is central to the composition while two celebrants flank him on either side. The young women wear the special clothing associated with Susu Bundu initiates, highlighted by the white sheath tied around their waists, perhaps signifying their transformation to womanhood.<sup>17</sup> A. James also captured Bundu women outside of a studio setting, perhaps just following their procession as new celebrants. In *Conakry—Jeunes Filles Circoncises* from 1910-1915 (fig. 4.2), five celebrants are featured wearing the costuming and accoutrements associated with Bundu graduates. They present formal poses, with legs planted on the ground and slightly apart to better display the textiles and costume. Their hands are on their laps and eyes focused squarely on the camera.<sup>18</sup>

In both examples, one of the primary points of concern vis-à-vis the caption was centred on the physical altering, or the act of circumcision, of the initiates.

Emphasis on the physical aspects of the ritual process underscored the high value

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<sup>16</sup> I am grateful to Professor Odile Goerg, Université Paris-Diderot-SEDET, who brought my attention to the information on A. James. Born in Santo Domingue in 1882 in Portuguese Guinea (present-day Guinea-Bissau), James was employed as a photographer from 1900 onward with the colonial government's general auxiliary service supplying images of Conakry and its people. He most likely ran a commercial photography business, which also allowed him to print postcards. See individual records in 1921 Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Dakar.

<sup>17</sup> See also figure 4.4, where the special outfit worn by the young women is emphasised. See also Erin Haney, *Photography and Africa* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 61.

<sup>18</sup> Christraud Geary, "The Black Female Body, the Postcard, and the Archives," in *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*, ed. Barbara Thompson (Hanover: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 155. See also Stephen Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," *African Arts*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1978), 52-59.

placed by consumers on images that suggested a heightened African female exoticism and ritual practices suggestive of “barbaric” or unchristian acts. Thus the circumcision “operation” became the overriding trope for difference from the associated text on the postcard. These captions also lack a temporality, often misrepresenting the many steps required in the transformative process over several weeks of ritual seclusion.

Ultimately James’s portraits of the Bundu girls were recreations in a studio setting that were commissioned by the Bundu client for personal consumption. Once the portraits were published as postcards they became metaphors losing their original meaning and part of a larger public discourse.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Picturing the Bundu Woman in Freetown***

The practice of taking an initiation portrait became widespread and not limited to Francophone colonial regions. The peripatetic travels of photographers and their photographs also fostered a variety of approaches that offered a range of depictions. From around 1910-1915, W.S. Johnston’s studio featured Bundu girls in several studio photographs.<sup>20</sup> In these candid shots, devices such as soft focus effects and lighting infused the images with an artistic quality that removed it from the stark documentation found in similar photographs from Francophone regions. For example, in *Timence Bondo Girls*<sup>21</sup> from around 1910-1915 (fig. 4.3), Johnston not only takes

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<sup>19</sup> See Christraud Geary, “Missionary Photography: Private and Public Readings,” *African Arts* 24, no.4 (1991), 49.

<sup>20</sup> There are earlier images of Bundu women in the protectorate by Johnston, including the Sowies taken around 1900-1905, but these were not selected for postcard production until a later date.

<sup>21</sup> See Fyfe 1962, 1-7 and 19-23. Fyfe observes that the Temne had occupied the Sierra Leone peninsula long before the formation of Freetown and that Temne groups were resident of the founding of the town. By the turn of the century, Temne

up the practice of Bundu studio photographs in Sierra Leone but also recasts it to serve the tastes of the local Bundu woman client and the consumer. The soft focus and lighting adds a dramatic quality, creating a unique aesthetic. As a result, the four young women appear confident and relaxed. In *Susu Bondo* from around 1910-1915 (fig. 4.4),<sup>22</sup> Johnston has posed the young Bundu graduate in a standing profile position that heightens the theatrical nature of the portrait. The lighting of the subject creates a chiaroscuro effect along her neck and most strikingly along her arms, highlighting their musculature. A long ceremonial walking stick reflects the ritual aspects of her initiation and adds a dynamic quality to the image, stressing the young woman's profile, beauty and grace. W.S. Johnston's depictions of the Bundu graduates circulated as postcards throughout the region and beyond.

It is difficult to say if these images influenced similar production by other photographers at the time. However, given the competitive nature of photography in Sierra Leone, it is likely that Bundu women and the families of initiates sought the services of other photographers to produce comparable commemorative images. Thus, Lisk-Carew was similarly commissioned to take commemorative portraits featuring groups of Bundu girls. And, just as portraits were commissioned by Creole clients in Freetown, so too was it fashionable amongst well to do families of Bundu girls to have these portraits made.<sup>23</sup> These portraits served as visual expressions of social mobility, as they often signified the ability of wealthy families to outfit their

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communities could be located in several parts of Freetown such as Bambara Spring, Fula Town, Fourah Bay Road and Cline Town.

<sup>22</sup> Similar to the Temne, several Susu had formed enclaves in Freetown by the time Johnston took this photograph. It is estimated that by 1911, there were over 1,500 people of Susu background living in the urban centre. The Susu and the Temne originated in Northern Sierra Leone and many emigrated there for trade purposes.

<sup>23</sup> Mrs. Iya Nana Fofana, pers. comm., May 14, 2009, Freetown. Mrs. Fofana was speaking in relation to her own experience in the late 1940s when she underwent her initiation and the kinds of practices popular at the time.

daughters in the finest costuming associated with Bundu ceremonies and their ability to afford a portrait taken by one of Freetown's most established Creole photographers. Moreover, given the derision with which Bundu was met in Freetown, by proudly wearing their Bundu attire, which signified their status as members of the powerful secret society, they also challenged the Creole aesthetic of western modes of dress. By situating themselves within the studio setting, they further affirmed their rightful place as members of the larger cosmopolitan community in Freetown.

The unique multicultural makeup of Freetown, with its outlying villages and its on-going influx of migrants from the protectorate and other regions, gave Lisk-Carew considerable access to Bundu groups and the ritual events surrounding initiation rites.<sup>24</sup> In *Bundu Girls* from around 1903-1910 (fig. 4.5), the girls have completed the procession and are lined up in a row. Musicians form part of the narrative signifying the celebratory nature of the event and a *ligba* is included in the lower left corner. However, the masked costumed figure is not that of the *Soweisa*, thus providing a different performative dimension to the ritual aspects of Bundu in the city. Ambivalence toward the Bundu society and its members continued in the press from the 1890s onward, yet it also had occasional defenders. In a 1910 issue of the *SLWN*, for example, a young Creole woman asks why Bundu is regarded as “devilish and heathenish while Freemasonry ... is respected and highly tolerated.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Robert Wellesley-Cole, *Kossoh Town Boy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), an autobiographical coming-of-age novel set in 1920s Freetown in which the author presents a gentile account of Freetown. At one point in the novel, he writes of witnessing a “pull Bundu” ceremony where new graduates paraded through the streets of Kossoh Town. This indicates the kinds of proximity and awareness local Freetonians would have had with Bundu as well as other practices seemingly relegated to the village surroundings.

<sup>25</sup> “Native Customs vs. the Christian Religion,” *SLWN*, May 24, 1910, 2.

Lisk-Carew's extant Bundu portraits consist of a very small percentage of his vast body of images. This is partly due to the small client demographic requesting such portraits as well as economic factors. Despite the dearth of portraits, they held esteem and value for multiple viewers, clients and constituents. In *Bundu Girls* from around 1910-1911 (fig. 4.6), four young women pose in front of a painted backdrop; two are seated while two stand behind. The seated girls have a prominent position in the frame, and their hands, arranged on their laps, display wedding bands. All of the women wear the dress, accoutrements and hairstyles, which signify their status as Bundu initiates. Lisk-Carew displayed the girls in the familiar grouping which foregrounds with a classic painted backdrop. Yet, the subtle backdrop and demure subjects assist in diluting tropes suggestive of "exotic beauties." The girls display sophistication, a sense of self and their new identities as eligible for marriage or, in some cases, already married.

The portrait not only documents their success, but also expresses a sense of belonging and the construction of a shared identity in a hostile environment such as Freetown. Thus, the symbolic elements found in the dress styles and ceremonial objects of the Bundu visually knit together the cohesiveness of the group and demonstrate an attachment to a larger social grouping. In so doing, Lisk-Carew has highlighted the modes of Bundu dress as unique to a social and cultural milieu.<sup>26</sup>

Within the Bundu society, attire is used to express and emphasise status differences

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<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Fofana, pers. comm., May 14, 2009. Mrs. Fofana noted that the upper halter top pieces were comprised of little coloured beads woven together to create unique patterns and designs. In the mid-1940s and 1950s competitions were held amongst the girls to decide who had the most creative and interesting pattern. This particular piece of clothing accessory seemed to be a necessary feature of the costume. Mrs. Fofana noted that if a young girl did not have the means to make one of her own, she could borrow one from a fellow initiate. The tops worn by the young women featured in Lisk-Carew's photographs mirror the ones worn by those depicted in the portrait studies produced in Guinea who were predominately of the Susu community.

between the initiated and the uninitiated. While there are regional and cultural variants in graduation attire, the main identifying features consist of a short cotton halter-like top and a *lappa*, or wrap skirt, with or without a beaded attachment and white cotton material tied in a knot.<sup>27</sup> The “velvet” material<sup>28</sup> may have originated in Guinea and then appropriated by Susu and Fula groups along its border with Sierra Leone. The head-tie, or *tamboria*, is associated with the Susu costume but absent among the Temne- and Mende-speaking groups. An elaborate bell and beaded attachment that jingled with movement signalled that the girls were approaching and had passed their initiation during the graduation procession.”<sup>29</sup>

An appreciation of the costuming forms a crucial aspect of the studio images since attire worn by the graduates signifies the transformation of one identity and the revelation of another. Similar to the fashion sense of Creole brides (which I examine below), the distinctive nature of Bundu costuming is essential to the constitution of

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<sup>27</sup> This style of Bundu/Sande attire was prominent in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Guinea, The Gambia as well as parts of Sierra Leone. Trade in textiles amongst the Susu- and Mende-speaking groups in Freetown and along coastal areas could account for the popularity and similarity of this style amongst Bundu groups in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

<sup>28</sup> During my interview with Mrs. Fofana – a Susu – she referred to this cotton material as “velvet.” Since her daughter, Professor Aisha Ibrahim, was translating our discussion, I thought perhaps Mrs. Fofana had been mistaken in her recollection of the specific fabric; however she was insistent. She stated that this velvet came in a fine-stripped design and that this style of fabric may have been brought into Sierra Leone via Guinea and The Gambia. Velvet describes the sheen of the fabric rather than the “velvet” produced in Western factories. It also refers to local/ regional hand-woven textiles. See John Vogt, “Notes on the Portuguese Cloth Trade in West Africa, 1480-1540,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1975), 623-651.

<sup>29</sup> Mrs. Hawa Conteh, pers. comm., December 10, 2008. When interviewing Mrs. Fofana in Freetown in 2009, she too concurred that the bells were primarily used in the dancing and keeping the accompanying drumming in sync. She also added that amongst the Temne, the bells are attached around the ankles as well.

group affiliation, solidarity and social identities.<sup>30</sup> Such positions are manifest in *Bondu Girls* (fig. 4.6) since the photograph was first and foremost meant for personal use and thereafter for consumption as a postcard in the local and global markets. Lisk-Carew succeeds in complicating and displacing the potential ethnographic subtext of the images produced by some European and African photographers. Thus, as John Picton argues,

There is an engagement between photographer and sitter by which the latter could promote a personal sense of self-identity with the modern world of the time, but also incorporating elements, usually through dress and textiles, of the inheritance of tradition. The outcome is very different from the exoticisation promoted by European photographer in Africa.<sup>31</sup>

Absent from Lisk-Carew's published postcard of *Bondu Girls* is the addition of any reference to the girls' ritual circumcision in the additional text. Hence, Lisk-Carew recognized the value of producing portraits in which the young women negotiated their authorship.<sup>32</sup> The theatricality of the studio portrait also played an important role in developing an alternative type of Bundu photograph. The portrait is far removed from the damaging discourse engendered by prevailing attitudes at the time and reinforced in the Sierra Leonean press.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hildi Hendrickson, ed. "Introduction," *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>31</sup> John Picton, "Photography, Textiles and African Inventions of Modernity," *IFRA Ibadan Newsletter*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2002), 13.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Bigham, "Issues of Authorship in the Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita," *African Arts*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1999), 58.

<sup>33</sup> Deborah Poole, *Vision Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 203.

Lisk-Carew reconstituted the formulaic group pose in the studio featuring Bundu celebrants. His sophisticated and refined approach heightened the awareness of the ritual. In so doing, such images also gained popularity as commodities in the form of a postcard. Lastly, *Bundoo Girls* from around 1910-1911 (fig. 4.7) features a group portrait. In the staging of this Bundu tableau, Lisk-Carew changed the painted backdrop, which is more elaborate featuring lush vegetation creeping along soaring Corinthian-styled columns, elegant drapery and a majestic Victorian-styled stairway. The seated young woman clasps her hands in her lap, feet planted firmly on the ground. The woman standing to her right looks away from the camera, while the woman standing to her left offers a demure smile. The women's costumes reflect the range of dress styles and adaptations in Bundu costuming and accessories related to regional differences. Once again, Lisk-Carew offers a highly stylized portrait that emphasises both the group's dignified demeanour and the variety of Bundu attire. Christraud Geary observes that such examples of Lisk-Carew's elegant Bundu portraits offered a special aesthetic appeal and interest for western audiences and set them apart from similar portraits produced in areas of Francophone West Africa.<sup>34</sup> In making this observation, Geary notes the difference in representing the Bundu girls in a studio setting such as Lisk-Carew's, where the pose and backdrop were carefully considered in collaboration with the client. Geary also argues that in similar photographs, unimaginative poses in front of a makeshift backdrop, passive stares of the Bundu girls and text that identified the circumcision operation placed the image in

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<sup>34</sup> See Christraud Geary, "Different Visions? Postcards from Africa by European and African Photographers and Sponsors," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*, ed. Christraud Geary and Virginia Lee-Webb (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 170.



the realm of the ethnographic and lacked the artistic sensibility afforded by Lisk-Carew.<sup>35</sup>

The emergence of Bundu commemorative portraits did little to sway the view of Creoles and Christian Freetonians in favour of Bundu women and their practices. However their emergence served as visual reminders of the Bundu women's complicated position in Freetown. They were also indicative of the ways in which Lisk-Carew created images that appealed to the tastes of the European consumer while meeting the Bundu women's needs in terms of their formal aesthetic.

## **Creole Brides**

### ***Creole Brides in Freetown***

The spotlight on Freetown Bundu women and their practices centred on their so-called “uncivilized” ritual practices. However another concern, promoted by missionaries in Sierra Leone and the colonial regime, was around marriage practices such as polygamy. Thus, in late-nineteenth-century Anglophone West Africa, the question of marriage and the promotion of Christian practices related to marriage became an overriding obsession.<sup>36</sup> In the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century a legal framework was created in Sierra Leone under English and African law. Both jurisdictions recognised customary marriage alongside, Christian and Islamic marriage.<sup>37</sup> Thus started a debate between these different forms of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 71.

<sup>37</sup> Kristin Mann and Richard L. Roberts, *Law in Colonial Africa* (London: Currey, 1991), 2 and 13.

practices and the various possibilities offered to men and women in terms of rights and social positioning. Bishop Ingham succinctly sums up such notions in his musings on Sierra Leone's progress over one hundred years. He observes, "The great desideratum in the social life of colony is the sanctity of the marriage relationship ... there are plain signs here of the beginning of this; but the comparative absence of the ideas of love and fellowship from the marriage tie ... tend to encourage concubinage, and this degrades woman from her true place."<sup>38</sup> The colonial authorities introduced monogamous marriage to the colony and recognized legal marriage as one performed by a chaplain according to the rites of Church of England.<sup>39</sup> However, Bishop Ingham's additional sentiment regarding the motives of Creole brides was also echoed in numerous articles and letters to the editor in Sierra Leone's newspapers. The overriding notion in many of the narratives was that Creole women did not marry for love so much as for money, prestige and the elaborate weddings that ensued.<sup>40</sup> A poem published in 1888 in the *SLWN* illustrates the problem:

If a young lady marry for love, her friends will immediately say,  
we cannot but pity the innocent dove ... But should she mate  
with an ugly old man, if with bright gold he is mettled, they

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<sup>38</sup> Right Rev. E. G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone after A Hundred Years* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1894), 301. See also Richard Phillips, "Heterogeneous Imperialism and the Regulation of Sexuality in British West Africa," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2005), 307-308.

<sup>39</sup> See Ida P. Lisk and Bernadette L. Williams, "Marriage and Divorce Regulation and Recognition in Sierra Leone," *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1995), 656. The Marriage Act of 1859 gave legal authority to marriages celebrated by a Christian minister other than a minister of the Church of England. The Protectorate Marriage Ordinance extended the provisions for Christian marriages to the protectorate.

<sup>40</sup> See "From Grave to Gay: The Matrimonial Revolution," *SLWN*, March 2, 1895, 2; and "Money and Marriage," *SLWN*, October 31, 1885, 4. See also Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 186-187. Cohen notes that amongst the Creoles Christian marriage was a key means of maintaining a position of prestige and elite status in Freetown society.

spread the good news wherever they can, that she is comfortably settled.<sup>41</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, marriages corresponding to Christian practices were arranged. Amongst elite Creole families, such matchmaking ensured the suitable financial and social conjoining of families. One finds numerous examples of such arrangements in Sierra Leone newspapers. For instance, the following announcement in the *SLWN*: “A wedding has been arranged and will take place early in January 1916 between Mr. Henry Jones, son of S. Horton Jones Merchant and Ms. Rachel Spolding, Sister-in-law of T.B. Williams, Postmaster.”<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the scathing editorials levelled at Creole brides for their supposed greed, was the practice of giving the bride’s family a large sum of money known as the trousseau.<sup>43</sup> Similar to the “bride wealth,” the trousseau was returned in the event that a marriage was unsuccessful because of the wife’s actions. Tied to the trousseau and status of the couple was the ability to have a lavish wedding with distinguished guests, and fashionable and imported bridal wear.<sup>44</sup> Within the pages of the various newspapers reporting on such occasions, meticulous care was taken whereby eyewitnesses to the lavish spectacles provided minute details, including long lists of guests that were documented for interested readers. The wedding of councillor C.C. Nicolls to Laura Thomas, the daughter of wealthy merchant J.H. Thomas, is one

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<sup>41</sup> “Comfortably Settled,” *SLWN*, November 3, 1888, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *SLWN*, January 1, 1916, 7. See also Filomena Chioma Steady, *Women and the Amistad Connection: Sierra Leone Krio Society* (Rochester: Schenkman Books, 2001), 165. Steady notes that the practice continues today with “a strong parental influence on the choice of a prospective spouse for their sons or daughters.”

<sup>43</sup> See Mann 1985, 58.

<sup>44</sup> See Fyfe 1962, 380. He writes that amongst the settlers, from the beginnings of the colony, weddings have always been an ostentatious affair.

such example of a late-nineteenth-century society wedding that was reported in the *SLWN*:

There has hardly been any event occurring in Freetown which has aroused such an intense degree of interest ... The widespread manifestation may be accounted for by the fact that the bride and bridegroom are known to all ranks of the community and by the prominent social position held by their relatives and friends ... From ten o'clock people could be seen streaming to George Street from all parts. If there were 1000 spectators in the Cathedral itself there could not have been less than 5,000 outside ... The excitement culminated when the bride was driven by her father in a carriage, the horse being tricked out with wedding favours. The bride was met at the entrance by 15 bridesmaids, her train (5 yards long) being carried by 2 pages splendidly dressed in page like equipment in blue velvet ... The bride was neatly attired in a costume of white duchess Satin, embroidered with pearls and trimmed with chiffon and orange blossoms ... The large group was then photographed in the Drawing room by W.S. Johnston.<sup>45</sup>

The Thomas's ostentatious wedding provided an opportunity to showcase the advancement of social status through the public performance of marriage. The number of the guests demonstrated the affluence of their social network.<sup>46</sup> It also presented the cosmopolitanism both regional and intercontinental through the attire adopted by the wedding party. The presence of W.S. Johnston to capture the wedding party with a candid shot also highlighted the prestige attached to having an on-the-spot portrait taken by a well-respected photographer. Judging from newspaper accounts, such commemorative documentation of the wedding group most often occurred after the service, usually on the steps of the church.<sup>47</sup> In 1910, Lisk-Carew photographed the

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<sup>45</sup> "Marriage-Nicolls-Thomas," *Sierra Leone Times*, December 12, 1896, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Mann 1985, 56.

<sup>47</sup> See "Marriage of Mr. C.J. Porter of Lagos to Miss. Annie McCauley of Regent," *SLWN*, January 25, 1890, 4. Photographer Albert St. John was on hand to take the group photograph. See also "Marriage of Miss Clarissa B. Lewis and Mr. T.A.

wedding of the mayor of Freetown's niece. The *SLWN* reported "following the ceremony the guests left the church for the residence of the bride's mother ... In front of the house they were photographed by Mr. A. Lisk-Carew ... In the house Mr. Lisk-Carew photographed the bridal group."<sup>48</sup> By the early twentieth century, the pomp and spectacle of elite weddings were given less coverage in the Freetown press but were still actively reported on with vigour.<sup>49</sup> While the lavish weddings of the mid- to late nineteenth century were less pronounced, the reportage remained fixated on the visual dominance of the bride. Before the turn of the century, the wedding costume worn by Creole brides was described with painstaking detail in newspaper accounts, including a short blurb on the bride's "going away" outfit.

However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the eloquent and longwinded descriptions gave way to more concise narratives. The social standing of the couple may have played a role in such editorial decisions. Thus, those couples with recognizable names and a high stature in the community were afforded more coverage than the average middle-class Sierra Leonean. While there was a range of wedding styles from which to choose, the essential component for the affluent Creole bride was an elegant European- styled dress (as described above) either imported from England or made locally using the finest imported fabrics. The Creole bride's dress was a central reference point and allowed observers to perceive the distinctions claimed by its wearers. Thus, Creole brides (particularly the elite) pictured in wedding photography of the time asserted their social cohesion as part of a larger group and

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Godfrey Macarthy," *SLWN*, February 2, 1907, 3, where J.W. Paris photographed the wedding party as they left the church.

<sup>48</sup> "Wedding—Foster—Rollings," *SLWN*, October 8, 1910, 4.

<sup>49</sup> From 1885 to 1922, there were over 700 wedding announcements and reports on local weddings in Freetown. By the 1930s, such reporting seemed to have waned in the *SLWN*. Newspapers, such as the *Sierra Leone Times*, covered weddings but to a much lesser extent.

distinguished themselves from the rest of the population.<sup>50</sup> The importance of fashionable attire for the bride and the entire wedding party was not confined to the private and personal sphere but was part of a public self-presentation and the potential for admiration or critique.

### *Constructing the Creole Bride in Studio Photographs*

Lisk-Carew was no doubt familiar with the complex attitudes on Creole weddings and especially the ways in which sartorial wedding styles were used to articulate self-presentation. He produced wedding photographs as commemorative objects that provide some insight into the wedding ritual as a rite of passage, the dynamics of gender and the social and cultural values of the Creole bride. In viewing Lisk-Carew's wedding images, it is important to highlight that despite his competent skills and reputation, as a middle class member of the Creole community with professional ties to the elite and colonial administration, he also shared and understood their particular cultural nuances and practices.<sup>51</sup>

In *Bert and Admira Faulkner* from about 1920-1925 (fig. 4.8), Lisk-Carew's familiarity with the couple took on special meaning since the bride he photographed was his niece. In this captivating wedding shot, Admira and her new husband, Bert, pose for their formal portrait in Lisk-Carew's studio. Family members remembered that Lisk-Carew and other relatives considered Admira a woman with striking good

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<sup>50</sup> Cohen 1981, 186.

<sup>51</sup> See Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 40.

looks.<sup>52</sup> The photograph not only accentuates Admira's physical beauty, but also showcases Lisk-Carew's confident authority in terms of composition and lighting in his presentation of a newly married couple. Admira wears a European-styled dress to which the conventional pose draws attention. The dress mirrors the type worn by many middle-class and elite brides, as evidenced in the descriptions in the *SLWN*. The couple's wedding attire marks them as belonging to a specific social and economic group: educated, professional, middle-class Creoles. Lisk-Carew's use of a plain backdrop<sup>53</sup> forces the viewer to concentrate on the elegance and sophistication of the couple and particularly in the romantic gauze effect of the bride's long tulle train. Of most importance, the blank backdrop also allows the personality of the sitters to come to the forefront, as exemplified in Admira's open engagement with her viewers. Here, Lisk-Carew eschews European bridal conventions typical in portraits of the time whereby the bride's head was bowed and eyes lowered to evoke a sense of the docility of the demure bride.<sup>54</sup> The portrait was intended mainly for private consumption, yet it also represents Lisk-Carew's understanding of his client bride that is evident in the intensity and directness of Admira's gaze toward the camera.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Mrs. Holland Campbell, pers. comm., October 15, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Viditz-Ward notes that painterly backdrops made popular in studio photography during the late nineteenth century became less fashionable after World War One and were replaced with plain or textured styles. See James B. Weman, "From the Background to the Foreground: The Photo-Backdrop and Cultural Expression," *Afterimage*, vol. 24, no. 5 (1997), 2-3.

<sup>54</sup> Lili Corbus Bezner, "Wedding Photography: A Shining Light," *Visual Resources*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2002), 13.

<sup>55</sup> Along with the wedding portraits, it is evident that Admira was a favourite subject of Lisk-Carew's photography as she and her growing family were featured in a series of larger format framed photographs. In each image (three in total) there are new additions to the family. The grouping ends with a final portrait of her, Bert and their seven children! Within this grouping (all found in the parlour of the home of Mrs. Bertmira Williams, Admira's eldest daughter in Freetown) is a single studio portrait of Admira taken in the mid- to late 1930s.

Lisk-Carew captured various groups of bridal parties in studio using similar visual conventions. These iconographic wedding groupings are comprised of the key kin and friends associated with the bride and groom. Although the two examples that follow were taken at different periods, the first around 1920-1925 (fig. 4.9) and the second around 1930-1935 (fig. 4.10), both are indicative of the continuing importance fashion trends played in Creole wedding photographs. The wedding party in figure 4.9 is posed in front of Lisk-Carew's standard backdrop. The group is small and perhaps reflects a shift from the large elaborate weddings made popular amongst the wealthier Creole set. However, the scaled-back size of the wedding party does not take away from the absolute adherence to the fashion of the day. The men are decked out in formal wear, including a shorter version of the morning coat, waistcoat, striped pants, leather shoes with spats and bowler hat. They have followed to a tee the essential wedding costume as outlined in an English how-to booklet. The "How to Dress for a Wedding" section suggests "a morning-coat, neatly stripped trousers and waistcoat, patent leather shoes with spats and a bowler hat [for the bride-groom]. Either a wing or double collar may be worn and a pair of grey or white gloves carried."<sup>56</sup>

While the groom and male attendants display their fashionability and adherence to the sartorial rules pertaining to wedding attire, so too does the featured bride. She is the focus of the day, and in this portrait her appearance represents not only her own status but also that of the groom and their families. Lisk-Carew is aware of such considerations and constructs the image of the young woman as the quintessential middle-class Creole bride. Her dress is elegant, yet understated. And her veil, similar to the one worn by *Admira*, is long, full and flowing and has been arranged by her feet, where the effect is ethereal.

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<sup>56</sup> "The Wedding," in *Everything You Want to Know: 1929 Tit-Bits Year Book How Why and When of Everything* (London: George Newnes, 1929), 17.



Lisk-Carew's photograph reflects his understanding of the ways in which such wedding photographs were shaped by certain cultural registers in Creole society. Thus, an emphasis is placed on the bride, since it is she that will be scrutinized in terms of her overall comportment, style of dress, hairstyle, veil and flowers. In addition to being housed in albums, such portraits were displayed prominently on parlour walls or in a central position on a piece of furniture, which allowed for greater public access and viewing.<sup>57</sup>

The wedding party in figure 4.10 features a slightly larger group and offers another example of Lisk-Carew's formulaic wedding images. In this example, a younger generation offers new notions of display. The men wear less formal attire opting for carefully tailored linen suits rather than morning suits. The women are outfitted in tasteful wedding attire that is muted and refined, yet exceedingly fashionable. The bride is central to the group's staging. Her dress is simple and minimalist, in contrast to that of the bride from the earlier period. Her look is completed with a long modest veil. Compared to earlier decades, this generation demonstrates a shift from style of the older Creole elite.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> For example, I first encountered Admira Faulkner's wedding portrait at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Bertmira Faulkner. There were two versions of the image and a separate photograph of Bert. All of the framed portraits were on an end table in the parlour. I found similar display patterns in the other homes of Creole families, both in Sierra Leone as well as the diaspora.

<sup>58</sup> See Barbara Harrell-Bond, *Modern Marriage in Sierra Leone: A Study of the Professional Group* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1975), 193-194. Harrell-Bond notes that the members of the May family introduced the Ashobe style, or the practice of the bride's family wearing dresses made of the same material, to Sierra Leone in the 1920s. "Ashobe" is a Yoruba-derived term. Cornelius May was the editor of the Sierra Leone Weekly News, and his father was a Yoruba recaptive. Following the marriage of Cornelius's daughter to a doctor from Lagos, the relatives of the bride put on the same dress material for the reception." The practice is popular amongst all groups in present-day Freetown. I found no extant images of the Ashobe style in wedding photographs by Lisk-Carew.

How the clothes are worn on the body also come to bear on such distinctions. Thus, the young man featured at the right side of the composition stands with confidence and self-assurance revealing his stature as a key member of the party. The bride's pared-down costume is worn with effortless grace, suggesting a familiarity with the ways in which her body could best accentuate the beauty of her wedding ensemble. Lisk-Carew's staging of the bride and compositional choices, such as lighting and backdrop, draws the viewer's attention to her positioning within the overall group portrait study. On the one hand, he captures the Creole bride as part of a larger social construction whose wedding ceremonies and costumes historically were linked to wealth and social status. On the other hand, he pictures brides who adapted their styles to express their individuality, conveying the contradictory desires to both conform and distinguish one's self. As Georg Simmel notes of fashion in general, "Fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation ... at the same time it satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency toward dissimilarity, the desire for constant change and contrast."<sup>59</sup> Simmel's idea about differentiation also speaks to the ways in which Creoles often adapted European dress to their own tastes, attitudes and sensibilities.

The final example, a wedding portrait of Lisk-Carew's bride, Olawale Ojufemi Esther-Bright (Esther) from around 1945 (fig. 4.11), perhaps best illuminates the desire for adaptation and individual flare, and Lisk-Carew's personal approach to such desires. This striking portrait offers a rare opportunity to witness a tender photographic moment taken by Lisk-Carew featuring his beaming new wife. Olawale's wedding portrait takes the form of a stylized vignette, with soft focus at the edges, which underscores the romantic nature of the image and the occasion. In this

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<sup>59</sup> See Georg Simmel, "Fashion," in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. D. Levine (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 296.

full-length portrait, Olawale is posed in a way that highlights her poised stance, and her striking wedding gown is a radical departure from the traditional wedding dresses Creole brides wore in the 1940s. Resembling more a ball gown than a formal wedding costume, the dress features a fitted bodice with a flared skirt, perhaps made of organza due to its gauzy texture. Olawale's style reflects a minimalist approach since her dress lacks a train. She also wears no veil or similar head covering. She carries a dainty fan in lieu of a bouquet of flowers. In contrast to the previous examples, she stands with her body positioned on a slight angle and not quite facing the camera. In so doing, Lisk-Carew emphasizes the long lines of her body and the details of the distinctive dress. He understood how to position the body in ways that both flattered his subject while highlighting the compelling details of the dress. Lisk-Carew's pose draws attention to her personal style choice as individual and an integral part of her identity. As Andrew Lisk-Carew notes, when he first saw the stunning image of his mother, "It was a moment that crystallized for me how talented a photographer my father had been."<sup>60</sup>

Lisk-Carew's gendered photographs of women in Sierra Leone—Bundu girls and Creole brides—show his ability to capture the range of female types who were also subjected to various public discourse, attention and critique. In the Sierra Leonean press, such women were represented as, protectorate women who were subjected to intense moral scrutiny based on their cultural practices and the reportage on the wedding proclivities of well-to-do brides. From 1905 through to the 1940s,

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<sup>60</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., October 23, 2005. In addition to generating increased interest and deeper appreciation of his father's work, the tender portrait of his mother also stirred within Andrew a desire to bring attention to his father's work as a testament to the tremendous contributions he had made to the photographic histories of Sierra Leone.

Lisk-Carew captured these women at transformative stages in their lives. It is clear that no significant single trope identifies the women who presented themselves in front of Lisk-Carew's camera. These images offered a diverse set of approaches to suit each subject while emphasizing women as aesthetic objects.

### **The *Yooba* Woman**

#### ***Morality and Sexual Representations: Lisk-Carew's Erotic Postcards of the Yooba Woman***

Many of the Sierra Leonean women featured in Lisk-Carew's stylized studio photographs present their fashionability through European-styled dress or a local form of dress that maintained and was associated with indigenous cultural practices. In such cases, the women, even the Bundu women, who appear in studio images are fully clothed and captured in neutral poses that evoke respectability and sophistication. However, Lisk-Carew also photographed women who perhaps existed on the margins of Sierra Leonean society. Such women may have been constructed as women of loose moral character, or *yooba* women according to local parlance. In these images, he photographed local women with bare breasts representing erotic ethnographic types. Yet these photographs of scantily clad or semi-nude women represent a distinct genre, which was mass-produced in the form of postcards for local and international consumers.

The images of African women since the invention of photography are innumerable and exemplary of the circulating material located within books, journals, albums and in the form of *cartes-de-visite* and postcards. They also recount the

complexities of the colonial gaze, the particular gender relations and aesthetic conventions of the period and the specific approaches of the photographer. Historically, the issues surrounding such images and the ways in which these images fixed the African woman in a representational crisis have proven very difficult to break.<sup>61</sup>

The genesis of this predicament has its roots in the ubiquitous depictions of African women in various states of nudity or semi-nudity for publication, circulation and consumption as postcards. The images reflect the staged depictions of half-dressed women staring passively into the camera's viewfinder. The exoticising tropes of nakedness, dark bodies, bare breasts, languid poses against rough backgrounds, as typified in colonial photography, assisted in giving credence and validation to colonial hegemony by casting the African woman as both savage, primitive and decidedly *un-modern*.<sup>62</sup> It should be noted that African signifiers of the breasts and nudity before colonial domination were in direct opposition to Western ideas about African women's bodies. The colonial missionary project was also fuelled by the notion of the unclothed body, which was viewed as a "profound spiritual hazard."<sup>63</sup> Also tied to this notion of spiritual bankruptcy was the idea of moral depravity since "people who displayed a lack of shame at being naked were people whose souls were in danger."<sup>64</sup> In the Western popular imagination of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the

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<sup>61</sup> See Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

<sup>62</sup> Richard West, *Back to Africa: A History of Sierra Leone and Liberia* (London: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 176. Regarding the views of Creoles and recaptives to nakedness, he notes, "The Creoles dressed somewhat after the English fashion. Since nakedness was the badge of the slave, an abundance and even an excess of clothes were seen as the proof of freedom."

<sup>63</sup> Phillipa Levine, "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2008), 189.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

breasts in particular and African nudes in general allowed for the continued construction of African women as “other” yet also as desirable. Thus, the African female body was subjected to moral scrutiny, control and commodification.

### ***Yoobas* in Sierra Leone**

In Sierra Leone from the mid-nineteenth century onward, both Creole and protectorate women were closely observed for conduct unbecoming of respectable Christian mores. In the Sierra Leonean press, such observations also took the form of none-too-subtle warnings as poems or morality stories. Thus, such cautions could be found when women were warned about the alleys in Freetown where, if not watchful, they could receive their “first lessons of error.”<sup>65</sup> In a more explicit narrative, a poem appeared in *SLWN* by an anonymous female writer. “For Dear Fatherland” explores the problem of poor girls who turn to prostitution in order to buy status items. She writes,

Sa Lone Girls dem good good one  
 Sa Lone Girls dem clean clean one  
 Poor lek loss, nor get for eat...  
 Money, Money Lord have pity  
 Coverslot<sup>66</sup> and Silk Handkerchief  
 Body all day go for nothing  
 Blessed, blessed Sa Lone girl stop and think

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<sup>65</sup> Spitzer 1974, 21.

<sup>66</sup> At the turn of the century in Freetown, the Coverslot, or *Kaba Sloht* was an ankle-length dress that was considered the cultural attire for Creole women. It had long sleeves and a yoke and was made of printed cotton fabric. By the late 40s and into the 1950s the shorter skirt was adapted and called simply “print.” See Betty Wass and S. Modupe Broderick, “The Kaba Sloht,” *African Arts*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1979), 62.

Talk say—how dis ting go look  
 Girl like me for turn yooba...  
 Girl Like me for turn Rum-Puncheon  
 Creole boy for look me down  
 O, de yoobas—ah de yoobas  
 Everyday the numbers swell.  
 Swell with blessed Creole Girls  
 18 year, 19, year, 14 year sef day join  
 Do ya sorry for dis land  
 Aliens! Aliens, what de ye mean  
 Thus to spoil my dearest country  
 Thus to tread upon our daughters.<sup>67</sup>

The main cause for her concerns are the sexual encounters between local girls and European men in Freetown and the ensuing damage to their reputation. A similar narrative published a month later, and perhaps as a response to “For Dear Fatherland,” warns that young women, in order to protect their virtue, must be weary of all military men, both European and African, or risk turning *yooba*:

Good Good wok way girl for do,  
 But for god sake run from Barrick (Barrack),  
 Barrick life nar pure ruin,  
 You go surely turn Yooba<sup>68</sup>

The notion of turning into a loose woman or a prostitute was associated with the proximity of military personnel in Freetown and the majority of Africans garrisoned

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<sup>67</sup> “For Dear Fatherland,” *SLWN*, July 20, 1907, 6.

<sup>68</sup> “Roselyn’s Dialogues: For Young Girls and Women,” *SLWN*, August 24, 1907, 6.

in Sierra Leone.<sup>69</sup> The main barracks were located on Tower Hill and at other sites at Mount Aureol and Kortright Hill. By 1899, the total number of rank and file at Kortright Hill, as listed in the *Sierra Leone Times*, was 575, with “200 Timinies, 199 Mendies, 45 Jolloffs, 35 Sosos ... 5 Liberians.”<sup>70</sup> The large number of soldiers gave rise to the potential for sexual liaisons and encounters with the female population in Freetown and the outlying villages. The dangers of prostitution as outlined in both “Dear Fatherland” and “Rosalind’s Dialogues” was discussed in a lengthy letter to the editor later that year: “Beautiful little girls who are scarcely out of their teens ... are being drawn into the net. In truth, the girls who allow themselves to be thus ensnared are of that type of idle, lazy souls who prefer a cheap any sort of life.”<sup>71</sup> Coincidentally, Lisk-Carew’s first advertisements for his practice can be located in this edition of the *SLWN*. The discourse around sexual politics, the evils of prostitution, the dire warnings aimed at thwarting a potential life as a *yooba* and the militarised environment created the ideal conditions in which Lisk-Carew could market his eroticised images drawn on the *yooba* female persona in Freetown. Such images, sold as photographs and postcards, would certainly appeal to the large male populations, seen as key consumers and viewers of erotic material.

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<sup>69</sup> Freetown’s harbour was an important strategic base to the Royal Navy. As a result an effective garrison was essential. There was a small minority of European troops supported by the West India Regiment from the Caribbean. In 1896 The West African Regiment was established because of internal unrest in the protectorate. The regiment’s primary role was to defend Freetown. It consisted of twelve companies of infantrymen. In 1896 there were 60 British Officers and 1,500 African rank and file.

<sup>70</sup> “The Fatal Disturbance in Walpole Street,” *The Sierra Leone Times*, June 17, 1899, 2.

<sup>71</sup> “To the Editor of the Weekly News,” *SLWN*, July 20, 1907, 4.



### **The *Yooba* in Lisk-Carew's Postcards**

As examined in the previous chapter, Lisk-Carew cultivated a reputation for offering the widest selection of postcard imagery of Sierra Leone. Diversity played an important part in his business, where satisfying the needs of the consumer and clients was paramount to his continued success. As a result, a panoramic vista of the harbour was just as vital to the mainstay of his reputation and business as were images picturing female semi-nudes on postcards. Lisk-Carew capitalized on the expanded tastes for the erotic and commoditized female bodies by highlighting exposed breasts and upper thighs. Postcards featuring such representations were the most widely marketed within Lisk-Carew's oeuvre. However, judging from the extant postcards within this category, he may have succumbed to market and consumer pressure to produce, since the selection is relatively small compared to other producers of the time.<sup>72</sup> It is possible that, as a young photographer with a fledgling commercial studio, Lisk-Carew may have been looking at a way to build a portfolio of images in which to promote his business as well as pander to the demand of the market for such titillating material.

For the most part, the identities, occupations and circumstances of many of his young women, female clients or models remain unknown. Yet, as poems and the letters to the editor suggest, some women explored opportunities that created available monies based on sexual liaisons and perhaps posing for a photograph. Thus, economic considerations, market demand and personal requests by female clients may have served as key motivating factors. Added to this was Lisk-Carew's apparent charm. As one informant suggested, he had a way with the people he photographed, which appealed to his female clients especially. His manner was very calm and professional

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<sup>72</sup> See Geary, in Geary and Lee-Webb 1998, 174.

“so everybody enjoyed having him photograph them.”<sup>73</sup> Yet for the two women featured in *Mendi Girls* from around 1905-1910 (fig. 4.12), their sullen demeanours seem to suggest otherwise. He captures them in a simple pose—one woman sits while the other stands at her side. Although taken outside of the studio, there is little available light and the shade obscures some of their features. Despite such concealment, their dispositions are grim and indifferent, which is palpable to the viewer. The young woman who sits stares impassively at the camera, while the one standing has been carefully positioned and instructed to pull back the front portion of her *lappa*. In so doing, she reveals the upper parts of her legs and the viewer is granted a peek at her thigh. This subtle alteration in her pose, combined with the seductive gesture, is an objectifying strategy that invites the voyeuristic male observer to imagine what is hidden by the rest of her garment. It is an obvious signifier of the *yooba* stereotype or the sexually available African woman.

While the possibility exists that the young subjects may have instigated the poses as a way of self-representation, the gestures are both stiff, unnatural and lack any emotional engagement with their viewer. The status of the young women is unknown, however Lisk-Carew saw an opportunity to take their images and a set of negotiations began. We do not know what, if anything, they were offered in exchange for their photograph or if the image was a commission. Lisk-Carew uses some of the same damaging visual tropes in which to frame particular female subjects, particularly women from the protectorate, and highlights the rigid binaries and complex power relations which existed not only between the genders but also between Creoles and other cultural groups in the protectorate.

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<sup>73</sup> Mrs. Holland–Campbell, pers. comm., November 18, 2008.

*Timmie Girl* from around 1910 (fig. 4.13)<sup>74</sup> offers further insight into Lisk-Carew's occasional forays into suggestive photographic material and the inability of female models and clients to control the circulation of their images on postcards. It also serves as an excellent example of the complexities associated with private pictures that were then circulated for public consumption and the multiple readings brought on by such representations. The "Timmie girl"<sup>75</sup> is captured as a nude odalisque lounging on a blanket on an unfinished stone floor. The space in which the photograph was taken is sparse and devoid of props and may have been taken in her home. The young woman presents a different vision than that featured in *Mendi Girls*. Her gaze at the camera and viewer is both seductive, audacious and suggests her comfort with the spectators' scrutiny of her body.<sup>76</sup> One of the most intriguing aspects about this photograph is the complete ease with which this young woman seems to have performed her pose. She possesses a sense of her own presence and is aware of her sex appeal. Lisk-Carew has constructed her as an erotic being sexually available to the male viewer's gaze. In Freetown, the *Timmie Girl* postcard exemplified the ideas surrounding the *yooba* girl who risks her virtue to pose in a risqué photograph.

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<sup>74</sup> Lisk-Carew's *Timmie Girl* also crops up in a postcard image attributed to Jacob Vitta, a photographer who worked in the Gold Coast from around 1905 to 1914 (Vitta died on May 6, 1914, in Accra; see *Gold Coast Leader*, May 16, 1914, 3.) Vitta called his version *Daisy*, which was published in the Gold Coast in 1912. It is likely that Lisk-Carew's card was sold to Vitta, who republished the image using a different name. Terence Dickinson collected the *Daisy* postcard and brought it to my attention. Unfortunately, it has since been misplaced or stolen.

<sup>75</sup> While the young subject may have belonged to the Timmie group, we have no way of knowing for sure. Since Lisk-Carew travelled to the Protectorate, it is likely that this short descriptive statement may have some validity. In the case of European editors and publishers, the captions often reflected their own stereotypes and clichés. See Geary in Thompson 2008, 146.

<sup>76</sup> See Sander Gilman, "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality," *Racing Art History*, ed. Kimberly Pinder (Routledge: New York, 2002), 119.

Similar to *Mendi Girls*, this postcard also became prime in Lisk-Carew's catalogue of similar suggestive material.

As a result of its titillating content, the *Tinnie Girl* postcard became a popular seller for Lisk-Carew. Certainly, images of scantily clad women would assist in attracting to his shop male colonial consumers eager for these types of images. It is quite likely that the soldiers in the barracks and the colonials on the ground were keen collectors of like images. Around 1920, ten years or so following the initial publishing of the photograph, the postcard was reissued for Lisk-Carew by a European publisher (fig. 4.14) and, as a result, underwent some editing. A skimpy covering was superimposed in order to conceal the young woman's lower frontal nudity, with the added caption *Just You and Me, Sierra Leone*.<sup>77</sup> It is ironic that while the European publisher attempted to insert a degree of modesty by adding the cloth piece, the new caption seeks to further heighten the young woman's sexual availability and coquettish manner. The model and client was transformed into one of erotic sexuality but sanitized for export as a postcard and a commodified object of exchange. Perhaps there was a change in local sensibilities, since by the mid-1920s laws for the protection of women and children were added to the Police Ordinance Act of 1851.<sup>78</sup> The stories that might be told about the young woman in the image and the place from which she came would become part of a public document to be circulated mainly in Europe but also in Sierra Leone and other regions in West Africa. Unfortunately, there is no extant documentary record that can offer insight into the transactions negotiated between the young woman pictured and Lisk-Carew.

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<sup>77</sup> Geary, in Thompson 2008, 146.

<sup>78</sup> See T. O. Elias, *Ghana and Sierra Leone: The Development of Their Laws and Constitutions* (London: Stevens, 1962), 236; and Richard Phillips, *Sex, Politics and Empire: A Post-Colonial Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 207.

*Tinnie Girl* represents a candid and intimate image that was quite a departure from the kinds of images for which Lisk-Carew was primarily known. It is perhaps the most extant sexually suggestive photograph in this genre. Most of the postcards in this category were more benign representations with subtle erotic undertones. For instance, *A Native Fruit-Seller* from around 1905-1910 (fig. 4.15), features a local woman in a captivating pose. The female fruit seller was captured during the course of her workday and has stopped to allow Lisk-Carew to take her image. It is a particular photograph of a woman engaged in a work-related activity. The composition showcases her grace and beauty as she balances the large bowl of fruit on her head. Her arms are positioned on her hips in a gesture that brings the viewer's attention to her exposed breasts. And she displays an enigmatic smile. However, the caption belies any overtly sexual or erotic overtones and is used simply to provide ethnographic flavour to the postcard. For voyeuristic European male viewers, the ubiquitous staged image of the exotic African woman also provided open access to imagery seen as curious, taboo or uncivilized. For African male consumers in Sierra Leone and other regions along the coast, this image perhaps held less impact because of the familiarity of the subject.

Lisk-Carew presented different pictorial codes that may have appealed to both European and African male consumers. *Mandingo Girls: Hair Dressing Styles* was taken around 1910-1911 (fig. 4.16) and then published as a postcard around 1920.<sup>79</sup> In this elegant portrait, two of the young women are captured in a semi-profile and thus do not confront the viewer with their gaze or their bare breasts. The *lappas* are

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<sup>79</sup> There are two versions of this postcard image. In the first version, from 1910, only the young woman on the left is featured in a cameo-style fashion and is captioned *The Country Belle: Harvest Moon – So Fair, So Full and Radiant*. And in the later version, published between 1912 and 1920, the image has been cropped, eliminating the stool to the left of the frame.

elaborate and seemingly made of expensive cloth, perhaps worn specifically for the occasion. Lisk-Carew has used a vignette technique, soft lighting, sepia tones and a simple backdrop as a way of obscuring any overt erotic element. However, the girls on either side of the model facing the camera touch her hand that hints at an underlying sensuality. While the girls appear alluring, there is an innocence that distinguishes them from the *Timmie Girl* image or the risk of being labelled as a *yooba*. Lisk-Carew imbues the portrait with an air of delicacy, refinement and social respectability, which is also evident in his Bundu studio portraits. Thus, the image offers a dualistic representation not only suggesting innocence but also, through their semi-dressed nature, eroticism and timelessness. Dress and modes of undress were potent signifiers of civility, accomplishment and respectability within the cultural and political spaces of colonial Freetown. The caption, based on the accompanying text, suggests an ethnographic pretext with its reference to both the cultural group represented and the variations in hairstyling.

In the end, this photograph depicts a refined exoticism where, despite Lisk-Carew's best intentions, the photograph's meanings are always mutable, especially within the colonial context.<sup>80</sup> The young female clients, eager to display their coiffures, actively participated in this construction of their image. The photograph was most probably taken for a family photo album or for personal use before circulating as a postcard. As indicated above, once the photograph was distributed as a postcard within the larger marketplace, its initial meaning was drastically recontextualised. Yet Lisk-Carew's artful *Mandingo Girls* worked in stark contrast to the seemingly brazen sexual tension inherent in both *Timmie Girl* and *Mendi Girls*.

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<sup>80</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

Considered in a larger socio-political context, these postcards nuance the discussion of African female identities during the colonial period and the ways in which Lisk-Carew negotiated the complex visual terrain of colonial stereotypes, local clients' expectations and his personal approach and aesthetic. This genre of erotic private photographs and public postcards coexisted and circulated and thus revealed the paradoxes and unstable conditions associated with both colonial and local visual constructions of female identities. Taken together, these images represent the fluctuating binaries in the depictions of local African women found within Lisk-Carew's work.

In his quest for saleable images, Lisk-Carew offered representations of local women as commodified objects of desire in the form of popular postcards. The women pictured in various states of undress conveyed the generalized notion that all African women were sexually available, thus satisfying the European appetite for the exotic, erotic and easily accessible through the postcard. For African men, including the many soldiers living in Freetown's military barracks, titillating images such as *Timnie Girl*, *Mendi Girls* and *Mandingo Girls* appealed to the desirability of the local male viewer and consumer. While such images represent a very small percentage in Lisk-Carew's overall output, his task was to present the desired images for the male consumer.

In this chapter, I have explored Lisk-Carew's gendered images through three broad categories of local women: the Bundu celebrant featured in group studio portraits whereby her transition from girl to marriageable woman was commemorated in front of the camera; the Creole bride whose elaborate weddings were reinforced in the press

and staged in Lisk-Carew's studio; and the *yooba* stereotype who embodied the woman of loose morals and was represented in postcards featuring "obligatory bare-chested girls stiffly staring at the camera."<sup>81</sup> As I have shown throughout this chapter, key contradictions are at play in the practice of Lisk-Carew. On the one hand, he was part of the colonial ideology and participated in picturing the sexualized "other." And on the other, he produced a set of photographs, which attempts to nuance the understanding of the range of women's lives within the colonial context from the late nineteenth twentieth century onward in Sierra Leone.

In tracing the many ways female identity was fashioned and refashioned in front of the camera during the colonial period, Lisk-Carew's gendered images underscored the unique, precarious and conflicted positions held by many women in Freetown. Each stance was closely observed, monitored and editorialised: issues such as immorality, marital complaints, the attire of a glamorous Creole bride and anxiety over the presence of Bundu women in Freetown were fodder for the local press.

For women in the protectorate and in Freetown, membership in Bundu provided a lifelong solidarity, which assisted in offering both spiritual and cultural refuge, and a platform to encourage loyalty to cultural practices despite overt public contentions to the contrary.<sup>82</sup> The carefully deployed Bundu photographs helped to define and reinforce national and local identities. The Creole brides captured in studio photographs reinforced their assimilated cosmopolitan identities whereby *au courant*

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<sup>81</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Alphonso Lisk-Carew: Creole Photographer," *African Arts*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1985), 48.

<sup>82</sup> See *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, December 6, 1954, 4. Sir Milton Margai, the first president of the Republic of Sierra Leone, has been recognized as being a champion of the Bundu society. He maintained that the Bundu society played an integral role in the life of ALL people of Sierra Leone.



European-styled wedding attire both signified and shaped their construction as well to do with their stylish wedding party.

Lisk-Carew's gendered images served multiple purposes. Seeking to appeal to both local Africans and colonial and foreign appetites, his mildly erotic portraits represented not only the commodification of women on the postcards but also issues of class, ethnic group and gender identities, which were consolidated throughout the photographic inscriptions.

Thus, Lisk-Carew's images offer an illuminating entrée into facets of women's identity from the late nineteenth century into the late 1940s. Women in Sierra Leone were seen in multiple contexts, generating debates and editorials in the Freetown press. Lisk-Carew, perhaps inspired by such debates or simply eager to build his practice, photographed a rich array of local women that generated a tension between the fulsome recording of the people of Sierra Leone and images which stood in conflict with these photographs. In the next and final chapter, I examine the ways in which Lisk-Carew's overall oeuvre and commitment to photography was honoured following his death in 1969. I also interrogate the legacy his photographic achievements engendered in post-colonial and post-conflict Sierra Leone.

## Illustrations



Fig. 4.1. A. James, *Jeunes Filles Soussous de Conakry (Guinée Française) durant les fêtes de l'excision et leur Prétendant*, ca. 1910, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig. 4.2. A. James, *Conakry—Jeunes Filles Circoncises*, ca. 1910-1915, postcard, courtesy of Duncan Clarke.



Fig. 4.3. W.S. Johnston and Sons, *Timence Bondo Girls*, ca. 1910-1915, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig. 4.4. W.S. Johnston and Sons, *Susu Bondo*, ca. 1910-1915, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig.4.5. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Bondu Girls*, ca. 1903-1910, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig. 4.6. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Bondu Girls*, ca. 1910-1911, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig.4.7. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Bundoo Girls*, ca. 1910-1911, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig. 4.8. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Bert and Admira Faulkner*, ca. 1920-1925, silver print, courtesy of Bertmira Faulkner.



Fig. 4.9. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Wedding Group*, ca. 1920-1925, silver print, courtesy of Isa Blyden.



Fig. 4.10. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Wedding Group*, ca. 1930-1935, silver print, courtesy of Isa Blyden.





Fig. 4.11. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Olawale Esther Bright*, ca. 1945, silver print, courtesy of Andrew Lisk-Carew.

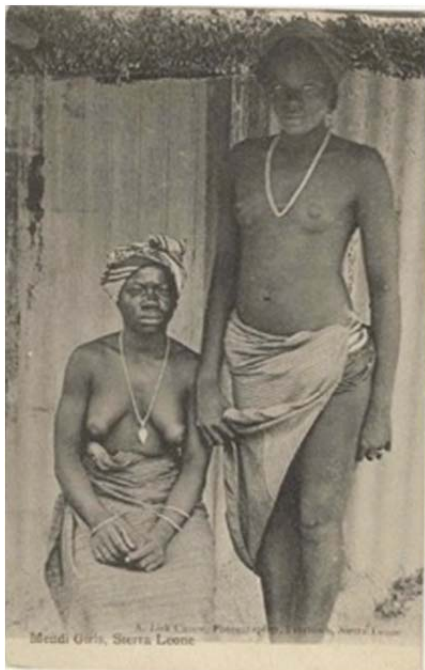


Fig. 4.12. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Mendi Girls*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.

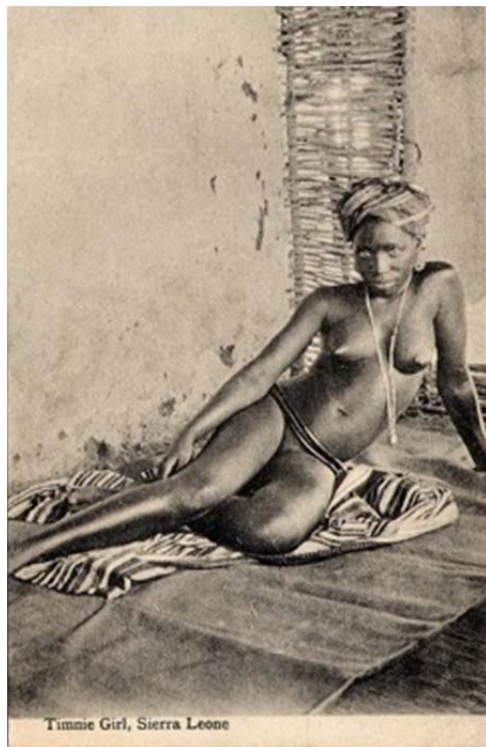


Fig.4.13. Alphonso Lisk-Carew. *Timmie Girl*, ca. 1910, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.



Fig.4.14. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Just You and Me*, ca. 1920, postcard, courtesy of Christraud Geary.





Fig. 4.15. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *A Native Fruit-Seller*, ca. 1905-1910, postcard, courtesy of Delcampe.



Fig. 4.16. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Mandingo Girls: Hair Dressing Styles*, ca. 1910-1911, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.

**Chapter Five**  
**“The Old Guard Changeth”:**  
**A Retrospective Exhibition and Lisk-Carew’s Legacy**

In the previous chapter, I offered examples of the ways in which Lisk-Carew represented the women of Sierra Leone. His photographs, I argued, not only highlight the exploitation of some local Sierra Leonean women, but also implicate Lisk-Carew in the continuation of stereotypical representations of African women as overtly sexualised beings. Despite this particular body of images, Lisk-Carew’s *oeuvre*, as I have demonstrated throughout this study, includes a vast range of subject matter and approaches that extended over fifty years.<sup>1</sup> Oddly, the announcement of his death in July 1969 generated little attention or commentary in the press on his long and remarkable career.<sup>2</sup> Lisk-Carew was sensitive to the pulse of his era and used the press not only as a vehicle to promote his business, but also as a political tool to voice his own concerns on issues affecting the local communities. During his active years, the Sierra Leone press admired him for his achievements in photography and wrote glowingly of his accomplishments and notoriety in public life. Yet from the time his practice closed, until his death, his contribution as a visionary photographer remained largely undervalued.

In this chapter, I examine the complexities of his diminished recognition in newly independent Sierra Leone as well as the triumphs of his iconic career. Here, my

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<sup>1</sup> Lisk-Carew amassed a formidable collection of glass plate negatives and various pieces of photography equipment. Unfortunately, there are no extant lists that itemise the contents of the collection. These materials were donated to the Sierra Leone Museum following his death but were later gradually stolen or sold off. While such materials might have contributed to Lisk-Carew’s compelling legacy, their absence speaks to some of the difficulty in defining his impact on the history of photography in Sierra Leone.

<sup>2</sup> Whilst combing through the various newspapers of the time, for instance, I could not locate a death notice or a single editorial that marked Lisk-Carew’s passing.

analysis turns to the retrospective exhibition of his work held in 1970 at Fourah Bay College and the British Council. Considering this exhibition, I examine the curatorial attention given the work, as well as its overall reception by the public. I explore, in other words, the ways in which his work was recovered, recognised and presented in a new historical context. While Lisk-Carew's photography was seen as constituting "the old guard" or a relic from the past in the exhibition, it coincided with a younger generation of image-makers who were actively pursuing photography as a profession and for whom Lisk-Carew served as their mentor either directly or indirectly. Yet, this generation, which began to emerge at the end of Lisk-Carew's career, engaged in producing work that was largely mitigated, constrained and constituted by a rapidly changing social, economic and political landscape in the years just prior to independence and leading up to Sierra Leone's civil war. Lisk-Carew's legacy would be challenged by these conditions.

When considering the notion of a "legacy," there is always the temptation to look back at various historical trajectories and the vicissitudes in these practices. Yet, as a result of Sierra Leone's devastating protracted civil war, I also examine the aftermath and the kinds of re-constituting of photographic practices and adaptations that emerged to suit the present material conditions of the country.

### **Re-discovering Alphonso Lisk-Carew and the *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana Mapping the Social and Political Landscape, 1950-1969***

In the pre-independence period (1940-1947), a strong nationalist consciousness appeared and coincided with the formation of local political parties. Pro-independence formations were based on the continuing tensions and anxieties experienced historically between the Creoles in the colony and the inhabitants of the protectorate.

By 1947, the Constitution was amended, providing majority participation in the Legislative Assembly. However, the franchise gave majority representation to groups from the protectorate, making the Creoles a permanent minority.<sup>3</sup> The fierce polarities created such political parties as the Creole-based National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL), under the leadership of Dr. Bankole Bright, in 1950 and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), a conglomeration that represented both Creole and Protectorate interests, in 1951.<sup>4</sup> That year, following the imposition of the new constitution, elections were held, and the SLPP won a majority, and its leader, Dr. Milton Margai, was appointed Chief Minister.

According to testimonies, Lisk-Carew continued to service the needs of various communities during the late 1940s and into the 1950s, mainly through personal recommendations and repeat customers. His patrons were the people he already knew: family, friends and contacts made through past government commissions and other acquaintances. But he also continued to attract new customers on the basis of his preeminent reputation as the owner of the oldest and most established studio in Freetown. The increase of new photography studios in the city engendered a shift in approaches to the medium. The new photographers were rooted in the present and offered an array of styles and techniques often through manipulation of the image and modern backdrops to remain ahead of competition.<sup>5</sup> However, Lisk-Carew's practice appealed to clients who were familiar with his conventional approach, which idealised a world far removed from the fast-changing

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<sup>3</sup> Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1989), 105.

<sup>4</sup> Bankole Bright's party held a rigorous platform, which included a separation of the colony from the protectorate.

<sup>5</sup> Vera Viditz-Ward, "Notes Toward a History of Photography in Sierra Leone, West Africa," *Exposure*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1991-1992), 21. See my discussion later in this chapter.

realities of the post-World War Two era. Even toward the end of his career, a photograph bearing the Lisk-Carew stamp was viewed as a sign of status: “Even as Mr. Lisk-Carew got older, people wanted *him* to take their picture personally and no one else ... It was so that they could say it was taken by Lisk-Carew.”<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, there was an increasing dissatisfaction with the ineffectual bureaucracy and economic upheavals for which both local and British administrations were blamed.<sup>7</sup> Creoles continued to voice their grievances and shore up support for their constituencies with the establishment of additional political parties, including the Sierra Leone Independence Movement (SLIM) in 1956. SLIM’s founder was Dr. Edward Blyden III, a senior lecturer at Fourah Bay College who was known for his vocal opposition to colonialism.<sup>8</sup> The SLPP won the election of 1957. Disenchanted groups, including the Temne and some Creoles, were alarmed by the Mende hegemony and searched for political alternatives which they found in the 1960 formation of the All People’s Congress (APC) under the leadership of former trade union leader Siaka Stevens, a Limba, one of Sierra Leone’s smaller northern ethnic groups.<sup>9</sup> The APC provided a much-needed alternative to the SLPP, and Stevens reached out to the poor urban masses as well as marginalised northerners. Stevens’s trade unionist beginnings helped him to reach out to working people and mobilise support, and played a role in his ascension to power. While numerous attempts were made to overthrow Margai, the SLPP Chief Minister held on to power and succeed in

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<sup>6</sup> Cassandra Garver, pers. comm., May 13, 2009. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>7</sup> See Wyse 1989, 108. For example, the 1955 General Strike and 1956 Tax Revolt.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 108

<sup>9</sup> John Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001), 28.

his demand for independence from Britain.<sup>10</sup> On April 27, 1961, Sierra Leone became an independent state. The SLPP held onto power for six years, but by 1967, in a hotly contested election, the APC, under the leadership of Siaka Stevens, was elected.<sup>11</sup>

Democracy was short-lived, however, when on March 21, 1967, Stevens was overthrown in a coup. After a year in exile, he was restored to power through a popular uprising. Following his reinstatement, he clamped down on any real or perceived opposition to his rule and ran a brutal and repressive regime.<sup>12</sup>

### *Connections*

While Lisk-Carew was in failing health at the beginning of Stevens's controversial tenure as President, he was familiar with Stevens's activities in the trade unions. It is said that Stevens even admired Lisk-Carew's political work with the WAYL and would visit him during his years as mayor of Freetown to discuss current issues in municipal politics.<sup>13</sup> Following independence, photography studios continued to operate, however with the influx of people from outside Freetown, many were not

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<sup>10</sup> See Wyse, 109. Margai clashed with his younger, more brash brother Albert who was challenging his brother's leadership. There was also increasing pressure and opposition by Siaka Stevens and his supporters.

<sup>11</sup> John R. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 83; Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics, and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 125-130; and Jimmy Kandeh, "Politicization of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone," *African Studies Review*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1992), 81.

<sup>12</sup> Stevens ruled until 1985. The period has often been referred to as the 17-year plague of locusts. Stevens destroyed and or corrupted every state institution, including the judiciary to the universities. John Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy* (Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publisher, 2001), 29. During his rule, Sierra Leone went from being the model of democratic governance and economic prosperity that it had been under Milton Margai to being the example of "neopatrimonialism" whereby national resources were redistributed as "marks of personal favor to followers who respond with loyalty to the leader rather than to the institution that the leader represents." See also William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Lisk-Carew, pers. comm., October 20, 2007.

Creole- or even Sierra Leonean-owned.<sup>14</sup> For instance, in 1961, a full-page advertisement ran in the *Sierra Leone Year Book* for Paragon Studios, owned by Ghanaian photographer E. Ukpong.<sup>15</sup> By the following year, the *Year Book* included full-page advertisements for three immigrant-owned studios: Adebayo Photos, Osho Photo Studio and Dingab's Studio.<sup>16</sup> These new studios listed a range of genres and photographic services with an emphasis on passport photographs. Since these studios were no longer owned by single families, a new crop of photographers ran businesses that frequently changed ownership.<sup>17</sup> Such changes to the landscape of commercial photography and the shifting political and economic situation certainly impacted the ways in which photography was viewed and patronised. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studio photography to which Lisk-Carew held an iconic status had changed, as new consumers and patrons with differing needs and viewing practices set the tone for the competing studios at this time.

Between the closing of his studio in the late 1950s and his death in 1969, Lisk-Carew's work fell from public view. With no family member or protégé to carry on the business, the postcards and photographs were randomly preserved in the albums of his consumers as relics and memorabilia of the past. Insuring Lisk-Carew's legacy and appreciation of his commitment to photography in Sierra Leone was certainly the impetus behind a retrospective in the 1970 *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana*.

As the socio-cultural and political conditions continued to change from 1961 onward, so did the post-independence "period eye." The euphoria of independence gave rise to photography practices that sought to showcase a stable and unified

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<sup>14</sup> Viditz-Ward 1991-1992, 21.

<sup>15</sup> "Paragon Studios," in *The Sierra Leone Year Book* (Freetown: Daily Mail Publications, 1961), 68.

<sup>16</sup> *The Sierra Leone Year Book* (Freetown: Daily Mail Publications, 1962), VI, VII.

<sup>17</sup> Viditz-Ward 1991-1992, 21.

pluralised nation, strong political leaders and a thriving multicultural populace. At the same time, photographers set their sights on attracting new immigrants to their studios, using innovative backdrops and experimentation with photographic technologies resulting in a shift away from the stylised studio portrait conventions of the past.<sup>18</sup> However, the optimism of the independence period and nostalgia for the colonial past converged with the *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana*, which ran from December 5 to December 10, 1970. Buoyed by the enthusiasm engendered amongst newly independent African states, there occurred a cultural resurgence across the continent and particular interest in projects related to the arts. For example, patronage at national and international levels, both private and governmental, resulted in such ambitious pan-African projects as the First World Festival of Negro Art, held in Dakar in 1966, and the First Pan African Festival, held in Algiers in 1969.<sup>19</sup> Sierra Leone's participation in these festivals was limited (the Sierra Leone National Dance troupe performed at FESTAC in 1976 and 1977 in Nigeria). However, there was a growing interest in cultural and artistic initiatives that showcased local artistic production. In fact, predating the *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana* by a year, the *Contemporary African Art* show, held at the Camden Arts Centre in London, exhibited paintings and sculptures by a group of Sierra Leonean artists.<sup>20</sup> The show was one of the earliest exhibitions to consider contemporary modernist African art practices. Unfortunately, aside from some of the well-known African artists of the

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<sup>18</sup> Viditz-Ward 1991-1992, 21.

<sup>19</sup> FESTAC, the Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture, was held in Lagos in 1977.

<sup>20</sup> "Sa.Leone Paintings and Sculptures in Art Show," *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, August 5, 1969, 2.



time, such as Ibrahim El Salahi and Twins Seven-Seven, the exhibition catalogue makes no mention of the Sierra Leonean artists who participated in the event.<sup>21</sup>

The 1970 *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana* was not initiated around the premise of an art or photography show. Instead, the organisers, and chiefly Dr. Edward Blyden III, carefully curated the exhibition as an examination of the larger cultural and historical context of Sierra Leone as a nation through the lens of material and artistic production – specifically photographs. At the same time, Blyden was interested in capturing the imagination of Sierra Leoneans in terms of building Sierra Leone’s cultural capital. Thus, Blyden notes that the aim of the exhibition was to “stimulate local craftsmen, industrialists and artists, to greater efforts by examples of superior skill ... and to stimulate social and intellectual improvement through the country.”<sup>22</sup> In its broadest sense, the underlying objective of the exhibition was to educate a large portion of Sierra Leonean society about the value of history and the importance of art in its representation.

Dr. Wellesley Cole, another member of the committee, had similar ambitious goals for the exhibition. Curiously, he linked the positive reception to the show to future improved road conditions, which would “help Freetown emerge as it did in earlier times as the metropolis of trade and commerce for all West Africa.”<sup>23</sup> Cole’s lofty predictions for a reclaiming of Sierra Leone’s past glory as the “Athens of West Africa” illustrates the high expectations placed on the exhibition by key organisers.

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<sup>21</sup> See *Contemporary African Art* (London and New York: Studio International, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> Edward W. Blyden, III, “Introductory Note,” in *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970: In the British Council Hall, Sunday 6th to Thursday 10 December 1970; An Exhibition of Photographs, Original Manuscripts and Other Historical Documents, Representing Three Quarters of a Century of Sierra Leone’s Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Development* (Freetown: Fourah Bay College, Institute of African Studies, 1970). n.p.

<sup>23</sup> “Sa. Leoneans and Future of Arts,” *Sierra Leone Daily Mail*, December 8, 1970, 2.

Cole also made reference to Lisk-Carew and his work, highlighting for the press that the “work of well known photographer, the late Mr. Alphonso Lisk-Carew ,will be displayed.”<sup>24</sup>

The idea to include a comprehensive retrospective of Lisk-Carew’s photography within the exhibition was initiated by Dr. Blyden. According to informants, the Blyden family were distant relatives and maintained a close relationship with Lisk-Carew throughout his lifetime.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Blyden considered Lisk-Carew an artist, and following his death he started the task of gathering images for the exhibition. Mrs. Holland-Campbell, who was a member of the organizing committee, recalls that Dr. Blyden was concerned that Lisk-Carew’s work would not live on in the memories of Sierra Leoneans and thus did not want him “to die just like that.”<sup>26</sup> With the permission of Lisk-Carew’s family, he gathered many boxes of photographs from his home and then selected the photographs that would constitute the show. He also visited the homes of individual Creole families in Freetown who were known to have photographs taken by Lisk-Carew and borrowed them for the show.<sup>27</sup> Following the retrieval of original photographs (and in some cases postcards), these images were preserved enlarged and mounted on thick cardboard paper.<sup>28</sup> From the closing of his shop in the late 1950s to his death in 1969, familiarity with Lisk-Carew and his work was limited to those who knew him and an older generation who had patronised his

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ms. Isa Blyden, pers. comm., May 14, 2010. I had the opportunity to briefly meet Dr. Blyden at Smart Farm, the family home in Freetown, just before he died in 2011. Since the ailing Dr. Blyden’s speech was limited, Isa Blyden acted as an interlocutor, asking him questions about his knowledge of Lisk-Carew. There were several personal photographs taken by Lisk-Carew of members of the Blyden family, including two compelling studio portraits of Isa Cleopatra Blyden following the funeral of her pan-Africanist father, Edward Wilmot Blyden.

<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Holland-Campbell, pers. comm., November 10, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Ms. Isa Blyden, pers. comm., May 14, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Mr. Moses Yaskey was the head photographer of the photographic section at the Ministry of Information.

business. Thus, in pursuing Lisk-Carew's work for the exhibition, Blyden also wanted to expose a larger Sierra Leonean public to his artistic achievements in photography.

### **Inside the *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana: A Nation on Display***

The organisers of the exhibition, and in particular Dr. Blyden, curated the exhibition with two narratives: one sought to reclaim Sierra Leone's historical and cultural accomplishments, using Lisk-Carew's photographs to focus such a narrative. The other was concerned with Lisk-Carew the artist, being a retrospective of his work. Therefore, as observed in the exhibition catalogue, "the artistic and photographic achievement of Alphonso Lisk-Carew has placed everyone in his debt and not the least those who attend this Exhibition; without the presence of his work, this display would have been greatly impoverished."<sup>29</sup> In both respects, Lisk-Carew's photographs served as visual aids that mapped out a country's social and political history and progress, and as artistic works that reflected the sophistication of his profession.

The exhibition, held in the main auditorium at the British Council, traced the many shifts and turns in the shaping of Sierra Leone by focusing on three distinct eras and thematic subtexts: "From 1895-1923 (The founding of Sierra Leone to The Age of Elegance and Grandeur)"; "1923-1945 (Constitutional Change to The Second World War)"; and "1946-1970 (Africanisation to Material Culture and Music)." The 40-page catalogue served as a reference booklet for the exhibition that began with a numbered index and that offered annotated accounts under each item.<sup>30</sup> It also gives

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<sup>29</sup> "Alphonso Lisk-Carew the Artist," in *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970*, n.p.

<sup>30</sup> The written narratives provided in the catalogue also acted as a didactic guide to the photographs. They offered detailed accounts and names of personalities or subjects

some insight into the visual layout and forms of display of the exhibition since there are no extant photographs. An intriguing installation technique was used whereby the images pertaining to a particular era were hung behind the recreated façade of a house or structure representing the architecture of that period.<sup>31</sup> In addition, there were separate areas pertaining to material culture and artefacts, photographs and Freetown architecture. A panoramic viewfinder was set up on the veranda of the British Council Auditorium that allowed visitors to use a visual apparatus to observe various places of interest in Freetown. The catalogue thus encouraged viewers to use the apparatus since “our history is all around us, for those who take the time to observe!”<sup>32</sup>

As chronicler and observer of life in Sierra Leone, Lisk-Carew illustrated the changes in the society over the course of his lifetime and career. While no doubt many of his photographs were utilised in the various eras under display, the largest concentration of his work representing the breadth and range of his practice was located in the sections under headings 25 and 26, respectively, “Alphonso Lisk-Carew: The Man and his Work” and “Alphonso Lisk-Carew: The Artist.” The first section provided a brief biography, described his various business enterprises and outlined the many facets of his photography career. The second described the range of his oeuvre, labelling his work as “striking and original”<sup>33</sup> and noting his eye for the “unusual and intriguing.”<sup>34</sup> Section 27 of the catalogue, “The Art of Photography: Moses Yaskey-Master Photographer,” was dedicated to Yaskey’s work in the preservation, enlarging and mounting of the older photographs taken by Lisk-Carew. Figure 5.1 shows a photograph of Yaskey in the process of enlarging some earlier photographs. The

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featured which augmented the vague or at times missing identifications on the enlarged and mounted images.

<sup>31</sup> “A Guide to the Exhibition,” in *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970*, n.p.

<sup>32</sup> “Panoramic Viewfinder,” in *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> “Alphonso Lisk-Carew: The Artist,” in *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

caption in the catalogue reads, “The section shows the detailed workmanship and skill necessary before we can re-exhibit the work of the earlier master photographer, Alphonso Lisk-Carew.”<sup>35</sup>

The extant photographs from the exhibition reflect not only Lisk-Carew’s virtuosic aesthetic but also his ability to capture a range of personalities and places that reveal Sierra Leone’s transformation through the decades. Dr. Blyden’s intuitive selection of available images and his curating of Lisk-Carew’s vision of Sierra Leone certainly added to the appeal of the exhibition.<sup>36</sup>

For example the portrait of an elite Creole man from around 1908-1910 (fig. 5.2) typifies the kind of photograph worthy of inclusion. Blyden displayed Lisk-Carew’s studio portraits of the wealthy elite Creole community, which highlighted their importance and social status. It features an elegant young man who personifies the “age of elegance and grandeur.”<sup>37</sup> He is dressed in the formal European men’s wear that was popular amongst Creole men of a certain elite class. Lisk-Carew has eschewed a conventional frontal position and instead opted for one in which the young man stands with a slight angle to the camera with his right hand gracefully holding an umbrella. The pose stressed the bespoke nature of his fashionable suit and his overall customised style. In so doing, the photographed conveys his individuality, self-confidence and dandified elegance.

Lisk-Carew’s extensive patronage by a range of local personalities in Freetown was showcased with the fascinating portrait of “Pa” Alimamy Bungie (fig.

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<sup>35</sup> *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970*, n.p.

<sup>36</sup> The extant photographs from the exhibition have been scattered, lost or stolen. There is a dearth located in the Sierra Leone National Archives and a few in Isa Blyden’s possessions. None of my informants familiar with the exhibition were able to give a concrete number related to Lisk-Carew’s images. However, I encountered twenty large-scale mounted and labelled images at the archives.

<sup>37</sup> “The Age of Elegance and Grandeur,” *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970*, n.p.

5.3), also known as the “Sympathetic Undertaker.” A unique and flamboyant Freetown personality, Pa Bungie (1870-1935) was a master carpenter, whose specialty was the construction of coffins, and a funeral arranger for the local population. He was known for driving a specialised hearse vehicle that was decorated with loosely placed feathers on its roof, which would shake when on the road.<sup>38</sup> In the photograph, Lisk-Carew has captured Bungie’s larger-than-life persona with his trademark walking stick. Bungie strikes a dignified but performative pose, in keeping with his audacious nature. His self-possessed expression toward the camera, gesture and deportment that showcases his elegant attire, accented his individuality and forceful presence in the local community. For the spectators in 1970, Lisk-Carew’s image of Bungie not only highlighted an iconic figure in Sierra Leone history but also called to mine the ways in which such characters participated fully in Sierra Leone’s complex colonial society.

Alongside the studio portraits were a range of images representing the various administrations of elite schools, such as the Annie Walsh Memorial School and Methodist Boys’ High School during the 1930s, members of the local legislative council, protectorate chiefs images of the local streets and vistas from the countryside from bygone eras. Thus shaped through Blyden’s eyes, Lisk-Carew’s photography was used to represent Sierra Leone’s glorified past, acknowledge Creole achievements and pay tribute to indigenous cultural groups’ contributions to the

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<sup>38</sup> See Magbaily C. Fyle, *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 28-29. A Krio proverb was created around his quirky hearse, “luk we yu de shek lek de feda na Bungi as” (You quiver like the feather on Bungie’s hearse). I am grateful to Professor Festus Cole who related anecdotal stories about Bungie, which have become part of Freetown folklore. Professor Cole happened to be at the Sierra Leone National Archives during the time I found the large print portrait of Bungie. Lisk-Carew photographed Bungie on more than one occasion; he even produced a postcard image of him (perhaps as a memorial) following his death – the caption of which states this point.

development of the nation. The disparate range of images also presented a comprehensive picture of both the colony and the protectorate over the span of fifty years. Ultimately, his photographs promulgated an image of Sierra Leone as a historically culturally rich, progressive and inclusive society. The social and cultural character of Sierra Leone projected by these images would continue to be used, according to the catalogue, to “help us remember our nation’s history.”<sup>39</sup>

The organisers of the *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana*, particularly Dr. Blyden, constructed a carefully curated event to which there were numerous outcomes and meanings. While the primary goal was to emphasise Sierra Leone’s historical accomplishments over 75 years, it was also a venue for encouraging a homegrown engagement and understanding of local arts and culture. The timing of the exhibition was strategic, as post-independent Sierra Leone was undergoing profound socio-economic and political changes. For viewers of the exhibition, Lisk-Carew’s photographs may have held a mirror to the past, allowing an awakening of their historical consciousness and perhaps a renewed optimism for their present and for what the future might hold. Judging from the absence of reportage in the Sierra Leone press, the exhibition was not an immediate success, nor did it garner much attention from the larger populace. However, Dr. Blyden observed that “what future historians will record of this exhibition is not ours to determine ... the creative, artistic geniuses of the period ... will serve as the indices by which success or otherwise of this exhibition will be measured.”<sup>40</sup> Blyden’s remarks are prescient vis-à-vis Lisk-Carew’s retrospective whereby viewers could engage with the breadth of his career and prolific output. Blyden suggests that such achievements speak for themselves. Thus, the

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<sup>39</sup> Section 27, “The Leaders of the Nation,” in *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana, 1895-1970*, n.p.

<sup>40</sup> Blyden, “Introductory Note,” in *ibid.*

expressive potential of Lisk-Carew's studio work and the many facets of his encyclopaedic coverage of Sierra Leone situated him as an early African professional whose modernist work responded to global trends that were adapted to local needs and consumer demand. Such recognition in 1970 constitutes Lisk-Carew's rightful place at the forefront of early African photographic practice and challenge recent assessments in which his contributions have been minimised and or glossed.<sup>41</sup>

### **Lisk-Carew's Legacy: The Post-Colonial Era**

As I explored above, during the years following Lisk-Carew's closing of his shop and the mounting of the exhibition of his work, a shift in photographic practice occurred due to photographers from outside of the region opening small studios in Freetown. Yet, Lisk-Carew laid the foundation for a succession of local photographers who were active in Freetown and the surrounding provinces from the late 1950s through to the late 1990s and the beginning of Sierra Leone's civil war. These photographers were rooted in the continuum of image practices in Sierra Leone and for the most part they acknowledge Lisk-Carew as a pioneer in the profession. Indeed, they engaged in fragmented practices that represented a marked shift from those of Lisk-Carew's generation.

This shift or rupture is evident in the work of five photographers, which I examine below, several of whom worked during and at times for President Siaka Stevens's regime of the late 1960s into the mid 1980s.<sup>42</sup> Christos Greene, Ronald Luke and A.C.M George were each involved to some extent in maintaining the official gaze of the government. Here, photography was used as an extension of state

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<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of this, see "Review of the Literature" in Chapter One of the present dissertation.

<sup>42</sup> Steven served as prime minister from 1967 to 1971 and then as president of the Republic from 1971 to 1985.



policies to entrench a national mythology and political will. Unlike Lisk-Carew, who undertook commissions for the colonial government, these photographers were initially drawn to government commissions because of financial reward and their idealistic notions of nation building. The Stevens-led APC government, unlike most governments of newly independent states, did little in the way of promoting national heroes and civic pride. Until the military coup that toppled president Siad Momoh's government in 1992, the establishment of patriotic art was also rare in Sierra Leone.<sup>43</sup> This group of photographers regarded it as their duty to document the rapidly transforming independent nation. In contrast, there were other photographers who countered this burden of representation. For example, Nigerian Jonathan Adenuga, whose studio overlapped with Lisk-Carew's in the late 1950s. There was also Pa Francis Kongo who lived and worked as an itinerant photographer primarily in the Provinces. Both of these photographers adopted similar conventions and practices to those of Lisk-Carew while operating within the complex dynamics of a fragile West African nation.

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<sup>43</sup> See Joe Opala, "'Ecstatic Renovation!': Street Art celebrating Sierra Leone's 1992 Revolution," *African Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 371 (1994), 199. Opala notes that some of the patriotic art created by young people featured Sierra Leone's political heroes or activists, such as Bai Bureh and Sengbe Pieh and cultural practises, such as Bundu. I discuss this further in further detail later in this chapter.

### ***Jonathan Adenuga***

The “Devil of Mount Aureol.”<sup>44</sup>

During my visits to Freetown between 2009 and 2011, I had many insightful conversations with local photographers who had worked in the late 1950s and 1960s. During these conversations, one photographer in particular was often mentioned – Jonathan Adenuga, who began his career in Freetown at the tail end of Lisk-Carew’s. Born in Nigeria, Adenuga travelled to Freetown in the early 1950s to attend Fourah Bay College. After receiving a degree in English Literature, he decided to stay in Freetown.<sup>45</sup> During his time at Fourah Bay College, he earned extra money by taking the photographs of fellow students. He was supposedly self-taught.<sup>46</sup> He subsequently opened a photography studio on Goderich Street in Freetown. Adenuga offered similar modes of photography to that of Lisk-Carew. The most notable were studio portraits and postcards. There is no indication, however, that he was patronised by the colonial regime or that he pursued such commissions. Practicing before Sierra Leone experienced decolonization, Adenuga was considered an innovator regarding his unique approach in which it is said he experimented with different techniques to enhance his portrait photographs.<sup>47</sup> As a result of such departures in conventional image practices, he earned the respect of younger colleagues and the nicknames “Devil of Mount Aureole” and the “Magician with the Camera.”<sup>48</sup> His professional rivals were unanimous in their admiration of Adenuga as a photographic rebel.

Adenuga’s studio photography made its mark because of his ability to take compelling portraits. And, more importantly, the portraits indicate experimentation

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<sup>44</sup> A popular nickname of the artist.

<sup>45</sup> Mrs. Regina Phillips, pers. comm., April 17, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> A.C.M. George, pers. comm., May 14, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

with double exposures and camera tricks.<sup>49</sup> His work was a departure from Lisk-Carew's visual conventions to studio portraiture. He did, however, take advantage of the waning popularity of picture postcards by producing images of sights of interest in Freetown. In the postcard image *Lovely Fountain* from around 1965-1970 (fig. 5.4), he captured the water fountain in Victoria Park. The park was founded in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday and to mark Sierra Leone's centennial anniversary.<sup>50</sup> It was a popular local gathering spot in the heart of Freetown and served as an iconic landmark.<sup>51</sup> The fountain is set against the leafy foliage of the park setting, where he captured the structure as an important commemorative monument to Freetown's history.

It is important to keep in mind that Adenuga's clients were representative of communities struggling to define their identities as African subjects, bound up in the process of imminent independence. In short, representing a society in flux, Adenuga's portraits were in dialogue with these conflicting and competing forces, and they registered his clients' desire for personal commemoration at the nexus of political transition on the road to independence. His awareness of his clients' needs was certainly in line with that of Lisk-Carew who also pushed technical and aesthetic boundaries to impress his clients. After spending two decades in Freetown, Adenuga returned to Nigeria in the late 1970s and died there in the 1980s. Adenuga is a fascinating figure in the genealogy of photography in Sierra Leone. He is captivating

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<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, his family did not give me permission to reproduce any of Adenuga's portrait images. However, given the few examples that I viewed in Freetown, the technical and formal aspects of Adenuga's work are consistent with comments made by informants about his great skill in the darkroom and the control that he exhibited in printing his own work.

<sup>50</sup> "Victoria Park," *SLWN*, June 26, 1897, 9; "Opening of the Victoria Park," *SLWN*, June 23, 1900, 8.

<sup>51</sup> In the 1930s, Lisk-Carew held his popular film shows in Victoria Park. See Chapter Two, where I outline the details of this enterprise.

because of the mystique surrounding his photography, which has evolved in the micro-communities of aged photographers in Freetown. Also intriguing is the fact that his practice, while embedded in the centre of colonial administration, eschewed many government commissions.

### *Christo Greene*

Better the Devil you know, than the Devil you don't.<sup>52</sup>

In the late 1960s, three of the Creole photographers under review emerged. All of these men were educated in Britain and they returned to Freetown fuelled with dreams of building the new nation. As one of the photographers lamented, “When we went to Britain, our aim was to come back and help to develop our country, but by the time we had returned, things had already begun to change for the worse.”<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately – for all three – this dream was never realised. These now elderly photographers revealed their knowledge and familiarity of Lisk-Carew’s practice, which they hold in high esteem.

The first photographer in this group is Christo Greene, pictured in figure 5.5. Born in 1937 in the Creole village enclave of Wilberforce, Greene travelled to London in the mid-1960s and began his studies in watchmaking at Hackney Technical College. During his stay in the United Kingdom, Greene sought out classes in photography, a hobby he had developed during his formative years in Freetown. Following the completion of his studies in 1974, he returned to Freetown and promptly opened a studio on Siaka Stevens street (the busy main thoroughfare). Prior to leaving for London, Greene had joined the APC and shortly after opening his

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<sup>52</sup> *Sierra Leone: The Path to One Party System of Government* (Sierra Leone: Government Information Services, 1978), 33.

<sup>53</sup> A.C.M. George, pers. comm., May 16, 2009.

studio, he was contracted by Stevens to take official images of visiting political officials and state visits. For example, in 1979, he captured Guinean president Ahmed Sekou Toure during an official visit to Sierra Leone (fig. 5.6).<sup>54</sup> He was also commissioned to do a range of government-sponsored photographs of national sites and various cultural performances. For instance, around 1975-1979, he captured a Fula dance troupe in the provinces (fig. 5.7). Such images helped to laud the Stevens regime by propagating the ideals of a multiethnic society living in harmony, an important proponent of nation building at the time.

However, under the rule of Siaka Stevens, Sierra Leoneans also experienced manipulative political practices, which ended in the development of a one-party state in 1978. It is important to keep in mind that this immediate post-colonial period was simultaneously informed by heady nationalism and socio-economic decay. As writer Frank Ly (a pseudonym) observed, the political climate of the 1970s was deemed the “politics of accommodation and persuasion,”<sup>55</sup> with Siaka Stevens playing the main roles as leader and manipulator. One of the ways in which Stevens was adept at holding onto power was in controlling his image as a beneficent leader. Photographs featuring his likeness were disseminated widely in formats such as pamphlets, postcards and images accompanying newspaper articles. Freelance photographers commissioned by the government, including Greene, fashioned an image of Stevens as a reassuring but powerful man of the people whose rule would ensure political and economic stability. Thus, Stevens was frequently featured as a large-than-life politician who comforted the populace with the notion that any alternative to his rule would be detrimental, as noted in the epigraph above. Greene’s commissioned

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<sup>54</sup> *Sierra Leone Daily News*, March 20, 1979, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Frank Ly, “Sierra Leone: The Paradox of Economic Decline and Political Stability,” *Monthly Review*, vol. 32, no. 2 (June 1980), 25.

photographs also often featured Stevens as the indisputable leader decked out in military uniform and regalia. As some commentators observed, while some leaders seemed to relinquish the trappings of power, Stevens took advantage of any opportunity to wear this particular attire.<sup>56</sup> In around 1985, Greene captured Stevens, close to his retirement, presiding at an official event and wearing full military dress to symbolise his continued autocratic power (fig. 5.8). Greene claimed that he was instrumental in shaping Stevens's image until the president's retirement in 1985.<sup>57</sup> The governmental assignments became routine for Greene, and while he desired to invest these engagements with his own personal signature, the opportunities to do so were limited.<sup>58</sup> Greene notes that, beyond the promotion of tourism and the official state propaganda images for which he was often hired, he continued to focus on documenting the pluralistic nature of various local practices that dovetailed with the regimes ideological tenets.

### ***Ronald Fashola Luke***

The quality is missing today in photography because only a small minority know what they are doing!<sup>59</sup>

While Greene's attempts at conceptualising his practice in new ways were constrained by his ties to the government, his contemporaries continued their development and training outside of Sierra Leone. Ronald Luke, pictured in figure 5.9, shared a

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<sup>56</sup> Fred Hayward and Ahmed Dumbuya, "Political Legitimacy, Political Symbols, and National Leadership in West Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1984), 659.

<sup>57</sup> Greene was one of several official photographers who covered the 1980 Organization of African Unity meeting in Sierra Leone. The overinflated costs of the meeting (over \$300 million dollars U.S.) created controversy for Stevens. Stevens often hired other photographers for official events and occasions but Greene argued that he produced the majority of his official photographers including those featured in this thesis which were found on an internet site created by the Stevens family.

<sup>58</sup> Christo Greene, pers. comm., May 10, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Ronald Luke, pers. comm., May 17, 2009.

trajectory similar to that of Greene's. Born into an elite family in Freetown,<sup>60</sup> Luke attended Ealing Technical College and School of Art from 1961 to 1967 and then, similar to Greene, returned to Freetown 1974. Representatives of Siaka Stevens's government were keen to attract young foreign-trained photographers and thus approached Luke for commissioned work. Despite the overtures, however, Luke chose to remain committed to his own creativity and autonomy. As a result, he opened the country's first colour lab and a studio in 1975, which operated until 1980.

As Luke built his studio and business enterprise, a range of genres constituted his practice, including wedding photography, landscape and cityscape photographs which he later published as postcards and studio portraits. Luke's key objective, however, was in cultivating his skills as an art photographer. In 1974, soon after he left Britain, such pursuits were obviously encouraged by the positive reception of an exhibition of his work sponsored by the British Council.<sup>61</sup> While Luke was committed to establishing a practice that employed new artistic techniques or colour technology, he recalls many of his clients were slow to patronise such offerings. He notes that at times he "even offered free colour prints, but most people continued to ask for black and white."<sup>62</sup> Eventually, he took advantage of a lucrative government commission to produce a series of colour postcard images reflecting various sites in Freetown and the provinces. The series was meant to promote Sierra Leone as a tourist destination. Luke obliged by capturing places of interest such as the Law Courts, Freetown's harbour, and the Mano River and its beaches. The experience of working for the

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<sup>60</sup> His grandfather trained as a lawyer, and his uncle Desmond Fashola Luke was the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone in the late 1990s. Luke recalls that his family encouraged him to seek a suitable career in law or medicine. When he refused, his parents refused to finance his education. Luke paid for his education by working odd jobs in London, including a short placement at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>61</sup> Ronald Luke, pers. comm., May 17, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

government was not altogether fulfilling, and Luke claims he avoided further similar commissions.

Sadly, as is the case of most of the photographers of this era under review, little is left of his photographs, which were either lost or destroyed as a result of the civil war and a devastating fire that reduced his house to rubble in 2000, or have badly deteriorated through neglect. What little he was able to recover is scarcely testament to a half century of photographic enterprise. An image of a single hibiscus flower taken around 1978 (fig. 5.10), and recently salvaged, shows his early use of colour techniques at a time when few photographers had acquired such expertise.



### *A.C.M. George*

My dream was to establish a photography archive of work taken by local photographers ... the war put a stop to that!<sup>63</sup>

For A.C.M. George, shown in figure 5.11, the final British-trained photographer under consideration, the engagement in photography in Sierra Leone, specifically its development and preservation, has been a lifelong quest. George's photography experience began at the age of 11, when he was given a Kodak Brownie box camera as a birthday present. Propelled by his interest to further photography in Sierra Leone, George worked as civil servant in the Ministry of Information and Public Relations in 1962 and then was granted a scholarship to continue his education at Ealing Technical College and School of Art in 1964.<sup>64</sup> Upon his return to Freetown in 1968, he became a member of the Institute of Science and Technology and the Institute of Incorporated Photographers in London. At the Ministry, he was assigned to travel with the Governor General and Prime Minister and became the head of the photographic department and, eventually, Controller of Visual Services.

Immersed in state-sanctioned visual material and institutional building, George hired recruits who deployed photography as an ideological tool to create an "authentic" and "official" historical record of the continued social and political development of Sierra Leone.<sup>65</sup> He worked with Moses Yaskey to ensure the high visibility of Siaka Stevens, both locally and regionally. Whilst obviously embedded in nation building and statehood projects, it was also essential for Stevens, the master of spin, to register in everyday contexts. Therefore, images shot by George and his team

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<sup>63</sup> A.C.M. George, pers. comm., May 14, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> The British High Commission in Freetown pioneered the scholarship. Mr. Luke's and Mr. George's time at Ealing overlapped, and they continue to be great friends and photographic rivals.

<sup>65</sup> A.C.M. George, pers. comm., May 16, 2009.

of photographers ranged from localised depictions of benign school march outs to full coverage of the over-inflated OAU<sup>66</sup> meeting in 1980. The colour lab, which George established at the Ministry, played an important role in the printed images featuring the event.<sup>67</sup> Despite the ideological control enforced by the Ministry, George was optimistic that he could further some of his wider ambitions such as establishing an archive, a photography library, and securing better equipment and materials for the development of superior-quality images. He also created opportunities to continue the photographic mapping of Sierra Leone begun by Lisk-Carew by deploying junior government photographers around Freetown and the provinces. Every Monday morning, the results of their travels would be posted on bulletin boards around Freetown. These peripatetic photographers visually recorded various sectors of the country, providing a means to knit the nation together and to forge new national identities.

George maintained connections with an earlier generation of local commercial photographers, including “Pa” Williams who ran Jumbo Studio. George claims it was Pa Williams who taught him how to process colour transparencies and slides. However, such skills were no doubt taught during his time at Ealing. Instead of embracing his parallel initiatives, “red tape and bureaucracy brought about the gradual decline of the department.”<sup>68</sup> George’s innovative plans that set out to expand the Ministry’s rigid framework were viewed with suspicion by senior management. Ultimately, for George, the 1990s brought stagnation in terms of any furthering of his inventive photography practices and attempts to move beyond the stultifying state viewpoint. During the civil war, the Ministry’s photographic equipment, the archives

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<sup>66</sup> Organization of African Unity.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., May 14, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

developed by George along with his personal collection of photographs were destroyed, leaving little trace of two decades of both Sierra Leone's and George's national project.

***“Pa” Francis Mack Kongo***

I will never stop snapping.<sup>69</sup>

For Pa Francis Kongo (fig. 5.12), the pursuit of photography engendered more localised meanings in the small village communities throughout the provinces in which he would practice for more than fifty years. Kongo was born in 1945 in Bo, where he completed primary and secondary education. In 1965, he pursued an avid interest in photograph by taking a correspondence course with Lancaster Photography College. Following the completion of the course, he started a popular itinerant practice in the Eastern Province. By 1979, as Sierra Leone's economy steadily declined, he proceeded to France to further his studies in photography, received a diploma and thereafter resumed his itinerant practice.<sup>70</sup> His work throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s and 1980s reflects African subjects engaging with verve and optimism, despite the uncertain political and economic landscape. This energy is demonstrated in a portrait of a local gentleman in a flamboyant stripped jacket from around 1969-1975 (fig. 5.13). The portrait is an example of the thriving communities in the provinces who were trying to assert themselves in the face of the growing economic and political crises plaguing the nation.

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<sup>69</sup> Francis Kongo, pers. comm., May 11, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> At the time of our interview, Pa Kongo was ailing. When I asked why he chose France for the continuation of his photography training, he noted a personal connection in Paris. He could not recall the name of the institution that granted his diploma.

By 1985, Sierra Leone's continuing socio-political woes were exacerbated following Siaka Stevens's retirement. Stevens installed Major General Joseph Siah Momoh at the head of the party; Momoh continued the reign of corruption and authoritarian rule of his predecessor. At the same time, Foday Sankoh, a commercial photographer<sup>71</sup> and ex-army corporal, was plotting an attack on Sierra Leone from Liberia. In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), backed by Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and Liberia's Charles Taylor, along with Sankoh launched an armed insurgency, and by 1992 Momoh's government was overthrown. By 1996, following years of unrest, a fragile amnesty was reached by the RUF. Multiparty elections were held and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected. However, the amnesty was short-lived following the RUF's alliance with Johnny Koroma, the leader of the Armed Forces. The joint forces became the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). In 1999, the AFRC/RUF launched "Operation No Living Thing" and entered the east end of Freetown, attacking civilians. The protracted fighting destroyed the city before ending in 2002 with the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Over 50,000 inhabitants were killed, thousands were left with missing limbs and a third of the population was left homeless.<sup>72</sup> Pa Kongo continued, in his words, to "snap" during the war – not fearing for his life.<sup>73</sup> He also managed to rescue a selection of images from the ashes of his home shortly after the rebels burned a path through his village in Kaikor in the

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<sup>71</sup> Steve Riley and Max Sesay, "Sierra Leone: The Coming Anarchy?" *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 22, no. 63 (1995), 123. Riley and Sesay note the importance of Sankoh's professional career as a photographer which allowed him to "pose scenes to send distinct messages to those who rule."

<sup>72</sup> See Daniel Hoffman, "Disagreement: Dissent Politics and the War in Sierra Leone," *Africa Today*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2006), 3-24; and Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>73</sup> Pa Francis Kongo, pers. comm., May 17, 2009.

Eastern Province. When asked what he thought the future would bring to Sierra Leone, he rigorously responded, “Who can tell, but I will never stop snapping.”<sup>74</sup>

The photographers under consideration in this section operated between the waning years of Lisk-Carew’s practice at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the civil war in 1992. Collectively, photographers such as Christo Greene, Ronald Luke and A.C.M. George continued Lisk-Carew’s broader legacy through their commitment to a range of general photographic practices in the late 1960s to the late 1980s. However, their individual practices suffered as a result of their ties to the government. Photographers of the previous generation were interested in creating distinctive repertoires that appealed to a wide range of patrons and consumers while cultivating their own styles. Lisk-Carew’s relationship with the colonial regime was symbiotic, however he asserted a measure of power in the production of his images. The photographers featured above, with the exception of Jonathan Adenuga and Pa Kongo, attempted to capture the myriad concerns of the early years of the post-independence era but were mostly hindered in such pursuits.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

### **Lisk-Carew's Legacy: The War and Post-Conflict Sierra Leone**

Local photographers in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century used the medium in the formation of modern subjectivities. However, the trajectories of the contemporary generation of photographers, which I examine below, also reveal multiple approaches and practices that are concerned with the trauma and post-conflict realities of Sierra Leone. Some are also drawn to the possibilities of artistic engagement that go beyond the frame of the conflict. Thus, the practices of Augustine K. Blango, Frances Ngaboh-Smart and the contributions made by the Sierra Leone Union of Photographers (SLUP) exert political agency that is shaped by myriad concerns, approaches and experiences such as issues of gender and documenting the rebuilding of Sierra Leone's devastated infrastructure.

#### ***Augustine K. Blango***

Augustine Blango, shown in figure 5.14, is a contemporary of the photographers discussed above, but he is also an exception in relation to the ways in which he managed his practice during the war. Blango was born in Makeni in the 1940s<sup>75</sup> and received some of his photography training in Sussex, U.K., in the 1960s under the tutelage of David Rumsay. Following his return to Sierra Leone, he opened a private studio in Makeni, which thrived for thirty years, and lectured in photography at Njala University.<sup>76</sup> Blango considers himself an art photographer and claims that his commercial work was done in order to “fund his creative photography.” Since his clients were mainly located in the provinces, he did not benefit from government

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<sup>75</sup> Mr. Blango was reserved about divulging his age but he is in his mid-70s.

<sup>76</sup> Njala University, the second largest university in Sierra Leone, was created in 1964 as part of the University of Sierra Leone. Initially paired with Fourah Bay College, it was granted autonomous status in 2005.

commissions or patronage. Throughout the 1990s and the raging civil war, photographers were hard-pressed to maintain their livelihoods with crumbling infrastructures and destabilised populations.

As previously discussed, many photographers were forced to abandon or, at the very least, scale back their photographic enterprises due to the war. When business waned, Blango looked for innovative ways to continue his practice. He embarked on creating a series of striking photographic assemblages and collages that combined fantasy, composite images and diverse spatial perspectives which were then hand coloured with paint or pastel crayons. A range of clients, including United Nations and ECOWAS<sup>77</sup> soldiers and the local army recruits, requested the portraits. Blango's use of collage forces the viewer's self-awareness of the fragmentary nature of the picture and the materials used. As Heike Behrend contends, "Collages are related to some sort of scepticism, to breaks and discontinuities, to semantic changes and the destruction of meaning."<sup>78</sup> Blango's modernist use of collage offers a new way to engage with photographic portraiture in which the dislocations of the war are used as a key discursive devise. Thus, motifs of the war replace the painted studio backdrop.

In a striking example taken from what he calls his "War" series, Blango demonstrates how specific narratives of the war are translated through his unique approach. Figure 5.15, from the year 2000, features a family group portrait that was commissioned by a regular soldier in the Sierra Leonean army. The soldier provided Blango with photographs of himself, his wife and four children and requested that their images be incorporated in the photograph. Blango obliged by superimposing the

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<sup>77</sup> Economic Community of West African States.

<sup>78</sup> Heike Behrend, "Fragmented Visions: Photo Collages by Two Ugandan Photographers," *Visual Anthropology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2001), 301.

heads of the family on pictures of soldiers wearing army fatigues and carrying AK47s. The photograph constructs the soldier and his family as a cohesive family unit who play a collective and aggressive role in the peacekeeping efforts by the United Nations against the rebels in Freetown. Blango creates his photographs with the close collaboration of clients who are very clear about the aesthetic outcomes. Thus not satisfied with a realistic representation of his family, the client requested one that transformed their identities into a fanciful manipulation of those pictured. The subjects became more auspicious given the ongoing trauma of the civil war. Blango recalls, "I was already working in this style before the war , but after the war started, some clients wanted to use it for different occasions such as weddings. In all cases, these photographs look better than the subject!"<sup>79</sup> For Blango, the war served as the context through which both he and his clients were forced to situate themselves in the world. It is also central to the ways in which images were viewed at the time.<sup>80</sup>

In another remarkable portrait (fig. 5.16), also taken in 2000, the subject is transformed into a Hindu bride. Blango's client, a Fula petty trader, requested a wedding photograph that would capture her as a Hindu bride so as to emulate the Indian brides in Bollywood movies.<sup>81</sup> Blango uses the cut out image of a brightly coloured sari, a bejewelled neckline and matching headpiece inserting the client's face as per his client's wishes. The collaged image transforms the subject from a banal trader suffering the effects of war to a glamorous bride and hybrid construction of the global identity (as we can see in the differing skin tones of décolleté and face).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Augustine Blango, pers. comm., May 8, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> See Heike Behrend and Tobias Wendl, eds., *Snap Me One! Studio-fotografen in Afrika* (Munich, London and New York: Prestel, 1994).

<sup>81</sup> Blango recalled that the young woman's business was selling both foreign and local pirate movies. The most popular films were Bollywood-type films.

<sup>82</sup> Behrend 2001, 318.



A similar effect is realised in a final example from 2002 (fig. 5.17). The photograph creates a fantastical scenario following President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah's triumphant election victory in May 2002, which signalled the end of the war. A member of the president's new cabinet commissioned the photograph. It is not known if the president ever viewed the image. Blango has pictured Kabbah riding through the streets of Freetown on an elephant. The collage features various perspectives, images and spatial areas: The elephant takes up most of the visual space and is larger than life, acting as a symbol of strength and power as he towers over the cheering crowd. The figures in the crowd (which are cut out from various magazines and newspapers) are of varying heights and ratios in relation to the viewer's perspective. Blango has added text to the image which reads, "Congratulations on your recent achievement." The collage creates a combination of reality and a "constructed dream world," where "several temporally discrete images come to coexist within the same fabulous space."<sup>83</sup> In using the collage and painting technique over photographs, Blango offered his clients a new way of envisioning themselves within a society experiencing trauma and conflict. The images open a space for clients to fantasise and manipulate their realities, thereby disrupting the photograph's "truth." In a way, Blango has continued Lisk-Carew's legacy. Despite the different conditions of their time, both Blango and Lisk-Carew controlled the type of reality they wished to represent through the framing of the subject and through the manipulation of the photograph afterward with the addition of captions, text, colour, illustrations and paint.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: Indian Photography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 134.

<sup>84</sup> See my discussion on Lisk-Carew's postcards in Chapter Three.

### ***Frances Ngaboh-Smart***

With the conclusion of the war in 2001, such practices and approaches as evidenced in the work of Augustine Blango necessarily shifted because of the material conditions of the country. For the most part, younger photographers turned their attention away from individual studio practices to capturing daily life that brought attention to the significant hardships wrought by the war. A small emergent group of female photographers have also trained their lens on subjects that grapple with autobiographical narratives around gender, sexuality, social-economic realities and gender-based violence. One such newcomer is Frances Ngaboh-Smart, pictured in figure 5.18. Ngaboh-Smart was born December 13, 1982, on the outskirts of Freetown. She was only ten when the war broke out and retained only blurry memories of the early days. The incident that jolted her into the reality of the war occurred in 1997 during military rule when she was witness to a decapitation.<sup>85</sup> The brutality of the act was a defining moment that transformed her into adult awareness of the horrors of the war. Ngaboh-Smart became interested in photography while earning a Bachelor of Arts at Fourah Bay College. In 2007, she participated in a skills training workshop organised by two British photographers from Hull. She showed promise, and one of the workshop leaders, Lee Karen Stowe, became her mentor. Using Freetown's unreliable Internet connections, Ngaboh-Smart sent her photographs to Stowe for commentary and critique. In 2011, following her first body of work, she received a scholarship to study with American photographer Sam Abell<sup>86</sup> at the Pacific Northwest Arts School on Whidbey Island in Washington State.

Since that time she has used the medium to produce sophisticated and highly

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<sup>85</sup> Frances Ngaboh-Smart, pers. comm., May 23, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Abell is most known as a photojournalist who has worked extensively with National Geographic Magazine.

personal work that examines the complex multifaceted worlds of women in Freetown. In her first series, “Nya Jee Salone – My Mother Sierra Leone,” the images evoke the realities of a range of female subjects living in contemporary Freetown and surrounding areas. For example, in 2010, she began to document women in Freetown’s sex-trade industry. Ngaboh-Smart cites the lack of skills, training and education which forced many women to seek prostitution as an economic alternative. In a photograph from 2010-2011 (fig. 5.19), Ngaboh-Smart captures a young woman partially camouflaged by the dark shadows. The photograph depicts the fleeting moment perhaps before or after an encounter with a client. Ironically, despite the stigma attached to prostitution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the unfaltering view of the “yooba,” the women photographed by Ngaboh-Smart felt a detachment given the past brutalities that occurred during the war.<sup>87</sup> They considered their choice an attempt at some control over their own bodies. Ngaboh-Smart’s early work reflects her familiarity with the people, locales and circumstances faced in the post-conflict era. As she notes, against this backdrop, “photography introduced into my life a purpose ... I know their stories because I am that story and I can tell it better through my pictures.”<sup>88</sup> Ngaboh-Smart’s images offer an alternative to the ubiquitous and clichéd representations of Sierra Leone’s post-war population as amputee victims largely devoid of context. More importantly, her photographs capture the depth of her subjects’ lives, often in one shot. For example, a photograph from 2011-2012 shows a man (the president of the amputee football club) deftly kicking a football (fig. 5.20). The image also demonstrates her strong sense of composition and captures the

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<sup>87</sup> Francess Ngaboh-Smart, pers. comm., May 23, 2013. During the Civil War, more than 60,000 women and girls were raped or experienced some form of sexual violence at the hand of the rebels, United Nation troops and government soldiers. “We’ll Kill You if You Cry: Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone Conflict,” *Human Rights Watch*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003), 3-5.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

physicality of the moment. Balancing on his crutches while instigating the movement symbolises the precarious positions and post-war anxieties experienced by millions of Sierra Leoneans. Ngaboh-Smart's practice evokes a poignant reminder of the brutalities of the war while capturing the perseverance and resilience of both its survivors and its victims.

### *The Sierra Leone Union of Photographers (SLUP)*

The long-term economic, psychological and physical effects of the war, as depicted in the photographic work of Augustine Blango and Frances Ngaboh-Smart, resulted in new approaches to photographic practices in Sierra Leone both during the war and following its end. Despite the presence of a small minority of internationally trained photographers, many unemployed locals (many of whom were former combatants in the war) took up photography as a means of gainful employment. Freelance photography was viewed as a means to an end for participants who had little interest (or available funds) to invest in private studio ownership. Photography in Sierra Leone thus shifted to a new realm where anyone with a camera could take a picture, even if unskilled in photography.<sup>89</sup> As a result of the reduction or lack of adequate photography training and resources, the images generally produced were very poor in quality.<sup>90</sup> In 2005, there was a concerted effort to organise, train and professionalise photographers in Sierra Leone with the establishment of the Sierra Leone Union of

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<sup>89</sup> See Jean-Francois Werner, "Photography and Individuation in Contemporary Africa: An Ivorian Case Study," *Visual Anthropology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2001), 266. Warner notes that where once photography was seen as a profession requiring great skill and aptitude, it has been reduced to the simple act of taking pictures.

<sup>90</sup> Steven Momoh, pers. comm., May 14, 2009.

Photographers, or SLUP.<sup>91</sup> Dedicated to the promotion of professional photographers and the training of amateurs, the group is at the forefront of using digital technologies as a tool for social change, reconstruction and the dissemination of their own images.

The SLUP primarily works with a range of photographers and various technical skill levels who engage in genres such as passport and identity photographs, wedding photographs and myriad other practices.<sup>92</sup> The organization claims a membership of over 10,000 members, but only a small minority have received professional certificates. Thus, most members work on a freelance basis, producing images concerned with broader political imperatives. Access to used and donated equipment has seen the emergence of a new wave of photographers. Most members are eager to show their concern and support for the rebuilding process by scrutinizing closely various aspects of the political process as it has unfolded in the recent post-conflict years. Thus, the political pervades their projects. The digital revolution, while slow to develop in Sierra Leone, has nevertheless had a profound effect in the ways in which images are produced and disseminated, and offers new opportunities in the development of photography in Sierra Leone – for example, photography campaigns aimed at promoting fair, democratic and peaceful elections, capacity building initiatives with underserved communities, and the ongoing documentation of political events.

In 2012, the SLUP was asked to serve as observer for the second

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<sup>91</sup> In 2005, the group was known as the Indigenous Photographers Union of Sierra Leone. The name was changed in 2010 following the election of a new executive. Steven Momoh was elected its president and is blessed with an encyclopaedic knowledge of photographers in Sierra Leone. I was lucky to have had him as my interlocutor and guide during all of my trips to Freetown.

<sup>92</sup> See “Insights into the Sierra Leone Photo Lab Business,” <http://commerceandculture.org/commerce-culture/news/insights-into-the-sierra-leone-photo-lab-business.aspx>, 2011.

democratically held elections since the end of the war. The project was dubbed “Cameras Against Violence.” Approximately two hundred photographers, mainly men in their late twenties and up, were deployed in Sierra Leone’s fourteen districts to monitor pre-election activities.<sup>93</sup> In Freetown, the photographers also captured the political rallies which converged in the already overcrowded streets of the Central Business District (fig. 5.21). Members of the SLUP used photography to call attention to the effects of the war on Sierra Leone’s poor and crumbling infrastructure. They highlighted the plight of elementary schools in the “Picture Your Right” project using photography to promote the importance of education and foster community building (fig. 5.22). The images presented in the small publication by the same name foreground the on-going and important rebuilding efforts supported by international organizations such as the Canadian Fund for International Initiatives.

The images produced by the photographers of the SLUP reveal their active role and representational practices in the ongoing transformation of Sierra Leone. Some of today’s emerging photographers must also grapple with their past as former combatants and their attempts to help rebuild and reconcile their actions through photography. Alongside the growing trend in photojournalism and documentary photography, and the political engagement of such work, Steven Momoh is eager to take the union and its members to, as he states, “the next step toward greater professionalism, more opportunities, education, training and an increased profile of the profession within Sierra Leone.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Steven Momoh was instrumental in organizing this initiative.

<sup>94</sup> Steven Momoh, pers. comm., May 21, 2010.

In this chapter, I began by exploring the ways in which Lisk-Carew's legacy was recognised as part of a retrospective of his life's work during the 1970 *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana* held at the British Council. Organisers such as Dr. Edward Blyden III used Lisk-Carew's massive oeuvre to illustrate the development of Sierra Leone over fifty years of his practice while also highlighting him as an artist. I then explored Lisk-Carew's legacy through the practices of several local photographers, some of whom had practices which overlapped with the closing of his studio in the late 1950s. I traced the practises of some of the next cohort of image-makers whose photography emerged under the Siaka Stevens's regime. As a result of shifting political and economic conditions, most of their work constituted patronage by the state and a reduction in their own individual practices and approaches. Sierra Leone's devastating decade-long civil war and its aftermath compromised the careers of this group and most of their work was either lost or destroyed in the civil war. Yet, as I have examined in the work of Pa Kongo, Augustine Blango, Francess Ngaboh-Smart and the members of the SLUP, the war also created new opportunities to use diverse photographic approaches and genres. The work of a new wave of post-conflict photographers in Sierra Leone is concerned with visualising the particularities of a violent past and the traumatised present. While the memory of the distant historic past has been severed, preserving the remnants of Sierra Leone's formidable photographic traditions, will assist in furthering the possibilities of fostering contemporary image practices in the future.

## Illustrations



Fig. 5.1. Unknown Photographer, *Mr. Moses Yaskey*, ca. 1970, silver print, courtesy of the Sierra Leone Public Archives.



Fig. 5.2. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, *Creole Man*, ca. 1908-1910, silver print, courtesy of the Sierra Leone Public Archives.





Fig. 5.3. Alphonso Lisk-Carew, “Pa” *Alimamy Bungie*, ca. 1908-1910, mounted silver print, courtesy of the Sierra Leone Public Archives.



Fig. 5.4. Jonathan Adenuga, *Lovely Fountain*, ca. 1965-1970, postcard, courtesy of Terence Dickinson.



Fig. 5.5. Julie Crooks, *Mr. Christo Greene*, 2009, colour print, personal collection.

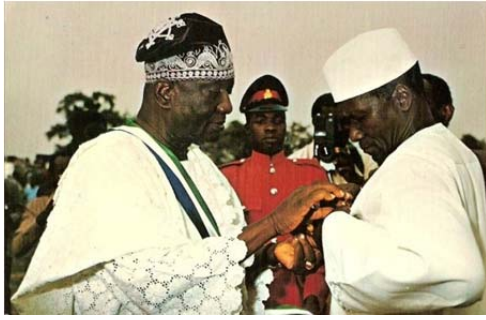


Fig. 5.6. Christo Greene, *Siaka Stevens decorating Guinea's President Ahmed Sekou Toure*, 1979, colour print, courtesy of Siaka Stevens Family.



Fig. 5.7. Christo Greene, *Fula Dancer*, 1970-1975, black and white print, courtesy of Christo Greene.



Fig. 5.8. Christo Greene, *President Siaka Stevens*, ca. 1985, colour print, courtesy of Siaka Stevens Family.



Fig. 5.9. Julie Crooks, *Ronald Luke*, 2009, colour print, personal collection.



Fig. 5.10. Ronald Luke, *Hibiscus*, ca. 1978, colour print, courtesy of Ronald Luke.



Fig. 5.11. Julie Crooks, *A.C.M. George*, 2009, colour print, personal collection.



Fig. 5.12. Unknown Photographer, *Untitled*, ca. 1970, silver print, courtesy of Pa Francis Kongo.



Fig. 5.13. Pa Francis Kongo, *Portrait of Gentleman*, 1969-1975, black and white print, courtesy of Pa Francis Kongo.



Fig. 5.14. Julie Crooks, *Augustine Blango*, 2012, colour print, personal collection.



Fig. 5.15. Augustine Blango, *U.N. Family*, 2000, collage and colour print, courtesy of Augustine Blango.

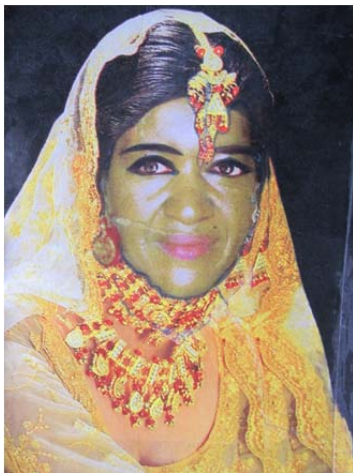


Fig. 5.16. Augustine Blango, *Hindu Bride*, 2000, collage and colour print, courtesy of Augustine Blango.



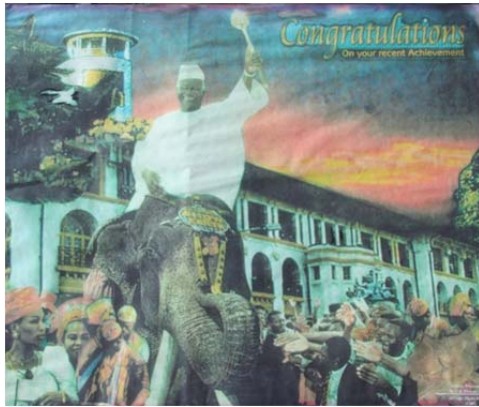


Fig. 5.17. Augustine Blango, *Kabbah on Elephant*, 2002, collage and colour print, courtesy of Augustine Blango.



Fig. 5.18. Unknown Photographer, *Francess Ngaboh-Smart*, 2010, colour print, courtesy of Francess Ngaboh-Smart.



Fig. 5.19. Francess Ngaboh-Smart, *Portrait*, 2010-2011, black and white print, courtesy of Francess Ngaboh-Smart.



Fig. 5.20. Francess Ngaboh-Smart, *Joseph*, 2010-2011, colour print, courtesy of Francess Ngaboh-Smart.



Fig. 5.21. SLUP, *Election Rally*, 2012, colour print, courtesy of SLUP.



Fig. 5.22. SLUP, *Picture Your Right*, 2012, colour print, courtesy of SLUP.

## Conclusion

Chapter Five considered Lisk-Carew's legacy through the prism of the 1970 *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana* and the ways in which later groups of photographers either attempted similar visionary practices, creating new approaches to representing Sierra Leone, or were constrained to curb their attempts due to the exigencies of war and political instability. However, alongside these considerations lay issues surrounding the past in terms of the preservation and conservation of Lisk-Carew's photographs housed in the temporary institutional space in Freetown at the Public Archives. It is ironic that while any concrete attachment to Lisk-Carew's legacy was severed by the war, the vulnerable photography archive contains important examples of his early work and serves as a fascinating visual resource and connection to Sierra Leone's prior rich photography history. Thus, in closing, I examine the ways in which Lisk-Carew's surviving photographs can be preserved and maintained, thereby assuring a concrete and tangible place in Sierra Leone's modern history.

More generally, the memory of Sierra Leone's impressive photographic past is highly mediated. Pierre Nora has argued that our understanding of the past depends so much on memory because there is so little of the past left. Memory is "archival" in that "it relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the images."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the only connections that can be made between past and present are through the material trace or the archives that highlight Lisk-Carew's legacy and practice within post-colonial and post-conflict Sierra Leone. This claim on the significance's of the trace is of the highest priority and constitutes the

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, vol. 26, Special Issue (1989), 7, 13.

final objectives of this dissertation: to recover, reclaim and preserve the surviving photographic archives. The current heritage rebuilding projects taking place in Sierra Leone are bound up with memory, defining the present and in multiple platforms. Initiatives that seek to reclaim and reanimate aspects of Sierra Leone's cultural past offer hope that similar attention can be brought to bear on the photographic archives. Liam Buckley writes about the "salvage imperative." This approach views the preservation of photographs as an exercise in the post-colonial present that ruptures colonial ways of seeing the world.<sup>2</sup>

### **Cultural Heritage Rebuilding and the Archives: Remembering, Forgetting, Reclaiming**

#### ***Remembering***

In 2009, British anthropologist Paul Basu was granted funding through the Arts and Humanities Council to launch an initiative called "Reanimating Cultural Heritage: Digital Repatriation, Knowledge Networks and Civil Society Strengthening in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone." The three-year project was aimed at finding ways to "animate" the material culture of Sierra Leone that was housed in museums globally. The initiative strove to re-establish the context in which objects such as masks and sculptural figures are actively used in the performance of local cultural practices such as Bundu and related practices. A website called [SierraLeoneHeritage.org](http://SierraLeoneHeritage.org) constitutes the digital platform linking related images, videos and text as a way of documenting

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<sup>2</sup> Liam Buckley, "Objects of Love and Decay: Colonial Photographs in a Post-Colonial Archive," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2005), 257. While I am aware that it was colonial regimes that instigated the salvage paradigm, I am interested in the notion of salvaging or rescuing Lisk-Carew's photographs from the burden of colonial imagery. I am interested in how his photographs can be recovered and reengaged by source communities as historical material.



Sierra Leonean cultural heritage. Coming on the heels of Sierra Leone's civil war, the project addresses the need for reclaiming the neglected and crucial sites of national heritage and history that have been lost, neglected and forced to the recesses of a collective memory due to years of general apathy and political strife.

The general apathy that I invoke here does not stem from community stakeholders who do not know or value the preservation of their histories.<sup>3</sup> As noted previously in my discussion, the lack of cultural heritage policies derived from former administrations such as under President Siaka Stevens's reign, wherein Sierra Leone's past history was not celebrated nor did it constitute part of a larger legislative agenda. In his recommendations on improving cultural heritage policies in Sierra Leone in the 1970s, Arthur Abrams stated that "Sierra Leone needs a comprehensive document on cultural development, integrated into the total national development ... It is also this author's ardent wish that the next National Development plan should have a chapter on Culture which the present one lacks ... and a concerted effort be made to rectify the mistakes of the past."<sup>4</sup>

At the present, the majority of Sierra Leoneans are more concerned with capacity building than with the state of their National Museum, Public Archives or other like institutions. However, the efforts of the Sierra Leone Heritage project to galvanise communities, promoting the country's rich cultural heritage in an effort to strengthen fractured communities, is admirable. The re-establishment of a sense of historical attachment and belonging, and the rebuilding of a strong national psyche, is in motion. A strong sense of memory and remembering informs this project, wherein memory is mobilised in certain institutional spaces, including the museum and

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Basu, "Confronting the Past? Negotiating a Heritage of Conflict in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Material Culture*, vol.32, no. 2 (2008), 233-235.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Abraham, *Cultural Policy in Sierra Leone* (Paris: UNESCO, 1978), 65.

national historic sites and monuments. The incitement to memory through these “sites of memory,” according to Pierre Nora, “imposes symbolic meanings on objects of the past.”<sup>5</sup> Relatedly photography, is also strongly linked to constructions of memory as a way of connecting the fragmented past and present. Yet, the ways in which Sierra Leonean photographers’ practices have contributed to documenting, reproducing, disseminating and preserving both its history and cultural heritage have not been integrated into the Sierra Leone Heritage project’s larger agenda.<sup>6</sup>

As I have explored throughout this dissertation, photography was used extensively from the mid-nineteenth century onward as a representational tool in the commemoration of Sierra Leone’s local political heroes, personalities and celebrities. Thus, W.S. Johnston, J.W. Paris, Alphonso Lisk-Carew and other African photographers often photographed prominent figures – Sir Samuel Lewis, Edward Blyden, Madame Yoko to name but a few. The images, which were then reproduced in the form of postcards and disseminated widely, helped to shape the local communities’ pride and attachment to such figures. These early images gave recognition to individuals who had a complex range of political ideologies, which no doubt engendered diverse interpretations by individual consumers.

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre Nora, “From Lieux de Mémoire to Realms of Memory,” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1996), XV-XXIV. Nora considers a site of memory as “any significant entity whether material or non-material ... which has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.” The Museum, the Public Archives and historical monuments in Sierra Leone would all be considered under Nora’s rubric.

<sup>6</sup> Occasionally, older photographs are used when comparing and re-photographing existing historic structures and ruins. See Paul Basu, “UCL Research Profiles,” [www.mhm.ucl.ac.uk/mhm-research/basu.php](http://www.mhm.ucl.ac.uk/mhm-research/basu.php).

What is compelling is the potential for reproducibility<sup>7</sup> of the original photographs – not only in their traditional forms as prints and postcards, but also in their new forms of deployment in the present. For example, in 1992, following a coup that overthrew the Joseph Saidu Momoh government, a campaign was launched by the members of the ruling National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) in conjunction with local youth artists to clean up and beautify Freetown with sculptures and painted portraits of Sierra Leone's past and present heroes. The youth artists used old photographs and images culled from a variety of sources, including old calendars, brochures and pamphlets, in order to paint the likeness of Madam Yoko, nineteenth-century Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther and others in public spaces through out Freetown.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the “renovation” project not only reproduced photographs from an early generation of Sierra Leonean photographers but also extended recognition of local icons for a younger generation. Unfortunately this project represented a temporary archive since many of the paintings were subsequently destroyed during the war.

A more recent example also shows the potential for old photographs to revive and recognise Sierra Leone's cultural heritage and past cultural heroes. In August

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<sup>7</sup> See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, Books, 2008); and Geoffrey Batchen, “In Modern Times: The Displacement of the Photograph,” *The Public Life of Photographs*, Lecture, Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto, May 10, 2013. For Batchen, reproducibility allows photographic images to be widely circulated, but it also gives the same image the capacity to come in a range of looks, sizes and formats. It is also possible for an image to appear in many places at once and to exist simultaneously at many different points of time, thus expanding temporal and visual boundaries.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Opala, “‘Ecstatic Renovation!’: Street Art Celebrating Sierra Leone's 1992 Revolution.” *African Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 371 (1994), 199-200. In 1987, largely through the efforts of Opala, a small publication entitled *Sierra Leonean Heroes* was published. The book contains the biographies of 50 great Sierra Leoneans, including Madam Yoko, Sir Samuel Louis and Edward Blyden. Where available, a photograph accompanied each biographical statement.

2012, Gary Shultz and William Hart jointly discovered the only known photograph of the Temne warrior Bai Bureh (fig. 6.1). The photograph was found on eBay.<sup>9</sup>

Lieutenant Arthur Greer of the West India Regiment took the photograph in 1898, not long after Bai Bureh's surrender to the British. It features the chief in a relaxed mode, wearing his "war gown" and guarded by a local Sierra Leonean police officer.<sup>10</sup> When the image was brought back to Sierra Leone in May 2013 and presented to President Ernest Koroma, he noted, "the presentation of the real portrait will help to re-create the image of Bai Bureh in the memories of all Sierra Leoneans."<sup>11</sup> Bai Bureh's legend as a great warrior who challenged British hegemony has always served as a symbol of both defiance and patriotic pride for local Sierra Leoneans of all generations.<sup>12</sup> The emergence of the Bai Bureh photograph in post-conflict Sierra Leone has captivated imaginations, rekindled the memory of the great hero's feats and placed into context the role images can play in recovering a sense of collective national pride. In addition, the image has been reproduced in other forms, such as t-shirts and cloth, introducing a "post medium" condition.<sup>13</sup> With the resurgence of interest in Sierra Leone's cultural heritage and figures such as Bai Bureh, there is a sense of déjà vu; the need to recall past practices, artefacts and heroes that have shaped its histories and identities is

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<sup>9</sup> See the introduction for a more detailed account of Gary Schulze's 50-year association with Sierra Leone. William Hart, a colleague of Schultz, was a lecturer at Fourah Bay College in the 1970s.

<sup>10</sup> "Real Photo of Bai Bureh Discovered," *Patriotic Vanguard, Sierra Leone News Portal*, May 24, 2013. The article notes that the inscription on the verso of the photograph reads, "Bai Bureh, Chief of the Timini (sic) when a prisoner at Sierra Leone in 1898. An original photograph by Lieutenant Arthur Greer West India Regiment who died August 7, 1900, when storming a blockade after the relief of Kumassie."

<sup>11</sup> "Gary Schulze Presents Real Picture of Bai Bureh to President Ernest Koroma," *Cocorioko*, May 9, 2013, 1.

<sup>12</sup> See Opala 1994, 204.

<sup>13</sup> Batchen 2013.

reanimated.<sup>14</sup> In this way, present day Sierra Leoneans experience a similar sentiment that existed prior to the 1992 coup. National redemption through the revival (or remembering) of values that once prevailed offers an affective continuum.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Forgetting***

Since the end of the Sierra Leone conflict in 2002, the government and local and international non-governmental organizations have focused their efforts on the rebuilding process. Thus, economic development has rightly been the priority. Certainly, as posited by many scholars, the under-resourced and neglected sites of memory, such as the Museum and the Public Archives, have rarely if ever been among the top priorities of any national government.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the Public Archives, and in particular the photography collection, has largely been forgotten.

Sierra Leone's archival history dates back to 1895 when Governor Cardew discovered the poor recordkeeping of the Colonial Office during his attempt to

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<sup>14</sup> In February 2011, the Sierra Leone Peace and Cultural Monument was unveiled. The monument commemorates the many lives lost as result of the war and includes a panel of relief sculptures dedicated to Sierra Leone patriotic heroes. W.S. Johnson's portrait of Madam Yoko was used in the creation of the image as part of a tableaux where, once again, the original image is reproduced. See Paul Basu, "Recasting the National Narrative: Post-colonial Pastiche and the new Sierra Leone Peace and Cultural Monument," *African Arts*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2013), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 204-205. See also Richard Werbner, "Multiple Identities, Plural Arenas," *Post Colonial Identities in Africa*, ed. Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1996), 1-25.

<sup>16</sup> See Paul Basu, "Palimpsest Memoryscapes: Materializing and Mediating War and Peace in Sierra Leone," in *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginations in West Africa*, ed. Ferdinand de Jong and Mike Rowlands (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 232; Arthur Abrams, *Cultural Policy in Sierra Leone* (Paris: Unesco, 1978), 61-63; and Kofi Akosah-Sarpong, "Distorted Past: A National Museum in Ruins," *West Africa*, vol. 3812 (1990), 2479.

streamline records in relation to Banana Island. A clerk was then appointed to oversee the records of colonial affairs for the annual salary of £60.<sup>17</sup> The archives in Sierra Leone constituted a regulatory state system that would look after the interests of the colonial regime. By 1965 and post-independence, the Sierra Leone parliament legislated the Public Archives Act which required the office to preserve, catalogue and conserve all public records for prosperity.<sup>18</sup> During the post-colonial period, the archives faced multiple challenges to its upkeep and management. Plagued by inconsistent infrastructure, lack of resources, skills development and political apathy in the willingness to invest in sustainable systems of management, the archives came perilously at risk of rotting away, thus earning the designation of an “endangered archive.”<sup>19</sup> As Liam Buckley observes in his work on the endangered National Archives in The Gambia, the “desire to preserve the national heritage in these material remains signals the transformation of the former colony into a modern nation and the national attainment of specific sign of being modern.”<sup>20</sup> While this truism applies to Sierra Leone in equal measure, the impact of the war cannot be overlooked: resulting in a traumatized population, broken infrastructure, and a fragile and unstable economy

No matter the current challenges experienced by the Public Archives, its rich content of official records and historic documents have always merited attention from

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<sup>17</sup> “The Colonial Secretary’s Office,” *SLWN*, January 12, 1895, 8.

<sup>18</sup> John Abdul Kargbo, “Archives Management in Post-War Sierra Leone: Luxury or Necessity?” *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2005), 244. The collection is comprised of significant records related to Sierra Leone’s history and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, including Registers of Liberated Africans, Letter Books, which provided information on the treatment of tens of thousands of “recaptive” Africans, court records and treaties with local chiefs.

<sup>19</sup> In 2011, the British Library supported a two-year project through its Endangered Archives Program which supports the physical preservation of nineteenth century documents. Mr. Albert Moore, the Chief Government Archivist, implemented the project.

<sup>20</sup> Buckley, 2005, 250.

a range of interested constituents and officials. For example, in 2009, the Harriet Tubman Centre at York University in Toronto partnered with the Public Archives to digitize materials related to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Black Loyalist history. The project was funded with a grant by the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme and is primarily concerned with document preservation.<sup>21</sup> However, this has not been the case with the photographic materials, which have garnered considerably less attention. The photography archive is in a state of decay and suffering from neglect, with files that are crumbling, infested with insects, and layered with dirt and dust. The photographs are stored on open shelves (figs. 6.2 and 6.3) in two large folders (fig. 6.4). The images have not been catalogued, numbered or documented. The collection is varied, ranging from an early cabinet card by Lisk-Carew (the oldest) to an assortment of images mounted on cardboard with identifying information on the verso or on the front (fig. 6.5). The condition of the images varies; some are in advanced stages of deterioration, some are fading, while others are in different states of degradation due to external factors such as bacteria, mould and the high humidity of the space in which the collection is held. Yet, however haphazard and damaged the photographs, the collection adheres to the generic historical construction of an archive whereby someone has "consciously put to one side, collected and thus transformed certain documents or objects that would otherwise be entirely disbursed or fragmented."<sup>22</sup>

Because of the unorganised nature of the photography archive, there is little indication as to who the collectors and depositors of the documents might have been

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<sup>21</sup> See "Before the War, After the War: Preserving History in Sierra Leone." [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project).

<sup>22</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 100.

over the years. As indicated above, several mounted photographs that were exhibited in the 1970 *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana* are now housed in the archive and may have been assembled by its main curator Dr. Edward Blyden III. Lisk-Carew's work figures alongside the work of unknown photographers. Due to its unorthodox structure, the archive represents a set of disparate images and eras. The colonial period is well represented by several enlarged and mounted images that range from depictions of the inception of the Sierra Leone Government Railway in 1896 to a group photographs featuring dignitaries following the completion of its first phase in 1897. Similar administrative photographs, along with generic views of Freetown and the protectorate, can also be found within the jumble of images. Moreover, throughout this dissertation, I have incorporated many fine examples of Lisk-Carew's photographs, which I discovered in this archive. However, for the most part, the photographs remain an underused and forgotten resource.

### ***Reclaiming***

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sierra Leone's cultural heritage is experiencing a tentative renaissance. There is a renewed interest in how to utilize and reclaim cultural modes of the past that were lost or eroded due to the calamities of war and economic crises. However, the photographs that make up the archive and that were instrumental in documenting the trajectories of Sierra Leone's development across the spectrum of its history have been ignored. The rudimentary photography archive in Freetown can play an important role in the rebuilding process. In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida makes the compelling point that building an archive is not always a question of safeguarding the past, "of dealing with the past that might already be at our disposal,"



but rather “a question of the future, the question of a response, a promise and responsibility of tomorrow.”<sup>23</sup> Rescuing and reclaiming can take the form of conservation techniques, such as the digitising and cataloguing of the entire photography archive. An awareness of the rich holdings contained in the archive would also be beneficial where the materials can be made accessible for a broader public. The circulation of such images in digital form or other platforms (such as print or video) moves the archive from the stasis of the institution and the sole function of preservation to new deployments and functions. Currently, the photography archive and its imminent deterioration present Sierra Leone as frozen in the colonial past. Creating a place for the images in the post-conflict present allows for a continuum of Sierra Leonean photography histories. In so doing, the practices of Lisk-Carew and numerous early local photographers can be reconsidered in tandem with photographers in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

Alphonso Lisk-Carew’s fifty-year career was complex and multidimensional, and indicative of the complicated local African context from in which his business thrived. His extant prints, albums, postcards and editorial writings demonstrate a life that was dedicated to photographing the myriad local personalities, cityscapes, cultural practices and natural resources, while negotiating the exigencies of the colonial regime. The melding of his photographic artistry, political ideologies and intimate relationship with the colonial regime reveal an uneasy and intricate set of circumstances through which he was forced to navigate. Through his lens, Lisk-Carew bore witness to the development of Sierra Leone under the colonial regime and

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<sup>23</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 36.

became one amongst many early Sierra Leonean photographers who had a hand in shaping the country's history.

In this dissertation, I have endeavoured to insert Lisk-Carew's life and work as a representative example of early African photography that emerged during the early twentieth century. I have also attempted to further our understanding of the social and political world in which Lisk-Carew lived and worked which certainly acted as motivating factors behind the types of commissions he was offered and the personal projects he undertook. Moreover, I have also tried to expand our understanding of Sierra Leone's social history from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by considering the work of other early Sierra Leonean photographers and then looking at Lisk-Carew's own trajectory and the role his work played in representing different facets of the visualising of Sierra Leone. By exploring Lisk-Carew's formidable photographic output, I have constructed a project that, I hope, will be a useful resource for the burgeoning field of the history of photography in Sierra Leone. And most importantly, I have shown that Alphonso Lisk-Carew's oeuvre and sustained engagement with the medium has assisted in placing him as one of the most significant photographers operating in West Africa in the early twentieth century.

Chapter One began with a historiography of Sierra Leone. I examined its history as a haven for repatriated freed slaves from the Atlantic world in the late eighteenth and into the late nineteenth centuries. I then traced the trajectory of the history of photography in Sierra Leone and discovered in the process the variety of photographers (both local and European) who were attracted to Freetown's busy and vibrant cosmopolitan landscape. Such cosmopolitanism was also displayed in

examples of other forms of local popular culture such as musical theatre and minstrel shows, which were popular amongst Sierra Leone's elite. The environment created a plethora of opportunities for early photographers, either as itinerants on short-term stays or as established residents, which was the case for Gold Coaster W.S. Johnson who made Freetown his home after experiencing early success as an itinerant.

In Chapter Two, the biography chapter on Alphonso Lisk-Carew, I used primary sources to examine the establishment of his early career, to position his studio work within the larger sphere of photography in Sierra Leone and to illustrate key moments in the trajectory of this illustrious achievements in photography. From early in his career. Lisk-Carew benefitted from patronage of the colonial regime, which assisted in supporting his business and expanding his studio. In so doing, he formed long-lasting relationships with successive colonial administrators and, in the process, secured the distinction of the royal seal on his postcards. Lisk-Carew's political forays and interest in nascent national movements of the late 1930s and 1940s were brief and did not materialise in his photographs. However, as a result of his associations, his relationship with the colonial government was jeopardised. Lisk-Carew's life and career demonstrates the ways in which photography played an significant role in the social relations of various local clients and patrons and in the larger imperialist agenda of the colonial regime.

In Chapter Three, I examined Lisk-Carew's photography in greater detail by analysing the images themselves. I explored the manifestations of Lisk-Carew's official patronage through the work done outside of Freetown, particularly in The Gambia and Liberia, and local assignments where he was asked to capture the various instances of such colonial-led achievements as the construction of railways and schools. My goal was also to locate specific trends and, when possible, the proclivities

of the subjects that came before Lisk-Carew's camera in the studio setting and to offer the contextual and theoretical underpinnings of the images. I showed that studio photography of local African clients was instrumental in shaping notions of identity and self-fashioning. Portraits highlighted the importance of elegant bodies and conventional poses, whereby Lisk-Carew emphasised the sitters' conscious acts of self-fashioning. Moreover, such portraits also reflected the distinct social demarcations in Sierra Leonean society in the early twentieth century. Lisk-Carew's numerous views of the protectorate and the urban environment, including markets and streetscapes, assisted in a particularised construction of Sierra Leone that, for the most part, offered a departure from stereotypical colonial manifestations.

In Chapter Four, I examined Lisk-Carew's gendered images and the ramifications on his practice. I showed how the photographs of the Bundu girls, the Creole brides and the so-called *yooba* women contribute to understanding how some women were viewed from the 1850s to the 1930s. Lisk-Carew's depictions of semi-nude African women for inclusion on a small number of erotic photographs point to the necessary negotiations and compromises he was forced to make in the competitive photography and postcard market. The production and popularity of such images also revealed the tension between the high value placed on consumer demand and Lisk-Carew's complicity in producing them.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I considered Lisk-Carew's legacy in post-colonial Freetown through the lens of the 1970 *Exhibition of Sierra Leoneana*. I then explored the practices of several local photographers, some of whose work overlapped with the closing of Lisk-Carew's studio in the late 1950s. The work of a new wave of photographers in post-conflict Sierra Leone was also examined whereby imaginative and diverse practices were created.

In the Conclusion, I examined the current trend that seeks to recover Sierra Leone's rich cultural heritage through various projects, cultural practices and artefacts. However, as I have attempted to show, there is unevenness to such notions of reclamation, which ignore the rich store of photography in the collection of the Public Archives of Sierra Leone. To this end, I offered substantive suggestions whereby the endangered photography archive could be used as a valuable resource to preserve important photographic material, to rebuilding a sense of collective identity in a society traumatised by conflict and, in the process, to reclaim Lisk-Carew's work for future generations.

As I stated at the outset of this dissertation, photography and Africa as a field of study has evolved since the late 1970s and there is still more work to be done before one can claim any comprehensive understanding of the use of the medium in Africa, and specifically in Sierra Leone. To this end, this study can open several avenues for further investigation. To begin, judging from the amount of anonymous prints in the photography archive, there are still many local and European photographers whose lives and practices have not been researched. Additional investigation on some of these photographers would create a more nuanced understanding and positioning of the myriad experiences and trajectories of photography in Sierra Leone. Moreover, while W.S. was given Johnston some attention here, his role as a pioneer regarding his art photography and intriguing personal life merits further attention.

Since Lisk-Carew was born in Freetown, which formed the main site of his studio and practice, it leads to speculation about the practices of other photographers who were working in the protectorate at the start of the twentieth century. How did they engage communities in rural areas around their photographic needs? Was there a

demand and interest for their skills? A broader investigation could, for example, examine the globalised dialogue between the studio portraiture of Africans produced by African photographers during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century and similar portraiture produced by White Canadian photographers in Nova Scotia, Canada, at that time. In light of the shared histories of those left behind in Nova Scotia and the freed Blacks who settled in Freetown, are there traces to be found amongst comparable available photographs?<sup>24</sup> My discussion of Lisk-Carew's portraiture explored the ways in which he supported and enabled the self-fashioning of his African subjects along with their own attempts at self-presentation. A comparative study that looks at the studio portrait practices from both a West African and Black Atlantic context could yield many compelling findings, such as the similarity in collaborative methods, and motivations where portraiture was used for commemoration and in the formation of new social identities (figs. 6.6 and 6.7). In the context of Nova Scotia, how did Black subjects negotiate their self-presentation and sense of self with local White photographers to be more visible in the world? These are key ideas that I hope to address in my ongoing study of photographic practices.

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<sup>24</sup> Dalhousie University Archives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, holds a large collection of glass plates produced by the Waldren Studios of New Glasgow and Antigonish, Nova Scotia. A number of the portraits represent some of the earliest studio photographs of Blacks living both in the area and in areas where Blacks predominated. The photographs date from between 1874 and 1940.

## Illustrations



Fig. 6.1. Lieutenant Arthur Greer, *Bai Bureh*, ca. 1898, silver print, courtesy of Gary Schultz.



Figure 6.2. Julie Crooks, *National Archives of Sierra Leone*, 2012, colour print, personal collection.



Fig. 6.3. Julie Crooks, *Open Shelves*, 2012, colour print, personal collection.



Fig. 6.4. Julie Crooks, *Folder with Photographic Material*, 2012, colour print, personal collection.



Fig. 6.5. Julie Crooks, photographs, 2012, colour prints, personal collection.





Fig. 6.6. Waldren Studio, *Miss Harlo Burden*, 1904-1905, print, courtesy, Dalhousie University Archives.



Fig. 6.7. Waldren Studios, *Miss Ford and Friend*, 1903-1905, print, courtesy, Dalhousie University Archives.

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