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## WITCH DOCTORS IN AN INSTITUTIONALIZED ORGANIZATION:

'Modernity of Witchcraft' in the Civil War of Sierra Leone

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I am grateful for this opportunity to hold a presentation.

I am Hideyuki Okano. Studying civil war of Sierra Leone and other Western African countries.

This presentation is a part of my research result.

## **The purpose of the presentation**

This presentation examines **the characteristics of states** through the analysis of the civil war of Sierra Leone(1991-2002).

- Research Target:
  - A pro-governmental force
  - \* Pro-governmental force is not a state,  
but strongly related to state
  - ⇒ The one locate in the margin of a state institution.

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This presentation examines **the characteristics of states** through the analysis of the civil war of Sierra Leone.

For the purpose of examining a state, I analyze a pro-governmental force of Sierra Leone.

It is because a pro-governmental force is not a state itself, but it is closely related to a state.

By examining such a marginal entity, I will try to illuminate a characteristic of a state.

## **Literature Review: Human Network as State Institution**

- States in Sub-Sahara Africa have been discussed in the realm of political science.
- An African state is dysfunctional in the sense of bureaucratic system
- Instead, Human Relations function.  
Ex) patrimonialism, patron-client network, rhizome state
- Patron-Client Network (PC network)

Multi-layered

Patron- Client(boss-junior)Relations  
through material benefit

(Chabal and Daloz 1999; Lemarchand 1972 ; Medard 1982)

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States in Sub-Sahara Africa have been discussed in the realm of political science.

In their argument, African states are considered to be dysfunctional.

The state cannot protect human rights, the state cannot provide social benefits. The state cannot provide economic welfare.

Thus, state can not work as expected. Especially they do not work in the sense of bureaucratic system.

However, some scholars argued that such states are functional in some sense.

Rulers govern a state even though the rule is full of violence.

There are politics among political figures even though there is no rule of law.

It means that a state work more or less in some means.

Some scholars argue that human relations are the key to understand politics in African state.

On the slide, I just name several concepts which conceptualize the rule of human relations in an African state.

I focus on one of such concepts: patron-client network.

To put this concept simple, patron-client network is multilayered boss-and-junior relations.

A boss, or a patron, is the one who mobilize juniors for the sake of oneself. They provide material reward to junior for their work.

And, Juniors, or clients, work for patrons. They receive material rewards for their labor.

This relation between the two is a concept of patron-client relation.

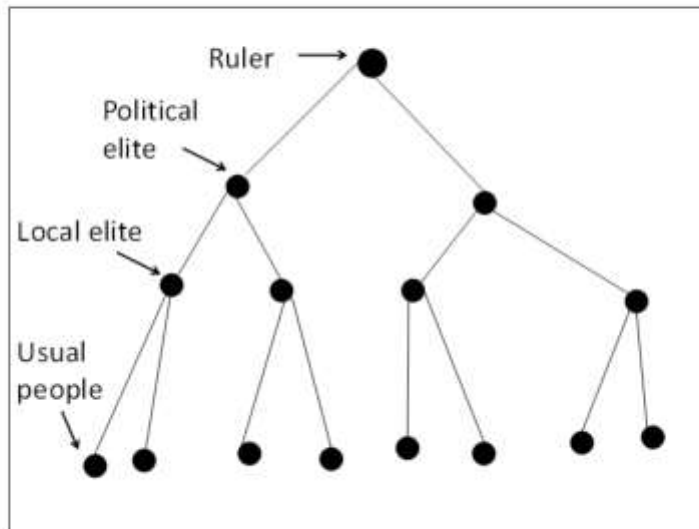
The concept of patron-client network considered that this vertical human relation between the two continues like chain.

One client can be someone's patron. So, the patron-client relations continue as vertical chain.

This chain is patron client network.

The image of patron-client network is as follows.

## The image of patron-client network



A concept of patron-client network considered that a state is ruled by this network.

A state ruler is supreme patron.

He mobilize their clients for the sake of himself.

The clients also mobilize their own clients in order to meet the expectation of the ruler.

Thus, mobilization is in chain.

So, patrons of each level have to distribute material benefits to clients.

Patrons use state resources...so. corruption is a norm.

This is the concept of Patron-client Network.

Political scientists considers that a state is ruled through patron-client network.

## **Limit of Political Science Argument:**

- Political Science discuss human networks merely to understand a state, ...

↓ This Presentation goes beyond ↓

A functioning human network within a state  
could be a part of a larger network.

- I examine a pro-governmental force called Civil Defense Force (CDF). CDF is formed by mobilizing local militias, Kamajors.
- Initiators: how do their positions change within the network?

Political Science pays attention to human networks merely to understand a state. In other words, discussion on human network is confined to the discussion on how a state works via human network.

This presentation analyzes the human network in order to go beyond.

I consider that

A functioning human network within a state could be a part of a larger network

For illuminating the larger network, I examine a pro-governmental force called Civil Defense Force (CDF).

The CDF is pro-governmental force in Sierra Leone, which is organized by mobilizing local militias Kamajors.

This presentation analyzes how a number of Kamajor groups in various communities are organized into one governmental force, the CDF.

In the analysis of the process, I focus on initiators of Kamajor. I explain what are initiators later. Just remember that I pay attention to initiators, especially how their positions change within the network in order to illuminate the larger network.

# Sierra Leone

- Located in West Africa.
- Official language: English
- S/Leone is in civil war from 1991-2002.



[http://old-and-abbey-church.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Sierra\\_Leone.png](http://old-and-abbey-church.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Sierra_Leone.png)  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sl.html>

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Sierra Leone is located in West Africa.

Formerly, colonized by the Great Britain. So, their official language is English.

S/Leone is in civil war from 1991-2002.

# What is Kamajor? (1/2)

<1> Kamajor is local militia (community-based militia) by **Mende people**.

- 30% of population in S/Leone (1.5 mil)
- Lived in most war-affected areas.



<2> Under threats of the rebel, people organize Kamajors to defend their own chiefdoms.

- Chiefdom is an administrative units (around 150 chiefdoms in S/Leone).
- Paramount Chief is traditional leader in a chiefdom. Under a paramount chief, chiefs of sub-level exist.

Kamajor is local militia (community-based militia) by **Mende people**.

Mende dominate 30 % of the population of Sierra Leone.  
They lived in most war-affected area.

Kamajors were organized in number of chiefdoms in war-affected areas.

Under threats of the rebel, people organize Kamajors to defend their own chiefdoms.

Chiefdom is an administrative units (around 150 chiefdoms in S/Leone).  
Paramount Chief is traditional leader in a chiefdom. Under a paramount chief, sub-level chiefs exist.

Paramount chiefs are responsible to mobilize young men in chiefdoms and to organize Kamajors.

## What is Kamajor ? (2/2)

<3> Kamajor have initiation rituals to be a member.

- **INITIATORS** are responsible for the initiation rituals.
- The initiated are believed to be protected by occult powers (bullet-proof is emphasized).



<http://stuartfreedman.photoshelter.com/image/I0000DJVsRCE7aWI>  
<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2000/08/junger200008>

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- **Kamajor have initiation rituals.**
- **INITIATORS** are responsible in the initiation rituals.
- The initiated are believed to be protected by occult powers , especially, bullet-proof is emphasized.



## Initiators of Kamajors

Initiators stemmed from  
occult specialists in Mende society.

### **Witch Doctor (Herbalist)**

- Working for treatments of the sick and for divination.
- Witch Doctor is a professional controller of occult power in Mende society. (Bledsoe and Robey, 1986)

### **Islamist**

- Islam is understood by Mende's view. Professionals of Islam are also considered controller of occult power.
- Teachers in Koranic school  
/ Ritual Specialists (Divination and Amulet making)  
(Little, 1951 )

Initiators stems from occult specialists in Mende society. Roughly divided into two categories.

First is a witch doctor. They are traditional occult controller in the Mende society. Witch doctors work for treatment of the sick, or engaging in divination.

Second is Islamists. Islam entered to Mende society in eight to nineteen century.

Islamists are either teachers of Koranic school or ritual specialists who engage in divination and amulet makings.

## Chronological Change of Initiators



So, from now on, I trace the process in which Kamajors were organized into the CDF, and how the position of initiators come to change during the process.

For the sake of presentation I divide the process into four phases.

## Chronological Change of Initiators



First, I look at the rise of Islamists as commander.

- The war begins in 1991.
- Since late 1993, Mende land is involved in hit- and-run attacks by the rebel.
- Against the rebel, chiefdoms in war-affected zone organize young men to defend themselves.
- Paramount Chiefs lead the defense force.



The war begins in 1991.

Since late 1993, Mende land have been involved in hit- and-run attacks by the rebel.

Against the rebel, chiefdoms in war-affected zone organize young men to defend themselves.

This news paper shows one of examples.

It tells that community-defense militia lead by a chief killed rebel combatants.

Thus, paramount chiefs organize defense force for defending their own chiefdoms.

The practice of Kamajors rise in such a situation.

- An Islamist, *Moalem Sheriff*, organizes their apprentices to fight against the rebel.  
=protected by magical power  
(Bullet-Proof)
- The Islamists work as commanders.
- They successfully chase out the rebel from the chiefdom.
- The rumor expands in Mende society.

*Islamists chased out  
the rebel from their chiefdom.*

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- One Islamist, Moalem Sheriff, organizes their apprentices to fight against the rebel. They are believed to be protected by occult power. They are considered to be bullet-proof.
- They work as commanders. They lead young men in their chiefdom. They even go to war-fronts in order to prove their supernatural powers.

They successfully chase out the rebel from their own chiefdom.

After their success, the rumor expands in Mende society.

*Islamists chased out the rebel from their chiefdom.*

These Islamists are the origin of Kamajor.

But, the militia do not have initiation rituals yet. They do not call themselves Kamajors yet.

## Chronological Change of Initiators



Next, I will look the invention and spread of initiation rituals

- Chiefs in several chiefdoms jointly call Moalem Sheriff to empower their people.

*[Elders in several chiefdoms] have a meeting in Kale village, because this village was far from war-front.*

*They invited Moalem Sheriff for help.*

*“We have Islamists and herbalists.  
Why don’t you empower them?”*

*Moalem Sheriff accepted. ...He trained one herbalist and one Islamist.*

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The initiation begins because paramount chiefs of several chiefdoms jointly call Moalem Sheriff to empower their people.

This is what I heard from a former Kamajor.

*...After Moalem Sheriff went back, a herbalist, Aliu Kondewa tested his power. ...*

*Kondewa put an empowered shirt on a young man , and shoot him.*



**Aliu Kondewa**

<http://www.rscsl.org/CDf.html>



*Nothing happened.*

*People were filled with joy. The initiated succeeded to defend the community.*

*The chiefdom decide to invite Moalem Sheriff. Moalem and others teamed up and began to initiate people in Kale village.*

**Kamajors and the initiation are invented in Kalle Village.**

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From this narrative, it can be understood that Kamajors and the initiation are invented in Kalle Village.

- The three establish a shrine in Kale village to initiate Kamajors.



One more initiator, Brima Bangura

- Initiators begin to initiate young men by requests from paramount chiefs in neighboring chiefdoms.
- After their success, the initiation expands to whole Mende land.

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Three occult specialist, Moalem Sheriff and Aliu Kondewa and one more guy , establish a Shrine in Kale village to initiate Kamajors.

The picture is the third man called Brima Bangura. He is an Islamist.

The Initiators begin to initiate young men by requests from paramount chief.

Kamajors succeed to chase out the rebel in their district.

After the success, the initiation expands to whole Mende area.  
So, the community militia, Kamajor are prevalent in Mende land.

## Chronological Change of Initiators



Then Kamajor connect to a state and are organized as the CDF.

### 3. Kamajors Connected to a state

- *Samuel Hinga Norman*, is one of successful chiefs for organized militia in a chiefdom.
- After he chased out the rebel, the rebel held an intensive attack.



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The key person who connect Kamajor to the government of Sierra Leone is Samuel Hinga Normamn.

He is one of successful chiefs for organizing a militia in his chiefdom.

However, the rebel attacks his chiefdom intensively in 1994.



This news paper tells the story of rebel attacks.

The article says that, more than 70 bodies of young men are found in the front of the chief's house.

- Most of his militia are killed. After the attack, Norman moves to an urban area.
- Norman organizes refugees and city dwellers
  - = Kondewa initiate them.
  - = Military success achieves.



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After the attack, Norman escapes to an urban area.

In the urban area, people who escaped from rural areas gathers. Norman mobilizes such refugees and city-dwellers and organizes a new defense force.

Norman asks Kondewa to initiate them as Kamajors.

His Kamajors succeed to chase out the rebel.

- At that time, various Kamajor groups emerge.  
= Their leaders are:  
Paramount Chiefs/ Initiators/  
Independent Commanders
- Initiators in Kale village scatter to Mende land.



Aliu Kondewa



Brima Bangura

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At that time, various Kamajor groups emerges.

Some Kamajor groups are led by successful paramount chiefs.

Other Kamajor groups are commanded by Kamajor commanders. Such comomanders leave their own chiefdoms and lead independent troops.

Usually, such commanders have experience in the army. Because they know military knowledge, they can be prominent commanders.

In the same period, initiators in Kale village scatter to Mende land.

- Moalem Sheriff died.
- Aliu Kondewa keep initiating people in Kale Village.
- And, BRIMA BANGURA. He become a leader of large Kamajor group which are organized by several chiefdoms.

IN addition, there are their assistants of initiators.

The assistants also make their own shrines around Mende land.

- Islamists and Herbalists, who are not related to Kale village, begin to establish shrines and initiate people.
- They begin to have their own troops.
- They work as patron.



*Mama Munda (initiator) and her troop, Kassela War Council (Hoffman 2011)*

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Furthermore, Islamists and Herbalists, who have not related to Kale village, also begin to initiate people in various areas.

These initiators begin to have their own troops. They work as patron.

In this period, Kamajors repeatedly integrate into larger groups, because powerful leaders attract the weaker groups.



## Chronological Change of Initiators



Finally, Kamajors are integrated to the CDF.

- Norman is appointed to the Deputy Minister of Defense in 1996.
- Norman diverts the army budget to Kamajors.
- He assists various groups of Kamajors



Norman become the supreme node (=patron) of Kamajor network.



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So, Norman, the Chief who mobilize city dwellers and refugees into Kamajor.

This guy is fortunately appointed as a minister.

Due to his military success and his strong affiliation for a political party, Norman is appointed to the Deputy Minister of Defense in 1996.

The president himself is Minister of defense. So, he is the top in the ministry.

Norman diverts the army budget to Kamajors. He assists Kamajors for arms and ammunition, food and daily staffs .

Not only his Kamajor, but he also assists various groups of Kamajors.

Thus, Norman became the supreme patron of Kamajor network.

He intensively organize Kamajors from 1998

- Norman appointed commanders of various Kamajor groups as his subordinate
  - = 'District Commander',
  - 'Town Commander', etc.
- ⇒ They are integrated to the CDF.
- At the same time, Norman structures administrative system of the CDF in the capital.
- Initiators are organized as 'initiation section'.

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Norman appoints commanders of various Kamajor groups as his subordinates such as district commanders or town commanders.

Those who are appointed are integrated into the CDF.

At the same time, Norman structures administrative system of the CDF in the capital.

Persons such as merchants, NGO workers army personnels were employed as administrators. Because, they are good at working in an organization. Norman centralize the CDF structure and bureaucratize the CDF.

In the CDF, initiators only owe a role of the initiations under the name of Initiation Section.

- Initiators only owe a role of the initiations (Initiation Section).
- Kamajors in the troops of initiators leave initiators.
- Kondewa tries to regain influence by inventing new rituals:
- After a peace agreement, the CDF is to disband.
- Initiators go back to rural areas and spend as Islamists or witch doctors as they had been.

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As the role of initiators are confined to the initiations, Kamajors who belong to forces of initiators lose opportunities to go war front. It means that they lose opportunities to loot.

So, they have no reason to stay with initiators. They left and join to another Kamajor groups.

Kondewa try to regain influence by inventing new rituals:

He make rituals of regaining power or further spiritual power.

But, this is source of annoyance for other administrators. For them, initiators should concentrate on original initiations.

After a peace agreement, the CDF begin to disband. Not small number of cadres of the CDF became politicians or began to work as government officials. But, initiators were not.

Because they are not educated in English. They are not good at working in organizations.

So, initiators go back to rural areas and spend as Islamists or witch doctors as they were.

## Summary

- In Kamajor, initiators works for connecting people and networks.
- Kamajors become a pro-governmental force, the CDF. The structure of the CDF is bureaucratized, but *CDF is is Patron-Client Network in which material resources are distributed in commanding lines.*
- The initiators are marginalized in the CDF networks. They are marginalized from material distribution.

## **Conclusion:**

The network of Kamajor is not necessarily a patron-client network. However, once they connected to a state, Kamajors are integrated into the patron-client network.

- human networks is dynamic, and is not necessarily confined to a state institution.
- When a state needs a network, a state subsume the one. In this process, patron-client network with material distribution pervade.

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So, the conclusion is that.

The network of Kamajor is not necessarily a patron-client network. However, once they connected to a state, Kamajors are integrated into the patron-client network.

Kamajor is not a patron-client network, first.  
Or, they are not originally mobilized with material distribution.

Those who mobilize combatants have various source of power.  
-Paramount chiefs are traditional leaders.  
-Initiators are spiritual leaders.  
-Some commanders get independent from chieftdom, because they have military knowledge.

But, once a Norman distribute materials from state budget, it attract Kamajors. Then, finally Kamajor is organized under a government.

Initiators cannot accommodate with patron-client network under a state.  
Once they are integrated into the CDF, they are marginalized.

From this story, I can attest to the following points;

1. human networks is dynamic, and is not necessarily confined to a state institution.
2. When a state needs a network, they subsume the one. In this process, patron-client network with material distribution pervade. In this network, material benefit is essential. Other source of power are not functional.

So, it can be said that a state intervention might simplify human network in a society into patron-client network.

**Thank you**

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Contact me for questions and further discussion.  
I appreciate any comments.

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