



Occupational structure in a black settler colony
Sierra Leone in 1831

Stefania Galli



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Abstract: Occupational structure is a valuable proxy for economic development when more direct indicators are lacking. This study employs occupational structure for the Colony of Sierra Leone in 1831 with the aim of contributing to shed new light on African economic development at a very early stage. This work is based on data extracted from the 1831 census, one of the first reliable censuses in African history. This source provides valuable information on the whole colonial population, including occupational titles for a vast part of it. The results show that the Colony was far from homogeneous, combining a largely primary oriented countryside with a more modern urban sector centre around the Freetown's harbour.

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1. Introduction

Development economists have been busy for over half a century trying to single out the motives for the existing differences in economic performance among modern societies. Structuralism has contributed to the debate with a number of explanations, among which emerges the three-sector model pictured by Kuznets (Kuznets 1966). In such context, structural differences among countries can signal different rates of economic growth and provide indications on which structural changes might be needed in order to foster development. In particular, a structural and occupational shift from primary to secondary and tertiary sector has been said to be an indicator of modern economic growth (Kuznets 1966, 1973; Arndt 1985). In Kuznets' model, economic development appears to be also associated to an increased rate of urbanization. That for an increase in the size of urban agglomerates is considered to boost the demand for manufactures and services, absorbing the labour released by the primary sector into more productive activities (Kuznets 1973; Klein and Ogilvie 2016). The process of urbanization is linked to population growth. An increase in population is said to impact on settlement dispersion by reducing the distance between settlements while making communication easier. These elements result in the concentration of secondary and tertiary activities in those market centers that will become the new urban agglomerates thanks to rural-urban migration. Contextually, the increased demand for new products and services contributes to technical advancements and specialization that improve the productivity of the primary sector, allowing for a crowding-out of the agricultural activities towards industrial and service production (Boserup 1996; Kuznets 1973). In this context, it has been argued that urbanization rate and occupational structure can be employed as proxies for economic development when lacking other more direct measure, as for many pre-industrial societies. This point of departure has been taken by numerous recent works focusing on pre and post-industrial Europe (among them: Broadberry, Campbell, and van Leeuwen 2013; Klein and Ogilvie 2016 on England and Wales 1750-1911). They all find that a decrease in the share of workers employed in the primary sector constitutes a good proxy for the shift from a primarily agricultural economy to a more developed one, as claimed by Kuznets. In this growth enhancing context, William Baumol and others have highlighted the importance of the service sector, frequently overlooked in favor of industry when talking about economic development and modern economic growth. From his part, Baumol re-affirms that to a decline in the share

of the primary sector corresponds a rise in the shares of both secondary and tertiary sector, with the employment in services benefitting the most from the shift at lower income levels while the contrary is true at intermediate levels of development (Baumol 1967; Gemmell 1982).

The classical structural model depicted above relies on an efficiency assumption: for structural changes to be growth enhancing and help in the transition to modern economic growth, labour has to shift from primary traditional sectors to modern efficient sectors, reflecting not only in an increased productivity but also in higher incomes (Kwasi Fosu 2018). This assumption has been found to hold true for large part of the modern world, with rapidly growing developing countries in Asia confirming the rule. Yet, recent studies on Africa do present a different picture (McMillan, Rodrik, and Verduzco-Gallo 2014). In an attempt to uncover the determinants of the African growth path, characterized by highly volatile growth, low productivity and high inequality, scholars have turned to examine its economic structure. It emerged that structural changes in the context of African economies has been growth reducing, rather than growth enhancing, for at least the latter part of 20th century and the early 21st century (Bigsten 2018). For that to be the case, labour must have shifted from higher to lower productivity activities, in contrast with the classical efficiency assumption. Numerous studies have stressed the fact that much of the labour moving out of the traditional agricultural sector has not been able to be absorbed by higher-productivity sectors, but rather by a rapidly growing low-productivity informal sector (Bigsten 2018; Kwasi Fosu 2018). Thus, it seems as if the modern African experience of structural shifts is somewhat peculiar and does pose some questions in relation to the unfolding of modern economic growth. To what extent such pattern of development is long-lived, or it has emerged in the last few decades remains an open question.

This paper intends to contribute to the debate on economic growth in pre-modern societies while helping to fill the gap in literature affecting the African experience by examining the Colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa in its early days. The study will delve into examining the structural distribution of the workforce across sectors in light of Kuznets' model, along with presenting new estimates of population density and urbanization rate. To do so, a newly assembled dataset compiled from primary sources is employed. The dataset comprises household level data for the whole Colony of Sierra Leone for 1831, three decades after the Colony's foundation, including professional titles for vast parts of the population. The data, extracted from what has been defined as one of

the first reliable census in African demographic research (Kuczynski 1948), allows to study both formal and informal sectors, a great improvement for our analysis and a rare opportunity for scholars of African studies.

2. The historical context

Sierra Leone, located along the West coast of Africa is an interesting case study of African colonialism and economic development. The country is often considered the epitome of the difficulties that African countries have faced, with uprisings, military coupes and civil wars. Nonetheless, up until the annexation of the protectorate in the late 19th century, the then Sierra Leone Colony had possibly more in common with settler economies than with tropical colonies, despite its geographical location (Cox-George 1961). Its population of black settlers, migrants in search of their 'land of freedom', simultaneously embodied the characteristics of colonizer and colonized (Misevich 2008; Land and Schocket 2008).

Since the 17th century Europeans had attempted to establish a colony on a territory largely uninhabited, yet they managed to maintain only a small trading post in the Freetown estuary (Dorjahn and Fyfe 1962). The interest in Sierra Leone lied in the advantageous characteristics of its natural harbour, of which it was said that “[.] *shipping may at all times ride securely in the harbour; an advantage possessed by few situations upon the Coast, and probably by none in an equal degree*” (CO 1828, p.7; Caulker 1981). Nonetheless, the extremely high mortality rates of Europeans, for which the area gained the nickname of ‘White Man’s Grave’ had led to the failure of any major attempt of colonization (Spitzer 1968; Peterson 1969; Curtin, 1964; Frenkel and Western 1988; Öberg and Rönnbäck 2016).

Only in the late 18th century the British Government was able to purchase a small tract of land through an agreement with a native king and establish a colony in the area. The small tract of land, of roughly 550 km²¹ corresponding largely to the peninsula of Sierra Leone, would define the boundaries of the newly founded colony until the incorporation of the hinterland in the form of a protectorate in the late 19th century (CO 1828; Fyfe 1962). The aim was to establish a colony apt to host former slaves from both sides of the Atlantic, following a heated debate on where these blacks were to be settled, whether in England or elsewhere (Frenkel and Western 1988, 212; Goddard 1969 preface; Asiegbu 1969, 1–4). It was eventually deliberated that the most appropriate place for such a settlement was the

¹ Author’s estimate based on information from primary and secondary sources (Clarke 1863; Colonial Office 1828, 1842; Fyfe 1962).

Sierra Leone's peninsula² where people would migrate at the expenses of the British Government³ (Fyfe 1962; Fyfe 1987; Porter 1963; Peterson 1969; McDaniel 1995).

The first settlers sailed from England in 1787 and landed some months later in what would become the colony's capital Freetown ((Wyse 1989, 341–44). Just a handful of them survived the few harsh years (McDaniel 1995, 27; Curtin, 483). However, in the following years other groups of African descent arrived in Sierra Leone, notably the Nova Scotians from Canada and the Maroons from Jamaica. These came to be known as the 'original settlers' and settled in the capital Freetown (Lockett 1999; Walker 1976; Abasiattai 1992). Few decades later, a number of discharged soldiers from the West India regiments and other Royal African Corps were settled in the Colony. Lastly, the Colony became the landing place for those slaves intercepted by the British Navy⁴, along the African coast in the aftermath of the slave trade abolition act of 1807 (Fyfe 1962, 1987; Lockett 1999; Walker 1976; Porter 1963).

The large inflow of Liberated slaves if, on the one hand, compensated for an otherwise stagnant natural population growth, on the other hand modified the shape of the colonial population by outnumbering any other social group in the span of less than a decade and posed a burden to the Colony's financial resources (Kuczynski 1948, 96). This group was, however, in no way homogeneous, combining the presence of groups of Temne and Mende from the nearby regions, with Bambar, Woloff, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa from further areas in West Africa (Fyfe 1987, 412; McDaniel 1995 tab. 2.3).

The latter groups, liberated Africans and discharged soldiers, were settled in the rural area of the Colony, in an attempt of boosting agricultural production while limiting the pressure on Freetown, in which by the early 1820s space had become highly contested (McDaniel 1995, 31; Galli and Rönnbäck 2020).

Thanks to its settlement pattern, Sierra Leone came to be known for its ethnic and cultural diversity, with Hargreaves talking about the capital Freetown as a "*cosmopolitan city almost*

² "It have been maturely and humanely considered, by what means a support might be given to the Blacks, who seek the protection of this government; it is found that no place is so fit and proper, as the Grain Coast of Africa; where the necessaries of life may be supplied by the force of industry and moderate labour, and life rendered very comfortable. It has been meditated to send Blacks to Nova Scotia, but this plan is laid aside, as the country is unfit and improper for the said Blacks ", Plan of a settlement to be made near Sierra Leona, on the Grain Coast of Africa, reported in Kuczynski 1948, 16-17.

³ The Government was responsible to pay for the passage to Sierra Leone, along with a small initial provision in the form of clothing, tools and food supply able to ease the early months in the new territory (Galli and Rönnbäck 2020).

⁴ The harbor of Freetown had become the major base of the Royal Navy in the area by then (McDaniel 1995, 25, 31).

entirely composed of strangers?” (Hargreaves 1981, 104) and Fyfe claiming that “[w]ithin the span of one human lifetime the task of integration was more or less complete” (Fyfe 1987, 412). Yet, social differences among groups existed, particularly between urban and rural population. The urban area was dominated by a Westernized elite formed by Nova Scotians and Maroons, united in their early struggles as settlers of Sierra Leone (Asiegbu 1969, 20–21; Harris 1993, 51–52). On the other hand, the countryside was home to an African rural majority, initially relegated to the bottom of the society, yet gradually able to emerge and compete with the original settlers (Wyse 1993, 347–49).

Initially the Colony had been designed as a laboratory of self-government, where the governmental responsibility lied in the hands of each and every settler (Cox-George 1961; Everill 2017; Wyse 1993, 341). Nonetheless, the period of self-representation came to an end when the Colony was taken over by the Sierra Leone Company, a chartered company founded with the intent of developing trade between the Colony and its motherland (Caulker 1981; Curtin 1964, 124–25). Poor returns and growing antipathy from the settler part led to the Colony being handed over to the British Crown in 1808, just a few months after the slavery bill had passed (Curtin 1964, 132–35; Wyse 1993, 343–44). A proper colonial government was then established. Nevertheless, a certain degree of settlers’ participation was maintained, in order to captivate the settlers and to limit their chance of upheaval (Everill 2013; Fyfe 1962).

Despite the shifts in power, the Colony maintained the principles on which it had been built: egalitarianism and humanitarianism. The authorities, from soon after foundation, implemented a system of resource distribution based on equality of outcomes, later transformed into equality of opportunities when the pressure on the colonial finances became too heavy (Galli and Rönnbäck 2020). The idea was to foster the raise of a ‘democratic yeomanry’ made up of settlers (Everill 2013, 183), intended to produce for subsistence and, at a later stage, for the ‘legitimate economy’ that would have outcompeted slave-based economy and led to the disappearance of slavery (Olabimtam 2013, 214). However, reality turned out to be quite different than expected, and for most of the 19th century the Colony struggled to produce for export and, at times, for self-sufficiency (Curtin 1964, 128; Herrmann 2014, 92–97; McGowan 1990, 25). To survive, the colony had to establish trade relations with African landlords that extended to the whole of West Africa and Europe (Misevich 2008; McGowan 1990, 25). Such relations could take the form of gift-exchanging, particularly with neighbouring groups, in a situation of power

imbalance favourable to natives (Meillassoux 1971, 82; Herrmann 2014, 92). It could take the form of trade, instead, when both sides traded scarce goods, as in the expeditions along the coast of the Sierra Leone Company (McGowan 1990, 25; Meillassoux 1971, 82).

3. Data and Methods

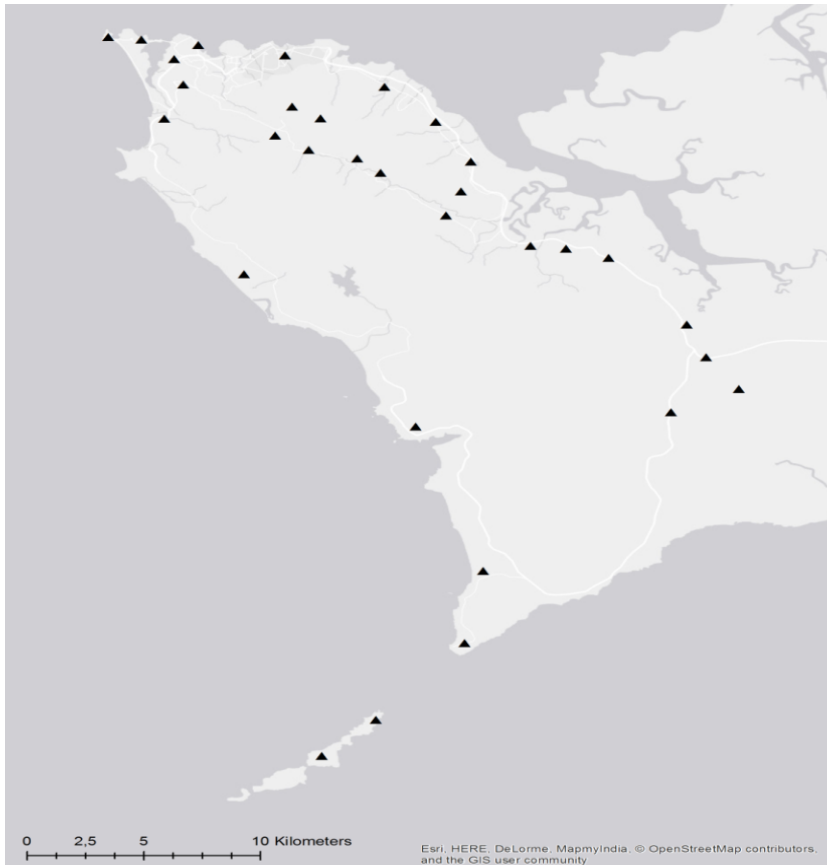
The present study relies on a newly assembled dataset extracted from a unique primary source, the *1831 Census of the Population and Liberated Africans for the Colony of Sierra Leone*. The census, undertaken over a five-month period in 1831, accounts for each and every household in the colony and it is organized geographically, distinguishing between rural and urban areas (CO, 1831).

The importance of the 1831 census lies in its completeness and reliability, an early and rare finding in African demographic research. The Colony had a relatively long tradition of census taking, dating back to 1802, only fifteen years onto the Colony's existence. Nonetheless, early attempts were limited in scope, covering only some groups of the population or employing sampling techniques. The 1831 census, conversely, was the first census to give account of the whole population⁵, including original settlers and Europeans and not only of the Liberated Africans (Kuczynski 1948). Despite the lack of a special legislation in regard to demographic survey, it seems as if census taking became an important part of the colonial administration, aiming at keeping track of the large numbers of Liberated Africans landing in the Colony while attempting to provide evidence against the phenomenon of re-enslavement said to plague the country (Kuczynski 1948, 24; Schwarz 2012; CO 1841, 83).

The census takers, selected especially for the job in Freetown, whereas chosen among the town managers in the countryside, employed standardized forms, an important novelty that limited inconsistencies in the information collected (Kuczynski 1948, 23). As a result, the whole of the over 9,000 households in the Colony was surveyed, providing information on roughly 29,000 individuals throughout the country. Of them, 80 percent settled in the rural areas of the Colony, where numerous villages had been founded in the period 1809-1830 to absorb the large inflow migration of Liberated Africans. The remainder, for the most part the 'original settlers', as well as a few Europeans, resided in Freetown.

⁵ The information relative to the natives is incomplete due to them not being considered as subjects of the Colony (Caulker 1981, 399). Nonetheless, their number was deemed negligible.

Fig. 1: Distribution of 1831 locations recording occupational details.



Source: CO, 1831, 1828.

The census provides an extremely rich set of information: from household's composition to occupational titles, to assets owned by each household. Slight variations in the variables recorded do emerge between the rural and the urban parts of the census. Among them, data were recorded at the individual level for Freetown, while they limited to household-level in the countryside. Nonetheless, the core of the information is comparable across areas, providing an unusual rich source material for Africa, often plagued by issues of data availability. Unfortunately, however, our study cannot extend further in time, as census taking in Sierra Leone stopped suddenly in the 1830s and did not resume until well into the 20th century. In this regard, the colonial authorities deemed impossible to sustain further efforts, probably due to resource constraints (Everill 2013, 185).

Additional sources were employed to estimate population density: The Report of the Commissioner of Enquiry of 1828 (CO 1828), Sketches of the Colony of Sierra Leone and Its Inhabitants by Robert Clarke (1863), and Christopher Fyfe's History of Sierra Leone

(1962), whereas the 1831 census provided all information required to calculate urbanization rate.

1.1. Occupational titles

In a first stage, occupational titles were recorded as appearing in the primary source, with only limited standardization related to minor spelling variations (i.e. shop keeper-shopkeeper, gaoler – gailor). In a second phase, each entry was analysed as to detect the presence of synonyms or of unclear titles. Among the first category, that of synonyms, a number of occupational titles emerged (appendix table A2.1). Synonymic occupational titles were gathered under the same label (often with the aid of the HISCO classification system so as to guarantee reliability) and their observations merged (Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles 2002). Through this process the number of occupational titles decreased from 123 to 99. Unclear occupational titles were also examined, and when found to be unreadable they were grouped in a separate category, otherwise merged with an already existing occupational title. In a third step, the resulting list of occupational titles was categorized according to an updated version of the PST (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) codification system developed by Wrigley (2006), the PSTI occupational classification scheme adapted to the African context (a major difference being that of mining/extraction as a self-standing sector).

1.2. Coverage

Unsurprisingly, early occupational data present some challenges, mostly related to coverage and classification.

In regard to coverage, in the case of Sierra Leone a large difference emerges between household heads and whole population, with the former been almost fully surveyed, while the same cannot be said for the latter (table 1).

Table 1. Professional titles coverage, geographical distribution

Whole population			
	Obs.	% of total	Total
Urban	4,886	57.80	8,453
Rural	7,064	34.42	20,522
Whole Colony	11,950	41.24	28,975
Household heads			
	Obs.	% of total	Total
Urban	1,607	80.79	1,989
Rural	7,064	98.53	7,169
Whole Colony	8,671	94.68	9,158

Source: Own calculation based on CO, 1831.

Those that had no occupational title recorded can be divided between occupational titles missing/unclear or the role within the household was recorded instead⁶. The large decrement in coverage presents a number of issues, as income pooling is expected to have played an important role for subsistence of households in Sierra Leone, as in most pre-modern societies (Archer 1991).

In the census, many of the women recorded were labelled as ‘wives’ or ‘daughters’. Yet, the majority of them were likely to be occupied. West African labour relations differed from their European counterpart, (Maier 2009, 2; Austin 2005, 108). Contemporary observers as well as modern scholars all agree that women in West Africa were responsible for a whole set of duties that in Europe were predominantly carried out by men, with the gender distinction running between subsistence-extra subsistence occupations (Boserup 1970, 19; Austin 2005, 107–10; Steady 1993, 171). Among the former, agriculture appears to have been largely undertaken by females, along with food processing, with men involved limitedly in land clearance and harvesting⁷ (Maier 2009; Rönnbäck 2016, 77–78; Austin 2005, 107–9; Martin 2002). Furthermore, women were often responsible for petty trade and for small manufacturing (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997, 30–32; Clarke 1863, 330–31; Law 2002, 202). Liberated Africans, who made up the largest share of the population of the Sierra Leone Colony, were said to have preserved their homeland’s language and habits even after landing (Fyfe 1962, 171). It is, thus, likely that the West African gender pattern of employment may have survived, and most women, often subsidiary workers, would have been employed in subsistence agriculture or petty trading to an extent that is underplayed when looking solely at household heads. Additionally, the great importance posed on agriculture by the Sierra Leonean authorities might have further incentivized women to take on agricultural duties. Unfortunately, at present it is not possible to determine to which extent the results would be affected if all female employment was to be examined.

Similar difficulties to that of female employment plague other types of subsidiary workers, as that of children. They were identified as infant, child, pupil or grandchildren in respect

⁶ The issue of under representation is not uncommon for studies of occupational titles, plaguing mostly women and children. A debate has been growing on the level of under-representation of women, differing when calculating by the amount of hours worked rather than only by occupation.

⁷ Robin Law warns that differences existed even within West Africa, as in the case of Yorubaland, where men rather than women were mostly involved in agriculture. Unclear it remains, however, whether this was a result of the emergence of export agriculture (Law 2002, 201).

to the household's head. Gareth Austin argued that in Ghana adults would expect children to contribute with their labour to the household income. An occupational gender pattern would characterize even this case, with boys and girls working for their fathers or mothers, respectively (Austin 2005, 110).

Similarly to women and children, natives and apprentices living in a settler's household were recorded but not so their occupational titles. Nevertheless, a number of primary and secondary sources help shed light on these individuals.

Natives recorded as living in households headed by colonial residents, and not within one of the few native households residing in Freetown, seem to have settled in the Colony only for limited periods of time. Within this period, they would be employed by settlers, most often as domestics or labourers. Upon collecting a sum of money considered as sufficient, they would return to their place of origin and settle down (CO 1828, 75). Some of them would also commute daily with the Colony to trade, however this group would not be captured in the census for obvious reasons.

The group defined as 'apprentices' has been object of numerous studies both contemporary and recent, the majority of them focusing on the link between 'apprenticeship' and slavery, the so-called re-enslavement problem. Officially, recently emancipated slaves landed in Sierra Leone could be distributed throughout the Colony and hosted by 'respectable'" households for educational and apprenticeship purposes (Fyfe 1962; Peterson 1969). According to the law, this group was to be made up of individuals 12 years of age or older, that could be 'apprenticed' upon the payment of a fee to the government, normally £20, for a period that could vary between 3 and 7 years, in a system not dissimilar from that of indenture. Each time a Liberated African was apprenticed an entry was to be recorded in a special register kept by the Liberated African Department (CO 1841, 43). Despite these clear regulations, reports of kidnapping of young recaptives for apprentice purposes were not uncommon. The lucrativeness of the business led some individuals to specialize in providing households with apprentices outside the official channels for half the official fee, and not unfrequently to sell them as slaves outside the Colony⁸ (Schwarz 2012, 195; Fyfe 1962, 182). Formally or informally, the system of apprenticeship was very similar to that of slavery. Treated often poorly, forced into

⁸ A contemporary observer wrote in this regard "[u]nlawfully carried away or removed from Africa and they were disposed of as slaves or placed detained or kept in a state of slavery contrary to the form of the statutes" cited in Schwarz 2012, 195.

arduous occupations and not allowed to access schools, many proved sympathy for the apprentices and more than once the system seemed on the verge of collapse, yet it was kept in place until the late 1830s (CO 1841, 91; Fyfe 1962). For the purpose of our study, the scant information available seems to indicate that most apprentices were employed as servants and labourers, but unclear remains to what extent.

In light of the difficulties presented, this study will examine household heads limitedly. Traditionally, household heads were predominantly male. The case under examination is no exception, as nearly 94 percent of all household heads was made up of men, and only the remainder was headed by a woman. The latter were often widows who inherited the role from their defunct husband. Male headed household appear to have been more common in the countryside than in Freetown, accounting for 98 and 79 percent respectively (table 2).

Table 2. Summary of household heads

Gender	Urban		Rural		Whole Colony	
	Obs.	% of total	Obs.	% of total	Obs.	% of total
Male	1,570	78.9	7,079	98.7	8,649	94.4
Female	415	20.9	90	1.3	505	5.5
Unknown	4	0.2	0	0.0	4	0.0
Total	1,989	100.00	7,169	100.00	9,158	100.00

Source: Author's elaborations based on CO, 1831.

1.3. Classification

Beside the lack of information on subsidiary workers, the issues of classification for those workers defined solely as 'labourers' or 'workers' is also not uncommon. Unallocated labourers are a common issue for scholars employing historical occupational sources, which typically provide information solely based on occupational titles, and not on industry. This creates a problem for all those professional titles that could be found across sectors and industries, among which that of labourers is the most classical example. The blurry definition of labourers has been problematic for many authors, and the case of Sierra Leone is no exception. Previous studies have dealt with the problem in different ways. Among them, Broadberry and co-authors argue that, given the economic structure of pre-industrial England, labour should be assigned to agricultural and non-agricultural professions in a proportion reflecting the actual occupational structure excluding the tertiary sector, to avoid the risk of otherwise inflating the share of tertiary (Broadberry, Campbell, and van Leeuwen 2013, 17–18). Conversely, Clark, also on England, propended for assigning labour across sectors indistinctively, by simply reflecting the share of workers with non-undifferentiated occupational titles. In doing so, he argued that labourers were

not more common in heavily agricultural parishes than in more urban parishes (Clark 2013, 7). The present study will follow the example of Clark (2013), with labour being assigned across all three sectors in proportion to the share of workers for which occupational information is available, as there is no evidence of a differentiated distributive pattern of labourers between rural and urban areas⁹.

1.4. Subsidiary Employment

One last issue relates to individuals combining two or more occupations, also known as subsidiary employment, regardless of for choice or need (Bigsten 2018). The problem appears to be as common in pre-industrial societies as in underdeveloped countries today. In this regard, Bauer and Yamey argue that subsidiary employment is, and has been, endemic to Africa (Bauer and Yamey 1951, 1954). Examining West Africa, they claim that most countries present an occupational structure that hardly fits in the standard picture developed for the Western world. They call this African specificity ‘imperfect specialisation’ (Bauer and Yamey 1951, 742) and argue that even though, officially, it would appear as if the majority of the population is employed in agriculture, in reality it is involved also in small trading activities, manufacturing, construction. They conclude by warning against the risk of distorting the picture if relying solely on principal employment in contexts characterized by imperfect specialization. The combination of two or more occupations is expected to have played a major role in the largely rural context of Sierra Leone in the early 19th century. Employment seasonality blurred the lines between primary and subsidiary employment so that farmers often occupied themselves with other activities (manufacturing, trading, carriage) to take advantage of their time during the rainy season, while individuals occupied in non-agricultural activities very possibly dedicated some of their time to subsistence agriculture (Austin 2005, 75). This study will, nonetheless, examine occupational structure solely on the basis of principal occupations, as recorded in the data source. We believe that subsidiary employment might have been endemic to the rural areas of Sierra Leone, while affecting only limitedly the more westernized urban population. Additionally, we do not find evidence that subsidiary employment is likely to bias our results, since both agricultural and non-agricultural labour would have been similarly involved in secondary activities.

⁹ The results would change only slightly if employing Broadberry et al. (2013). Specifically, primary and secondary sector would see an increment in employment of about 2 percent at the expenses of tertiary sector.

4. Occupational Structure

4.2 General Patterns

The 1831 census takers recorded a large number of occupational titles across the Colony of Sierra Leone, from farmers to blacksmiths to traders, to clerics and spiritists.

Occupational titles are available for over 94 percent of household heads, driven by the very high coverage of the rural census. The number of individuals in the sample amounts at 9158, corresponding to nearly one third of the total population of the Colony. The sample comprises 1919 individuals residing in the capital and 7169 distributed across the countryside. On average, information on occupation is either missing or unclear for about 5 percent the sample, with a peak of nearly 20 percent in the urban area of Freetown (appendix table A1.1). Missing observation plagues mostly female household heads, in a proportion as high as 39 percent, whereas that of men stands at about 3 percent (appendix table A1.3).

Agriculture absorbed the largest share of individuals with recorded occupations, more than half of the total. Non-agricultural occupations lagged behind, making up roughly 23 percent. Of this, the majority was within the secondary sector, whereas the tertiary sector only contributed for a very small share. The remainder comprised unclassified ‘labourers’, for which no industrial definition was provided to allow for their sectoral distribution.

Table 3. Sectoral distribution of household heads, without and with labour assigned

Without labour assigned		
Sector	Obs.	% of total
Primary	4537	52.3
Secondary	1304	15.0
Tertiary	707	8.2
Labour	2123	24.5
Total	8671	100
With labour assigned		
Primary	6008	69.3 (52.3 – 76.8)
Secondary	1728	19.9 (15.0 – 39.5)
Tertiary	93	10.8 (8.1 – 32.6)
Total	8671	100.0

Source: Own calculation based on CO, 1831 and a modified version of Wrigley, 2006.

In brackets: range.

The assignment of labour across sectors is strongly influenced by assumptions. The estimates presented reflect a situation in which labour is distributed across all three sectors in proportion to the share of workers by sector. As a robustness check, the values in

parentheses offer the minimum and the maximum share, by sector, if assigned all or no labour (table 3). The picture emerging after assigning labour is one where the vast majority of individuals employed did so in primary occupations, which now account for nearly 70 percent of the total. Occupations in the secondary sector amounted to roughly a fifth of the total. The importance of the tertiary sector remained limited, accounting for only 11 percent of the population.

Primary employment was made up largely by farmers, with agriculture absorbing the vast majority of primary workers and a share of nearly 60 percent of total employment. Other occupations appear of non-negligible importance. Sawyers alone made up more than 6 percent of the total, whereas fishermen stood at around 3 percent.

The share of secondary occupations appears to have been equally divided between manufacturing and construction. Within manufacturing, wood processing industries and footwear and clothing employed a little more than 3 percent of the total each. Various smiths accounted for 0.9 percent of the total, a similar share to that of individuals involved in food processing. The latter could possibly suffer from underestimation, as food processing was very much a female activity, but could also lend support to the idea that most of the food consumed in the Colony was produced and processed outside of its borders (Everill 2013, 189; Fyfe 1962, 95; Herrmann 2014, 95). Construction alone contributed to 10 percent of total employment. In this latter case, construction might be overestimated at the expenses of other activities due to the predominance of men in the field, many of them likely to be household heads.

Trading activities made up alone 50 percent of tertiary employment, roughly 5 percent of the total and 22 percent of all urban employment, signalling the strong propensity of the capital inhabitants towards taking advantage of the favourable location of Freetown, at the centre of numerous regional and intercontinental trading routes (Mitchell 1962; McGowan 1990, 25). The limited number of traders to be found in the countryside might be a result of difficult communications with capital, the major market or reflect the underestimation of female employment, as small-scale trading was predominantly a female activity. Domestic services contributed for a more modest 2.2 percent, whereas Administrative services, transportation and professions made up the rest. Conversely to most of other African colonies and to its later development, mining had no relevance for the Colony of Sierra Leone at this stage.

Table 4. Occupational structure Sierra Leone 1831, household heads

	Colony (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Primary	69.2	19.8	82.4
Agriculture	59.3	5.3	74.1
Sawing	6.3	6.3	6.3
Fishing	3.2	8.1	1.8
Rest of primary	0.4	0.1	0.2
Secondary	19.9	38.0	15.0
Manufacturing	9.9	17.1	7.9
Wood industries	3.4	2.4	3.7
Footware and clothing	3.2	6.4	2.4
Metal working	0.9	0.6	1.0
Stone processing	0.9	2.8	0.3
Food processing	0.8	2.8	0.1
Rest of secondary	0.8	2.1	0.4
Construction	10.0	20.9	7.1
Tertiary	10.8	42.2	2.6
Retail and wholesale	5.1	22.0	0.5
Domestic service	2.2	10.2	0.0
Administrative services	1.4	3.15	0.9
Transport	1.1	2.65	0.7
Rest of tertiary	1.0	4.2	2.1
Mining	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100
Obs.	8671	1607	7064

Source: Own calculation based on Colonial Office, 1831 and a modified version of Wrigley, 2006.

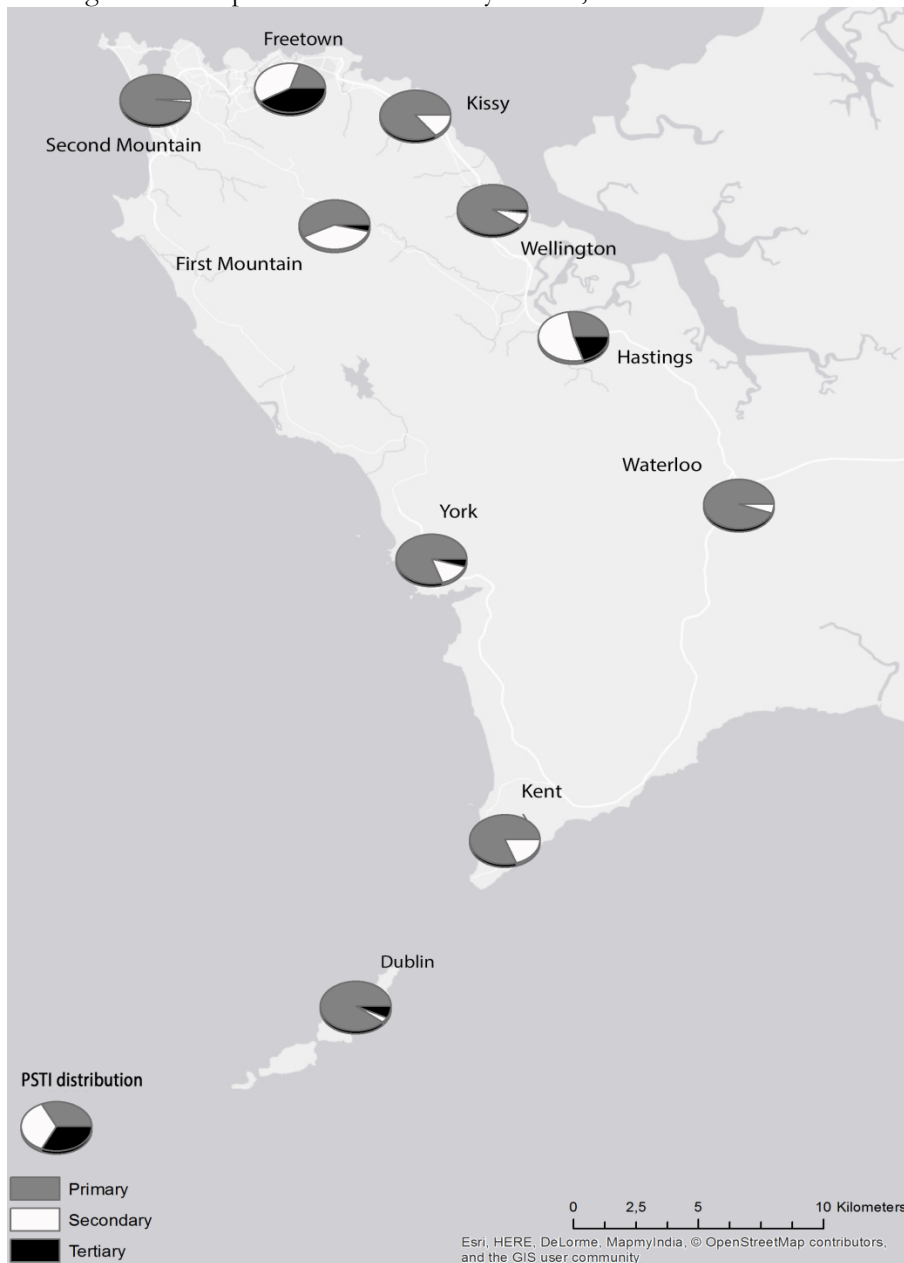
4.2 Geographic Distribution

So far, the Colony of Sierra Leone has been examined in its entirety. However, major differences between urban and rural areas emerge from table 4, with the two areas showing opposite yet complementary trends in occupational structure. In the capital, tertiary occupations were predominant, with a vast share of the population involved in trading activities, nearly a quarter, and to a lesser extent in domestic services, 10 percent of the total. Within the secondary sector, construction appeared to outnumber manufacturing, accounting for 21 and 17 percent of total employment respectively. Primary production shows a slight predominance towards fishing over sawing and farming.

Conversely, in the countryside it was the primary sector that employed the greatest share of household heads, followed by secondary and tertiary occupations, 80, 15 and 2.6 percent respectively. Farming, rather than fishing, absorbed the majority of individuals involved in

primary production, while sawing employed a similar share in both rural and urban area. Employment in the secondary sector was almost equally subdivided between manufacturing and construction, with wood processing industries being the most notable manufacturing activity. Employment in the tertiary sector showed a relatively equal distribution across numerous occupations.

Figure 2. Occupational distribution by district, rural Sierra Leone 1831



Source: Own calculation based on CO, 1831, 1828; modified version of Wrigley 2006.

Despite this general tendency, some rural districts showed a clear deviation from the mean. Figure 1 reports sectorial data at the district level, an aggregation of village level data for

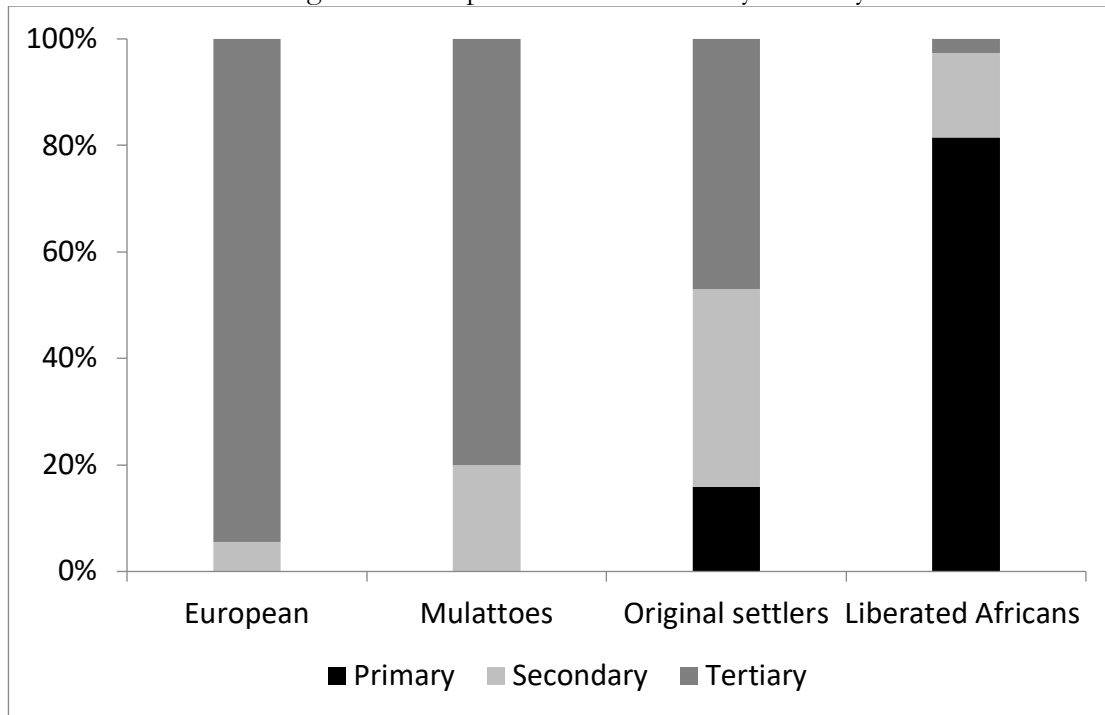
each of the nine rural districts of Sierra Leone. Most districts appear in line with the rural pattern above, despite large differences in soil quality and market access. On the other hand, two districts, those of Hastings and First Mountain, are characterized by a more nuanced distribution of employment across sectors, with a greater importance granted to secondary and tertiary sectors. In the case of Hastings, the economy revolved around export-oriented timber production, with sawing, wood processing and construction absorbing over two-thirds of those employed. It seems reasonable to assume that such deviation from the general pattern had to do with the favourable position of the district for timber production and processing, thanks to navigable streams that facilitated timber transport and nearby mountainous areas providing a vast source of primary material. In the case of the First Mountain district, instead, employment was distributed almost evenly across farming, sawing, wood processing and construction. One could argue that settlers living there could have seen Freetown as an outlet for their work, due to the vicinity of the two centres, which might have motivated some to invest in farming, despite the limited fertility of the soil, and others to contribute to the timber trade and to the construction business.

4.3 Ethnic Distribution

The colony of Sierra Leone was well-known for its heterogeneity. Europeans would live side-by-side descendants of the original settlers from Canada, indigenous groups and the majority of liberated slaves landed in the colony. Despite the absence of an institutionalized discriminatory policy regarding occupations, common in other colonies, large variations do emerge among ethnic groups (fig. 3).

Europeans, despite accounting for a very small share of the population employed, were largely employed in the tertiary sector. There they held high governmental positions or were recorded as merchants. Mulattos, on the other hand, were largely employed as professionals in the tertiary sector, including lawyers, doctors, and traders. A few mulattos were also employed in the secondary sector, as carpenters and tailors. Colonial residents, as the descendants of the original settlers were defined, made up a more substantial share of working individuals than the two groups above, 10 percent of the total. A third of them were employed in the tertiary sector, either through the colonial administration, as school masters and teachers (a sign of their acquired education), physicians, or privately as traders. A few of them was also employed in petty trading and small manufacturing, while only a few was employed in the primary sector.

Figure 3. Occupational distribution by ethnicity



Source: Own calculation based on CO, 1831, 1828; modified version of Wrigley 2006.

Liberated Africans, on the other hand, made up the vast majority of the population recorded as working. It emerges that only a handful of them was employed outside the primary sector, as constables and schoolteachers, as well as shopkeepers in the tertiary sector, as carpenters and artisans in the secondary. The vast majority, however, was employed in small scale subsistence agriculture.

6.5 Female employment

The examination of female employment relies on a small sample of female household heads for which professional titles were registered (Table 5). Despite its clear limitations, the sample captures major differences across the Colony. Overall, the sample shows the predominance of tertiary sector occupations among women, amounting to over 80 percent of female heads' employment. Primary and secondary employment appears to have accounted for a far smaller share, 9 and 10 percent respectively. The occupations that seem to have absorbed the greatest shares of female employment were that of domestic services, roughly half of the total, and that of retail and wholesale, accounting for a further 30 percent. Clothing manufacturing absorbed an additional 8 percent, similarly to nursing services. Nonetheless, when examining geographical dispersion of employment, it emerges that nearly the totality of women employed in the tertiary sector resided in Freetown,

whereas all those employed in the primary sector resided in the countryside, polarizing the results of the whole sample.

Table 5: Female occupational structure Sierra Leone 1831, labour assigned

	Colony	Urban	Rural
Primary	27 (8.8)	0 (0)	30 (62.5)
Secondary	31 (10.2)	18 (7.0)	14 (29.1)
Tertiary	246(80.9)	238 (93.0)	4 (8.3)
Mining	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total employed	304 (100)	256 (100)	48 (100)
Missing	201	159	42
Total	505	415	90

Source: Own calculation based on Colonial Office, 1831 and a modified version of Wrigley, 2006.

In brackets share of total female household head employment.

The frequencies for the whole Colony differ from the sum of urban and rural due to the different underlying distribution of the separate samples compared to the combined one.

5. Additional proxies for development

By 1831, the Colony of Sierra Leone had seen its population increase tenfold, from a few hundred to some 30,000 settlers in the span of a generation, due to rapid inflow migration rather than to natural fertility. Limited opportunities for frontier expansion led to increasing population density, as the total area of the colony remained stable at about 550 km². Consequently, population density reached 50 person/km² in 1831, a value only half that of England at the same time, according to data from the Maddison database (2008). The increase in population that followed the landing of liberated Africans certainly impacted settlement dispersion, as testified by the emergence in rapid succession of new settlements throughout the peninsula from 1809 to 1830, and urbanization rate. Table 6 below shows urbanization rate at the village-level for different thresholds: 2,000, 5,000, and 10,000 inhabitants.

Table 6: Urbanization rate, Sierra Leone 1831

	Over 2,000	Over 5,000	Over 10,000
Share	43,4%	29,2%	0%
Obs.	12572	8453	0

Source: Own elaborations based on CO, 1831.

No settlement accounted for over 10,000 inhabitants in 1831, quite possibly due to the recent foundation of the Colony. However, urbanization rate for the 5,000-threshold stood at about 30 percent, the whole of the population residing in the capital. Furthermore, urban centres over 2000 inhabitants contained the non-negligible share of 43 percent of the population, made up of the capital Freetown and by two recently founded settlements in the countryside, those of Wellington and Kissy¹⁰.

It would appear as if, in spite of sustained population growth and increasing urbanization rate, the Colony's communications remained problematic well into the 19th century, with contemporary sources lamenting the inadequate communication system in place in the Colony. Financial constraints, geographic difficulties and the relatively recent foundation seem to be responsible for this problem. The isolation from the capital, the major domestic and international market in the area, possibly slowed, if not hindered, the process of development in the rural parts of Sierra Leone. This pattern seems confirmed by the finding emerging from the study of occupational structure, where the countryside seem to have relied heavily on agricultural and primary production, whereas the picture of Freetown seem more varied, an image corroborated by contemporary qualitative sources (CO 1828, 7).

Interestingly, the recorded population density for Sierra Leone is barely within the critical population density values identified by William Allan of 33-50 person/km², who estimated land availability depending on land quality¹¹ (reported in Austin, 2005, p. 62-63). Based on these estimates, it would seem as if already in 1831 Sierra Leone had approached the limit of sustainability¹², paving the way for a situation in which land would increasingly become scarce. In such a context, we would expect subsistence agriculture not to be sustainable, supporting those sources claiming the necessity to import staple food from neighbouring countries due to the colony's inability to produce for self-sufficiency (McGowan 1990; Herrmann 2014; Misevich 2008). Furthermore, land constraints could justify the interest in extending the colony's influence to the fertile areas of the hinterland, completed in the late

¹⁰ Wellington had only been founded in 1819, Kissy in 1817 (Colonial Office 1828, 36-40). Five other settlements recorded a population approaching 2,000 inhabitants.

¹¹ The estimates were developed to account for the level of population density that easily depleted land could sustain in a context of subsistence agriculture in Ghana, not dissimilar from the type of land characterizing the peninsula of Sierra Leone.

¹² Ideally, we would want to estimate rural population density, however no mention of the extension of Freetown has been preserved.

19th century with the annexation of the Protectorate. In theory, land scarcity would be expected to reflect into a crowding out of agriculture and primary production, corresponding to a shift in occupational structure towards secondary and tertiary sectors' occupations. Yet, we find no trace of such pattern, likely due to the pernicious effects of isolation.

6. Discussion

6.5 Agriculture

The large share of settlers employed in agriculture, nearly 60 percent as emerging from table 4, seems to be the natural consequence of the strong emphasis on agriculture that had characterized Sierra Leone since its foundation. For the original idea was that the colony was to develop and prosper through the establishment of cash crops agriculture in Africa in a context of fairness and equality¹³, embodied by a class of small landowners that Brownwen Everill has called 'democratic yeomanry'. Thus, various governmental policies aimed at making the Colony food self-sufficient and a net exporter of agricultural produce, in an attempt to feed that 'legitimate trade' that ultimately should have outcompeted slave-based production. However, the original settlers never really engaged in agriculture but rather occupied themselves with trade (Asiegbu 1969, 18). Later settlers, Discharged Soldiers and Liberated Africans, appear to have been more involved with agriculture, settling down in areas of the peninsula characterized by improved land fertility compared to Freetown. Yet, some sources claim that they too poorly adapted to the farming life (Fyfe 1987; McGowan 1990; CO 1828). Eventually, despite the possibility for each individual to access land at the only cost of clearing a plot of land of own choice, agricultural production remained stagnant until the late 19th century. The Colony failed to produce for its own self-sufficiency, and Freetown survival relied heavily on imports of staple food from the neighbouring regions, importing over two-thirds of its food supply (Fyfe 1980; Herrmann 2014; CO 1828; McGowan 1990). Trade records show that the Colony exported only minor quantities of ginger, palm oil and ground nuts (CO 1841, 53). This seems to clash with the evidence emerging from occupational data (table 3 and 4). However, numerous studies confirm that soil in the Colony was definitely not as fertile as prospected initially

¹³ In order to foster agricultural production and equality, every new settler was intended to receive an equal amount of resources in the form of land and resources for the first three months in the colony (Colonial Office 1828). For a discussion of the shifts in the kind of egalitarian policies implemented in the Colony see Galli and Rönnbäck 2021.

(CO 1828; Birchall, Bleeker, and Cusani Visconti 1980), which, combined with a rapid growth in population density, affected negatively land availability and made subsistence agriculture not sustainable already in 1831. Additionally, the settlements where land was of comparable better quality were located in distant, remote areas of the peninsula with problematic communications with the rest of the Colony, which greatly hindered the possibilities for development and made cultivation for the market unprofitable (Galli and Rönnbäck 2021).

6.5 Timber Production

If agriculture, despite the large share of employment, did not contribute to the Colony's economic development, timber production did so instead. Sawing appears to have employed a non-negligible share of individuals throughout the Colony, about 6 percent on average (table 4), to which should be added the employment generated by wood processing industries. All in all, combined they absorbed ten percent of household heads employed. Nonetheless, geographical differences existed due to the nature of the industry, requiring waterways for transportation and forests to be cleared. In this respect, Hastings and the First Mountain district appeared to have taken advantage the most from the prospects offered by the timber industry (figure 2). However, a certain degree of involvement with timber production, even if only accounting for a more modest 3 percent, could be found everywhere in the colony, with the sole exception of Dublin, likely due to the remoteness of its location. Timber production appears to have assumed the role that initially was to be of agriculture, providing an alternative source of export for the colonial economy and for the legitimate commerce at large (Fyfe 1962, 125). In 1839 timber export was by far the major source of revenues for Sierra Leone, accounting alone for over 70 percent of exports (CO 1841, 53). The source of the primary produce came from within the Colony, where forests were cleared with the double aim of meeting the demands of timber and of clearing land for agriculture. Nonetheless, timber demand could not be solely met by colonial production. For this reason, a growing number of colonial tradesmen engaged in timber trade with neighbouring communities and traded timber in Freetown as middlemen for indigenous producers (Everill 2013, 191).

6.5 Construction

Timber was in high demand in the Colony not only for export, but also for local needs. Construction, according to employment shares, absorbed a similar share as that of timber production, nearly 10 percent (table 4). Construction was extremely important since the Colony appear to have been in the midst of a construction boom, with infrastructures and housing being in great demand (CO 1828; Macaulay 1826; Goddard 1969; Fyfe 1962). The vast increase in population along with the foundation of new settlements in previously uninhabited areas appear to have boosted the demand for buildings, which reflects into occupational shares. Additionally, housing had a status-symbol function in Freetown (Galli and Rönnbäck 2020). Various sources seem to confirm the impression that Sierra Leone, and Freetown in particular, was in a state of a building frenzy. Employment shares show that nearly 20 percent of urban household heads were involved in construction, and qualitative source affirm that land in Freetown became much contested in the early 19th century, with land and housing prices skyrocketing between 1820s-1830s (Fyfe 1962, 143). It is, thus, no surprise the high share of employment in construction in 1831, as that answered to the needs of a colony of recent foundation undergoing a process of expansion into new areas of the peninsula.

6.5 Trade

The present study corroborates previous sources on the importance of trading activities for the Colony of Sierra Leone in the early 19th century. Trade employed 5 percent of household heads in the Colony, but over 20 percent in the capital (table 4). This is no surprise, given the favourable characteristics of the Freetown harbour and the numerous international and regional trade routes that centred on the Colony's capital that made of Freetown a major trade hub for the whole of West Africa (McGowan 1990; Mitchell 1962; Fyfe 1962). Occupational titles reveal that different types of traders crowded the city, among them merchants, traders, shopkeepers, hawkers and market clerks. Major differences existed among them, social class being one of them. Following the example of Archer (1991) and Newbury (1971), traders can be sub-grouped into: merchant's elite, general traders/brokers and petty traders/retailers (table A1.5).

The first group, that of merchants, accounted for a small share of traders, yet its importance was not negligible. This group was made up of individuals involved in trade between Europe and Sierra Leone, filling in the role that had belonged to the Sierra Leone

Company with scarce success. Merchants were for the totality males, most of them of European descent, nearly 80 percent of the total, even if a few Mulatto and original settlers could be found among them (table A1.6). According to the 1831 census they all resided in the capital. Hardly surprising, for their activities required large amounts of capital and well-developed networks, centred on Freetown. These elements could have been easily available to Europeans who had served for the Company previously, since the Sierra Leone Company allowed its employees for private trading, a good source of income and network possibilities (Cox-George 1961, 79). Additionally, numerous Company's officials were absorbed into the colonial government when the Colony had been transferred to the Crown, but continued their trading activities nonetheless, leading to conflicts of interests between their merchant and governmental interests (Cox-George 1961, 26).

Traders and brokers made up roughly 3 percent of the whole trading sector (table A1.5). Most of them resided in the capital, however a few could be also found in the countryside. They were men for the vast majority, with only a negligible share of women. This type of traders frequently operated as middlemen for merchants, from whom they differed for lack of capital and networks. Merchants often advanced goods to brokers on credit, in a relationship built on trust (Newbury 1971, 98). Europeans and Settlers, both Nova Scotians and Maroons (but increasingly so liberated Africans), worked for European merchants (Newbury 1971, 97). They would be sent inland to purchase foodstuff to be sold in the colony, or ivory and other luxurious goods to be exported to Europe (Fyfe 1962, 101). Native landlords would not infrequently send subordinates to settle in the colony, with nearly 40 percent of the whole group of traders/brokers made up of natives in 1831 (Fyfe 1962, 149; table A1.6). These intermediaries would be paid to live in Freetown and help arranging trade for their landlord (Dorjahn and Fyfe 1962, 396).

The last group of traders was that of retailers/petty traders, among them shopkeepers and hawkers, often not easily distinguishable. This group focused on the domestic market, often setting up shops or stalls in the vicinity of the Navy headquarter or in populous areas of the capital (Fyfe 1962, 141). These occupations required only basic skills and very limited capital, reason why among them were many settlers, both original settlers and liberated Africans. Women made up more than a third of the group, a share likely to increase if all secondary workers had been surveyed. As illustrated above, numerous scholars have highlighted how petty trading was very much a female occupation in most African societies, both pre- and post-colonial (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997, 30–32; Law 2002,

202; Austin 2005, 107–9), corroborated by contemporary sources for Freetown (Clarke 1863, 330). Nonetheless, we find no trace of female traders in the countryside even though a certain degree of trade was certainly carried out, likely in the form of marketing of agricultural produce and small manufacture (table A1.5). Additionally, local shops had been founded in 1827 in the most important settlements in the countryside, with the aim of sparing the villagers from the long and arduous journey to the capital and possibly to incentivize the development of a local market (Asiegbu 1969, 30). For these reasons, we believe that the share of traders might further increase if the whole female adult population was included in our analysis.

6.5 Other Sectors

Other broad sectors that bear a certain amount of importance for the Sierra Leone's economy in its early stages were manufacturing and domestic services. The share of manufacturing, when excluding wood processing, appears to be relatively small. That suggests that the Colony might have imported rather than locally produced much of its manufacturing needs. Clothing manufacturing seems to be an exception, likely thanks to the presence of the Navy. Domestic service, on the other hand, is likely to suffer from under-representation (that is expected to apply also to employment in petty trade). It has been argued that a vast number of individuals for which information were not reported, among them natives, apprentices and female subsidiary workers were likely to have been occupied in domestic service, according to qualitative sources. To which extent the picture on occupational structure would change if they were included, it remains however hazardous to determine.

7. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to convey new evidence on economic development in Africa in a colonial context, as that of Sierra Leone, through the use of three widely employed proxies: occupational structure, urbanization rate and population density. The study is part of broader attempt to fill a major hole in the literature on African economic growth and structure.

The Colony of Sierra Leone is an interesting case study for this purpose for two major reasons. Firstly, data collection pre-dates that of most territories in the continent, allowing for an early examination of occupational structure that combines both formal and informal sector. Secondly, the Colony was an atypical case of African colonization: a black settler

colony in tropical West Africa characterized by ideals of equality and self-government. The picture emerging from the examination of Sierra Leone is useful in capturing all different experiences characterizing the African continent and its path of development.

The results of this study highlight that the Colony was very much geared towards primary production, with a major share of the population involved in agriculture and timber production, the former confined to a state of mere subsistence for a combination of geographical and social elements, whereas the second one producing mostly for export. On the other hand, construction and services appear to have also had an important role in what seems like a frenetic period for the Colony's development. The rapidly growing population needed housing and infrastructures, while numerous trade routes centred on Freetown favoured the flourishing of a rich and diversified trade in the Colony.

The underrepresentation of female occupations is likely to introduce a bias towards male-dominated occupations. In light of previous literature, if we could examine the whole population we would expect an increase in the employment shares for trading and domestic services. It is more difficult to argue whether the share involved in agriculture would be affected, since that was a female dominated sector in other African societies, yet we registered a very high share of farmers even among male household heads.

Overall, the results of this study show that the Colony was far from being homogeneous, but rather it was made up of two very different halves, one urban and one rural. They differed, among other things, in terms of occupational and economic structure, with the urban area relying on trade, services, and construction, while the countryside was more focused on primary production. The distinction goes further to include population characteristics, as the original settlers, Europeans and Mulattos all resided in Freetown, conversely to the majority of the liberated Africans that inhabited the countryside.

In brief, the Colony had two souls trying to cohabit in a newly settled territory. On the one hand, we found a trade and service oriented urban elite, able to embrace the possibilities that Freetown had to offer and able to develop far-reaching economic and cultural networks. On the other hand, we have a rural majority relying on subsistence agricultural and timber production, suffering a geographical and cultural isolation.

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Appendix A1: Summary statistics

Table A1.1: Household heads, professional titles availability

	Urban		Rural		Whole Colony	
	Obs.	% of tot.	Obs.	% of tot.	Obs.	% of tot.
Info available	1607	80.8	7064	98.5	8671	94.7
Missing/unclear	382	19.2	105	1.5	487	5.3
Total	1989	100.0	7169	100.0	9158	100.0

Source: CO, 1831.

Table A1.2: Information availability by gender

	Male		Female	
	Obs.	% of total	Obs.	% of total
Info available	8363	96.7	304	60.2
Missing/unclear	286	3.3	201	39.8
Total	8649	100.0	505	100.0

Source: CO, 1831.

Table A1.3: Occupational structure Sierra Leone 1831, household heads

	Obs.	% of total
Primary	6008	69.3
Secondary	1728	19.9
Manufacturing	859	9.9
Food processing	68	0.8
Footware and clothing	278	3.2
Textiles	0	0
Metals	77	0.9
Machine making	0	0
Rest of secondary	435	5
Construction	869	10
Tertiary	935	10.8
Retail and wholesale	441	5.1
Domestic service	191	2.2
Transport	97	1.1
Rest of tertiary	206	2.4
Mining	0	0
Total	8671	100

Source: Colonial Office, 1831; modified version of Wrigley, 2006.

Table A1.4: Occupational structure by rural district, household heads

	1st mount.	2nd mount.	Kissy	Wellington	Waterloo	Hastings	York	Kent	Dublin
Primary	56.7	97.7	85.6	90.5	94.3	28.0	80.9	80.7	90.3
Secondary	39.7	1.7	13.6	7.6	4.7	52.4	14.8	18.5	3.2
Tertiary	3.6	0.6	0.8	1.9	1	19.6	4.3	0.8	6.5
Obs.	1497	701	631	945	1198	985	657	249	201
Soil q*	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	2
Comm. q*	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	1
Distance (km)*	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1

Source: Colonial Office, 1831 and a modified version of Wrigley, 2006.

*Indicators from Galli and Rönnbäck 2021. Range: 1(bad) - 3(very good).

Table A1.5: Traders by type, geographical distribution

	Colony	Urban	Rural
Merchants	21 (0)	21 (0)	0 (0)
Traders	91 (6)	79 (5)	12 (1)
Petty traders	216 (77)	203 (77)	13 (0)

Notes: N. of females in parenthesis.

Sources: Colonial Office 1831; Newbury 1971; Archer 1991.

Table A1.6: Traders by social group, Freetown

	European	Mulatto	Original settler	Liberated African	Natives
Merchants	16	3	2	0	0
Traders	3	0	30	15	31
Petty traders	0	4	49	138	8
Tot. by social group	19	7	81	153	39

Sources: Colonial Office 1831; Newbury 1971; Archer 1991.

Appendix A2: Standardization process

Table A2.1: Synonymic standardization of occupational titles

Occupational title	Synonym in the source	Occupational title chosen
Agriculturalist	Farmer	Farmer
Wine maker	Brewer	Brewer
Ship master	Ship captain	Ship captain
Boat builder	Boat maker	Boat maker
Supervisor	Overseer	Overseer
Washer woman	Laundress	Laundress
Bailiff	Constable	Constable
Servant	Domestic	Servant
Watchman	Guard	Guard
Dresser [^]	Auxiliary nurse	Auxiliary nurse
Grumetta*	Labourer	Labourer

Source: CO, 1831.

[^]Dresser: The term dresser appears to have assumed a specific meaning in Sierra Leone, coming to define personnel providing first medical aid, often without training, in the rural parts of the Colony where medical help was otherwise absent (Fyfe 1962, 139).

*Grumetta: The term, commonly used in the British West Indies, originally referred to freeborn blacks that, by law, could not become slave but rather ‘vassals’. According to James Stephen in his *Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated (2010(1824))*, the legal mind behind the Slave trade bill of 1807, grumettas enjoyed greatly bettered conditions than their enslaved counterpart. Nonetheless, their condition was dictated by need as Stephen continues “[t]hey might, if urged by hunger, naturally enough agree to exchange freedom for a state hardly at all distinguishable from it in point of comfort or security, by becoming ‘grumettas’ or life servants, to some who is able and willing, on that condition, to give them employment and relief” (Stephen 2010, 362). According to Fyfe (1962, 95), in 19th century Sierra Leone the term had come to define free black labour, rather than a vassal, who offered his/her own work for a wage or goods. It would appear as if need might still have played a role in deciding to become a ‘grumetta’ also in Sierra Leone. However, it does not emerge that this was a lifetime condition for those who chose it, from here the association with labourer above.

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