

The Journal of Sierra Leone Studies 2020, Edition 1

Editor: John Birchall

A Special Edition

Welcome to The Journal of Sierra Leone Studies. This is the first Journal dedicated solely to Sierra Leone to have been published for a long time.

We hope that it will be of use to academics, students and anyone with an interest in what for many is a rather 'special' country.

The Journal will not concentrate on just one area of academic study and invites contributions from anyone researching and writing on Sierra Leone to send their articles to: John Birchall for consideration.

Prospective contributions should be between 3500-5000 words in length, though we will in special circumstances consider longer articles and authors can select whether they wish to be peer reviewed or not.

Articles should not have appeared in any other published form before.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to suggest changes they consider are needed to the relevant author (s) and to not publish if such recommendations are ignored.

We are particularly interested to encourage students working on subjects specifically relating to Sierra Leone to submit their work.

Thank you so much for visiting The Journal and we hope that you (a) find it both interesting and of use to you and (b) that you will inform colleagues, friends and students of the existence of a Journal dedicated to the study of Sierra Leone.

John Birchall

Editorial Board: Peter Andersen, Abdul Bangura, Howard University, Saidu Bangura, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, John Birchall, Professor Tucker Childs, University of Portland, Ade Daramy, Nigel Davies, Queen Mary's College ,University of London, Lisa Denney, Overseas Development Institute, London, Professor Adam Jones, University of Leipzig, Gary Schulze, Joko Sengova, , Professor Ian Hancock, University of Texas. Dr. Nemata Majeks-Walker, Dr. Richard Wadsworth, Njala University.

This maybe a 'first' in the history of the Journal – a Special Edition to remember some distinguished and much-admired Sierra Leonians, who have passed in a way in the last few months.

These initial responses to their 'passing' were written by John. Since then, more detailed accounts of these famous Sierra Leoneans have now been received. Thank you to those who wrote them.

In years to come, the names that follow will stand out as being part of a 'special generation', we all owe them an enormous debt.

John

Professor Arthur Abraham.

Arthur was born in Daru, Kailahun District, Eastern Region on July 12, 1945.

He received a Bachelor (Honours) Degree, Durham University, 1967. Master of Arts, University Sierra Leone, 1971. Doctor of Philosophy, Birmingham University, United Kingdom, 1974.

Doctor of Social Science from the World University RoundTable, 1986.

His academic career included Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Professor, Dean, University Sierra Leone, Freetown, 1973-1997. Associate Professor Cuttington University College, Liberia, 1978-1980. Ministers of State Government of Sierra Leone, 1992-1993.

Professor Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, 1999- . Visiting Professor Long Island University, New York, 1997-1999.

He also served in academic roles at Leiden in Holland, and Yale Universities.

His highly respected book on the Mende people opened as follows:

‘This study of the Mende, the largest ethnic group in Sierra Leone, goes back in time to uncover Mende origins, and ends at the beginning of the Colonial period. Drawing from early documentary, oral, anthropological, linguistic, and other evidence, the work argues that Mende originated in all probability as a lingua franca sometime in the late 16th century and spread fairly quickly. State formation began in the 17th century, gathering momentum in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Three case studies form the focus of the rest of the book.’

Arthur died on 12th July 2020.

Here are some memories from someone who knew him. Rather typical of Arthur, kind and supportive to so many.

23.5.1991: “... The only direct news I have is from Arthur Abraham, who had gone home to his Pendembu area to rescue his old invalid mother. He reports awful damage, villages burnt, and people slaughtered...”

Part of a letter from Christopher Fyfe to Adam Jones.

Professor Eldred Jones

Eldred Jones, who has died aged 95, was principal and pro-vice-chancellor of Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

A literary scholar and critic, he was one of the pioneers of the study of modern African literature and introduced unique perspectives in Shakespearean studies.

Born in Freetown to Ethline (nee John) and her husband, Eldred Jones, a customs officer, Eldred Jr was educated at the CMS (now Sierra Leone) grammar school and Fourah Bay College. He then went to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he gained a degree in English language and literature in 1953.

He returned to Fourah Bay College that year, rising through the ranks of lecturer, senior lecturer and, by 1964, professor and head of the English department. The college was affiliated to the University of Durham, and he earned his PhD, on the treatment of black characters in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, from Durham in 1962. In 1974 Eldred was made principal of the college.

His critical works included *The Elizabethan Image of Africa* (University of Virginia for the Folger Shakespeare Library, 1971), *The Writing of Wole Soyinka* (Heinemann, 1973), and *Othello's Countrymen: A Study of the African in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (Oxford University Press, 1985).

He lost his sight in his middle years and *The Freetown Bond: A Life under Two Flags* (James Currey, 2012), and all his later written work, was brought to the page by his wife Marjorie

Jones. He won jointly (with his wife Marjorie) the African Studies Association of the UK Distinguished Africanist Award.

Eldred passed away on 21st March 2020.

John writes on Eldred

I first met Eldred, then he was 'Professor Jones' to me, when he read the libretto, I had written for a school musical at St. Joseph's, Brookfield's, where Patricia was teaching music- she and Alex Baird had written the music.

I visited him at home and was treated to a brilliant tutorial on how and where I was 'OK' and where it could be improved – the latter was noticeably more in content than the former. All were brilliantly supported by his knowledge, humour and a style of writing that far surpassed mine.

The school musical played to packed houses at The British Council and we all enjoyed a memorable time.

Our paths did not cross again until the early years of this century, by which time he had lost his sight and Marjorie had become his 'eyes'. I felt honoured to act as 'bag man'

We traveled together to Freetown, chatted for several hours and he told me of taking his students to Mbang for 'poetry camps,' his children and of his days in Oxford.

We worked together for three years on various British Council initiatives and each time I learned so much, not just of Sierra Leone but how to overcome a 'minor' problem of lost sight and how this 'special couple' were brought even closer by it.

News came to me from time to time, including the passing of Marjorie.

Each generation of humanity sees just a few who are 'different', and Eldred was one of those.

Nigel remembers Eldred

Professor Eldred Durosimi Jones was a brilliant academic, scholar, literary critic and a pioneer of the Krio language, whose life exemplified the academic excellence of Fourah Bay College and Sierra Leone more broadly in the mid-twentieth century. It was for his contributions to scholarship that he has been aptly designated the "Titan of Anglophone literary criticism in Africa."

Eldred Durosimi Jones was born on 25 January 1925 in Freetown, Sierra Leone to Eldred Prince Jones and Ethline Marie Jones, nee Quinn. Eldred Prince Jones was a customs officer of Liberated African descent and Ethline Jones was a shopkeeper and businesswoman of Jamaican Maroon descent. Eldred Durosimi Jones would remark on his idyllic childhood in his charming memoirs and reflected with distinction on his Jamaican Maroon ancestry and the distinct cultural practices of Sierra Leonean family members descended from this ethnic group.

Eldred Jones was educated at the Church Missionary Society (presently the Sierra Leone) Grammar School. After completing his education at the Grammar School, Jones attended Fourah Bay College, which was then affiliated to the University of Durham, and graduated with a degree in English. In 1953, following his studies at Fourah Bay College, Jones attended Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford and earned a degree in English language and literature. In 1952, Jones married Marjorie Pratt, a Sierra Leonean dress maker.

Following his return to Sierra Leone, Jones became a lecturer and subsequently a senior lecturer at Fourah Bay College. In 1962, Jones received his PhD from Durham University via Fourah Bay College and his thesis focused on characters of black African descent in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. By 1964, Jones was appointed as the professor and head of the English department at Fourah Bay College. A decade later he was appointed as the Principal of Fourah Bay College in 1974 and he subsequently served as pro-Vice Chancellor, remaining connected to the college until his retirement in 1985.

In terms of his contributions to literary criticism and scholarship, Jones published one of his best known works, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* in 1965, which won the criticism prize at the inaugural World Festival of Black Arts. Jones also published other literary critical works, namely *The Writing of Wole Soyinka* in 1973 and subsequently *The Elizabethan Image of Africa* in 1979.

Eldred Jones founded and became the first editor of *African Literature Today*, a literary journal which critiqued and reviewed African literature, in 1968. The journal, which remains the premier gold standard literary journal on African literary works, was edited by Jones for over thirty years.

Jones was also one of the pioneers of the Krio language and wrote several articles on this subject that outlined the salient qualities of the creole language as a *distinct* English-based creole language. His work on the Krio language culminated in one of his seminal works, *The Krio-English Dictionary*, which he co-edited with Clifford Nelson Fyle, and which was published by Oxford University in 1980.

Jones' literary and scholarly achievements were widely recognized, and he was elected as an honorary fellow of his alma mater, Corpus Christi College in 2002. Both Eldred and Marjorie Jones were recognised by the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom when they were jointly awarded the Distinguished Africanist Award in 2002. Jones was also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a recipient of the Royal Society of Arts Silver Medal.

Jones commanded great respect in Sierra Leone internationally as a great intellect and cultured gentleman who enjoyed reading and had a penchant for music. He published his memoir entitled, *The Freetown Bond: A Life under Two Flags* in 2012.

After an illustrious career and life as a polymath, Eldred Jones passed away on 21 March 2020. Jones was predeceased by his wife, Marjorie, who died in 2015, and his daughter, Essemary, but was survived by his daughter, Mimi, and a sister, Ethline.

Nemeta remembers his dear wife Majorie.

Behind every great man is a phenomenal woman. I cannot believe it has been 5 years! In a long life lived to the fullest with style, this woman of excellence, Mrs. Marjorie Jones, raised the profile of womanhood both in Sierra Leone and internationally.

Over fifty years ago, she took a deliberate decision when she swapped a profession in law with devoting herself to supporting the work of her husband as an international scholar. In doing so, her reputation preceded her in many parts of the world as an excellent homemaker, researcher, editor, and all-round manager.

Her excellence was recognized when, jointly with her husband, the African Studies Association of the UK gave her the Distinguished Africanist Award for 2002 at a ceremony at the University of Birmingham. Her work in African studies culminated in the position of Assistant Editor of the Internationally renowned journal, African Literature

Today, in which she was solely responsible for the compilation of the index, which raised that section of the journal into a widely respected study guide to modern African literature. Her skills in copy writing and editing under pressure were similarly appreciated and rewarded by the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in the service of which she travelled widely in Africa, Europe, and Japan. In celebration of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of her alma mater, Fourah Bay College, she reproduced the whole of the College Register from 1827 to 1977 in typewritten form.

Her presence in the great libraries of the world, particularly the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC was as familiar and respected as that of her husband's whose reputation in Shakespearean and African Scholarship was largely due to the intellectual stimulus and support he received from his wife.

She made beautiful and comfortable homes in half a dozen university towns in Britain, the United States and Canada where they made temporary homes and her skills as hostess of grace and charm has given her a unique reputation among scholars everywhere.

Her house and garden are models of excellent design and meticulous care and maintenance.

Her hospitality was world famous and her ability to adapt to emergencies was demonstrated when, during the rebel war, she gave refuge for several weeks to some thirty-two guests who were forced to leave their homes. She turned a chaotic situation into a pleasant holiday. Her cooking skills extended from giving the most elegant dinners to making the best of the most basic ingredients.

Perhaps her most extraordinary achievement was to accommodate to her husband's blindness nearly twenty years ago and then going forth to enable him to continue his extensive work of writing, editing, and lecturing globally. At an advanced age, she exchanged the typewriter for the computer and made transition from sight to blindness almost seamlessly. In all this, she has managed to keep up her own interest of gardening, music, art, and design, and when the increasingly rough roads permit, walking through the hills around Leicester.

Two of her Batiks and a Silk Screen Print formed part of the Sierra Leone Art Exhibition at Festac 77 in Lagos, Nigeria. Without leaving her home, she made a great financial contribution to the

support of her family by practising as a professional dressmaker and designer; incidentally saving many thousands by making, not only her own but, her husband's clothes.

They made a perilous road journey to Conakry, Guinea as members of INAMEC. She worked as her husband's personal assistant when he was Chairman for over three years of the National Policy Advisory Committee, reading to him hundreds of pages of confidential cabinet papers and typing his notes.

She similarly supports his work as Chairman of Knowledge Aid Sierra Leone, a project which aims to make the best use of Information Technology in our educational system. She acquired daughters like me along the way.

The country recognized her singular role as a model of womanhood by awarding her the insignia of Commander of the Order of the Rokel.

She is an embodiment of the poetic ideal:

'A perfect woman nobly planned

To warn, to comfort and command'

Nigel remembers Arthur Porter

Professor Arthur Thomas Porter was one of the Durham Breed and his immense contributions to the history of Sierra Leone and wider scholarship are encapsulated in this vignette of his remarkable life.

Arthur Thomas Porter III was born on 26 January 1924 in Freetown, Sierra Leone to Guy Hazeley Porter (1879-1929), and Adina Agnes Porter, nee Cole (1891-1949). Guy Porter was educated in England as an engineer and returned to Freetown and assisted his father in the family hotel business and other commercial enterprises. Adina Agnes Porter was a schoolteacher at the Freetown Secondary School for Girls and subsequently took up trade following the death of Guy Porter in 1929. The Porter and Cole families were well-respected and well-known families in the Freetown community of Jamaican Maroon, Afro-Caribbean, British, and Liberated African descent. Porter was proud of his family history including his paternal grandfather and namesake, Arthur Thomas Porter I, (1834-1908), a contractor and hotelier who was known as 'Sir' Arthur in his heyday.

Arthur Porter received his early education in Freetown at the Annie Walsh Memorial School and subsequently at the Freetown Secondary School for Girls before proceeding to the Church Missionary Society (now the Sierra Leone) Grammar School. After completing his education at the Grammar School, Porter attended Fourah Bay College, which was then affiliated to Durham University, and graduated with a degree in History. After completing his studies at Fourah Bay College later Selwyn College, Cambridge University where he read history and was among the set of students to achieve Upper Second-Class Honours. In 1953, Porter married Rigmor Sondergaard Rasmussen, a Danish nursing student he met during his studies at Cambridge University. The Porters had three children, one of whom survives Professor Porter.

Among Arthur Porter's contributions to academic scholarship was his landmark work, *Creolehood: A Study of The Development of Freetown Society*, which was a seminal socio-historical study of the Sierra Leone Creole people.

Porter had a distinguished career as a scholar and academic in both Sierra Leone and abroad. He was a Professor and subsequently Vice Principal of Fourah Bay College before proceeding to an appointment to University of Nairobi, Kenya. After a decade of service in Kenya, he returned to Sierra Leone where he was appointed as Vice Chancellor and Pro Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone. In later life, Porter was also a member and one-time chair of the UNESCO board in Paris, France and was a member of the Sierra Leone Diamond Mining Company. He received honorary doctorates from the University of Malta and Boston University in addition to honours from Ethiopia and Yugoslavia.

A cultured and genial man, Porter was known for being a gentleman of great charm, wit, and intellect. At an advanced age, he continued to visit his beloved Sierra Leone annually, although he made his permanent home in Ottawa, Canada in his later years.

After a lengthy and distinguished academic career, Arthur Porter passed away on 26 March 2019. He was predeceased by his wife, Rigmor Sondergaard Rasmussen, in 2005 and was survived by his daughter-in-law, Pamela Mattock Porter, and his granddaughters, Gemma, Fiona, Adina, and Charlotte, and his great grandchildren, Adelaide and Arthur.

Final Word

A generation is leaving us, these are sad times for many reasons, let us hope in the years to come that Sierra Leone produces those who will carry on such a tradition.

John

1st November 2020.