

## MARRIAGE IN SIERRA LEONE

There are four types of valid marriage in Sierra Leone:  
(a) marriage under the Christian Marriage Ordinance;<sup>1/</sup> (b) marriage  
under the Civil Marriage Ordinance;<sup>2/</sup> (c) marriage under the  
Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance,<sup>3/</sup> and; (d) marriage under customary  
<sup>4/</sup>law.

The first three types of marriage are regulated by statutory law. The fourth type is valid when it results in the transference of the rights to the domestic, sexual and procreative services of a woman from her family to her husband and his family. The consent of the male members of both families is necessary.

An essential requirement for a valid customary marriage is that a dowry be presented to the wife's family by the husband's family.<sup>5/</sup> As soon as the dowry is accepted, the marriage is valid.<sup>6/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> II The Laws of Sierra Leone ch. 95 (1960).

<sup>2/</sup> Id., ch. 97.

<sup>3/</sup> Id., ch. 96.

<sup>4/</sup> T. O. Elias, Ghana and Sierra Leone 298 (1962); and, Barbara E. Harrel-Bond and Ulrica Rijusdorp, Family Law in Sierra Leone 83 (1975).

<sup>5/</sup> Harrel-Bond and Rijusdorp, Id. at 13.

<sup>6/</sup> J. Fenton, Outline of Native Law in Sierra Leone 22 (1951).

While the formalities and ceremonial aspects of these transactions may differ widely from place to place, the legal principles remain <sup>1/</sup> the same.

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<sup>1/</sup> Supra note 5.

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