

**Encounters of Culture, Heritage  
and Development**  
**exploring global connection in Sierra  
Leone**

A thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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# Sierra Leone Inaugural Annual Cultural Festival



**His Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma**  
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

**“Cultural President “**  
**19th. - 29th April, 2012**

I, Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the relationships emerging between culture, heritage and development in Sierra Leone. The concept of 'culture for development' is increasingly influential as a framework for intervention in both development and heritage work. However, it has so far received limited critical attention. Using a multi-sited ethnographic approach, this research traces the complexities and contradictions that transpire as Sierra Leone's cultural sector attempts to establish its position within the country's future. 'Culture for development' emerges from a recognition that intervention has historically failed to respond to local contexts. This thesis proposes that in Sierra Leone, such an agenda is obscured by wider political, professional and personal concerns over the role of the past within a context of aspirational change and transformation.

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# List of abbreviations

APC - All People's Congress

CDF - Civil Defence Force

DFID - UK's Department for International Development

EU - European Union

ECOMOG - Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

IDA - International Development Association

IMF - International Monetary Fund

MEST - Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MoDEP - Ministry of Development and Economic Planning

MoTC - Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

MRC - Monuments and Relics Commission

NCDRC - National Curriculum Development and Research Centre

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NLTNPS - National Long Term National Perspective Studies

NPRC - National Provisional Ruling Council

PRSP II - Second Poverty Reduction Strategy

RCH - Reanimating Cultural Heritage: Digital Repatriation, Knowledge Networks and Civil Society Strengthening in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone

RUF - Revolutionary Uniter Front

SLNM - Sierra Leone National Museum

SLPP - Sierra Leone People's Party

TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UCL - University College London

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNHRC - United Nations Human Rights Council

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WTO - World Trade Organisation

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# Introduction

In 2010, the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals Summit reviewed global progress in reaching the UN's 'End Poverty by 2015' targets. One of the critical outcomes of this meeting was the development of a specific resolution on culture and development, officially recognising that culture has a role to play in international aid and development initiatives (UN, 2010a: 3). 'Culture' was absent in the commitments made by world leaders when they signed up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) campaign in 2000 (UN, 2010b) and its inclusion at the summit meeting, ten years on, is indicative of the recent surge in discussions which concern the notion of 'culture for development' and the establishment of this discourse within mainstream development and heritage circles. These discussions have taken place at high-level international conferences such as the 2010 European Union International Seminar on Culture and Development (EU, 2010), though interest at this level has been rising since the 1990s through, for example, UNESCO's establishment of the World Commission on Culture and Development in 1993. 'Culture for development' is likewise increasingly embedded within academic discussions about 'culture' and 'heritage'. My research has taken place at UCL's Institute of Archaeology where a recently established Archaeology and Development Network is seeking to put together a 'best practice' document outlining the Institute's position on undertaking archaeological fieldwork in the 'developing world'. Meanwhile Paul Basu, Wayne Modest and Tim Winter are leading a new Routledge book series in culture and development, seeking to publish works which critically explore the contribution of museums, heritage and cultural tourism, among other things, to a broad range of 'development' concerns such as sustainability, human rights, environmental management, creative industries, or culturally appropriate forms of conflict resolution.

This thesis, based largely on research within Sierra Leone's cultural sector, is situated in the context of this rising interest. 'Culture for development' has emerged as a new and

relatively unchallenged globally recognised discourse. In its widest sense, this language is evocative from both a development and a heritage perspective. In the former it speaks to half a century of critique which questioned the validity of development interventions given their derivation from largely Western-capitalist models of progress by arguing for a more culturally-informed approach (Black and White, 2004; Chambers 1983; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Crush 1995; Dos Santos 1973; Escobar 1995; Ferguson and Lohmann 1994; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Grillo and Stirrat 1997; Long and Long 1992; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). For museums, heritage and tourism organisations and research projects, 'culture for development' has the potential to explore the continuing relevance of the past in the present. These perspectives are discussed in much greater deal in the following chapter. There has as yet, however, been little research that has looked critically at this discourse and the ways it is used and instrumentalised by those who engage with it. Echoing the call for proposals for the Routledge series mentioned above, there has thus far been little debate around the relationship between 'culture', 'heritage' and 'development' as it emerges on the ground. In this thesis I seek to foreground this debate and contribute to it by exploring the relationship between culture and development as it emerged within Sierra Leone's cultural sector.

As I write, Sierra Leone awaits the conclusion of its second presidential election since the close of a prolonged and bloody civil war in 2002. The incumbent president's challenger, Maada Bio, might be considered a surprising candidate given his role in this war, leading the National Provisional Ruling Council as Sierra Leone's head of state for three months in 1996. The election itself was reported as a relatively peaceful affair. Although Ernest Bai Koroma has now been reinstated for a second term, accusations of intimidation and ballot stuffing by supporters of the incumbent president have been announced by the opposition.

This small West African state has witnessed a number of key changes since its occupation of the very bottom of the UN's Human Development Index in 2007, or its fame as being the 'worst place on earth', to quote the title of James Traub's (2000)

report for the New York Review of Books. Ernest Bai Koroma's four year term as President has been dubbed by both the international donor community and the Sierra Leonean Government's own political rhetoric as leading Sierra Leone into a 'new era'. A central part of this has been to develop deeper alliances with the country's development partners through, for example, a collaborative National Poverty Reduction Strategy. Changes sanctioned as a result include a greater focus on governmental and civic reform to generate a broader 'attitudinal change' within the populace, discussed further in Chapter 4. Further transformations include the construction of a new ring road and a more reliable electricity supply to the capital with many now, legally or otherwise, connected to the National Grid. The 2010 Free Maternal Healthcare Bill is widely considered a success, as are attempts to ensure nationwide free primary school education. Sierra Leone is also currently preparing itself to be connected to an underwater fibre-optic telecommunications cable which will offer high-speed internet access, through the World Bank-funded West Africa Regional Communications Infrastructure Program.

This research is situated within another set of changes occurring within Sierra Leone's cultural sector. The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTC) currently awaits the ratification of a new and long awaited Cultural Policy, whilst also engaging in the multi-donor Integrated Framework initiative which seeks to reestablish Sierra Leone's tourist industry. Changes are also underway at the Sierra Leone National Museum (SLNM) where interest in this national institution and its potential to play a more prominent role in society has initiated a number of internationally funded interventions, very much part of the 'culture for development' context outlined above. This includes the 'Reanimating Cultural Heritage' research project which has funded this PhD research<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Full title: 'Reanimating Cultural Heritage: Digital Repatriation, Knowledge Networks and Civil Society Strengthening in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone'. This project was led by Paul Basu and funded between 2009 and 2012 through the 'Beyond Text' programme of UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. Alongside this thesis, two of the main outputs from the project were the [www.sierraleoneheritage.org](http://www.sierraleoneheritage.org) digital heritage resource and the edited collection *Museums, Heritage and International Development* (Basu and Modest 2013).

This context of change is central to this research as my informants negotiate the importance or relevance of the past to not only the present, but also to a future Sierra Leone. International intervention plays a central role in this negotiation, providing the resources and vocabularies which dominate top-level reforms and national poverty reduction strategies, and are likely to continue doing so. In this thesis I ask what is the relevance of Sierra Leone's culture and heritage – including its cultural institutions – to this future? How is this sector being moulded by international donors as well as national government? One potential answer was presented shortly after I began fieldwork in March 2010 during the 49th anniversary of independence, discussed below.

## **The 49th anniversary of independence**



Figure 1. The Community Concern Network's banner erected at St Joseph's Convent School to mark Sierra Leone's 49th anniversary of independence on 27th April, 2010. The event was run in collaboration with the Sierra Leone National Museum. Photo: author.

On the 27th of April, 2010, Sierra Leone celebrated its 49th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule. I had begun fieldwork a month earlier, thrown in to daily life at the National Museum and its complicated power struggles with the other key institutions in Sierra Leone's neglected cultural sector, namely the Monuments and Relics Commission (MRC) and the MoTC. At the time, the SLNM, itself a

legacy of the colonial past, was left to its own devices in planning a modest contribution to the national holiday. The Museum's Education Officer, Miriam<sup>2</sup>, had set herself the task of managing an event put together in collaboration with the Museum School Club and Community Concern Network (CCN), a small and at the time unfunded youth-based NGO. In 2010 CCN described their main 'community concerns' as the lack of 'education in cultural heritage...when 95% of young people do not know their culture' (opening speech 27th April 2010, President of CCN, Solomon. S. Kanyako), and so a collaboration with the National Museum seemed an obvious solution. Part of the unofficial agreement surrounding this partnership was that they would collaborate to put together a 'heritage education programme' for schools: the 49th anniversary event was planned to launch this new initiative.

Leading up to the national holiday, CCN and Miriam organised a number of meetings to plan the activities that would take place on 27th April at St Joseph's Convent School near Sierra Leone's National Stadium in Freetown. Together a decision was made to have a 'cultural theme', and Miriam made a number of suggestions which included a short educational play about independence in 1961 and a presentation of Sierra Leone's largest ethnic groups. Sierra Leone officially has 16 different ethnic groups as identified by the 2004 population census (DACO and Sierra Leone Information System, 2006). Historically each group has its own language, however mass displacement during the war and high levels of rural to urban migration have resulted in a generational shift in the use of minority languages. Aside from English (the official language) and Krio (the lingua franca), Mende or Temne were identified as the first language of two thirds of the population in 2004 (MEST 2007: 3). This was recognised at the National Museum, and CCN were advised to concentrate on the main 'ethnic groups', including Krio, Mende, Temne, Loko, Limba and Fula. Miriam suggested putting together a 'cultural performance' of traditional songs, poems and dances, representing the 'cultural traits' of each group. She recommended wearing thick woven 'country cloth' shirts to represent the Mende and dyed Garra cloth to represent the Temne. She

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<sup>2</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant. The rationale for this is discussed in Chapter 2.

suggested Limba culture should be represented by someone carrying gourds of palm wine, since they were known as 'palm wine tappers' and Krio culture by a man in a shirt and tie, carrying a briefcase.

These rigid ethnic classifications are of course problematic, widely shown to be the product of colonial classificatory imagination (Hall 2002; Eltringham 2004). Regardless, ones 'tribe' remains an important marker of identity in Sierra Leone although these are of course subject to fluidity and change. Miriam's main concern was that that the 49th anniversary should in some way link with the National Museum, and these performed ethnic categories were the way she felt this link would be best represented. Like many Sierra Leoneans of her age and education, she expressed concern over the 'youth forgetting their ways' since the war. Particularly concerning to her was what she understood as lack of discipline, and desire for the youth to replicate African American music culture by wearing low-slung jeans, tight tops and short-skirts. As a Pentecostal Christian, these changes represented an encroaching unsavoury Western influence which she noted would be disastrous to Sierra Leone's efforts to modernise and move forward. For her, the SLNM's 49th anniversary version of 'remembering our culture' provided a mechanism to mitigate this.

Though the events had been meticulously planned, the day itself did not run smoothly. Trouble began when I was invited by the CCN's President, Solomon S. Kanyako, to sit at the 'VIP table' situated the front of the hall as 'Official Representative of the National Museum', and asked to give a speech. This was of course an incorrect assignation of my association with the SLNM, which I pointed out. My title was corrected and as the opening speeches began, Kanyako's very generous introduction called upon the 'British philanthropist who has come all the way from London to help save the National Museum'. My 'help' had thus far been limited to a series of failed and misguided attempts to put together a workshop at the SLNM for local schools, and hanging round the foyer chatting to staff members and visitors to try to pick up Krio. This was not lost on Miriam who questioned my validity as a 'VIP' the following day.



Tensions continued at St Joseph's as it became clear that CCN had made a last minute call to change the theme of the event from 'Culture in Mama Salone', to 'Learning from the past, sailing into the future' (figure 1). Although Solomon S. Kanyako maintained that CCN was still a 'cultural heritage organisation' in the opening speech, this was quickly pushed to one side. Dressed in tight jeans, vest tops, t-shirts and Western suits, the group had prepared a series of short plays covering healthcare, police capacity, and poor quality education in Sierra Leone. Each play concerned an account of corruption among those in powerful positions, and the subsequent effects on people with limited resources (figure 2). In the first play a young mother lost her child because the doctor refused to prescribe antibiotics unless she engaged in sexual intercourse with him, in the second a trader was not able to recover stock which was stolen from her because the thief paid the policeman, and in the third a family could only afford to pay schooling for one of their children due to the expectation of 'gifts' by a local teacher. The finale saw all of the performers don necklaces and bracelets made from beads in the national colours – green, white and blue – which they wore for a performance of a song called 'wear your culture'. This brief reference to the partnership with the Museum was not enough to impress staff at the SLNM, and Miriam left before the proceedings were concluded.

After the event I discussed the change of plans with two of the members of CCN, George and Mohammed, on a bench in the school ground. George explained that if they had marked this anniversary with traditional clothes and music, people would have reached the conclusion that they were 'not modern'. CCN, he commented, was about the future and so they needed to demonstrate an understanding of 'future concerns'. The concerns expressed by CCN are of course valid, matching the priorities which have also been identified by Sierra Leone's development partners and the current government. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID), for example, is currently embarking on a five year Access to Security and Justice Programme in which police reform plays an integral role. Meanwhile in 2010 the Government announced its Maternal Healthcare Bill, providing free healthcare for pregnant women and children under five, primarily funded via UNICEF, the European Union, the World Bank and DFID.

The most recent governmental Poverty Reduction Strategy outlines the importance of reform to the health, security and education sectors to a future Sierra Leone in order to achieve a better quality of life for its citizens in the future.



Figure 2. Community Concern Network concluding their three short plays concerning corruption in Sierra Leone. They focused on the health, education and police sectors.

Nothing that occurred during this event was particularly revolutionary. But reflecting on it as I began writing this thesis consolidated a number of questions that I had begun to formulate as I progressed through my fieldwork within Sierra Leone's cultural sector. During this period of research, discussions about 'culture' or 'heritage', rarely avoided becoming discussions about 'development'. Likewise, a discussion about the past, often became one concerned with the importance of 'modernity' to the future. Of course this may in many cases have been due to expectations concerning my interests in Sierra Leone: why else would I be there if not to 'help' or 'provide aid' in a context where this has framed relationships with Westerners over the last decade or more? A mainly French tourist industry in the 1970s collapsed as the country's infrastructure slowly crumbled, so where one might expect foreign interest to be concerned with cultural sites and performances as Charlotte Joy found in Mali (2012), in Sierra Leone these relationships are substantially altered. Rather, academics, journalists, politicians and aid workers flooded the country throughout the 1990s to photograph, document, research and attempt to transform the appalling conditions the country found itself in.

This has remained the case until very recently, and only now is a slow trickle of tourists, predominantly focused on the country's magnificent beaches, beginning to return. Certainly expectations of my role during the 49th anniversary conformed to expectations of foreigners with regard to aid and expertise. Yet these slowly crumbled as my limited capacity to make a difference was realised. Meanwhile 'development' and 'modernity' retained their centrality to what might otherwise be identified as 'cultural' or 'heritage' work. This relationship was often framed through rhetorics of 'culture for development', however it also concerned a much wider set of negotiations and conflicts.

A number of themes emerging from the anecdote related above are relevant to this thesis and will be explored through the following chapters. The first, and most obvious, is the apparent disconnect drawn by these educated members of CCN between that which is 'modern' and relevant to Sierra Leone's future, and that which is 'traditional'. Secondly, the role of 'culture' within this was not completely sidelined, but nominally represented by the wearing of beads in the national colours. Miriam's plans were arguably more appropriately aligned with Sierra Leone's cultural diversity, however this was also a misrepresentation formed through rigid categorisations of ethnic traits, being more representative of a colonial world view than reflecting the reality. Thirdly, both CCN and the SLNM recognised the importance of aligning 'heritage' with 'development', yet this went little further than making a statement to this effect. In reality, the role 'culture' has to play in 'development' remains ambiguous. A 'culture for development' vocabulary is employed, in this case along with an anti-corruption vocabulary, yet the deeper critiques which under-lie this particular rhetoric are absent.

## **Structure of thesis**

This introduction is followed by seven chapters which collectively seek to take a grounded approach to understanding the relationship between culture, heritage and development emerging as Sierra Leone embarks on a new phase of transition.

I begin in Chapter 1 by taking a step back and tracing the recent nexus of culture and development by exploring the critical parallels in both development and heritage

studies. This chapter seeks to establish the foundations for the surge in 'culture for development' initiatives by exploring how this formula answers mutual critiques which concern the application of a particular world view constructed in the West, with a set of globally applicable ontologies, values and needs. Both disciplines have reached a conclusion that a more grounded and context based approach is required which encourages local voices to come forward, rather than prioritising those of Western development, heritage or museum bodies, or indeed political elites. A 'cultural turn' in development has recently been identified by Peitersen (1995) and Radcliffe and Laurie (2006a, 2006b), which looks to traditional knowledge, skills, institutions and resources as valuable components which can contribute to broader development aims. Likewise, heritage and museum initiatives gain increasing credibility by responding to present concerns which in many cases revolve around broader development-related agendas. I conclude with three more detailed case studies which critically explore moments of 'culture for development' in Indonesia, Cambodia and South Africa.

Chapter 2 brings the discussion back to Sierra Leone by discussing the methodological approaches I used to explore the emerging relationships between culture, heritage and development in this context. Responding to the complexity of Sierra Leone's cultural sector and the multiple external influences which surround it, I draw inspiration from Marcus' (1995) discussion of multi-sited ethnographic methods. I follow by exploring the significance of my own participation in the Reanimating Cultural Heritage project, and the ways this has influenced the discussions I chose to focus on. Using Tsing's (2005) notion of 'friction', this thesis focuses on moments of 'encounter' where ideas from different parts of the world temporarily come together to create new forms. Such encounters are traced across multiple sites, and I conclude this chapter by providing an overview of these sites and the ways they interconnect.

Chapter 3 explores the contested ideas of the 'local' and the idea of 'local expertise' in the context of my research in Sierra Leone by focusing on the complexity which surrounded the 50th anniversary of independence. A central component of the nexus of culture and development concerns the need to acknowledge the dominance of Western

ways of understanding the world, and highlights the importance of embracing local knowledge and skills. In response I argue that the distinctions between what is foreign and what is local are less clear cut in Sierra Leone. In the lead up to the anniversary the Freetown press engaged in a debate which asked what it means to be independent, whilst the country continues to be dependent on foreign aid. I suggest there is another complexity in this equation which concerns a long history of foreign influence that shapes relationships with aid and intervention in the present. This is particularly potent as individuals attempt to define what is 'locally appropriate' in Sierra Leone, looking to China for new models of modernity, whilst others express nostalgia for the colonial past at a former British slave fort or draw on decades of foreign influence at the SLNM as a format for appropriate museum work.

Chapter 4 also explores the idea of intervention, however here I am more concerned with the centrality of imported development discourse to discussions about culture and heritage in Sierra Leone. I return in particular to this idea of change and transformation which is deeply embedded in the current government's political rhetoric, and the way narratives of heritage are negotiated within this framework. Members of the MoTC currently need to align themselves to the concerns of both the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community in order to raise their professional profile. As such, there exists a relative ambiguity in defining the role the past has to play within this dominant discourse of transformation. A similar tension emerges through a discussion of the new teaching syllabus, written in collaboration with UNICEF, and heavily dominated by development language. Among teachers, however, there persists a strong sense of loss, bound up in an imagined past which is heavily influenced by the aspirations of change associated with the present. I conclude this chapter by focusing on the use of 'unity in diversity' by the presidentially selected celebration committee during the 50th anniversary, and the roots of this phrase in the Government's most recent Poverty Reduction Strategy. Transition was central to the official celebration material which presented the occasion as marking a 'new era'. I end the chapter with a discussion of a scandal which engulfed the anniversary committee, and which bought

the event crashing down. A replacement committee was established which pursued a popular yet fragile campaign concerning dressing in the national colours.

The focus of Chapter 5 is concerned with Sierra Leone's draft Cultural Policy. This document, which has been in gestation for nearly two decades, draws heavily on 'culture for development' discourse, written as a result of a series of workshops supported by UNESCO after the establishment of the World Commission on Culture and Development and their report from 1995, *Our Creative Diversity*. These workshops encouraged the writing of national cultural policies which better align the cultural sector with national development goals. These recommendations did not, however, carefully consider the possibility that cultural traditions and practices may directly conflict with wider development agendas. I explore how a 'culture for development' rhetoric is instrumentalised by today's MoTC through a series of attempts to re-brand Freetown's masquerades, which are considered to otherwise conflict with ideas of a developed and modern society, being largely built on violent competition. This is contrasted with narratives surrounding Sierra Leone's female initiation societies. Once the focus of feminist Africanist scholars, these traditional institutions have over the last 20 years been the target of international human rights campaigns which condemn the practice of female genital cutting. I explore attempts made by Sierra Leonean employees of a well-known international development NGO to reconcile this campaign with their own personal reflections on the esoteric power of the society and its material culture. I also discuss narratives employed by a member of staff at the SLNM as she tried to overcome a similar conflict, though in this case heavily influenced by the preachings of the Pentecostal Church.

This globally popular church is the focus of Chapter 6, which explores the apparent paradox that emerges where the senior members of the SLNM are active members of Freetown's burgeoning Born Again community. This focus was not intentional, but as I completed my fieldwork it became clear that this doctrine provides an alternative and perhaps worrying model of 'culture for development' discourse. Rather than embrace local knowledges and practices, it seeks to destroy them through a targeted campaign

of spiritual warfare. Yet, like the interventions of aid agencies and the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy, it also promises a transformational future. This future has many of the same advantages of development including better healthcare, economic prosperity and the potential to travel. Chapter 6 seeks to explore the mechanisms behind the popularity of the Pentecostal church in Sierra Leone with a particular focus on the way the past is negotiated by the Born Again community at the National Museum. It asks whether there are any lessons which can be learned from this globally influential network of institutions in a critical reconsideration of the relationship between culture, heritage and development in Sierra Leone.

The final chapter draws on the 51st anniversary of independence to highlight four key themes which emerged during this research, and challenge the ease with which 'culture for development' is applied as a universally relevant discourse.

# 1. Tracing the nexus of culture and development

Culture, in all its dimensions, is a fundamental component of sustainable development. As a sector of activity, through tangible and intangible heritage, creative industries and various forms of artistic expressions, culture is a powerful contributor to economic development, social stability and environmental protection. As a repository of knowledge, meanings and values that permeate all aspects of our lives, culture also defines the way human beings live and interact both at local and global scales. (UNESCO 2010:2)



Figure 3. A young women learning skills in weaving using a traditional loom at the Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project in Port Loko, funded by Plan International. The centre provides vocational skills for young people effected by the war and past school going age. The centre offers training in textile weaving and dyeing, tailoring, food preparation and

This quotation introduces a short report by UNESCO concerning The Power of Culture for Development, which outlines the organisation's increasing focus on the potential for cultural heritage to play a role in wider international development. UNESCO's cultural division sits on the cusp of the recent theoretical and practical re-convergence of culture and development which is increasingly drawing attention from the academic



community. In 2011 Paul Basu and Wayne Modest co-organised the first workshop for a Critical Conversations in Culture and Development series. This meeting was attended by both academics and heritage practitioners, and demonstrated the range of projects which currently operate at the nexus of culture and development. This included UNESCO led museum building in Cairo (Butler 2007), training and capacity building in Kenya (Hudson et al 2011) and Indonesia (Kreps 2008), and communication programmes in Malawi (McKew 2011), amongst other. However, the meeting also touched on the complexities surrounding intervention, in particular the unequal power dynamics emerging as resources and expertise follow a North to South directionality. This conclusion was not revolutionary, but echoed a problem that has been the focus of critical engagements with both 'heritage' and 'development' as the particular values, ideals and discourses of some become representative of the needs and aspirations of all.

Grappling with this entrenched inequality remains central to the theoretical and operational nexus of culture and development. It emerges as critical engagements with heritage, museology and development begin to question the global relevance of these contested rhetorics. Some of these critiques have explored the cooperation of museums, heritage industries and development programmes in the colonial past as they worked to construct often demeaning and offensive 'truths' about people (for example Crush 1995, Coombes 1997). Others have explored how these 'truths' continue to effect policy and frame practice, marginalising particular groups, cultures or sectors of society and overlooking diverse local contexts (for example Ferguson 1994; Chambers 1983). Commenting on the unfeasibility of reconciling the discursive foundations of development with the complexity of today's world, some have even gone so far as to argue that development 'ought to be banned' (Sachs 1992). A similar conclusion did not seem unforeseeable during the Tropenmuseum workshop where a South African participant accused 'culture for development' programmes of 'neo-colonialism' during the final proceedings, highlighting the tensions which continue to surround intervention.

Nonetheless, just as theoretical explorations of both 'development' and 'heritage' as contested discourses have coincided, parallels also emerge in the ways these perceived inequalities have been challenged. Rhetorics of 'participation' and 'collaboration', and the importance of establishing 'grass-roots' or 'bottom-up' agendas, have been proposed as potential routes to resolving power disparities, particularly by engaging with local knowledge and responding to local concerns. This theoretical nexus has led to heritage and development interventions which cross-over. Almost paradoxically, 'development' projects draw on 'heritage' in seeking to become more locally relevant, whilst 'heritage' similarly draws on 'development' as a route to reaching broader local agendas.

This chapter traces the nexus of culture and development as it materialises in current academic theory and practice, emerging from development and heritage and museum studies. It presents a model which establishes this nexus through concerns over the ethical implications of intervention, whereby Euro-American discourses come to dominate global policy and practice and the expense of local or indigenous values and knowledge. The 'local' emerges as a powerful and more ethical alternative, providing new and perhaps more appropriate models for change. My thesis explores the instrumentalisation of this rhetoric in Sierra Leone through a number of different avenues. As I will argue over the next five chapters, the current model overlooks a great deal of complexity which emerged in the context of my research.

## **Theoretical parallels: from culture in development, to culture for development**

### **MODERNITY**

Both 'heritage' and 'development' are contested in the present and share their roots in the past. One significant meeting point is the way these discourses both built on cultural-evolutionist models of progress and modernity in their earlier forms.

The paragraph that introduces this chapter notes 'culture, in all its dimensions, is a fundamental component of sustainable development' (UNESCO 2010:2). 'Sustainability'

is key here, framed within the current emphasis on exploring the way local knowledges and resources can lead to sustainable projects with greater local relevance. International development has always striven for sustainability, albeit in its earlier modernist forms, sustainability was a presumed given; instability was considered a prerequisite of 'weaker' non-Western cultures. Crush (1995) introduces his edited volume on the Power of Development by exploring narratives of change as transformation through the British Commissioner's accounts of British Central Africa (now Malawi) in 1885 and 1888 (1995: 1-4). Crush compares two contrasting descriptions of this landscape which highlight the certainty with which the Commissioner predicted the reordering of space from an 'unordered, savage, chaotic, dangerous' African landscape, to a 'civilised, ordered, white, male' English one (1995: 2). Within this account, Africans emerge as 'objects for the application of power rather than subjects experiencing and responding to the exercise of that power' (ibid). The colonial transformation is absolute, indicating the weakness of both African agency, but also the transience of African culture. Crush draws parallels between this ideology and the exercise of power through development interventions, where a similar level of transformation is sometimes predicted, constructed through narratives of 'a world of unruly terrain requiring management and intervention' (1995: 3).

This notion of 'management' and 'transformation' echoes later mid-20th century models of progress which traced a transition from a disorderly society to rational Western society, and thus provided a blueprint for international development initiatives. In this well-known and widely critiqued model, economists such as W. W. Rostow (1960) and Sir Arthur Lewis (1955) mapped a blueprint for economic growth, built on a model of Western industrialisation.

Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth (1960) typically demonstrates this approach by looking at forms of growth experienced by the North, particularly the United States, and using them as a model for supporting similar levels of growth in the rest of the world. Rostow hypothesised that societies could be ranked by their respective economic contexts by arguing that all economies move in the same direction. He identified five

key stages which ran from poor, irrational and rural 'traditional society', through to 'take-off' which was typified by advances in technology and high levels of investment. Finally, he argued, all economies would reach the 'age of high-mass consumption', associated with high productivity and mass urbanisation, and representative of Western Capitalist markets. Rostow predicted that underdeveloped countries could only reach the 'age of mass consumption' by following through similar large scale economic and cultural changes experienced in the North, such as an industrial revolution.

This model was used as a framework for planning a range of development projects which attempted to recreate the 'preconditions for take-off' experienced by the West. One example is the idea of 'technology transfer' (Campbell 1990), whereby projects supported the distribution of established Western technologies through national development plans (ibid). Campbell's (1990) edited volume, for example, discusses the transfer of rural agricultural technologies, such as tractors, and the wider social implications of this.

As noted above, Rostow's model was based on key assumptions emerging from cultural-Darwinist models of change whereby 'weaker' non-European cultures would become transformed through contact with 'stronger' European cultures. Of course this model was also central to earlier anthropological concerns over the degradation of indigenous cultures upon contact with European colonisers, forming the impetus for many early 20th century ethnographic collections. Based within the anthropological tradition of 'salvage ethnography' (Gruber 1970), these collections formed an archive of what were considered to be disappearing 'cultures', including objects, recordings, images, and human remains. The latter has been subject to considerable debate, particularly where recent burials were disturbed and human remains removed to create a scientific archive of peoples who were predicted to become 'extinct' through European contact (McNiven and Russell 2005; Tumbull 1991).

On a different level, the evolutionist narratives behind 'salvage ethnography' had considerable affect on the interpretation of the non-European past. Coombes (1997),

for example, explores how narratives of 'degeneration' and 'decay' informed by anthropological notions of primitivism circulated the British 'discovery' of the Benin bronzes during Rawson's punitive expedition into Benin City in 1897. The artistic skill involved in the detail of these still contested objects was considered to be beyond the capabilities of the current population and so a number of different and sometimes contradictory narratives emerged which presented a culture in moral and artistic decay (Coombes 1997:9-30).

Rostow's model is now widely appreciated as deeply flawed, based in the 'ethnocentric and empirically incorrect' assumptions which circulated cultural-Darwinism at the turn of the 20th century (Gardner and Lewis 1996:14). The notion of 'progress' as marching toward a Western economy or society is clearly problematic, not least due to the increasing centrality of non-Western economies such as China, India, Brazil and South-East Asia (for example Jacques 2009). Despite this criticism, some have argued that international development has yet to completely sever its links with Rostow's modernism; most obvious are the inferences that can be drawn from the verb 'to develop'. Long, for example, notes that this 'visualises development in terms of a progressive movement towards technologically more complex and integrated forms of "modern' society"' (Long and Long 1992: 18).

#### **DISCOURSE AND POWER**

Escobar's (1995) well-known critique *Encountering Development*: the making and unmaking of the third world argues that 'development' is an invented term, emerging from the historical context of the post-World War II era. Focusing on political and economic relations between the United States and South America, Escobar argues that this discourse played a strategic role in enabling the industrialised North to maintain its economic and political influences over the unindustrialised South, in the imminent collapse of Western empires. Escobar uses the example of the establishment of the World Bank's poverty indicators in 1948 to argue that the notion of 'poverty' is an invented truth. He suggests the indicators used by the Bank were arbitrary and worked

to transform two-thirds of the world's people into 'poor subjects', or the 'third world' (1995: 23).

Escobar's approach slots in to a broader category of academic enquiry emerging in the 1980s and 1990s which became self-identified as 'post-development' critique, pushing toward Sachs' assertion that 'development ought to be banned' (Sachs 1992 in Crush 1995: 2). Rahnema and Bawtree's (1997) edited volume, *The Post-Development Reader*, makes a broader argument along these lines. Echoing Escobar, Rahnema's introductory paragraph reads:

The leaders of the independence movements were eager to transform their devastated countries into modern nation-states, while the 'masses'...were hoping to liberate themselves from both the old and new forms of subjugation. As to the former colonial masters, they were seeking new forms of domination, in the hope that it would allow them to maintain their presence in the ex-colonies, in order to continue to exploit their natural resources, as well as to use them as markets for their expanding economies... The myth of development emerged as an ideal construct to meet the hopes of these three categories of actors (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997: ix, my emphasis)

This statement implies that the development industry operated to consolidate certain forms of knowledge as truth, and thus 'development' is understood as 'myth'. Echoing Escobar, Rahnema challenges the idea that development paradigms and practices emerged to deal with real poverty, but rather argues that they worked to establish existing power structures. This notion of power has been discussed elsewhere. Crush comments that the 'production of Western knowledge is inseparable from Western power' (1995: 3), following on with 'the power of development is the power to generalise, homogenise, objectify' (1995: 22). This 'power' emerges through the relationship with the production of knowledge, but specifically in the idea that 'power decides what is knowledge, and what is not knowledge' (Alvares in Crush 1995: 5).

This concern with power and knowledge develops along similar lines to a body of critique emerging from heritage and museum studies which explores the historical role of museums and imperial world fairs in the objectification of particular peoples or sectors of society. Although 'public heritage culture' arguably shares its epistemological origins with much earlier paradigms extracted from Greek mythology (Butler 2007: 15), its present manifestation as archive and/or exhibition has its roots in the mid 19th century. This period was marked by a particular Western epistemological shift which saw a movement from the 'chaos' of so-called 'cabinets of curiosity' to order, resulting in the kinds of scientific and typological classification associated with museum catalogues and exhibitions (for example Breckenridge 1989; Bennett 1995). This transition has been associated with control, the creation of citizens, and nation-building by thinkers such as Foucault (1970) and Anderson (1983). However, key to the context of this discussion of 'power' in the production of knowledge, is the correlation of this shift with colonialism.

Although the politics of 19th century collecting were more complex than simply serving colonial regimes (for example Basu 2012; Coombes 1997), it has been widely argued that collecting and exhibiting 'other' cultures played a key role in maintaining particular narratives of colonised peoples in popular Western imagination. Breckenridge (1989), for example, shows how the selection and organisation of Indian objects at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition created an illusion of control. He argues that the collection 'ordered India's unruly and disorderly past, at the same time that it pointed toward India's present by ordering her unruly and disorderly practices' (1989: 209). In his foreword to Bernard Cohn's (1996) *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Nicholas Dirks writes 'Colonial conquest was not just the result of the power of superior arms, military organisation, political power, or economic wealth...Colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened, as much by cultural technologies of rule' (1996: ix). Breckenridge's (1989) discussion of world exhibitions identifies one such 'technology of rule'.

In a similar vein, 'spectacle' is discussed by Mitchell (1989) as a mode of objectification from the perspective of Arabic accounts of Western world exhibitions in the 1880s and 1890s. He particularly highlights the effect of 'setting the world up as a picture...to be viewed, investigated, and experienced' (1989: 220). This picture-making was made most apparent in the recreation of spaces in imperial exhibitions of the late 19th century, which were often inhabited by real people and replica buildings thus blurring the boundaries of where the exhibition ended and the world itself began. Key to Mitchell's argument is that these exhibitions authenticated a distinction between a Western interior, as complex, real, and experienced through the everyday, and the 'Oriental', or non-Western, exterior. As exterior the non-West became essentially 'Other', to use Said's term (1991), and as Other, it was characterised as inherently knowable, definable, and controllable to a Western audience. Mitchell argues that this worked to create a new 'truth' as colonies became essentialised through the strategic representation of selected objects, particular historical accounts and replica spaces. A similar process of truth-making is explored by Coombes' (1997) discussion of how images of West Africa's perceived primitivism were repeated and authenticated through various 'public' domains, such as exhibitions, the illustrated news, and scientific or ethnographic journals. Ethnographic collections played a key role in this authentication, providing a visual link between academic and public domains, or acting as 'benevolent educators, dispensing rational and more particularly 'scientific' knowledge about the colonies and their indigenous peoples' (Coombes 1997: 43).

This body of critique argues that exhibitions and collections played a key role in maintaining a distinction between the Western imperial nations as knowledgeable and their colonies as inherently knowable. In a similar way, Escobar (1995), Crush (1995) and Rahnema and Bawtree (1997) propose that 'development' is based on the construction of truths which present a simplified and homogenised 'myth' of the 'Third World' which works to consolidate the power and authority of the 'First World'.



## **DISCOURSE AND TRUTH**

Although clearly both international development and heritage and museum work emerged within a particular political and economic climate in the past, the legacy of this in the present has also been debated. Of particular importance are the broader implications that emerge where a constructed 'truth' is applied on the ground through policy and practice.

A central problematic that has emerged through development critique is the way in which a generalised understanding of what constitutes 'under-development' provides the blueprint for projects implemented in diverse cultural, economic and political contexts. A key criticism in the 1980s and 1990s, to this effect, was the devastating affect of global structural adjustment regimes imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank across the world in an attempt to reduce world debt (for a discussion see George 1992).

On a different level, Ferguson's (1994a; 1994b) critique of the World Bank sponsored Thaba-Tseka project in Lethoso explores how development discourses support particular institutions, whilst failing to adequately understand the contexts in which they are operating. He argues that to 'move money', international funding bodies, such as the World Bank, 'prefer to opt for standardised "development packages"' (Ferguson 1994b: 176). In Lethoso, this involved inventing an image of an isolated traditional subsistence peasant society. This false narrative resulted in a series of unsuccessful projects in the 1980s, designed to establish an industry in growing maize cash-crops for export. Ferguson argues that the majority of these projects failed since they were based on a statistic invented by the World Bank which posited that 80% of rural income in Lethoso came from agriculture. This slotted in to the organisations broader perceptions of 'peasant societies', when in reality 70% of average rural household income actually came from wage labourers working in South Africa who sent their pay packets home to their families in Lethoso (Ferguson 1994b: 174). As such the projects were unable to employ the large numbers of labourers required to establish the high yields necessary for competitive export and collapsed as they were already employed elsewhere.

Similar, but on a different scale, is Simmons' (1992) discussion of the failures of development practice to respond appropriately to feminist critique in the 1970s and 1980s (for example Boserup 1970). Increasing gender awareness in the early 1990s resulted in a series of blanket projects which sought to integrate women into economically driven development initiatives. Central to this was increasing women's market-determined productivity through micro-financing schemes and land reforms which created quotas for female employees. Simmons argues that this both failed to respond to broader issues of sexual violence and exploitation, and undermined key responsibilities in maintaining the household. Rather than liberating women, Simmons argues that the integration of women into market focused development projects has impinged on their freedom to choose how best to organise their own and their families lives.

These critiques question what are widely used as indicators of development success or failure. A similar concern has been levied at the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In a special edition of the *Third World Quarterly*, Poku and Whitman (2011) note that the complexities not only lie in the local relevance of this set of universal goals across states, but also in the inequality within states with regard to 'their political capacity and practical means for addressing them [the MDGs], with the incidence of violent conflict, resource availability and environmental constraints' (2011: 5). The MDGs are born through a global trajectory to 'end poverty by 2015', yet the discussions included in the special edition suggest that they provide little support for understanding how they should be implemented by governments.

In each of the examples discussed in this section, a constructed 'truth', based on broad and general understanding of 'the world's poorest', drives development projects and thus fails to acknowledge and respond to diverse contexts. Ferguson's (1994a) notion of a 'development package' unsurprisingly has parallels in heritage and museum work, particularly through transnational heritage legislation and policy such as UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention. In a similar vein to the idea of 'development' as

'myth' (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997: ix), critical discussions of 'heritage' have also argued that this is a discursive construct. Derrida has argued that it emerges from a particular Euro-American concern with the advance of time (Derrida in Butler 2010), whilst Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) discuss 'heritage' in relation to the 'invention of tradition' and the development of the nation.

UNESCO's preservation ethic is often highlighted as a key example of failure to look critically at 'heritage' as a largely Western construct. Writers such as Henry Cleere (1995) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004), for example, argue that the World Heritage List, and since 2003 the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list, fail to see heritage sites and practices as dynamic entities with fluctuating meaning. Rather, UNESCO's approach has been criticised as freezing a particular place or event in time by preserving it and protecting it from change affected by external forces such as degradation or globalisation. Cleere's (1995) well known critique of 'outstanding universal value' outlines problems in trying to apply the organisations architectural focus on a global scale, highlighting the ways this marginalises non-monumental cultures in Africa and the Pacific. Attempts to ease this imbalance were made through the 2003 ICH convention, however the idea of 'outstanding universal value' remains problematic given the vagueness with which UNESCO defines 'outstanding' and 'value' (Cleere 1995). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) frames the ICH convention as creating a 'second exhibition', whereby practices that are no longer relevant to society become reinvented through a 'second life' as heritage objects. She highlights the idea that this can add 'value' through increasing revenue gains in tourism, however the original aims of 'safeguarding' fall short with regard to the local reality. In a similar argument, Smith's (2006) analysis of what she terms 'Authoritative Heritage Discourse' explores how 'heritage' is used as a 'professional discourse that privileges expert values and knowledge about the past and its material manifestations, and dominates and regulates professional heritage practices' (2006: 4).

It has been argued that the implementation of this heritage 'formula' has been both traumatic and disempowering by foregrounding the particular values of some, over

those local to the site or practice. Often these communities have been shown to be directly affected by such top-level initiatives yet omitted from the project objectives. Case studies include the forcible displacement of those engaged in traditional livelihoods at Angkor (Muir 2005), both literally and metaphorically demolishing sites of well-being in Palestine (Butler 2010), or implementing projects that have little understanding of the local politics at Djenné (Joy 2012). In these examples, a constructed global 'heritage value' has determined UNESCO's approach to managing sites which arguably have alternative and complex values in the local. In a similar way, Ferguson (1994b), Simmons (1992) and Poku and Whitman (2011) argue that the imposition of global frameworks of 'development' can fall short, failing to grapple with the specifics of local complexities.

#### **LOCAL ALTERNATIVES**

In their exploration of the relationship between local culture and development, Radcliffe and Laurie (2002; 2006b) argue that post-development theorists such as Escobar (1995), and Rahnema and Bawtree (1997), have failed to understand the complexity of the relationship between development and local cultural contexts. Post-development frameworks of rejecting development as a 'monolithic imposition of Western notions of modernity, progress, and knowledge', have arguably perpetuated a dichotomy of an 'evil North and a noble South' (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006b: 234). So, they argue, disenfranchising the involvement of local and national actors in responding to development initiatives, and overlooking how development has been indigenised by different localities.

This focus on the individual actor can partly be traced back to an earlier body of critique which emerged as a response to world systems analysis models used to explain the observation that whilst the North was becoming richer, the South was becoming less politically and economically stable (Dos Santos 1973; Wallerstein 1974 (2010)). Wallerstein's classic model charted these relations of centre-periphery inequality presenting a context where global trade dynamics were characterised by relations of dependency between the periphery and the centre. In this model the periphery was

characterised as the supplier of raw materials and unskilled labour, bought or invested in by centre-economies. Long and Long (1992) reacted against these macro-level global frameworks by highlighting the importance of an 'actor-orientated approach', whereby development concepts are 'grounded in the everyday life experiences and understandings' of those who work in, or are affected by, development (1992: 5). In short, this context based approach advocated for research which recognised the 'multiple realities' of development encountered through fieldwork. Returning to an earlier discussion, 'multiple realities' also highlights the problems associated with applying a generalised understanding of a homogenous 'underdevelopment' to diverse contexts.

Long and Long's discussion refers both to those who practice and research development, and those who should benefit from these projects. Their central proposal is that research should be undertaken to elucidate the way development operates on the ground. This followed earlier and still ongoing discussions concerning the need to consult target communities in determining needs and developing solutions. Chambers (1983) highlights the division between those instigating and carrying out development programmes, the 'outsiders', and the rural poor. He argues these divisions are cultural and geographical, but also deeply entrenched in the operational reality of development initiatives where rural programmes are planned by urban-based people with a selection of professional biases regarding what they 'see' as a problem and what they don't.

Chambers (1992) offers a solution which runs along similar lines to Long and Long by proposing a grounded research process called Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as a route to determining needs and developing solutions. PRA draws on insights borrowed from anthropology including flexibility, learning about a context through informal conversation, reflexivity and attempting to reach a deeper local reality. Chambers also highlights the importance and validity of local knowledge. Radcliffe and Laurie refer to this new focus as the 'cultural turn' in development theory and practice (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006a; Radcliffe et al. 2002; Radcliffe and Laurie 2006b). As a result,

development policies and projects have increasingly begun to incorporate vocabularies of 'participation' and 'collaboration' to reach a more 'bottom-up' form of change.

A central tenet of this change has been to drive at a more 'sustainable' form of development which is better suited to local contexts. Breidlid (2009) explores the idea of 'sustainability' in his critique of South Africa's new national curriculum which was produced by the Africa National Congress in 2005. He argues that this curriculum is unsuccessful as it overlooks indigenous knowledge systems. The study focuses on the dilemmas inherent in 'exclusively introducing Western-based scientific knowledge in a cultural context based on indigenous epistemology' to argue for more research in the process of bringing indigenous knowledge systems together with development agendas (Breidlid 2009: 140).

The extent to which terms such as 'participation', 'collaboration' and 'sustainability' practically manifest themselves has been widely discussed, many arguing that they exist as jargon, or 'buzzwords' with limited operational value (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 111; Cornwall and Eade 2010). Returning briefly to 'participation', this term has been particularly critiqued due its very broad remit. Rahnema (1992) argues that 'participation' has been degraded, losing the critical roots which saw it incorporated into development work. Rather, she argues, it is employed to 'soften' top-down agendas. Gardner and Lewis (1996: 111-113) note how 'participation' can result in a token level of involvement whereby the results of consultation are used to legitimise existing plans instead of challenging them. They also suggest participatory research methods, such as PRA, might foreground the views of vocal members in society thus perhaps disregarding those in greater need.

Radcliffe and Laurie (2006b) develop an alternative approach to thinking about culturally appropriate development by highlighting the importance of driving towards a locally defined development value, or social capital, and applying it to indigenous cultural forms. Specifically, they explore recent indigenous rights legislation in Bolivia and Ecuador that promotes 'development with identity', or the merging of regionally

specific social capital with global development paradigms. This legislation is understood as emerging through regional, national and international spheres, and 'profoundly influenced by this multi-scalar milieu rather than merely by "Western" development paradigms or "local Indian cultures"' (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006b: 239). This research draws out three key points of encounter where culture is used successfully in Andean development projects: culture as product, culture as institution, and culture as creativity. Culture as product refers to the orientation of culturally specific products (such as local cuisine, crafts and artworks) and services (such as ethnotourism) onto an increasingly global market. Culture as institution suggests strength lies in traditional Andean social institutions through their ability to act as non-state mediators to negotiate conflicts or communicate local concerns. Culture as creativity supports projects that value the flexibility of culture as a mode of innovation through the ability of individuals or traditions to change and adapt to new contexts.

This model echoes the UNECSO 2010 report which introduced this chapter concerning The Power of Culture for Development. Indeed, for Radcliffe and Laurie, local culture is considered a 'powerful contributor' to development in the Andes. 'Culture' is a central component of UNESCO's recent 'culture for development' strategy as it both provides a more 'locally appropriate' and locally defined understanding of development, as well as the tools, or capital, to make it possible. It is thus based on partnerships and collaborations whereby development is led by existing expertise (though expertise that are identified by UNESCO), rather than project plans designed at an international or state level.

Again, parallels can be traced through critical reflections in heritage and museum work, as these also grapple with disparities between generalising global discourses and local contexts. Several recommendations have been made in response to this in search for more locally relevant heritage discourse and practice. In contexts of Western ethnographic museums, often with collections that reflect former or ongoing colonial relationships, this redress has also involved building partnerships and collaborations with different communities. Clifford (1997), for example, draws on Pratt's (1992)

'contact zones' as spaces where 'peoples geographically and historically separated, come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict' (1992: 8). Arguing that museums must acknowledge the historical, political, and moral, dimensions of these 'ongoing relations', Clifford calls for a focus on dialogue, collaboration and reciprocity. Emerging from this perspective are initiatives that challenge, or expand, museum and heritage work by forming new relationships and, to some extent, creating new aims and objectives. This trend should be understood in a wider Museum Studies context where collaboration and dialogue have been central to what has been characterised as 'the New Museology', emerging in the early 1990s. This critique highlights the social role of museums, particularly in education and learning, and the need for a transition toward a less authoritarian approach to collection interpretation and display (Hooper-Greenhill 1994).

Collaboration, dialogue, and reciprocity have become particularly central to museum work which seeks to build relationships between these institutions and their 'source communities' (Peers and Brown 2003). The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, for example, has participated in a number of projects collaborating with Haida and Blackfoot communities in Canada (Peers 2010), the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology is working on the decentralisation of its electronic catalogue together with Zuni groups in New Mexico (Srinivasan et al. 2009a; Srinivasan et al. 2009b; Boast et al. 2007) and the MOA is working with the Musquem Indian Band to set up a nationwide online research community (Knight 2010; RRN 2011). Key to these projects has been destabilising the traditional authority of the museum by opening up collections to multiple and flexible interpretations, and releasing some degree of ownership. The Musquem-MOA project, known as the Reciprocal Research Project, for example, uses web-based technologies to enable globally dispersed collections to be brought together digitally and reorganised into new collections with alternative object stories (RRN 2011). The Musquem band is the indigenous community local to the University of British Columbia and the MOA, and they have played a primary role in establishing access rights for the resource.



Partnerships with local communities are also increasingly key to current approaches to heritage and archaeological site management, where a similar set of concerns to those above are negotiated through initiatives which work with the local community. Greer et al's (2002) discussion of community based archaeology in Australia explores how an increasing focus on collaboration with Aboriginal groups has instigated a change in approaches to interpretation. In particular they show how new forms of collaboration are emerging which result in deeper partnerships than simply acquiring consent or employing individuals on an informal basis allowed (2002: 266-267). Increasingly, this consultation process has resulted in an audible indigenous voice emerging in the planning and interpretation of archaeological excavations. This has fundamentally altered the focus of Australian historical archaeology from settler-historical narratives to combined histories incorporating Aboriginal voices and narratives.

Collaborative projects concerning both museum collections and archaeological or heritage sites often work by building long term relationships with communities who have already raised concerns over their cultural rights. This may be as rights to self-representation with regard to the interpretation of the past, to do with pending repatriation claims and rights over land, or concerning broader political claims for restitution. The Reciprocal Research Network at the MOA and the University of British Columbia, for example, is built on a longer history of boycotts and protests by First Nations indigenous communities concerning appropriate museum practice, dating back to the 1980s (Phillips 2000). Greer et al (2002) note how the consultation process regarding excavations in Australia on Aboriginal land, and later community archaeology projects, emerged as a result of a broader recognition of indigenous rights concerning the control and ownership of cultural resources through the Aboriginal land rights movement (2002: 266).

Questioning museum and heritage ethics as a result of such protest is clearly vital, particularly where the long histories of inequality and conflict discussed by Clifford (1997) and Pratt (1992) are concerned. What is less clear, however, is how to respond

to contexts where such critique is not as immediately forthcoming from the local community, or when the 'local' is less defined through cultural rights legislation.

This section has explored the nexus of culture and development through theoretical parallels concerning the Eurocentric or Western bias of both 'development' and 'heritage' discourses. I have emerged at a point where this theoretical critique has been responded to through calls for local alternatives by building partnerships and carrying out collaborative projects. Radcliffe and Laurie's 'cultural turn' demonstrates this from a development perspective, where development in the Andes emerges from existing indigenous knowledge and resources rather than imposing foreign notions of what the process of development entails. Similarly, museum and heritage projects seek to rethink practical and theoretical approaches by building relationships with communities whom they represent through collections or archaeological research and heritage management. As these critiques meet, a broader 'culture for development' rhetoric arises with increasing potency in both the development and heritage worlds. Despite this, little research has yet taken place which makes detailed proposals for how this relationship between heritage and development transpires on the ground, nor the potential problems which may arise through such initiatives. Below I explore three case studies which do explore the relationship between 'culture' and 'development' in greater depth, each centred on a different operational perspective of 'culture for development'.

## **'Culture for development': Case studies**

### **CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING**

A key way museums in particular have sought to expand their remit of work and move on from the discursive biases explored above is through providing training and capacity building for museums elsewhere. These schemes often involve partnerships between Western museums and museums in former colonies although this is not prescriptive as demonstrated in the partnership between the University of Denver's (DU) Anthropology Museum and local museums in Indonesia explored below. One example where this is the case, however, is in the British Museum's Africa Programme which

currently has partnerships with Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique. Apart from the latter, all these countries bore a colonial relationship with the United Kingdom at some point. An advantage of this former relationship, other than often having a shared language, is that the institution providing the training is likely to be familiar with the collections. Many ethnographic and archaeological objects entered Western museum collections by way of British colonial administrators and officers stationed in the colonies. This in theory means that expertise and knowledge can be exchanged, fitting in with the broader notion of building a 'partnership' (Hudson pers. comm). The most recent example of such a partnership resulted in an exhibition at the British Museum, called Kingdom of Ife: sculptures from West Africa, where a number of objects were loaned from the National Commission of Museums and Monuments in Nigeria in 2010. The project involved training in object research, packing, transportation and conservation, as well as exhibition installation, in both Nigeria and the UK.

One of the key reasons for this focus on partnerships has been in reaction to an increasing awareness that museum training in non-Western contexts has often been conducted in a 'top-down' way, relying on international expertise. Kreps (2008: 25) highlights how this transfer of 'museum models, technologies, and practices developed in cultural and socioeconomic contexts drastically different' from the context of her work in Indonesia, often results in staff remaining poorly trained and collections poorly cared for. Building on over 30 years experience working in museum development in Indonesia, Kreps (2008) develops a theoretical and operational model for 'appropriate museology' which draws on participatory approaches to development and ideas of 'appropriate technology', emerging at the critical nexus discussed above. Kreps argues that training and capacity building should include the intended beneficiaries, in this case Indonesian museum staff, in the planning and decision making process. She demonstrates how such an approach presents a more sustainable form of training by empowering local people and valuing their existing skills and knowledges. 'Appropriate technology' provides another means of such empowerment by recognising the

importance of using materials, tools and processes which are locally available (2008: 27-28).

This model is applied to a successful case study where Museum Studies students from DU participated in a training programme with members of staff from the Museum Pusaka Nias on the Island of Nias in Sumatra. The programme was initiated by a discussion with museum staff to identify what they felt they needed to accomplish during the training exercise, rather than putting together a project plan in Denver. Related to this, the team began a series of exercises based around preventative conservation, rather than remedial conservation, bearing in mind the highly technical and expensive nature of the latter. Materials for undertaking this training were all bought cheaply from the local market, rather than imported from elsewhere.

As noted above, this case study is based on Kreps' broader research on the relationship between museums and development, situated at the nexus of culture and development explored in this chapter. In her book *Liberating culture: cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation, and heritage preservation* (2003), Kreps argues that non-Western models and methods of curating challenge the idea that collecting and conserving objects is a universal phenomena (2003: 46). Instead she develops a model concerning the transmission of culture through time to broaden understandings of what constitutes museological practice. Rather than remaining separate from day to day life, she explores how museological practice is employed as a mode of local empowerment and recognition, associated with broader aspirations to improve social and economic conditions through community driven development. Central to her argument is the ability of culture to 'bolster a community's sense of pride, self-respect, and identity, giving people renewed energy and motivation to take on challenges faced in their lives' (2003: 115). Her later 2008 article provides a recent case study in the context of a devastating earthquake which struck Indonesia in 2005. In this context, Kreps (2008) suggests that 'culture is a basic need' and should be included in humanitarian relief. Here she explores the resilience of local construction techniques used to build

traditional Omo Hada houses in the face of earthquakes, and work undertaken by the Museum Pusaka Nias to support the repair and restoration of these buildings.

#### **HERITAGE TOURISM FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

'Cultural diversity' is described as a 'powerful economic engine' in UNESCO's most recent report on *The Power of Culture for Development* (2010: 5), echoing a recent surge in academic literature exploring the economic value of heritage. A significant body of this work concerns the development of models designed to assess the economic value of 'heritage' to make an economic case for research, conservation or preservation initiatives (for example Kim et al. 2007; Nuva et al. 2009; Choi 2009; Choi et al. 2010; Mazzanti 2002; Mazzanti 2003; Burtenshaw 2011). This work explores a central problem regarding the transfer of largely ethereal and intangible values associated with place, identity and wellbeing into tangible and measurable economic markers of value (Moshenska and Burtenshaw 2010). UNESCO's 2010 document, however, highlights more direct relationships between heritage and economic growth through 'cultural industries', 'traditional livelihoods', 'micro-enterprises', 'cultural tourism' and 'cultural institutions'. The first four echo Radcliffe and Laurie's (2006a) 'culture as product', concerning the support of and trade in existing skills and traditional production techniques. The latter concerns the potential for heritage to play a central role in the development of a regional tourism industry, specifically through tourism directed at particular cultural sites and performances, or museums, cultural centres and other cultural institutions.

The potential for tourism to support international development has been subject to considerable academic discussion in comparison to other 'culture for development' relationships (for example Briedenhann and Wickens 2004; Burtenshaw 2011; Harrison 1992; Mihalič et al. 2002; Sinclair 1998; Wearing and Neil 1999). Tim Winter's (2007; 2008) research in Cambodia explores the complexities emerging in this relationship. The recent post-war boom in tourism to the Angkor temple complex has seen an unprecedented increase in numbers of international tourists visiting the site from 8,000 in 1994 to approaching 830,000 in 2005 (2008: 532). Whilst this boom has

contributed significantly to the economic growth of Cambodia, Winter explores the nuances of this growth including the impact of these 'twin invasions of a global heritage industry and millions of tourists' on the local Siem Reap region (2007: 139).

Of particular interest to this thesis is the discussion surrounding the desire to 'look back, reclaim, and to retrieve' what was lost during the years of conflict and political turmoil under the xenophobic Khmer Rouge regime, whilst simultaneously looking forward (2007: 139). Tourism to Angkor provided the means to bridge this gap by both securing a national historical narrative of civilisation, and obtaining international assistance, recognition, and wider economic growth. Global prestige was cemented in 1992 through the designation of the Angkor region on UNESCO's World Heritage List. This spurred international assistance from over 20 countries in the 1990s to help restore the temple complex under the management of the International Coordinating Committee for the Safe Guarding and Development of Angkor (ICC) (2007: 50). The ICC was an administrative body created by UNESCO to oversee the restoration and management of the site. The ICC, in collaboration with other international and national bodies, began a restoration project at the site, heavily influenced by the research archive of the *École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO) who undertook extensive surveys of the monumental landscape in the first half of the 20th Century (2007: 55).

This international focus, along with the heavy reliance upon the EFEO archives, resulted in a project geared towards the scientific management of the site, including building conservation and engineering technicalities. Winter stresses how, although important, this orientation meant 'science would provide the ontological foundations for a universally shared definition of "authenticity"' (2008: 529). Extensive attention was thus paid to construction techniques and architectural styles, but less to the intangible 'lived' heritage which surrounded the site, including contemporary temple ritual practices. Winter notes 'in an environment characterised by a quest for objectivity and ontological "truths" ideas such as historical relativism, plurality or multi-vocality have remained firmly on the margins' (ibid). This study demonstrates how this has resulted in the construction of a 'homogenous ethno-national identity' built on an ancient and

static 'temple' culture, overlooking the centrality of Buddhist monastic orders and other intangible legacies to the region (2007: 64). This is highlighted by the narratives which circulated the Angkor National Museum built in 2007 which centres a Cambodian national history around Angkor whilst the regions ethnic and religious minorities or intangible cultural heritage are completely overlooked. This, he argues, provides a source for a fragile cultural identity in a context where social and cultural revival is key to this post-conflict context (2007: 531).

Another problem is highlighted by Winter which further distances the site of Angkor from the local population. Winter explores how the lack of planning which led up to establishment of Angkor as 'one of the states more important economic assets' (Winter 2008: 534) has resulted in major economic and social inequalities. Whilst those professionally engaged in the services and tourism industry have seen significant economic benefits, the salaries of school teachers, nurses, market traders or manual labourers remain low. Winter suggests that this is exasperated by a recent shift in policy towards concerns over the unsustainability of mass tourism at the site which has meant the focus of development projects in the area has shifted towards issues of sewerage, water management, forestry and urban planning (Winter 2008: 535). Winter makes a proposal for a need for more 'community orientated policies capable of improving the equitable distribution of tourism related capital across the region'. He notes that 'in a country that now has the highest levels of extreme poverty in Southeast Asia, Siem Reap province continues to languish as the country's third poorest' (ibid).

In this study, tourism is far from a simple solution to poverty alleviation, but has rather driven both the historical national narratives which surround Angkor and the distribution of benefits from visitors to this site. Winter points towards a crucial paradox which surrounds the nexus of culture and development. Although the theoretical discourse which leads to this nexus presents a context whereby 'culture' can provide a more locally relevant form of development, the reality is much more fraught. Culture, treated like any other resource, is susceptible to manipulation and perhaps even more so due to the often highly political nature of 'heritage'. The benefits from

tourism are, in this context, driven by the concerns and interests of the international community and the state rather than focused on the community which surrounds the site. Rather than benefit from Angkor's rising tourist trade, the majority is overlooked, subsumed by this mega-site.

#### **HERITAGE, SOCIAL COHESION AND POST-WAR HEALING**

Both Kreps (2008) and Winter (2007) propose that heritage has a role to play in rebuilding national or cultural identity in the aftermath of significant trauma. In her 2008 paper, Kreps discusses this in relation to two natural disasters which hit the islands of Indonesia in 2004 and 2005, whilst in the context of Cambodia, Winter's focus is in post-conflict recovery. The potential role of heritage in such recovery has been widely debated, particularly where the building of memorials is concerned. A broader consideration of heritage and conflict is highly relevant to Sierra Leone, a country which emerged from an infamously brutal civil war only eleven years ago.

Both the 1995 and 2010 UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development reports outline a format for using 'culture' as a mode of avoiding conflict. This focuses in particular on 'cultural pluralism' and diversity. Our Creative Diversity (1995) concerns UNESCO's 'commitment to pluralism', within a wider framework of 'global ethics' and 'shared values'. UNESCO's 'commitment' highlights value in diversity along several fronts, including notions of 'creativity and empowerment' (1995: 22) echoing Radcliffe and Laurie's 'development with identity', or Kreps' (2008) understanding of 'culture as a basic need'. However, both the 1995 and 2010 reports also frame ideas of cultural pluralism and diversity in a context of intercultural understanding and, thus, a way of overcoming potential tensions leading to discrimination, conflict and violence.

Our Creative Diversity highlights the need to recognise that 'ethnic and other forms of group identification can act as triggers for violent conflict when mobilized and manipulated to do so', paying particular attention to the potential for ethnicity and religion to distinguish opposing fractions (1995: 20). A 'commitment to pluralism' is also identified by the 2010 document as a key tenet of post-conflict reconciliation. The



report argues that culture can provide a vehicle for stability and social cohesion through intercultural dialogue which 'promotes mutual understanding, knowledge, reconciliation and peace' (2010: 6). In both these documents, the relationship between 'culture' and 'conflict' is framed by a broader endeavour to promote and safeguard local diversity. Key to this is supporting initiatives which both protect local difference and plurality, yet do so within a broader framework of unity.

These UNESCO documents explore the relationship between 'heritage' and 'conflict' in terms of conflict avoidance, or post-conflict reconciliation. 'Heritage' has, however, also been discussed as a mode of conflict memorialisation or post-conflict healing. This was recently the focus of a special edition of the *Journal of Material Culture* where heritage was critically explored as a potential technology of healing, providing a means for the making of new memories to address past suffering in Africa (De Jong and Rowlands 2008). Many of the papers in this volume contrast 'top-down' memorialisation projects, orchestrated by governments or through internationally supported heritage and public restorative justice programmes, with alternative 'bottom-up' memory politics and processes.

Meskill and Scheermeyer (2008), for example, question the therapeutic value of state-run memorialisation projects in post-apartheid South Africa as a legacy of the internationally sponsored Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This approach is contrasted with locally run projects. State sponsored memorialisation was concerned with the rewriting of the nation in terms that present a break from the past and the reconstruction of a renewed 'rainbow nation'. An example of such a 'set-piece' of memory is presented in the at the time unfinished Freedom Park in Pretoria (2008: 159). 'Dripping in material symbolism', the park presents a highly political 'mythologisation' of the past written through a liberation narrative forged by African National Congress (ANC) heroes and situated within a broader narrative of the struggle of humanity. Meskill and Scheermeyer further comment on the role of this national park in the reinvention of South Africa as a tourism destination, commenting that it

must compete with the 'new panoply of tourist and heritage experiences from game reserves, cultural villages, museums, malls, casinos and so on' (2008: 161).

This political writing of history presents a concern for the authors. Echoing Winter's discussion of Angkor they comment that 'identities forged out of half-memories or false memories, easily lead to future transgressions'. As an alternative, this case study, among other ANC-led projects, is contrasted with a community driven initiative centred on remembering Kliptown. Residents commented on the continued neglect of the area after the ANC were elected into power. Initiating regeneration on their own terms, residents had put together the Kliptown, Our Town Trust and subsequently an exhibition housed in a building used by the former apartheid regime to surveil the township.

The authors comment on the way the exhibit focused on the daily experiences of people living in Kliptown, marked by old photographs and locally collected objects. These objects are described as having a 'deep biography', and include examples of 'negative heritage' such as handcuffs used for torture and ID cards (2008: 163). Concluding with the notion that 'real therapy must start at home', the authors comment that post-conflict memorialisation needs to be about more than 'bolstering state pageantry'. In this context, 'state pageantry' was situated within a broader politics of recognition. This was both as recognition of the ANC's success as a transformative government, but also in terms of a global recognition of South Africa as a transformed nation. Governmental memorialisation pandered to these claims, developing a tourist industry based on South Africa's violent past, rather than developing a more locally appropriate therapeutic use of heritage as healing.

## **Conclusion**

Above, I have begun to trace the nexus of culture and development as it currently emerges in development and heritage studies. Central to this nexus is a shared critical discourse which explores how 'development' and 'heritage' emerge from a particular Euro-American engagement with, and understanding of, the world. Particularly

problematic is that these paradigms have been applied as universal truths despite their particular origins, and as such have influenced the way the non-West has been understood. Many have argued that this poses a significant problem particularly where it informs intervention, or where it determines the way people who do not share these constructed universals are represented. Central to this discussion is the issue of power, and in particular who has the power to construct truths about others. This is particularly problematic if we consider the North to South directionality of aid and intervention, and thus the inequality that presents itself at these moments of encounter. As noted by Pratt, these moments often involve 'conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict' (1992: 28), regardless of the good intentions which sit behind them.

Both sides have begun to negotiate this inequality through an increasing focus on the importance of collaboration and participation as a means of gauging local concerns and needs. Increasingly this relationship is framed through partnerships, whereby the local community is presented as a stakeholder in, rather than object of, development or heritage projects. I have explored how critical discussions of development have sought to find local alternatives to Eurocentric discourses which build projects with greater local relevance and ownership. Similar initiatives emerge in critically aware heritage and museum projects seeking to build partnerships and long term relationships with communities whose traditions are represented by museum collections and archives, or heritage sites and practices inscribed on global lists. Often this entails the reinterpretation of archives, collections, sites, performances and archaeological data along indigenous terms.

Increasingly this has been about finding a value in 'heritage' at a local level, rather than assuming the relevance of concepts such as preservation, authenticity or 'curation' (Kreps 2003). As noted by Meskell and Scheermeyer, 'preserving the past cannot fully function as a surrogate for the social, economic needs and political aspirations in the present' (2008: 168). As such, heritage projects are increasingly concerned with being relevant to this present through other avenues, seeking to

become more locally valuable by driving at 'development' oriented outcomes such as empowerment, local economic growth or post-war rehabilitation. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the theoretical parallels at stake, development also seeks a greater local relevance by returning to heritage for this curative moment. Radcliffe and Laurie's (2002; 2006b) 'development with identity' draws on the value of heritage as product, institution and creativity to bring a globally defined 'development' into the local through existing resources. In the Andes this is considered more appropriate than imported notions of product, institution and creativity which have been shown to fail in the past.

This nexus appears to grapple with a particular problem concerning the need to understand how Western discourses, masquerading as universals, can be altered or completely revised to fit better in non-Western or indigenous contexts. For Kreps (2008; 2003), curation is a relevant concept, although not in the way it emerges in Western imagination. In Indonesia, Kreps demonstrates how 'curation' can be read as a transmission of culture through time, associated with empowerment and identity. The nexus also concerns the way those with power employ 'heritage' and 'development' to political ends, such as was explored in the examples from Winter, and Meskell and Scheermeyer. In these examples, 'top-down' approaches are also intricately enmeshed in imported notions of these contested terms. At Angkor, the value of tourism as economic growth worked not only to define how the World Heritage status site was managed but also how it influenced the post-war reconstruction of a Cambodian national 'heritage'. This 'heritage' built on the architectural and conservationist interests of the French EFEO archives. In South Africa, the ANC's chosen model of memorialisation builds on the reproduction of South Africa on a global stage. The authors note how 'dripping with the rhetoric of sustainability, tourism, cultural heritage and improving socio-economic conditions, the heritage site neatly combines the national pageantry and economic development and job creation for which South Africa has become synonymous' (Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008: 165).

The nexus of culture and development might be understood as a negotiation of global 'universals' and their relevance to the local. In particular, this negotiation entails a search for a local alternative, or a more locally appropriate framework, to rethink global terms such as 'development' or 'heritage'. This 'global' is of course not actually global but possesses an intractably unequal bias towards those with greater power who are in a position to influence and drive global universals. Kreps (2008) demonstrates the importance of remembering this when embarking on projects that involve intervention, and the need build the planning process from the ground up in response to local contexts. Critical explorations of both heritage and development largely situate power in the West, associating it within an intractably unequal world order born out of a long history of imperialism. However, as both Winter and Meskell remind us, this also needs to be a discussion that concerns the way national political elites draw on old and construct new narratives about the past and its relationship to the future. Both these case studies concern contexts where the results of international intervention are drawn on by the State to bolster national pageantry in a way that conforms to wider political concerns.

The following chapters bring this discussion to Sierra Leone to explore how 'culture for development' transpires in this context of post-war national transformation. What are the relationships emerging between culture, heritage and development as international attention begins to move on from providing immediate crisis relief to forging a stronger and politically stable nation with an adequate transport network, trade infrastructure, and healthcare and education system. Even Sierra Leone's cultural sector is the focus of modest international attentions, encouraging this neglected sector to redefine its own role, and that which can be played by the past, in Sierra Leone's uncertain future.

## **2. Methodology: Tracing things in and through contexts**

In the last chapter I explored the recent operational convergence of culture, heritage and development by tracing the critical parallels emerging between development and heritage studies. As discussed, this nexus concerns a need to find local alternatives to top-down discourses and to move intervention on from its colonial roots. In Sierra Leone, the 'local' remains highly fraught, embedded in the wider political and personal struggles which characterise the cultural sector. Relationships between culture, heritage and development arise within a variety of different influences which are both inherently local, yet also draw on languages and knowledges from diverse contexts. These include internationally defined development discourses (including 'culture for development'), mid-20th century museology, and global Pentecostal doctrines, amongst others. What became increasingly clear was that this research had to expand out of the Sierra Leone National Museum (SLNM) and look further afield into new research sites in order to take a more grounded approach to developing an understanding of the relationships emerging between culture, heritage and development in Sierra Leone. I discuss this below.

### **Heritage ethnography**

This thesis is influenced by recent work which pursues an ethnographic approach to developing a nuanced and grounded exploration of heritage and museum discourses and practices (Butler 2007; Kreps 2003; Basu 2007a; Brumann 2012; Macdonald 2002; Joy 2012; Singh 2010; Elliott 2006). Much of this work sits at the cusp of anthropology, cultural studies, art history, museology and cultural heritage studies. Recently there has been a particular call for 'anthropologising' and 'humanising' approaches to exploring heritage by Butler (2006; 2007) and Rowlands (2002). As noted by Alvizatou (2008), this call was made in response to the wider heritage debate concerning the Western

discursive origins of 'heritage', discussed in the previous chapter. An ethnographic approach challenges the former emphasis on 'visitor studies' approaches to data collection by questioning the very nature of heritage as a concept and grounding it in wider contextual concerns (Butler 2007: 26-28). It builds on ethnographic methods to develop a more contextualised understanding of the ways in which people interact with and respond to heritage in the broadest sense. Ethnography has a perhaps more established relationship with development. This is both in terms of ethnographic studies of particular development projects, and the use of ethnography in development initiatives (Gardner and Lewis 1996). This link has resulted in the employment of anthropologists by international development agencies since the 1980s, particularly in response to much of the development critique explored in the previous chapter.

It should be noted that this is not a conventional ethnography in the more immersed sense, built on 'moving in' with a community over an extended period of time (Taylor 2002: 1). Rather I draw on a particular set of methods and interpretative tools to help me develop a grounded discussion of the nexus of culture and development as it emerged during my period of fieldwork between 2010 and 2011. I took three trips to Sierra Leone from March to June 2010, September to December 2010 and finally March to April 2011. Although fieldwork ended, my contact with my informants has continued after April 2011 through several rushed and excited telephone calls, email exchanges and increasingly, the world of Facebook. The Curator of the National Museum also visited the UK in March 2012 to dismantle a temporary exhibition of ronko shirts loaned from the SLNM and displayed at University College London (UCL); her trip was funded by the British Museums Africa Programme. The Director of Cultural Affairs made two visits in 2012, one funded by the Reanimating Cultural Heritage (RCH) project in February and the other by International Growth Centre for their annual International Growth Week, held at the London School of Economics in September.

### **Multi-sited ethnography and 'friction'**

Ethnography has traditionally included a process of full immersion in a particular location in order to gain a 'deeper' understanding of a community; historically this methodological tool has concerned societies and cultures which are distinct from the researchers own. More recently, however, there has been a call to expand ethnography as a tool for exploring less 'traditional' cultural forms such as consumerism (Küchler and Miller 2005; Miller 1987; Miller 2001), the internet (Miller and Slater 2000; Miller 2011) or public policy (Okongwu and Mencher 2000). The field of study has also broadened to include field sites spread across locations. This transition emerged in the context of a wider body of critique in the 1980s and 1990s that argued anthropologists should rethink their traditional focus on 'culture' as a bounded entity (Clifford 1988; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Augé 1995). Recent studies have included diasporic identifications with 'home' (Basu 2007a), travelling cultures (Clifford 1997) and, of course, heritage, museums (see above) and international development (Long and Long 1992; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Gardner 2012; Crewe and Harrison 1998). Ethnographies of development have been particularly influential in developing a methodological approach for exploring moments of encounter when different people from different parts of the world come together. Long and Long's discussion of practice led approaches to rethinking development, for example, highlights the need to expand the field site to include the multiple actors whom influence, drive and are affected by development interventions (1992: 5-7). This includes those targeted by development projects, along with 'government bureaucrats' and crucially 'researchers'. One might also include development planners and practitioners, as suggested by Yarrow (2008).

Following a similar discussion, Marcus' (1989) critique of the 'fiction of a whole' argues that ethnography often gets caught up in the 'construction of holism', or the 'situating of the ethnographic subject and scene as a knowable, fully probed micro-world' (1989: 7). This critique concerns the more traditional ethnography undertaken to investigate a single 'culture' or community. Marcus proposes that this overlooks the fact that few places can be spatially bounded, being shaped by a much wider set of regional, national, and global relations. In a similar argument to Long and Long, Marcus notes that this is particularly important given that ethnographers themselves are likely to come from the



outside, bringing with them non-local frameworks of interpretation. Rather, Marcus argues, we should explore holism through several concurrent accounts, focusing on relationships, networks, interconnections and emerging multiple narratives.

This interpretation of holism is influential to my understanding of a field site as something that is not spatially enclosed. This became immediately relevant when I began fieldwork at the National Museum and the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTC), as it became clear that both institutions are situated within a broader network of different individuals, communities, organisations, and interventions. The Museum was at the time undergoing significant changes as a result of both the RCH project and the British Museum's Africa Programme, but also embedded within much wider transformations in Sierra Leone, including the MoTC's attempts to redefine its importance to the country's future. These changes were neither directed solely by foreign intervention, nor did they emerge independently. At the SLNM and the MoTC, transformation appeared to concern a constant negotiation of foreign discourse, institutional politics, personal aspirations, beliefs and concerns. Understanding these negotiations would not have been possible without expanding my field-site and framing these institutions within a much broader set of historical, political, social and religious contexts.

Marcus' methodological framework for looking at 'simultaneous action in multiple locals' was influential to the way I have approached these multiple contexts (1989: 52). Key to this approach is tracing 'things in and through contexts' (1989: 95), letting new sites emerge through enquiry. This method of ethnographic research arguably limits the scope to develop 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of a particular location or event. Geertz notes 'doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript – foreign, faded full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries' (1973: 3). Geertz's manuscript is culture, or a particular culture situated in a particular locale, and the ability to 'construct a reading' of it rests upon long-term immersed fieldwork. Marcus' multi-sited research, on the other hand, is spread over several 'cultures' and traces links between them. The

object of study is not culture as manuscript, but a less definable idea of culture as flows, encounters and transitions traced through multiple sites.

A key focus of this thesis concerns situations where international languages of heritage and development, along with rhetorics of 'culture for development', emerge through formal and informal discussions exploring the role heritage, in its many guises, has to play in Sierra Leone. Building on the potential for ethnography to be spread across multiple sites, I found Tsing's (2005) notion of 'friction' useful as a means of narrowing down these moments which form the core of my data. For Tsing, 'friction' concerns moments where different ideas from different parts of the world encounter one another and represent conflicting concerns, needs, or world views. Such encounters are central to the nexus of culture and development that I discussed in the previous chapter, where a dominant approach has been to explore the reasons for these conflicts and the inequalities present in overcoming them. As noted, often Eurocentric discourses become instrumentalised as 'universal' discourses despite the fact that they may have limited local value, or overlook local and potentially more appropriate alternatives. Tsing's focus is on exploring the 'messy and surprising features of such encounters' (2005: 3) where new entities emerge as conflict is negotiated. In the context of my fieldwork, these entities were neither entirely imported nor did they emerge from a solely 'Sierra Leonean' perspective, but rather concerned a negotiation of different ideas concerning what it means to be 'Sierra Leonean' in a context of international intervention and influence in the colonial past, the present and, more than likely, the future.

Rather than focusing on foreign discourses and the ways these conflict with local contexts, this framework focuses on what emerges in the space in between. With respect to developing 'thick description' in a context of multiple sites, exploring moments of friction focuses this research on a variety of different encounters concerning culture, heritage and development which work together to form such a description. Tsing's moments of 'friction' materialise through a negotiation of seemingly contradictory narratives. Apparent contradiction featured strongly during my

fieldwork, and a key focus of this thesis is attempting to draw out the meanings and mechanisms behind such contradiction. Chapter 3 explores this through the SLNM's approach to curating an exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of independence which was deeply embedded in the Museum as a legacy of the colonial past. Chapter 4 focuses on the way the past emerges as both a site of cultural loss, whilst simultaneously emerging as a highly ambiguous space in discussions about Sierra Leone's needs for the future. Chapters 5 and 6 take this forward and explore moments of contradiction where the past directly conflicts with personal, professional and institutional aspirations for the future, and the attempts made by those working in both development and heritage to negotiate this.

## **Reflexivity**

The practice of ethnography is increasingly understood as a product of interconnections between the site, or sites, of enquiry and the ethnographer's own background and research interests (O'Reilly 2005: 2). Acknowledging this is particularly important in my case, where my thesis on the relationships between culture, heritage and development emerges through my involvement with a research project which already engages with 'culture for development' in Sierra Leone. This relationship has instituted constraints on potential lines of enquiry given that these should be appropriate to the projects broader aims. However, it has also opened them up, providing me with a range of already established contacts and a means to situate myself within daily life at the National Museum. The project initially also had a big impact on my interests before conducting fieldwork. My first year of PhD research concentrated on establishing a context for this initiative in my own mind, so that I could begin to carve out my own contribution

Baring this in mind, I draw on Davies' (2008) call for reflexivity in ethnography as a means of unravelling the impact of this connection on my research. Davies' begins by noting her concern regarding the way ethnography has historically fluctuated between arguments of complete objectivity (that social facts can be drawn out through research)

and subjectivity (that all such truths are a reflection of the researcher's own positionally). Rather she makes a call for 'critical realism' in ethnography, suggesting that a reflexive approach can lead to an understanding of a 'social reality that is independent of our knowledge of it' (2008: 6). Key to this approach is including the researcher and the process of research in the analysis or understanding of a particular social context. This speaks of a similar concern to Marcus' 'fiction of the whole' (1989) as it begins to address the impact of the ethnographer on his/her ethnography, both in terms of influencing the context of research and its interpretation.

A central tenet of Davies' approach is acknowledging the sometimes 'chaotic and unplanned nature of research' and thus adapting ethnographic methods during fieldwork to allow for chance encounters (2008: 29). This adaptive approach fits into Marcus' 'tracing things in and through contexts' in that it allows for new, unplanned, field sites to emerge through ethnographic fieldwork (Marcus 1995: 92). There is also an element of flexibility in Davies argument, which becomes particularly clear through her discussion of the sources, methodologies, and theoretical models that shape an ethnography. Here she maintains that neither informants, methods, nor theories, are separate from the research process. Indeed she argues that they intimately shape the 'social reality' that emerges through fieldwork. Davies' argues that rather than attempting to counter the influence of these entities, it is better to leave them loosely defined, enabling them to play a bidirectional role between the 'the empirical, the actual, and the real' (Davies 2008: 22). Or, rather, leaving space for sources, methods and theories to be influenced by the process of research, in as much as they impact upon the research itself. This reflexive flexibility was influential during my work in Sierra Leone where I often found myself playing the role of detective, following up leads that emerged during conversation, and ending up in new conversations with different people in different institutions.

My approach changed considerably through this process as I traced new contexts which bore initial connections with the RCH project, but slowly expanded outwards into new territories. I began my fieldwork with an interest in the ways in which museums and

archives were beginning to break down boundaries of authority over collections through digital technologies, and whether this was relevant in a context like Sierra Leone. I ended up with a very different set of questions regarding the relationship between culture and development, for a number of different reasons. When I began fieldwork it became immediately clear that 'heritage' was embedded in broader concerns about Sierra Leone's future, and the relevance of local 'culture' to this. The wider literature on collaborative museum projects concerns communities with often established cultural institutions and a clear understanding of their importance. In these contexts, the focus has been to explore ways in which these communities can reclaim authority over museum collections through opening up catalogues to multiple interpretations, establishing long-term partnerships or reconsidering the ethics of ownership. However, in the context of my own research, 'heritage' was a fragile concept and one which could not be divorced from the country's colonial past, its brutal civil war, and the current changes and transformations taking place as a result of governmental policy and international intervention. In response to the international community, the idea that 'culture' has a role to play in 'development' was important. However, rather than slot into current thinking on 'culture for development', the instrumentalisation of this rhetoric only worked to pose further complexity. Traditional approaches to thinking about 'digital repatriation' or 'source community' work seemed of marginal relevance to Sierra Leone's existing formal cultural sector given the wider complexities concerning who represents the 'community', the construction of 'expertise' and the way heritage is 'used' by political elites (Smith 2006).

## **Reactivity and ethics**

Just as research questions are influenced by the process of research, Davies also explores the dilemma of 'reactivity', or the effect of the research, on the research situation (2008: 7). 'Reactivity' was central to my own fieldwork since I was associated with both the RCH project, and by proxy the British Museum's Africa Programme, by staff at the SLNM. I was, thus, expected to 'make a difference'. This manifested itself in numerous awkward situations where I would be introduced as a 'philanthropist' or 'aid

worker', when of course I was nothing of the sort. This meant that I often found myself taking on the uncomfortable role of 'expert', providing advice on collections management or writing exhibition labels, or of 'benefactor' by purchasing soft drinks for staff or lending people money. Of course Davies' discussion of 'reactivity' is more subtle than this, referring to the impact of contact on the kinds of questions that are asked, the answers that are received, and the conclusions that are drawn.

Linking to an earlier discussion in the previous chapter, Davis' understanding of 'reactivity' is developed in response to the birth of anthropology during the colonial period and the search by earlier generations of anthropologists to reconstruct 'pure' social forms. In doing so, they have been accused of failing to acknowledge the influence of colonial contact, or indeed the capacity of non-Western cultures to change resulting in a form of 'ethnographic essentialism' (for example Lewis 1973). Key to this critique is also the failure of these early ethnographers to acknowledge the power politics inherent within their encounters, nor the broader preconceptions that framed this search for the 'pristine'. Clearly, the same concerns affect anthropologists today. Yarrow (2008) explores how anthropologists working in international development often reproduce 'paired opposites' of foreigner/local or West/non-West, whilst Escobar (1991) argues that anthropologists continue to overlook the origins of 'development' discourse in Western thought. Davies, on the other hand, is mistrustful of the centrality of 'participant observation' to fieldwork and the idea of 'becoming invisible' though participation thus, in theory, lessening the 'reactivity' of ethnographic research. She maintains that despite such long-term dedication, the process of undertaking an ethnography will always influence the results that emerge and that this should be acknowledged.

Davies uses the idea of 'reflexive feedback' to explore this issue, arguing that 'exploring observable events requires a consideration of the conditions that enabled the event' (2008: 20). Engaging in ethnographic research, thus, must be done alongside an exploration of the ways in which contexts impact upon research, and the way research impacts upon contexts. In relation to my own difficulties with the assumption that I was

there to support positive change, I am cognisant that this will have influenced the relationships I was able to build with my informants. These relationships did, as expected, change during the period of fieldwork in Sierra Leone as my limited capacity to 'make a difference' was realised in relation to the knowledge and resources I did or did not have. I tried to encourage people to lead discussions by making it clear from the start that I had a very limited understanding of 'culture' in Sierra Leone beyond what I'd read in Western publications and seen in museum collections. I was there to learn. In this way many discussions concerned heritage professionals telling me what they felt I should know, or would like to hear, about heritage in Sierra Leone. Later some of these 'expert' narratives turned in to more personal reflections revealing an alternative set of issues and concerns; both versions are considered useful in this thesis.

It is important to recognise that the centrality of the SLNM and the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs to this research is as a result of my connections with the RCH project. The cultural sector, and indeed Sierra Leonean heritage as a whole, is noticeably peripheral to the broader international development interventions taking place in Sierra Leone. Infrastructure development, security and health, and strengthening the economy by developing the mining, agricultural and fishery industries is a much bigger project, drawing considerable funding from large donor agencies such as the World Bank (see for example the Mining Technical Assistance Project, World Bank Group 2009). The MoTC has little political weight and struggles with underfunding and limited capacity, often acting, for its senior staff, as a stepping stone towards a position in one of the 'higher' ministries. In the period of my research, for example, the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, the late Hindolo Sumanguru Trye, was promoted to the more prestigious Ministry of Labour and Social Security before he sadly passed away in July 2012, and the Permanent Secretary, Melvin Caulker, was promoted to the Finance Ministry in 2010. The SLNM is equally overlooked, with few visitors and very little governmental support, despite being one of Sierra Leone's only public facing national heritage institutions.

The focus of this research is predominately on those who work in, or have professional roles that are related to, the MoTC or the SLNM. The majority of my informants are thus predominantly middle-class residents in Freetown with permanent formal sector jobs, although this does not reflect the kind of financial stability that one might otherwise associate with the 'middle-classes'. Many are rarely paid their wages on time, if at all, none owns their home and few have a reliable electricity supply nor any form of disposable income. Though these individuals could be considered 'elites' when compared to the majority of Sierra Leoneans who remain unemployed, they are nonetheless individuals with uncertain jobs who struggle to carve out their own contribution within a much more intimidating world of powerful politicians, investors and increasingly influential members of the returned diaspora. These people do, however, make important decisions which will impact on any future role 'heritage' or 'culture' might have to play in Sierra Leone. They have the potential to carve a greater role for their institutions and organisations as Sierra Leone continues to grow and this research charts this at a particular moment, eleven years after the end of the civil war in 2001. This is not a study of everyday 'grass-roots' constructions of heritage, something which remains an important project with the majority of ethnographic research concerning rural cultural life in Sierra Leone largely based on fieldwork which took place before the start of the civil war in 1990 (for example Jackson 1982; Nunley 1987; Boone 1990; Phillips 1995; Ferme 2001; Shaw 2002). Richard's (for example 1993; 2009) and his students' (Peters 2011) continued interest in youth culture, particularly among militants during the civil war, is perhaps an exception to this. My particular interest concerns how the individuals working in cultural institutions and implementing national heritage projects go about defining the role of 'heritage' in a context of rapid cultural change. Though greater attention should be given to providing alternatives to these top-down narratives, I suggest the importance of this can only be gauged once the existing institutional context is understood.

An important deliberation within this context has been the ethics involved in trying to ensure that my informants professional or social positions are not compromised by this piece of research (ASA 2011). This is an important consideration both within Sierra



Leone, and in the opinions of members of the international community who may seek to work with the sector in the future. The majority of my data comes from informal spontaneous discussions with my informants which I chose not to tape-record. As a result, although I tried to obtain consent and discuss my research with my informants where possible, I am aware that this does not always mean that the potential consequences of this work are understood by all involved, including myself. Especially important with regards to these considerations is the political nature of the sector, particularly where knowledge and money are concerned. As in any professional context, although my informants would frequently gossip or complain about other people in private, they were very careful not to let such information be publicly known, particularly where it involved someone more senior. When exploring such conflicts, I have decided to only include those which were voiced openly in meetings or confrontations. In addition, I have made a decision not to use any material which derived from discussions of a particularly personal and private nature. This is of course also subject to my own opinion and discretion, and so not fully unproblematic.

In terms of the international community, I am aware that in some cases what is publicly accepted and professionally important in Sierra Leone's cultural sector, may be considered in less positive light when this context is not well understood, or if it is taken out of the context of this research. As such I have decided to apply pseudonyms to partially protect the identity of my informants; these are labeled as such in the text. Although this is not enough to guarantee anonymity, I am concerned over the potential implications of the increasing digitisation of academic work and the use of search engines to fast track a more personal introduction. Having said this, I understand the use of pseudonyms can present a dilemma, particularly where informants are keen to take credit for their voices and opinions as recognised by van der Geest (2003) during his fieldwork in Ghana. This being the case, I plan to return to this question should any part of this thesis be published.

Although my research began with the RCH project, the SLNM and the MoTC, it has since expanded outwards to explore what I call encounters of culture, heritage and

development. I use the term encounter as it encapsulates the momentary nature of these relationships. Sierra Leone is changing at great speed; I conducted my fieldwork between 2010 and 2011 and in even this short space of time witnessed key transitions. The President announced the new maternal healthcare bill in April 2010, construction began on a new ring road around Freetown in May 2010 which, it is hoped, will relieve the city of its hopeless week-day afternoon traffic, and Sierra Leone celebrated 50 years since independence in April 2011. In September 2011 the President announced plans to connect Sierra Leone to the West African underground broadband cable. Potentially even bigger changes are in the pipeline as Sierra Leone prepares for Koroma's second term as President, announced on 24th November, 2012. Momentary and transitory, these encounters reflect part of a much broader and continually changing set of global connections. They do, nevertheless, point towards a wider set of conclusions that bring further complexity to the current nexus of culture and development.

## **Encounters**

An encounter conjures up notions of chance meetings, often intense but fleeting and momentary. The term can also relate to a conflict, contending with opposing viewpoints, and something to be overcome or negotiated. An encounter need not be predetermined by a place or time, but can be unexpected, determined by chance and repeated elsewhere in a different form. My understanding of 'encounter' is built on Tsing's (2005) notion of 'friction' whereby people and ideas from different parts of the world come together and negotiate complex and contradictory narratives and discourses.

Similar moments of contact are explored by Pratt (1991; 1992) in her discussion of the 'contact zone'; a term which has since become synonymous with collaborative museum projects via Clifford's (1997) consideration of the museum as a 'contact zone'. By 'contact zone', Pratt refers to 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many part of the

world' (1991: 34). The 'contact zone' is later expanded upon (Pratt 1992) and defined further as constituting deeply asymmetrical spaces where a dominant culture provides the context for negotiation and cultural exchange. Ultimately, however, Pratt argues these spaces maintain and support existing power structures, rather than challenging them. This is later taken up by Boast (2011) who argues that many museum 'collaborations' fail to respond accurately to a 'post-colonial museology', and rather represent a 'neocolonial' attitude to West/non-West relations. In particular, Boast draws on Pratt's notion of the 'autoethnography' as moments where the 'periphery' represents itself through the 'centre's' media or modes of communication. In a museum context, Boast argues that collaborations maintain existing power imbalances as indigenous or source communities are expected to represent themselves within the existing structure of the museum as collector, exhibitor and educator.

Although power asymmetries are integral to such moments of contact, I question the interpretative framework employed by Boast to understand this context. Boast questions the way collaboration has emerged by exploring how such relationships resemble former colonial relationships, without exploring why communities or individuals might seek such contact, or how they might work to negotiate inequality. There is an implicit assumption that because the museum is a 'site in and for the centre', it can have no value in the so-called 'periphery' (Boast 2011: 67). This argument draws the assumption that Eurocentric 'universal' discourses will always clash and contradict with local contexts. Returning to Pratt's 'contact zone', this is useful insofar as it highlights a moment of interaction, where cultures 'clash, and grapple with each other'. 'Autoethnography' is also key. Pratt defines this as 'a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them' (Pratt 1991: 34). Her assertion that 'such texts often constitute a marginalised groups's point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture' (ibid) highlights the importance of recognising that these texts do play a role, albeit in contexts of asymmetry.

Although an encounter might take place in a context of inequality, I argue that this inequality does not define it, rather it is a part of it. Tsing makes an important observation in relation to her ethnographic work in Indonesia when she comments that universals are both mobile and mobilising. They both move from one part of the world to another, but can also 'form bridges roads, channels or circulation' (Tsing 2005: 7), offering tools for global engagement. Thinking of encounters in this way avoids 'the idea that new forms of empire spring fully formed and armed from the heads of Euro-American fathers' (2005: 5). Rather the focus of my encounters is how this inequality is responded to, engaged with or instrumentalised on the ground. The encounters explored in this thesis are moments of crossover or overlap where complex engagements with both the local and the foreign take place. I explore the nuances of these overlaps and in some cases the way they are strategically employed to negotiate broader local issues or concerns. As discussed above, I trace such encounters through multiple sites expanding out from the National Museum. These are contextualised below.

## **Sites**

### **SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL MUSEUM**

This research began with a collaboration with the SLNM, located beneath Freetown's iconic cotton tree at the junction of Siaka Stevens Street and Pademba Road, each the namesake of one of Sierra Leone's 'national heroes' (Kabba 1988: 12+94). Although this location may inspire narratives of nation building and 'political museumising' (Anderson 1983: 182), its current capacity to fulfil this role is questionable (Basu 2012: 163). Critical accounts of colonial museum making might suggest that this is due to the 'colonial legacy' of such museums being 'born as elitist and paternalistic institutions...alien to local populations' (Fogelman 2008: 19; See also Eyo 1994; Cohn 1996; Adedze 2002; Ardouin 1996). However, as Basu (2012) has shown, the Sierra Leone Museum (renamed the Sierra Leone National Museum in 1967) was the product of the personal enthusiasms of a select number of both British and Krio individuals, rather than an example of orchestrated colonial 'technologies of rule' (Dirks 1996: ix). A report written in 1966 by Dr. M. C. F. Easmon, the first curator

of the Museum, notes how the development of a National Museum for Sierra Leone was met with considerable obstacles (Easmon 1966). He comments:

We had to overcome the following hurdles: no premises, no trained staff, no furniture, no exhibits and no money. The Central Government let us have at a pepper corn rent of £1 per annum a building previously the telephone exchange, and before that a Mineral Water Factors and a railway station of the old Freetown to Hill Station railway. (Easmon 1966: 2)



Figure 4. The Sierra Leone National Museum's dilapidated sign post, 2011. Photo: author.

Easmon goes on to list the donations made by various governmental bodies and civil society institutions in Freetown, including £400 from the Central Government for 'furniture, shelves, cupboards, exhibition tables, office furniture and store cupboard and...a telephone' (ibid). The Freetown Municipality donated the area surrounding the Museum, fenced in by a hedge funded by the Horticultural Department. The exhibits themselves came from the Monuments and Relic Commission, along with 'various private

sources on loan or as gifts' (ibid). Basu (2012: 158) notes how the MRC's collections were temporarily displayed at the British Council library with a future museum in mind. Initially planned to be a temporary measure, the National Museum still occupies the old Freetown railway station building today, although a second building was financed by the German Embassy in 1987. A further extension is also currently underway, financed by a recent donation of \$20,000 by a company trading in Sierra Leonean palm-oil.

The museum has two main galleries. The 'permanent collections' are exhibited in the original museum building (gallery one), and a more flexible exhibition space occupies the new building (gallery two). The permanent collections are predominantly ethnographic objects as well as a collection of photographs of Paramount Chiefs taken by Vera Viditz-Ward in the 1980s. Gallery two is often more historical in content, recently used for an exhibition about the civil war. In April 2011 it housed an exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule. The new building also has a space upstairs used occasionally for temporary exhibitions, but more often as space for events and workshops. There are two storage rooms, a small library and two spaces recently converted into offices for use by the MRC and a councillor for Freetown City Council, who also works at the SLNM. The court yard surrounding the Museum was cleared in 2011 and concreted over with a stage at the far end for outside public events. The SLNM has five main members of staff, including the Acting Curator, the Education Officer, an Accountant, and an elderly Cleaner and Security Officer. In reality, these roles are more flexible. The Education Officer is involved in much wider day-to-day museum work than the job title suggests, likewise the Accountant is in reality more concerned with his political duties as a councillor. Both the Cleaner and the Security are assisted by a group of 'volunteers' who are not on the official payroll, but benefit from the occasional foreign visitors who are encouraged to make a Le10,000 donation (approximately £1.40).

The Museum was initially a success after its opening in 1957, attended by Sir Milton Margai who was at the time Chief Minister, later to become Prime Minister after independence in 1961. A report issued in 1957 claims 10,000 people visited the museum in its first week of opening, whilst annual figures in excess of 250,000 are reported until the 1970s (Basu 2012: 161). The picture was very different when I began my fieldwork in early 2010, with only an occasional weekly visit being made by foreign aid workers or investors. This decline has been attributed to a number of different causes including accusations of the theft and selling of collections in the 1970s and 1980s, and the economic effects of the civil war which ravaged the country between 1991 and 2002. The National Museum was left relatively unscathed after the rebel

incursions into Freetown in 1997 and 1999; examples from elsewhere, such as the sacking of National Museum of Liberia in Monrovia (Rowlands 2008), suggest this is somewhat of an exception. What is, however, clear is that the political and economic turmoil of the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s considerably cut any governmental support for the National Museum. The SLNM is yet to recover this state funding with staff rarely being paid, and an absence of even the most basic museum resources. Changes do seem to be underway, due in part to the recent attention accorded to it by the two international interventions, based at UCL and the British Museum, discussed in this thesis. Despite this, museum staff were on strike at the time of writing after nine months without pay, with the majority of the national budget spent on campaigning in light of the November 2012 elections.

I spent the majority of my time during fieldwork at the SLNM, assisting with day-to-day museum work. This included the rehabilitation of objects in the upstairs storage rooms and checking objects for accession numbers. I also spent many interesting hours going through the original accession registers written by former curators and museum employees, providing useful insights into the way certain narratives about objects are passed down through the years. The SLNM library has an interesting collection of moth eaten and somewhat disorganised old museum files, photographs and copies of Sierra Leone Studies, a publication by Fourah Bay College which was discontinued in the 1960s. Staff at the SLNM often referred to themselves as a 'family', and welcomed me into to this as far as they were able.

#### **'REANIMATING CULTURAL HERITAGE'**

As mentioned above, this research is funded as part of the AHRC supported research project called 'Reanimating Cultural Heritage: digital repatriation, knowledge networks and civil society strengthening in post-conflict Sierra Leone'. Led by Paul Basu at University College London, this initiative began in 2009 by building on relationships established over a number of years with various actors in Sierra Leone's cultural sector. Although outreach work continues, the project has now drawn to a close with the initial grant running out in January 2012. Central to the project was the digitisation of Sierra

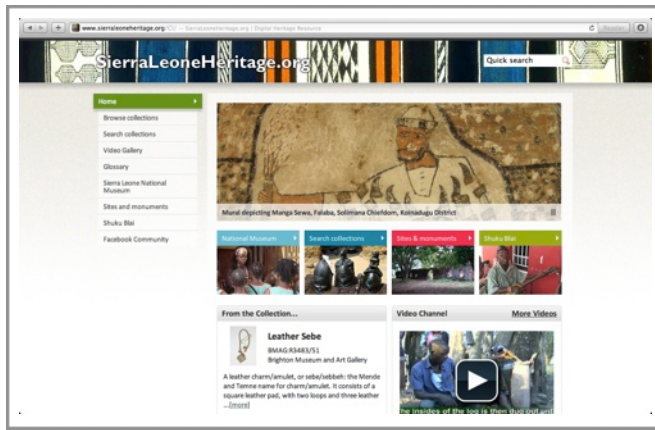


Figure 5. Snap-shot of the [www.sierraleoneheritage.org](http://www.sierraleoneheritage.org) website. This digital resource brings together Sierra Leonean ethnographic collections from five British museums and archives, and the SLNM. These are accompanied by a number of short documentaries and Facebook networking technologies. Image: [Sierraleoneheritage.org](http://Sierraleoneheritage.org).

Leonean collections held by the British Museum, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow Museums and the Sierra Leone National Museum. The World Museum Liverpool and British Library Sound Archive also joined the project in 2011. The UK museum partners had agreed

to contribute to the project by funding the digitisation of their Sierra Leonean collections, and agreeing that these digital objects can be openly accessed online via the project's website (2012). Another core task of the project has been to provide resources and training for the digitisation of the collections in the SLNM in tandem with a capacity building programme supported by the British Museum's Africa Programme, which will be discussed further below.

The digitised collections from all six partner museums/archives have now been uploaded onto an interactive website, [www.sierraleoneheritage.org](http://www.sierraleoneheritage.org) (figure 5). This digital heritage resource also engages with another aspect of the project, concerned with research on the integration of online social networking technologies into such online databases. The information technology side of the project has been led by a team in the School of Informatics at Sussex University. This work draws on an abundance of current projects that use digital technologies to open up museum collections to multiple interpretation, such as those discussed in Chapter 1 at the University of British Columbia (Knight 2010), the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge (Srinivasan, Enotte et al. 2009a, 2009b, 2009c), and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford (Peers 2010). The RCH resource integrates with Facebook, embedding this technology to enable users to make comments and 'like' objects, linking this in to a Facebook



profile page. It also uses Wikipedia as a 'glossary' tool, enabling it to keep up to date with new information added by users of this peer-reviewed site.

In addition to digitising and providing access to Sierra Leonean collections, the project seeks to 'reanimate' them by commissioning video documentaries from three Sierra Leonean partners, including the Ballanta Academy of Music in Freetown, iEARN SL (the Sierra Leonean wing of a global NGO working in computer literacy), and Talking Drum Studios (a Freetown based media organisation, part of an international NGO called Search for Common Ground). Each of these organisations brought varying degrees of capacity to the table, and took different approaches to producing these short films. These documentations are now also uploaded onto the site, and accompany object images and text descriptions. The process of making these videos incurred an interesting negotiation of what constitutes 'heritage' or 'culture' in Sierra Leone.

I have chosen not to focus on the RCH project in this thesis but rather explore a set of contextual concerns which relate to the development of the resource and the potential role it may play in the future.

#### **BRITISH MUSEUM'S AFRICA PROGRAM**

The RCH project was not the only initiative taking place at the SLNM but it was coordinated to coincide with another UK based initiative, the British Museum's Africa Programme. This training and capacity building programme has been working in Sierra Leone since 2007 and is also led by Paul Basu, the primary award holder for the RCH project. This connection meant that the two initiatives could support each other, making them even more interlinked from the perspective of SLNM staff, as well as the MRC and the MoTC. The Africa Programme seeks to take an embedded approach to capacity building, choosing to support skills learning through practice in the museum. As such, several initiatives have been implemented at the SLNM in core areas of collections management, care and exhibition. In 2010 to 2011, for example, the programme supported a project to build capacity in exhibitions development, where it worked with museum staff and other local partners to re-organise the displays in the

permanent gallery. This included funding the creation of seven full sized masquerade costumes, displayed on locally made mounts in human form.

**MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND THE MONUMENTS AND RELICS COMMISSION**

My first contact with the Ministry of

Tourism and Cultural Affairs was made on my first day in Freetown,

when I attended a meeting with Paul Basu, his research assistant, and the

Permanent Secretary of the MoTC at the time, Melvin Caulker. Following

on, we met Mohamed,<sup>3</sup> a cultural officer, and later the Director of

Cultural Affairs, Brima<sup>4</sup>. The MoTC was established in 1973 with

responsibilities over 'tourism, the Hotels and Tourist Board, cultural

affairs, monuments and relics, the Sierra Leone National Dance Troupe,

museums, entertainment clubs and organisations' (Abraham 1978: 30). The Ministry was divided into two separate

directorates which remain today; the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, and the Directorate of Tourism. My research at the MoTC was limited to the Directorate of Cultural Affairs

due to the connections between this section and the RCH project as well as the National Museum. This is not to suggest the prominence of Cultural Affairs within the MoTC's

broader agenda. Indeed historically the Directorate of Tourism has been the stronger of the two, with the duties allocated to the Director of Cultural Affairs restricted to the

management and promotion of the National Dance Troupe, founded shortly after



Figure 6. A youth group dressed in the national colours, selected to perform at the MoTC's 'Ministry Masquerade' in 2011. Photo: author.

<sup>3</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

independence. The remaining ministerial duties are technically allocated to the Directorate of Tourism, though in reality, this is of course more complicated.

The MoTC building is off of King Harman Road, in the former Chinese Embassy. I met with a cultural officer, Mohamed, on a weekly basis at his office where we had long discussions about Sierra Leone's history, his own role at the MoTC, his concerns over the future of Sierra Leone and the position of culture and heritage within this. Mohamed often came to the SLNM when he was on his way through town to talk to staff members, use the internet provided by the RCH project or deliver messages from the Ministry. He emerged as a key player in this research due to his personal enthusiasms for working with youth groups which he has managed to integrate into his remit as Cultural Officer (figure 6). Mohamed explained his work with youth groups as central to his role due to the need to eradicate 'bad culture' within the younger generation. Culture here became not culture as heritage, but culture as behaviour and attitudes, fitting in with references to 'attitudinal change' in the most recent poverty reduction strategy paper (Government of Sierra Leone 2008), written at the start of Ernest Bai Koroma's first term of office in 2008. The PRSP II is widely attributed to Koroma, despite being written with input from Sierra Leone's development partners. This document is very influential in the rhetoric used by the members of the MoTC when defining the Ministry's role in Sierra Leone, and plays an important role in this thesis. I also visited the Director of Cultural Affairs, Brima, on a number of occasions. These meetings were always very formal, however we became better acquainted when he spent a couple of weeks in London in 2012 and I had the pleasure of acting as 'tour guide' and eating cassava leaves stew with him at the High Commissioner for Sierra Leone's residence.

The management of the SLNM technically sits under the responsibilities of the MRC, established in 1947. The MRC was created under a 1946 Monuments and Relics ordinance and 'to provide for the preservation of Ancient, Historical, and Natural Monuments, Relics, and other objects of Archaeological, Ethnographical, Historical or other Scientific Interest' (1946 ordinance quoted in Abraham 1978: 33). Technically, the

Commission manages Sierra Leone's 18 proclaimed 'National Monuments', including the former slave castle at Bunce Island, though in practice it lacks the resources, expertise and capacity to do so. Indeed, at the time of my research, the MRC had very little involvement in a major conservation project taking place at Bunce Island, led by Joseph Opala on behalf of a US-Sierra Leone Bunce Island Coalition, despite being the statutory body technically responsible for coordinating such activities. An amendment to the Monuments and Relics Act in 1967 transferred authority over the SLNM from the independent Sierra Leone Society (which had become defunct by 1964), to the State via the MRC (Basu 2012: 162). At the time the MRC fell under jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, later to be transferred to the MoTC in 1973 (ibid). The relationship between the MRC and MoTC is not straight-forward, and this includes their respective roles with regard to the SLNM. Whilst management officially resides with the MRC, the Museum's budget, and thus staff wages, comes from the MoTC (though in practice the staff often go for long periods without being paid). The tension surrounding this relationship forms an important part of this research, not least in shaping my understanding of the political complexities surrounding Sierra Leone's cultural sector.

#### **CULTURAL POLICY**

During the latter part of my fieldwork, both Mohamed and the Director of Cultural Affairs became increasingly involved in pushing for the passing of Sierra Leone's first Cultural Policy through parliament. The most recent version of this document is currently awaiting ratification by the Sierra Leonean Parliament and is the latest of several versions of the policy. It is now unlikely to be passed until President Koroma settles in to his second term. Although a previous Cultural Policy is mentioned in the document, this refers to a report written by the Sierra Leonean historian Arthur Abraham for UNESCO in 1973, rather than any existing ratified policy. Abraham's report was written as part of a UNESCO drive to equip all nations with national cultural policies. Similar reports were, for example, written for Nigeria (Fasuyi 1973), Egypt (Wahba 1972) and Yugoslavia (Majstojovic 1972). The current version of Sierra Leone's Cultural Policy is based on a version written largely by Julius Spencer between 1992 and 1994, who was at the time the chairman of the MRC, but is now editor of *Premier*

*News*; a newspaper which is known for being vocally critical of both the MRC and the Ministry (Julius Spencer pers. comm.).

#### **50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE**

My fieldwork took place over 2010 and 2011, as Sierra Leone prepared to celebrate its 50th anniversary from British colonial rule. As a result of this, a large part of my discussion revolves around the national holiday. This was an important occasion for the SLNM and the MoTC, and both institutions were engaged in a long lead up and planning process. Preparations began as early as April 2010 when the anniversary was officially launched by the President on the 49th independence day (President Ernest Bai Koroma 2010). There were high expectations for this event, particularly given the 50th anniversary celebrations of Ghana in 2009 and Nigeria in 2010.

The 50th anniversary was a highly political event, embedded within the build up to the November 2012 elections. The discourse which surrounded it concerned the marking of a 'new era' and a transition from a post-war nation, to one which was well on the road to recovery: largely credited to President Koroma. Both the SLNM and the MoTC saw this as an important opportunity to play a more important role in Sierra Leone's future, and a number of issues ensued over the allocation of funds to realise these ambitions. The anniversary presented an opportunity to explore a popular celebration of 'Sierra Leoneaness', represented in this context through dressing in the national colours.

#### **SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION**

When I began fieldwork I was encouraged to explore ways the RCH resource might be able to have an impact outside of the SLNM and its online presence. Schools seemed an obvious place to begin and so much of my first phase of fieldwork was concerned with exploring whether 'heritage' plays a role in the national curriculum. Despite the rarity of visits to the SLNM by the local Freetown community, they do receive a number of school visits. Classes from government schools are often very large, some with over 100 students. They pile into the courtyard and are often split into two groups and taken around separately. The SLNM also holds a holiday school in August, although the costs, albeit very low, prohibit many children from attending.

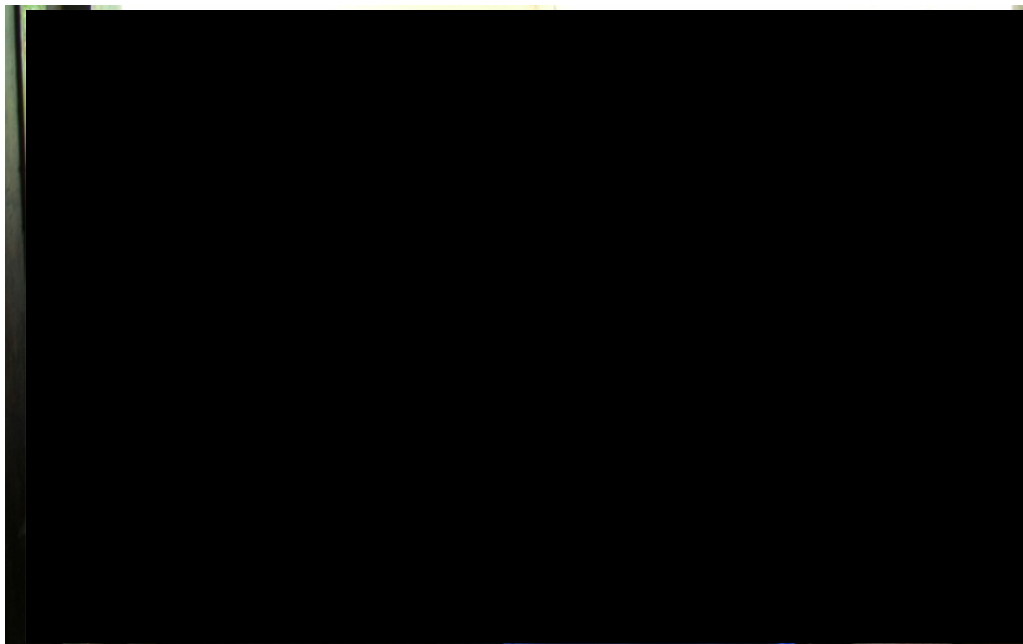


Figure 7. A visit to the SLNM by the Standard Preparatory School in Freetown, March 2010. Photo: author.

Most teachers agree 'culture' appears in the curriculum in 'Social Studies'. Some of Freetown's government funded schools include visits to the SLNM as part of lessons on Sierra Leone's history. These visits do not, however, include schools outside of the capital or not within walking distance, due to the associated travel costs. The curriculum itself has been developed through a series of UNICEF led workshops instituted in 2002.

Re-building the education sector was a key priority identified by both the international community and the Government, with over 70% of schools abandoned during the war (MoDEP and LTNPS 2003: 23; Government of Sierra Leone 2008). The current teaching syllabus was published in 2005 by the revised Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), and the National Curriculum Development and Research Centre (NCRDC). Unsurprisingly, the curriculum draws heavily on international development rhetoric for content. References to 'culture' emerge within this framework, as a route to building national consciousness and respecting cultural difference. In addition to looking at the 2005 Teaching Syllabus, I also interviewed people involved in creating content for the syllabus including the Acting Director of the NCRDC, Mr. Gassama<sup>5</sup>, and

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<sup>5</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

Professor Joe Allie who wrote the still used course book for Social Studies in 1996, and is now Director of the History and African Studies Department at the University of Sierra Leone's Fourah Bay College.

#### **PLAN INTERNATIONAL**

As my fieldwork progressed, it emerged that certain heritage practices conflicted with wider understandings of 'development' and 'modernity' among my informants. This emerged through discussions of 'backwardness' and the need for Sierra Leone to 'move forward', leaving both its violent civil war, but also its cultural past, behind. More explicitly, certain practices have been widely condemned by the international community as abuse of human rights. One of the most well known is the practice of female genital cutting (FGC) by Sierra Leone's female initiation societies. Given the recent focus on embracing cultural diversity in development, I was interested in how this conflict is dealt with by smaller international aid agencies and so followed Plan-Sierra Leone to their offices in Port Loko. Plan-Sierra Leone is part of Plan International, a UK based children's rights charity which operates globally. Plan-Sierra Leone is run from Freetown by its Sierra Leonean country representatives, who feed back to the main Plan offices in London. Port Loko is one of five country offices in Freetown, Kailahun, Bombali and Moyamba. This visit provided two different discussions surrounding FGC, one related to the organisations official views on the practice and how to combat it, the second concerning more personal reflections by staff.

#### **THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH**

The Pentecostal Church has risen in popularity in Sierra Leone, following the 'Pentecostal explosion' which hit West Africa in the 1980s and 90s (Gifford 1994). It has grown considerably since the end of the civil war (Shaw 2007), particularly within Freetown where it has a palpable presence through its many banners and large shiny new churches. Being 'Born Again' is immensely popular among Sierra Leone's middle-classes and thus the Church inadvertently has a sizeable influence, given the prominent roles of this sector of society as civil servants and NGO workers. This is no less the case at the National Museum where the majority of its staff members are important members of their respective Pentecostal churches.

This Church is crucial to the relationships that emerged between culture and development during my fieldwork. This is particularly so given that it engages with both 'culture', through a systematic spiritual battle against many of Sierra Leone's traditional practices, and 'development' through promises of personal prosperity and security. During my fieldwork I attended church services at both the Acting Curator's Church, the Christian Life Era Ministries International, and some held in Masingbi, a village in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the methodology I used to undertake my research on the relationship between culture and development in Sierra Leone. I have chosen to draw on ethnographic methods, responding to calls from heritage studies seeking a more grounded approach to understanding the nuances involved in the way individuals and institutions construct ideas about the past and broader cultural identity. Although this is not an ethnography in the more traditional immersed sense, I have chosen a particular ethnographic approach which builds on wider studies in contexts which cannot be spatially bounded, by tracing multiple field sites. Within these contexts, I focus on moments of friction, where different ideas or knowledges from different places come together to construct new forms. This is particularly key in the context of my research in Sierra Leone which focuses on a series of encounters where individuals and institutions negotiate and instrumentalise global 'heritage' and 'development' discourses, sometimes via governmental policies and legislation.

My approach is also influenced by an increasing focus on reflexivity in anthropology, by thinking about the impact of undertaking research on the research context. Although I began my research as part of the RCH project, my contribution to this work explores a different set of questions which emerged during my fieldwork. These concern the way individuals and institutions go about defining the role of 'heritage' in a context of rapid cultural change and the instrumentalisation of 'culture for development' rhetoric through policy, education, events or public celebrations.



### **3. Questioning the ‘local’: negotiating colonialism and intervention**

Discussions of discourse, power and truth are central to the nexus of culture and development as academics critique the continuing dominance of ‘Western’ ways of understanding the world over alternative values or knowledges. This inequality has been presented as a neo-colonial relationship, whereby powerful nations re-establish their own hegemony in the way they represent the rest of the world. Escobar (1995), for example, argues that development provides an ideal tool for the industrialised North to maintain its political and economic influence over the South. Mitchell (1989) and Breckenridge (1989) both show how exhibitions have long worked to consolidate colonial power by presenting colonial subjects as inherently knowable and quantifiable. Peers and Brown (2003), and others (Srinivasan et al. 2009a; Srinivasan et al. 2009b; Edwards 2006; Phillips 2000; Clifford 1997), have argued that this continues today as Western museums present narratives about non-Western cultures. In a recent article, Boast (2011) argues that the idea of a ‘postcolonial’ museology is a misnomer as museums continue to ‘collect’ and ‘exhibit’ different peoples’ pasts and traditions. As I have discussed, however, both development and heritage are increasingly being rethought with regard to local alternative constructions of these contested terms.

On 27th April 2011 Sierra Leone marked 50 years of independence from British colonial rule. If we are to take the nexus of culture and development seriously, one might argue that Sierra Leone is still engaged in neo-colonial relationships with both its former coloniser and its other national and multinational development partners. In this chapter I explore three case studies which present different negotiations of both a colonial past and a present which cannot be set apart from foreign intervention. The first and the last directly concern the anniversary, whilst the other explores a particular narrative of the origin of British intervention in Sierra Leone. Together they present

complexity in what is considered locally valuable. In each example, this 'local' is informed by both colonialism and intervention, bringing complexity to the idea of the 'local' as it emerges at the nexus of culture and development in Sierra Leone.

## **In-dependence?**

An article was printed in the Freetown based *Awareness Times* newspaper twelve days before Sierra Leone celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence in 2011. The title asks 'Celebrating 50 Years of What?' and begins:

Sierra Leone is gearing for its 50th independence anniversary celebrations from the British colonial masters. It is a fact that we should be celebrating such independence if truly we were independent, but even as I write this article, we are still under colonialism, politically and economically. Why? It is very simple. The British through the United Nations installed our current leader and they are in full control of our economy. They dictate the pace the economy should grow, what economic policies should be implemented and who should be appointed to certain positions of trust. (Thomas 2011)

Echoing some of the critique explored in Chapter 1, the journalist, Austin Thomas, goes on to comment that Sierra Leonean politics are built on a model that 'actually works for the West'. The fact that the West continues to send aid is called upon as evidence for this claim, made worse by the observation that politicians 'sign these agreements with absolute disregard for the long term effects of development' (*ibid*). A key concern for Thomas throughout the article is the negotiation of independence, when Sierra Leone remains dependent on Western, and in particular British, aid and intervention. In a similar way to Escobar's (1995) discussion of 'the making and unmaking of the Third World', Thomas asserts that Western aid works to limit Sierra Leone's independence. This is twofold as it both extends British colonialism through political influence and sidelines local capacity to direct the country's future development.

Whether or not the allegations of 'colonialism' in this context are founded, Thomas is not incorrect in his conclusion that Sierra Leone is heavily supported by foreign donor agencies. Self-acclaimed as Sierra Leone's 'most significant development partner' (DFID Sierra Leone 2011: 2), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) accounted for 19% of the country's Gross National Income in 2011. The United Kingdom was joined by numerous other donor agencies in pledging support for the successful implementation of the Sierra Leonean government's 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II). The top national donors from 2008 to 2009 include Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, USA and Japan (Government of Sierra Leone 2010: 88). The development of the strategy, known in Sierra Leone as the *Agenda for Change*, was itself a product of consultation between central and local government and Sierra Leone's development partners. These included DFID, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Development Association (IDA) (IMF and IDA 2009). This is not unusual. Poverty reduction strategies are initiated to consolidate international development assistance as much as construct a national development strategy and thus emerge through a consultation process with development partners (Thornton and Cox 2005). Much has also been written on the role of international intervention in the orchestration of the 2007 elections in Sierra Leone. In particular this has focused on the re-establishment of the National Election Commission in 2005 (Jalloh 2008) and the move from proportional representation to a single member constituency system as a mode of decentralisation (Fanthorpe 2006; Jackson 2007; Plan-SL 2008). Again DFID's involvement was central to the elections supplying over 50% of the financial donor support in the lead up and transition period. This support continued in the 2012 general elections.

Two further claims are made by Thomas' piece of journalism regarding Sierra Leone's future. The first is that 'we do not have to look outside of Sierra Leone for brains, because we have them within that are capable of turning the country around'. The second compares Sierra Leone to Rip Van Winkle:

Sierra Leone can be likened to the pathetic story of Rip Van Winkle...In this story, Rip Van Winkle slept for twenty years. On his way to the mountain-top for the commencement of the 20 year slumber, Rip Van Winkle saw a picture of King George III of England on display. When he came down twenty years later the sign had a picture of George Washington...While he was peacefully snoring up in the mountains a revolution was taking place that would change the course of history and Rip knew nothing about it. He was asleep. (Thomas 2011)

The 'revolution' in Irvin's original tale concerns American Independence. Thomas' metaphor on the other hand frames Sierra Leone after independence in 1961, yet concerns a state of continued dependence. The 'revolution' that has taken place whilst Sierra Leone has been 'in slumber, deeply snoring in military adventurism and corruption' (*ibid*) occurs in the East. Here the 'Asian Tigers have been able to use less than two generations to propel their economies from the quicksand of aid dependency to the solid rock of economic independence' (*ibid*). Thomas admires the way Asia has become the 'centre of international commerce', and today both 'gives aid to us and sends experts to help us grow'. Asian aid and intervention is clearly preferred by Thomas to the 'colonial' pursuits of the West. For the author, Asian 'experts' provide a more locally appropriate model for development due to a shared history of Western 'aid dependency'. Thomas refers to himself as a 'student in China' which may explain his focus. Over half of the China Council Scholarships were pledged to African students wanting to study in China at the 2006 China-Africa Beijing Summit (King 2006: 9). Twenty-three Sierra Leonean students received such scholarships in 2010, pledged during President Hu Jintao's visit to the country in September 2010.

Of course in reality the aid relationship between Africa and Asia, and in particular China, is increasingly subject to wide academic debate (for a discussion see Large 2008; further examples include Bräutigam 1998; Bräutigam 2010; Taylor 2006). King notes how China's discourse concerning a relationship of strategic 'win-win' partnership with mutual economic benefit, cultural exchange and cultural cooperation, presents a different donor-recipient relationship than is traditionally associated with 'aid' (King

2006). It is this notion of 'mutual benefit' which drives the current emphasis on scholarship programmes. Chinese narratives refer to this as 'cultural exchange', thereby implying benefits for China as well as for the African students (2006:9). Rather than represent Africa as poverty stricken and the receiver of aid, King shows how Africa emerges within this rhetoric as a positive vibrant continent and an opportunity for business and trade (2006:6). He argues this presents a different model of development built on economic growth and trade partnerships, rather than measurement along global time-bound targets such as the Millennium Development Goals. Tull (2006), on the other hand, is concerned that the new China-Africa trade agreements differ little from former African-Western relations. He argues that these are also built on highly asymmetrical power structures which favour short term gains for African partners and long term gains for China. Furthermore, he expresses concern over the nature of non-intervention with regard to the absence of 'political strings' attached to Chinese aid. This, he argues, consolidates the benefits of aid into the hands of political elites and endorses systems of political patronage (2006: 467).

Either way, Thomas' grasp of the debate presents Chinese aid and intervention as an alternative to Western development programmes, which, he suggests, is better suited to Sierra Leone. In particular, the 'Asian Tigers' model is presented as a route towards true 'independence', severing 'colonial' ties with Britain and, more broadly, the West. His argument draws on the broader 'win-win' discourse, explored by King (2006), which sees China and Africa growing together, rather than Africa being 'dependent' on external intervention. Of course this perspective is perhaps rather naive considering the new trade 'dependencies' which are emerging between Africa and China.

Thomas' piece is highly polemical, strongly associating the continued 'dependence' of Sierra Leone on the West with the failures of the State. A narrative of decline since 2007 is in keeping with the political leaning of the *Awareness Times* toward the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) over the All People's Congress (APC), who won the elections in 2007. The disregard of 'Sierra Leonean brains' is situated within a broader political critique concerning Sierra Leone's 'ethno-politics' (Fridy and M'Cormack-Hale 2011).

The current APC President, Ernest Bai Koroma, is accused by Thomas of overlooking 'ambitious and qualified young men and women' because of their 'tribe' or 'region'. Unlike SLPP's Milton Margai, elected the first Prime Minister of Sierra Leone in 1961, Koroma is presented as disinterested in 'governing ourselves', in line with the Asian model of mutual growth and cooperation. Rather he is framed in this controversial article as a 'puppet leader' who, like Rip Van Winkle, has failed to 'wake up' to a changing global order.

The article in the *Awareness Times* was unusually critical of the anniversary in comparison to wider reports of the lead up to the events. Later in this thesis I will discuss the corruption scandal which surrounded the Presidentially-elected anniversary committee in February 2010; naturally this caught the attention of journalists and it was widely reported. Apart from this, however, the anniversary provided a moment of reflection for Freetown's press concerning the need to move on from the problems of the last 50 years and celebrate a new beginning for Sierra Leone. An article in *The African Champion*, for example, concludes that '50 years is not much in the evolution of the nation. For Sierra Leone it is worth celebrating because baby steps taken now will amount to solid footing generations to come' (Sulimani Jr, 2011). A longer piece in the *Standard Times* asks 'where did we go wrong?' (Kamara 2011). The author, Issa B. M. Kamara, traces the decline of 'politics, economy and culture' since independence in 1961. Remembering 1961, Kamara comments:

Our economy before and after was not that too bad [sic]; in fact it was relatively healthy. But slowly and progressively our economy started drowning. From that point we had ourselves to blame. The colonialists did not carry all of our wealth. They left substantial wealth for us. (Kamara 2011)

This reflection echoes a broader narrative surrounding the 50th anniversary which was far less critical of colonialism. Indeed many noted that things were 'better under the British'. I explore this further below.

## **King George, Bunce Island and foreign aid**

There was a time when the white man went to the country of the Red Indian. He wanted to grow rice...meanwhile, in Africa...warriors were raiding towns, taking their brothers and killing them...one warrior said: 'I will kill you, or I will take your life'.

...The warrior took them to Bunce Island, where the Portuguese paid him in exchange for the lives of ten black men. King George came by boat from England and saw what was happening. He was a man of God. He picked up his bible and he read that all lives are the same...King George went to his advisor in New York. He said: 'Mr. Advisor, please can you help me. It says in the Bible that God has power over all men.'

The advisor said: 'God has a big power, so the white man cannot say when someone can live, and when someone should be punished. God decides when to bring death, and when to punish. If the white man continues like this, they will burn.'

....Four days went by and King George returned to England. He explained what he had seen, and returned to the sea with four boats. He told his soldiers to arrest any boats carrying black men. And so the slave trade finished.

King George took all the black men he saved back to England, where they were too cold, so he returned them to Sierra Leone. King George felt guilty about the way they had been treated and so made sure the children learned grammar, and so they gave him a staff and crowned him King of Sierra Leone. The tribal people of the provinces were not happy and the sons of Bai Bureh and Sengbe Pieh went to battle; finally they too got grammar. The white man until today

helps us with grammar. We like the white man now. (Pa Kargbo<sup>6</sup>, caretaker at Bunce Island)



Figure 8. Pa Kargbo, the elderly former caretaker of Bunce Island, narrating his story during a trip to the island in 2010. Photo: author.

This story narrates the history of Bunce Island and the heroic journey taken by King George III as he travels between New York and London to single handedly negotiate the end of the transatlantic slave trade. It was told to me by Pa Kargbo (figure 8) who was at the time the caretaker of the crumbling Bunce Island; a former slave fort located along the Rokel River. Pa Kargbo is an elderly Temne gentleman from Pepel, a coastal town on the Freetown Estuary, who has worked on Bunce Island since at least the 1990s. Visitors are rare to the island. The trip to the site involves a 45 minute boat ride from the bustling Kissi terminal in a chartered fishing boat, organised on arrival. Without life vests and shared with half a foot of water, a rusty fishing net and a couple of sea urchins, the trip was somewhat terrifying for the uninitiated. These clandestine and unmonitored trips were of concern to certain members of the Monuments and Relics Commission (MRC), some of whom felt they should receive a cut from the boat owners charging for the trip or that the MRC should enforce an entry fee. Others were more concerned with the destruction of the site, complaining that cannons had been

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<sup>6</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.



stolen and melted down, or that people camped on the island and built fires. Likewise, some staff at the Sierra Leone National Museum (SLNM) felt the Museum should act as the public facing institution for the site and argued tours should be organised through them. The site was proclaimed a National Monument in 1948 under Sierra Leone's 1946 Monuments and Relics Ordinance and so technically the fort is under management of the MRC. In practice, however, neither the MRC nor the SLNM currently have the necessary resources in place to restrict or monitor access to the island.

At the time of my fieldwork, boats were greeted by Pa Kargbo who would keep a look out for guests at Pepel and then make his own way over to Bunce Island in his family's boat. On arrival, Pa Kargbo went over the rules of the island in Krio - no littering, no swimming and definitely no stealing. After his tour, visitors were asked to sign a guestbook and make a small donation. Although Pa Kargbo was technically employed by the MRC, this appointment was rarely recognised through a salary. He made weekly trips into Freetown, taking a boat to the Kissi terminal and walking the 5km across town to the SLNM in the hope of bumping into a member of the MRC to ask for his wages. I had visited the island twice and was told this story for a third time on such a trip to the Museum, and this is the version I wrote down. I had given him a small amount of money, after which he stated that he was going to 'tell me everything I know'. It is important to note here that the many of the visitors to Bunce Island, including myself, are Westerners and that this is likely to have been noted by Pa Kargbo and has influenced the story he tells. As Tonkin (1992: 67) reminds us 'a narrator who is asked to narrate must consider the occasion, above all the perceived character, intentions and possible power of the audience'. This is of course one of the fundamental differences between written and spoken histories, given that the audience of the former remains hidden. What interests me, however, is how his oral narrative is informed by widely accepted historical accounts, yet diverts considerably from these. These diversions deal in particular with the primacy of King George, the importance of religion and the ways these relate to development through the importance of literacy.

### **OPALA'S NARRATIVE**

Pa Kargbo was clear when he told his story that it had first been told to him by Joseph Opala. Opala is an American historian who has been involved in many projects concerning Bunce Island since the 1980s. Pa Kargbo is illiterate, but he explained that he keeps all his information in his head and so has no need for books. As he began, however, he ceremoniously mimed the opening of a book with his hands and mentioned that he had been told about Bunce Island by his friend the 'white doctor Opala' who knew 'all tings dem' (everything). Opala remains the 'authority' on Bunce Island, although he is yet to publish much on his research (see Opala 1987). Rather, as a self-proclaimed 'public historian', Opala's narrative can be found in the media and over the internet. These alternative sites include the Wikipedia entry for Bunce Island which was first uploaded in March 2005 and has since been periodically edited by Opala (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia 2012), along with a touring exhibition, an account on [www.visitsierraleone.org](http://www.visitsierraleone.org) (Opala 2012), and a recent appearance on NBC News in the US (MSNBC 2012a, MSNBC 2012b).



Figure 9. The front aspect of Bunce Island's crumbling manor house. It was built and occupied by the London firm of Grant, Sargent and Oswald from the mid-18th to the late-19th century. Photo: author.

Pa Kargbo's narrative changed slightly each time I heard it, but all three versions included a heroic King George. In one version Bai Bureh and Sengbe Pieh were involved in the slave raids and fought against King George with the French. In another the French

tried to recapture the slave boats that had been freed by King George. In each version, however, King George triumphs over evil and brings grammar to Sierra Leone. Little of this narrative feeds into the story which is presented by Opala in his publication *The Gullah: rice, slavery and the Sierra Leone-American connection* (1987), nor through his other public outlets. As appears in the title of his book, Opala's focus is tracing African-American connections with Sierra Leone. His research follows these links through the commercial traders who occupied Bunce Island in the 17th and 18th centuries (figure 9). This includes the Royal African Company of England from 1672 and the London firm of Grant, Sargent and Oswald in the mid 19th century (1987: 5). Opala explores the links between Bunce Island and South Carolina through the relationship between Oswald and Henry Laurens, a wealthy rice plantation owner and slave dealer. In this trade relationship, Opala shows how Oswald traded slaves, ivory and camwood for Carolina rice. Pa Kargbo may be referring to Oswald when he speaks of the 'white man' who travelled to the country of the 'Red Indian' to grow rice.

Opala's work is accompanied by projects organising the 'return' of African-Americans with Sierra Leonean decent. In 2005 this included a somewhat sensationalist 'homecoming' of Mrs. Thomalind Martin Polite, a seventh generation descendant of a young enslaved girl called Priscilla who survived the middle passage. A faded and dog-eared poster advertising the visit adorns the wall of the acting curator's office at the SLNM.

#### **BUNCE ISLAND CONSERVATION PROJECT**

When I returned to Sierra Leone in April 2011, Pa Kargbo had been 'paid off' and no longer officially worked on Bunce Island. This has not yet stopped him monitoring visitors to the site and arriving halfway through tours in the hope of receiving a small donation. His services as 'caretaker' are, however, no longer required. Opala has campaigned for the importance of the site to African-American history since he began his research and recently secured a \$5 million USD fund through the Bunce Island Coalition to lead a conservation project on Bunce Island. The project was announced in 2010 and has received enormous publicity both in (Standard Times 2012; Corioko

2012) and outside Sierra Leone (BBC News 2012). Bunce Island was added to UNESCO's Tentative List in June 2012 and the organisation endorses the conservation project noting that 'Bunce Island has been handed over to the Bunce Island Coalition for the purposes of preservation and conservation action' (UNESCO 2012). A structural survey was carried out on the site in late 2010 and early 2011, followed by the first archaeological excavation to take place on Bunce Island. This was led by Chris DeCorse, Professor of Anthropology at Syracuse University, and focused on digging test pits to explore the structural phasing of the architecture. The results of the excavation are yet to be published, but a number of finds were donated to the SLNM in June 2011. Other work includes a digital reconstruction of the site and plans for the future establishment of a Bunce Island Museum. Drawing on Opala's narrative, Bunce Island has garnered extensive international interest due to its potential as a site for slave route tourism. It is hoped that this might follow a similar path to the tourist trade at Elmina Castle in Ghana and Senegal's Gorée Island (Basu 2008: 236; BBC News 2012a). However, despite the enormous publicity for this \$5 million USD project, little structural conservation work has to date taken place at the site.

#### **PA KARGBO'S NARRATIVE: KING GEORGE AND RELIGION**

Returning to Pa Kargbo, his story about King George and Bunce Island is based on a narrative pieced together from his memory of a discussion with Opala some time before the war. Yet his account takes a distinct direction which is unlikely to have been part of Opala's original account. Like the article by Thomas quoted above, Pa Kargbo makes a connection between colonialism in the past, and intervention and aid in the present. His narrative, however, presents a very different interpretation of this relationship. Both colonialism and continued aid intervention are valued in his story, embedded in a broader history of Sierra Leone.

Pa Kargbo's story begins by suggesting that Africans played a dominant role in both supplying and selling slaves to the Portuguese. King George is depicted as singlehandedly ending this trade, led by his religious and moral convictions. Opala was recently criticised in the Sierra Leonean Press by Professor Magbaily Fyle on this

subject. Fyle is associated with Ohio State University's Department of African-American and African Studies as well as Fourah Bay College in Freetown. He has written a number of publications concerning Sierra Leonean history (Fyle and Richards 1988; Fyle and Foray 2006). Fyle complained that Opala had misrepresented the history of the slave trade in Sierra Leone when he commented over SLBC radio that 'Sierra Leoneans had been busy selling each other, then the British (white people, I think he said) came here to help them' (Fyle 2010). Fyle notes that 'this was in obvious reference to colonialism'.

This speaks to a wider debate concerning the role of African agency in orchestrating the transatlantic slave trade. Shaw (2002: 30) observes that in Sierra Leone, as in other places in Africa, slaves were acquired for trade through raids and warfare. She notes that arguments which claim that wars of the slave trade era were to do with internal political strife, rather than economic benefits driven by European trade, has been presented as 'one that restores agency to Africans' (*ibid*). In Sierra Leone, Shaw argues the trade was clearly an 'intersection of African *and* European agency' (2002: 32). Fyle, on the other hand, argues the slave trade was 'demand driven', 'meaning that those who wanted slaves used resources and leveraged power to ensure that the slave trade dominated trade on the West African coast, to the extent where all societies had to participate or face extinction at the hands of the White slave traders' (2010). Either way, Pa Kargbo's narrative of warriors 'raiding towns, taking their brothers and killing them', until they are saved by the British King George, may have originated in his reading of Opala's narrative which Fyle criticises.

Pa Kargbo's narrative credits the end of the slave trade to the actions of a morally motivated King. George III was sovereign at the time of the British-led abolitionist movement which certainly had an ideological and moral dimension, though of course he had little personal involvement in the movement. Although the monarch would have signed the Act of Parliament which abolished the trade in Britain in 1807, he never visited Sierra Leone nor did he have any direct involvement in the abolition movement. The movement in Great Britain was led by the London Abolition Committee established in 1787. Pa Kargbo presents King George's role in the abolition as religiously motivated,

which may be associated with early presentations of the abolition movement as a religious philanthropic mission (Jennings 1997:vii). Jennings notes that William Wilberforce has historically been depicted as a key figure in this regard, led by his Evangelical Christian values (1997:vii). His two sons wrote a biography for Wilberforce in 1839 where his religious convictions are said to have driven his commitment to the cause. They note 'he stanch'd the wounds of one, while he stay'd the progress of the other in a career of oppression and cruelty which could not but have called down the just vengeance of a righteous God' (Wilberforce and Wilberforce, 1838:iv). Wilberforce emerges as a God fearing character concerned by God's wrath. This is echoed by Pa Kargbo in his depiction of King George's concern driven by his advisor's claim that 'if the white man continues like this, they will burn'. Of course the movement has since been understood as emerging from a much broader set of historical changes and political and economic pressures (Drescher 2004:2; Jennings 1997:ix). A focus on piety, however, is central to Pa Kargbo's broader narrative which also concerns the crowning of King George in Sierra Leone. It seems to give him a certain legitimacy to intervene and crucially also frames his rights as monarch.

Pa Kargbo's focus on King George is likely to derive from the fact that George III was representative of Britain at the time of the abolitionist movement. However, the centrality of King George may also be associated with the large cannons which surround Bunce Island. Many of these are stamped with George III's insignia and dated to the turn of the 18th century. During his tour, Pa Kargbo explained that these were the King's weapons, used to defeat the French when they tried to attack the island and take the 'freed Sierra Leoneans' back to America.

This narrative is somewhat confused. Though French naval forces did attack the island in 1779 and 1794, this has been associated with France's alliance with the American Loyalists during the American War of Independence by Opala (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia 2012). Portelli's (1981) notion of mode and periodisation in oral historical accounts is useful here as a tool for thinking about the way temporality is organised in Pa Kargbo's narrative. As Portelli observed during his fieldwork in Italy

'time is divided horizontally into periods and eras, and "hung" on key events which operate as partitions and interpreters of the meaning of each period' (1981: 171). Rather than following chronological time, Tonkin (1992: 71-75) explores how different temporalities are co-existent and cross over, highlighting the tenuous link between the duration of time marked with technologies of time, such as calendars and clocks, and time experienced or remembered. Pa Kargbo's narrative which he told me at the SLNM is arguably 'hung' on particular events which come together to plot his history of the slave trade. These include the African trade in their 'brothers', King George's religiously motivated travels to and from America, the 'return' of former slaves and the 'bringing of grammar'. The latter is the only stage which involved King George setting foot in Sierra Leone, and I wonder whether this is merged with the French attacks and consolidated into a single moment by the presence of the royal cannons, the only tangible legacy which can be directly associated with George III.

#### **PA KARGBO'S NARRATIVE: KING GEORGE AND EDUCATION**

Freetown, at the time the Province of Freedom, was formally established as a British Crown Colony during the reign of King George III in 1807. The colony was supervised by the Sierra Leone Company before this from 1791. True to written historical accounts, Pa Kargbo notes that this settlement was founded to re-home freed slaves from Britain and the New World. Rather than gifted to the Crown however, the land was secured through a controversial signed 'agreement' with a Koya Temne sub-chief called King Tom and the Koya regent, Naimbana. Ijagbeni (1968 in Shaw 2002: 37) has argued it is unlikely that the signatories understood this contractual agreement as a permanent affair, which led to a series of attacks on the settlement at the turn of the 18th century. Pa Kargbo may be commenting on these uprisings when he notes that 'the tribal people of the provinces were not happy and the sons of Bai Bureh and Sengbe Pieh went to battle'.

Sengbe Pieh, also known as Joseph Cinqué, is widely associated with the antislavery movement and the Amistad Revolt of 1839 in the US. Basu (2013a) shows how this hero 'returned' to Sierra Leone in the 1990s as a symbol of emancipation and now features

on the relatively new war memorial in the centre of Freetown. Bai Bureh, who also features on the monument, did lead a major uprising against the British, however this was over a century after the founding of the British Crown Colony in 1787. He is most well known for his involvement in the 1898 'Hut Tax War' in the aftermath of which he was captured and imprisoned before being sent in exile to what is now Ghana (Kabba 1988). As Basu shows in his discussion of the war memorial (2013a), these historical figures form part of a utopian narrative which frames Sierra Leonean history through a heritage of 'Freedom'; freedom from slavery, and freedom from British Colonial rule. In Pa Kargbo's narrative these figures are also paired, however their relationship with freedom is less clear. Rather they temporally come together to represent indigenous resistance against against the British crown, soon relinquished in this narrative after they 'get grammar'.

As noted above, Pa Kargbo is himself illiterate but was keen to demonstrate both that his story had come from Opala and that it existed in written form. Whether or not it was faithful to the narrative from the 'white Doctor', he was keen to assert that it was not his own invention but that it came from an authority. I suggest the mimed opening of a book also worked as a kind of legitimation, giving his narrative further weight. In his story, literacy also gave King George further legitimation as King of Sierra Leone, paired with his religious convictions.

Both colonialism and religion played an important a role in establishing an education system in Sierra Leone. Harding (1968: 143) notes that the Sierra Leone Company provided a school for the colony between 1791 and 1807. After this, education in Sierra Leone was provided through missionary work as well as the colonial government. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society played a central role here, respectively establishing 18 and 14 schools by 1840 (Harding 1968: 144). Several key schools were established in Freetown by missions after 1840. These included the CMS Grammar School for boys in 1845 and the Annie Walsh Memorial School in 1849, also established by CMS (*ibid*). Harding comments that 'the establishment of secondary schools in the Freetown area was almost entirely to the zeal



of various missionary bodies' (Harding 1968:145). This included teacher training. The Christian Institution was founded by CMS in 1816, later to become Fourah Bay College.

The British government played an increasingly official role in education after an Education Code was enacted in 1870, and formalised by an Education Ordinance passed in 1882 (Harding 1968:147). Harding notes that by the early twentieth century missions lost control of the education sector as it became increasingly managed by the central government. A survey in 1935 organised by the new Director of Education concluded that the state of schools in the Protectorate was vastly inferior to that in Freetown. Since then, this has been recognised as a key problem for Sierra Leone. Harding was writing in 1968 and registers concern that the post independence years had not dealt with the problems identified by the 1935 survey. Education in Sierra Leone suffered hugely as a result of governmental mismanagement of funds in the 1980s and ever more so during the civil war of the 1990s. With over 70% of schools abandoned during the civil war (Hinton 2009: 80), educational reform was identified as a key priority by both the government of Sierra Leone (MNDP and LTNPS 2003:23; Government of Sierra Leone 2008), and the international donor community (UNICEF 2000; UNICEF 2002; The World Bank and IBRD 2007: 78; DFID 2011: 3). This concern has, as Pa Kargbo notes, played a significant role in continued foreign intervention into the education sector. UNICEF, for example, has played a central role in the development of a new school curriculum and provision of teacher training as I will discuss in the following chapter.

Pa Kargbo's story is full of interventions both regarding its subject matter, and the way it was initially conveyed to him. Opala has a long history of working in Sierra Leone and frequently makes this clear in self-representation through the press, or online profiles. Yet his project remains an intervention, pushing a very particular African-American agenda which has as yet questionable affect in Sierra Leone. At the time of writing, Bunce Island is in much the same state as it was when the project started, with resources allocated to the development of a virtual-reality reconstruction of the site only available in the US, though this might change. Pa Kargbo's story emerges from this

intervention, and tells the story of another. Colonialism is portrayed as a necessary and legitimate intervention due to King George's role in the abolition of the slave trade, his religious convictions, and later in the establishment of education (or the 'bringing of grammar') in Sierra Leone. This narrative is based on a version of the story which came from Opala, however, Pa Kargbo seems to impart his own understanding of the history of Sierra Leone in the telling of it. This understanding values education and understands it as something which is bought in from elsewhere through intervention. It is quite uncritical of colonialism, associating it with positive and welcome change. Like the article above, colonialism and aid come together in Pa Kargbo's story despite this association being based on a somewhat fabricated history.

## **The 'local' at the Sierra Leone National Museum**



Figure 10. This photo was taken the year the Sierra Leone Museum opened in 1957. The building, the former Cotton Tree Station, can be seen in the foreground to the right of the image. Photo: Sierra Leone National Museum Archive.

Like Bunce Island, the SLNM encapsulates a long history of intervention. It is an institution which has been the location of numerous global encounters since its establishment in 1957. Interventions continue to play an important role today, situated

at the nexus of culture and development that I traced in Chapter 1. The 50th anniversary of independence at the SLNM was also a moment which was marked by intervention. Perhaps paradoxically given the context, these interventions were both British.

#### **A SIERRA LEONEAN MUSEOLOGY?**

The SLNM was formally opened in 1957 (figure 10), due in part to work of Sir Robert Hall, Governor of Sierra Leone between 1952 and 1956, as well as the activities of Dr. M. C. F. Easmon, Chair of the MRC. As discussed by Basu (2012), the establishment of a museum in Sierra Leone was the result of amateur enthusiasms rather than directed by official colonial policy. This included Hall's concern over the loss of Sierra Leone's traditional arts and crafts which he argued were at threat from the 'constant impact of foreign imports and foreign skills' (Basu 2012: 158). Hall was instrumental in the establishment of the Sierra Leone Society in 1953 and outlined his vision for a national museum during the inaugural meeting of the Society in 1954 (*ibid*). During this speech, Hall highlights the relative disinterest of both the State and the public in a museum, reflecting the increasingly symbolic nature of his role Governor (2012: 159).

Hall was not alone in his campaign for a national museum but was joined by the other members of the Sierra Leone Society consisting mainly of British expatriates and members of Freetown's Krio elite. The latter included M. C. F. Easmon, a physician and amateur historian who was educated in the UK and remained influential at the SLNM into the post-independence period (*ibid*). Easmon played a crucial role in co-ordinating the opening of the then Sierra Leone Museum as Chair of the MRC, the Sierra Leone Society and the newly established Museum Committee. Collections for the new Museum were assembled by the MRC and organised in display cases in the disused telephone exchange offered by the Government. As Basu notes, photographs taken at the opening of the Museum in 1957 show how the display cases have changed relatively little over the last 50 years (figure 11) (2012: 162). This is, however, beginning to change with the training and capacity building initiatives currently taking place at the Museum as discussed below.



Figure 11. The Sierra Leone National Museum's main gallery, prior to the changes made by the British Museum's Africa Programme. It remained largely unchanged from when it was first curated by Dr. M. C. F. Easmon. Photo: author.

The Museum thus began as an institution that represented rather British concerns over the loss of indigenous culture, carried forward by a British educated Krio elite. As noted, Easmon was assigned as the first Curator of the Museum. This occurred as it became clear that the Museum Committee would not be able to raise the sponsorship funds required to employ a trained curator (Basu 2012: 161). Easmon was later joined by Gary Schulze who served as Acting Curator between 1962 and 1963. Schulze was an American Peace Corps

volunteer who had been posted as a history teacher at the Albert Academy. He followed with an internship at the SLNM, which then developed into an official post (Gary Schulze pers. comm.). Perhaps one of Schulze's most significant legacies at the SLNM is the now iconic image of Bai Bureh in an old Kuranko gown and a tasselled hat as depicted in the life-size plaster-of-Paris statue from the SLNM commissioned by Schulze (Basu 2013a). Schulze is keen to tell the story of how he commissioned the statue from a Krio artist named J. D. Marsh. With no known photograph taken of Bai Bureh from the front, the artist was asked to use his imagination to construct the face. This image of Bai Bureh now features on the Le1000 banknote, and as noted by Basu, has also been recreated in the new Peace and Cultural Monument which commemorates the civil war.

Dorothy Cummings, a South African primary school teacher who travelled to Sierra Leone in the 1960s, succeeded as Curator after Easmon retired. Mrs. Cummings began

working at the SLNM in 1966 without any prior training and so learned on the job, following Easmon whom she still affectionately refers to as 'Doctor' (Dorothy Cummings pers. comm.). As Curator, Mrs. Cummings remembers that new objects which entered the collections were often bought to the Museum by traders selling rural produce in Freetown. She commented on her own lack of knowledge concerning these objects when I visited her in 2010 and noted that in many cases the traders who bought them in often had little information regarding their use or origin.

Though Dorothy Cummings retired in 1998, she still has strong links with the SLNM through Bertha<sup>7</sup>, the current Acting Curator, who speaks to her on an almost daily basis. Bertha started work at the Museum in the 1980s as a 'secretary cum conservator', again she also received training in museum work on the job with no prior experience in this field. Celia Nicols succeeded Dorothy Cummings as Curator and worked at the SLNM until 2008. Like all the Curators at the SLNM, Celia Nicols began her post with no training, however this soon changed when she received a scholarship from the West African Museums Programme to study for an MA in Museum Studies at Leicester University. In 2008, however, she moved to Dubai and the SLNM gained little benefit from this training. Nicols was Curator at the SLNM when the British Museum's Africa Programme began working in Sierra Leone in 2007 and was also the main point of contact at the National Museum as the Reanimating Cultural Heritage (RCH) project was being developed (Paul Basu, per. comm.). Officially no new appointment for the post of Curator has been made, however Bertha remains committed to keeping the institution running as Acting Curator.

During my fieldwork there was a discernible tussle for authority with the arrival of Joseph<sup>8</sup>, the great-nephew of M. C. F. Easmon. Joseph was born and educated in the UK and 'returned' to Sierra Leone after the civil war. He was clearly recognised by staff as 'Krio' at the SLNM, referring to both his ancestry but, perhaps more importantly, his general demeanour. Being 'Krio' was in this context associated with 'bluffing' (showing

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<sup>7</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

off) and behaving as if 'you are bigger than us', though in others it was also used to denote a Christian, educated and urban identity. Joseph spoke with a cut-glass English accent and was frequently frustrated by his life in Sierra Leone, which he was very vocal about.

Joseph highlights a number of reasons for this return, including a wish to re-establish links with his parents' homeland and to provide support for the cultural sector. A perpetually busy man, Joseph was involved in projects across Freetown including an attempt to establish a greater profile for Sierra Leonean film through the Freetown Film Festival which he initiated in 2007. More significant for the SLNM was his appointment as a commissioner for the MRC, and later his employment by the RCH project in 2010. The MRC had recently made plans to create a permanent office space in the new building at the SLNM, but Joseph's presence was consolidated in 2010 as he began to digitise the collections. Joseph took on an authoritative role at the SLNM based on his membership of the MRC, his broader role in monitoring the RCH project, and his family connections to Easmon. As the SLNM is technically managed by the MRC, Joseph felt a responsibility towards improving the Museum and attempted to implement this by calling a series of meetings during which the Museum's future was discussed. This was despite no formal training in museum work and these meetings were often resented by staff who felt Joseph was trying to take over.

#### **SLNM PLANS FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY**

Despite their lack of training in museum work, staff at the SLNM all have a very clear idea of what they feel a museum is, and how it should be run. This emerges in part through a kind of operational 'Chinese whispers' which goes backward in time as M. C. F. Easmon trained Dorothy Cummings, who then trained Celia Nicols and Bertha. The Museum is both representative of its 1957 incarnation, yet is also changed reflecting the turbulence of the last 50 years. Ideas of what a museum is and what it should do are of course also influenced by wider discourses surrounding museums in other parts of the world and well as broader notions of 'heritage'. This was certainly a key consideration for Joseph who developed a series of ambitious plans to redevelop the

Museum in 2010 on behalf of the MRC to mark the 50th Anniversary. Joseph's diasporic status gave him authority within the MRC as an 'ideas man'. Though he frequently ran into conflict with the Chair, he was nonetheless repeatedly asked for advice and understood as someone capable of directing change at the SLNM.

The plans began by presenting the Museum building, the former Freetown railway station, as 'steeped in history' and highlighting the need to 'acknowledge its former glory' (MRC 2010:1). Suggestions for doing this included the opening of the original entrance facing the Cotton Tree and restoration of the rusted street lamps which framed it. This 'former glory' is somewhat problematic. As noted above, the building was leased as a temporary measure. The railway station had been dismantled some time earlier and the building used as both a water purification plant and a telephone exchange since then. Joseph's presentation of 'glory' clearly points toward a nostalgia for the colonial past. More broadly, this past remains what is officially considered 'heritage' in Sierra Leone including the focus on Bunce Island, but also the remaining sites included on the MRC's list of 18 national monuments. As has been problematised by Basu (2008), the only monument to relate to a non-European past are the Earthworks and Live Stockade at Masakpaidu, Kono.

Joseph's plans drew heavily on his own experiences of visiting Western museums. In conversation he noted a comparison between the SLNM and the British Museum, both of which he saw as interlinked as representations of a nation's heritage. This is a somewhat illuminating comparison considering the nature of the British Museum's broader relationship with British Imperialism (Coombes 1997). Joseph planned to completely change the currently informal layout of the Museum to raise it to 'British Museum standards'. As it stands, visitors can choose between two unmonitored entrances to the Museum and walk straight in to the Curator's office which always has its door open if Bertha is in. Constant visitors are a cause for much complaint, but a central part of what the Acting Curator considers her role at the SLNM to be. A courtyard separates the two museum buildings with a number of benches which are

freely occupied by passersby whether or not (and often not) they have any interest in entering either building.

Joseph's plans aimed to reorganise this space to make it more formal. This included a reception area with an information desk and monitoring system to observe visitor numbers. The courtyard between the two buildings was to become a 'glass walkway' to ensure people entered and exited through the same entrance. This orderly redevelopment was intended to ensure that the Museum was transformed into an appropriate space to 'showcase the nation's deep and varied history and culture'. In conversation, Joseph was keen that the Museum was identified as a professional institution which, he claimed, was impossible with the current layout and more controversially, with the attitudes of the current staff. Along with displaying a nostalgia for a colonial past, Joseph also had a great deal of nostalgia for the idea of personal sacrifice when it came to 'saving Sierra Leone's heritage'. He saw this 'heritage' as greatly threatened by a broader disinterest. Perhaps this disinterest is not surprising given the somewhat limited notion of this 'heritage', based in colonial monumental architecture. Nonetheless sacrifice was central to Joseph's idea of the Museum and framed his criticism of museum staff whom, he felt, were not passionate or willing enough to commit fully to their jobs.

These plans were of considerable concern to staff at the SLNM, who felt that there were not being consulted and that decisions were being made secretly that affected them. Joseph claimed it was the job of the Chair of the MRC to liaise with the staff, but also saw the reorganisation as something which should be directed by the MRC. Part of the plans also included a managerial restructuring which consolidated the authority of the MRC over the SLNM. Meanwhile senior museum staff saw this secrecy as a potential move to dispose of the current acting curator and claim credit for the wider changes supported by the British Museum's Africa Programme, discussed below. The MRC was seen as an imposing institution that 'did not understand how things are', and which had only recently become interested in the Museum because of anticipated incoming funds. This was exasperated when the Chair of the MRC purchased a large, imposing and



expensive desk to put in the new MRC office which was understood, symbolically, as a move to create a new management structure by consolidating his position as a 'big man'. This was undermined by the staff making comments about the poor quality of the office furniture, which indeed eventually fell apart.

During this time, staff began to make their own exhibition plans. A misunderstanding led staff to believe that funds would be supplied by the British Museum's Africa Programme and that they were competing for these funds with the MRC. As it became clear that the Africa Programme would be supporting training initiatives in exhibition development rather than donating money, staff turned their attention to expected funds that had been unofficially promised by the anniversary celebration committee.

A central component of these plans was to incorporate text heavy interpretation. Large text panels were proposed covering the entire history of the country with additional labels to accompany each object. A member of staff recommended that 'we need to have so much information, so that people want to come again and again because they did not have time to read it all'. Another commented that she wanted to 'phase-out tour guides', allowing people to learn about the museum and its collections through reading the texts provided. Text proved important to visitors to the museum, and the lack of it was a common complaint made to the Acting Curator. Jacob<sup>9</sup> was a friend of mine who I met when he was working as a research assistant for Zachary Kingdon, Curator of African ethnography at the World Museum Liverpool. Jacob grew up in Masingbi, a village in the north east of Sierra Leone, but moved to Makeni and then Freetown after his home was attacked by the Revolutionary United Front during the war. He was accepted to study a BA in Law at Fourah Bay University in 2009 and pays his fees by also working at the Centre for Security Development and Analysis. Jacob was familiar with the Museum, having visited it for the first time with Zachary in 2010, but complained that it was empty and staff did not seem to know anything. For him, this was proven by the fact that there was no text. 'They are not serious' he noted of the staff, 'these are just rooms with old things; how can I be interested in them when there is nothing to read about

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<sup>9</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

them?' Of course the nature of these complaints must be understood in context, delivered by often middle class Sierra Leoneans living in Freetown, or expatriates. The few visits that the Museum does receive outside of school groups and tours are often of this literate and educated demographic for whom text is likely to have a greater significance than the illiterate majority of rural Sierra Leone or less well off Freetown residents.

On 19th April 2011 I attended a meeting with Bertha and Miriam from the SLNM at the Post Office. It was held to confirm the loan of a collection of stamps, which had been in use during the colonial period, for the museum's anniversary exhibition. During the meeting, we were congratulated on the \$30,000 USD donation to the SLNM by a mining group which had been announced over SLBC radio that morning. Neither Bertha nor Miriam had heard about it and immediately suspected the Chair of the MRC of deliberately keeping it from them. Later it transpired a cheque for \$20,000 USD had been presented to the anniversary committee by the SIVA Group, whose entity BIO Palm Ltd has recently invested in palm oil production in Sierra Leone. This was specifically labelled as funds for the redevelopment of the National Museum.

Though the Chair of the MRC promised the SLNM would be able to use some of these funds for their own exhibition, on the afternoon of 26th April these funds were still absent. A day before the anniversary was to take place, Bertha and Miriam struggled to put something together without any financial support. Adding to this context, staff had not been paid for the last nine months and many had refused to work over the holiday as a result. Texts were frantically drafted, based on readings of Christopher Fyfe's (1979) *A Short History of Sierra Leone*, as well as Wikipedia's Sierra Leone webpage. The subsequent narrative followed moments of contact with Europe and North America, beginning with Portuguese Pedro da Cintra's written accounts of what he called Serra de Leão in 1462, following through to the Transatlantic slave trade, the founding of the 'Province of Freedom' in 1787 by the British Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor, and then British colonial rule. Pre-colonial Sierra Leone was represented by a collection of unmarked stone tools, part of a collection of material

excavated in the 1960s by Carleton Coon, an American physical anthropologist who was at the time Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania (Allsworth-Jones 2002).

Paradoxically, rather than 'celebrate' postcolonial 'independent' Sierra Leone, this independence day narrative returns to popular construction of a 'Sierra Leonean history' told through moments of contact between the West coast of Africa and Europe. As with Pa Kargbo's story about Bunce Island and Joseph's colonial 'glory days', 'heritage' emerges as rooted in European contact.

#### **BRITISH INTERVENTION AND THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY**



Figure 12. Six of the eight new masqueraders installed in the Gallery. From left to right the Nafali, Falui, Matoma, N'doli Jowei, Hunting and Ode-lay masqueraders can be seen. The background mural was painted by a local mural artist. Photo: author.

Running alongside this highly fraught process of 'local' exhibition-making in the lead-up to the anniversary were two British interventions. These were the British Museum's Africa Programme and the Reanimating Cultural Heritage (RCH) research project. Anticipating the problems with funding, both of these initiatives timed outputs to coincide with the anniversary. The RCH project launched its online web resource in at a

press conference at the SLNM in April 2011, but my focus here is on the Africa Programme activities.



Figure 13. Local Freetown artist ‘Yellow Man’ constructing the wire and foam figure which currently supports the Matoma costume. Yellow Man is a member of Firestone, one for Freetown’s Ode-lay masquerading societies. Photo: author.

The Africa Programme was established in 2005 and has been working at the SLNM since 2008, based on consultations in 2007. This work was funded by a Ford Foundation grant allocated the British Museum and reinstated in 2010 to ‘provide technical assistance and training to West African museum professionals’ (Ford Foundation 2012). The rationale for the programme is to develop training initiatives in response to local needs and priorities, highlighting

how ‘the sharing of skills and expertise brings mutual benefit and enhances cultural knowledge’ (The British Museum 2012). The website for the programme highlights the importance of ‘sustainability’, ‘exchange’ and ‘skills sharing’ (*ibid*), echoing the discourses which sit at the nexus of culture and development explored in Chapter 1.

So far, this work has included capacity building and training initiatives including collections auditing, the rehabilitation of a storage area, educational outreach and exhibition development. Responding to the emphasis on ‘local needs’ in the wider programme objectives, the consultant developed an exhibition plan to put together a vibrant display of mounted masquerade costumes and masks with staff at the SLNM. This focused on performative heritage and took an aesthetic approach, rather than the

more didactic, historical approach which informed the SLNM's own anniversary exhibition. This enabled the Museum to commission eight new masquerade costumes from different groups across Sierra Leone including the Odelay and Hunting from Freetown, the Matoma from the North, the Nafali, Goboi, Jobai and Falui from the South and East and the Ndoli Jowei, or dancing Soweï (figure 12). The costumes were made by the National Dance Troupe of Sierra Leone, a craftsman based in Bo, and a local Freetown artist, Yellow Man (figure 13), who also constructed wire and foam figures to support them. The backdrop for the figures is a large mural depicting a 'village scene', painted by an established street mural painter otherwise commissioned to paint advertisements. This resulted in a significant visual change within the space, leaving in no doubt that transformations were taking place.

A number of other changes were made to the layout of the permanent displays including the building of new shelves to display some of the Museum's collection of Soweï helmet masks. The shelving is open: a cheaper alternative to installing expensive glass panels. Concerns over security were dealt with by filling it with less valuable carvings that had never been used in traditional performances, rather than the 'real' masks used by the female initiation societies.

Rather than using large amounts of textual object interpretation, staff were encouraged to develop skills in 'story telling'. This approach was in response to the low levels of literacy in Sierra Leone, as well as encouraging greater engagement with visitors. Drawing on Kreps 'appropriate museology' (2008), the exhibition utilises local skills and resources. Both the masquerade costumes and the wire frames were constructed using materials which are easily available, as was the new shelving. Freetown lacks the technology to produce high quality text panels, meaning printing would need to be outsourced, or that the Museum makes do with low quality laminates. Texts at present are printed out onto A4 sheets of paper.

The new exhibit was well-received. The Director of Cultural Affairs commented on the new figures and the importance of representing 'our esoteric societies from across the

country' at a press conference launching the redeveloped galleries, whilst at a more local level the new colourful gallery attracted passersby from the street, previously a very rare occurrence. Despite the potential problematic surrounding British intervention at this moment of marking independence, the importance of the partnership with the British Museum was touched upon by both the Director, and his Assistant Director, at the press conference. Mohamed, for example, introduced his 'broom analogy', commenting that 'one straw cannot clean well, but a whole broom is better'. Both were, however, careful to frame this intervention as providing support, in particular financial support, for a locally derived initiative. Special thanks were given to the consultant's Sierra Leonean research assistant, described as 'a man of the soil who brought us the British Museum'. This could be regarded as a need to symbolically reclaim activities at the SLNM and reaffirm the MoTC's limited role. Numerous other attempts were made to this effect, including criticism of the Hunting Society masquerader which bore the head of an alligator. The Director of Cultural Affairs asserted his authority by arguing that it should rather be the head of a 'land animal'. The head piece was made by Yellow Man, a local Freetown artist who makes the costumes worn in the Freetown Hunting society masquerades, questioning who should be considered the local 'expert' in a context such as this.

Returning to the SLNM's own anniversary exhibition, the only other point of contestation I witnessed surrounded the absence of text in the new gallery. Although the idea of 'story telling' was successful in some contexts, particularly with large groups, in others it created suspicion from non-Sierra Leonean visitors who drew the assumption that the guides were trying to make money. The more able and confident staff members held more senior posts at the SLNM and saw the role of museum attendant as beneath them, preferring rather to occupy one of the SLNM's three offices. As such, tours were given by the young men who were doing 'internships' at the SLNM, or the cleaning and security staff who had not participated in the training. This caused a 'palaver' when the Acting Curator attempted to reengage the Education Officer in giving tours. She was promptly told from behind a desk that 'acting like a beggar' was not 'real museum work'. As became clear in the tensions surrounding the Chair of the MRC's new

desk, having an office has symbolic value, associated with an established model of personal success, professionalism and authority. In a context of economic difficulty with few opportunities of formal employment and a reliable income, an office represents professional stability even if that stability is somewhat illusory. Of course interacting with visitors is also an important part of 'real museum work' and arguably something which would benefit the SLNM if realised.

A visit by the newly appointed Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Victora Saidu Kamara, promptly changed the textless British Museum supported gallery and a number of text sheets were typed, printed, laminated and attached to the cases. These were based on a booklet I had designed to accompany the objects in the Gallery in an attempt to provide text for those who required it. Clearly this did not solve the problem. As with the office, perhaps the issue was not so much about information but the symbolic associations of professionalism and education which accompany text in a country where literacy rates are so low. As a national institution, albeit one with limited national resources, the SLNM is currently expected to represent these associations. As has been discussed, notions of 'heritage' in Sierra Leone are limited and bound up in the foreign discourses which first institutionalised the idea of a national 'heritage'. These can be traced through a long history of intervention into this sector which has worked to construct new sets of values which are both locally relevant, yet nonetheless imported from elsewhere. The SLNM is currently full of text. The laminates have been replaced by a number of new text panels, some of which have been designed specially whilst others initially accompanied a small exhibition of Sierra Leonean objects installed at University College London to mark the UK launch of the RCH website. Joseph Opala has also installed a text heavy, set of exhibition boards relating to his work on Bunce Island.

Both the Africa Programme's exhibition, and the SLNM's plans for the 50th anniversary, aim at a kind of 'local', yet these locals do not always agree. This has resulted in compromises from both sides. What has emerged appears to be successful, yet is not the 'local alternative' which is raised by the nexus of culture and development discussed

in Chapter 1. Rather it is a culmination of different ideas concerning what a museum in Sierra Leone should, or could, do. These are likely to change as the country continues to redefine its national narratives in line with broader national transformations and, hopefully, increasing stability.

## **Conclusion**

In his polemical article about the 50th anniversary Augustin Thomas argues that Sierra Leone is not yet independent given that the country continues to be dependent on Western aid and intervention. He was concerned that President Ernest Bai Koroma was too reliant on Western expertise, overlooking the importance of indigenous Sierra Leonean knowledge. At the same time, Thomas saw a relevance in Chinese expertise which, he argued, was more appropriate to the Sierra Leonean context. His discussion began with an argument not dissimilar to that which emerges at the nexus of culture and development in as much as it draws an association between aid intervention and continued colonialism. Thomas suggests that ongoing intervention that 'actually works for the West' means that Sierra Leone remains 'under colonialism'. Although many have argued China-Africa relations represent similar, if not more pronounced, inequality to Western-African relations (Bräutigam 2010; Tull 2006), Thomas does not draw the same 'colonial' association. It is important that China has also been a 'developing country', but also that China presents an alternative relationship to the Western aid model, as it claims to be built on mutual gain.

There is also an element of mutual gain in the objectives of the Bunce Island Conservation Project led by Joseph Opala. His focus on the Sierra Leone-North American connection arguably benefits both those who trace their ancestry back to Sierra Leone, and Sierra Leone through predicted future tourism. Whilst this crumbling legacy of pre-colonial British trade is the focus of an emotional 'homecoming' by people such as Thomalind Martin Polite, it arguably has little, if any, emotional value to Sierra Leoneans (Basu 2008: 236). Paradoxically, for Pa Kargbo its relevance rather appears to lie in a somewhat confused narrative of British heroism. King George III gallantly



charges in on his ship and single handedly ends the trade, led by his religious values. The sins of the white man are forgiven when the monarch recompenses for centuries of unimaginable disregard for human life by teaching Sierra Leoneans to read and write. This has such power in Sierra Leone that he is crowned King. Pa Kargbo's story legitimates colonialism through both religion and education and brings this legitimation of intervention forward into the present by commenting on the 'white man's' continued role in 'bringing grammar'.

This notion of intervention and grammar is also powerful for Pa Kargbo in the way that it legitimates his own story. Though he cannot read, there appears to be a symbolic power in the suggestion that it comes from a book, in particular Opala's book. This may be because he expects that this will give his story legitimacy to a foreign, and likely educated, audience. I suggest, however, that this is also related to his narrative and that there exists a symbolic power in the idea of 'grammar'. Both Opala and King George come from elsewhere and bring with them resources and expertise. 'Grammar' seems to be central to the way Pa Kargbo imagines their authority as interveners. Of course in reality Pa Kargbo has benefitted little from Opala's work at Bunce Island. Although Opala's publicity may have initially raised the numbers of visitors, Pa Kargbo now finds himself without any official connection to the site. Likewise, the reality of colonialism was naturally much more fraught than emerges in his story and arguably played a central role in setting up the context which drove the civil war (TRC Vol .2, Vol. 3 2004), though this has been contested (Basu 2008).

Kreps' call for 'appropriate museology' suggests museum training and capacity building must respond to the local context. However, determining what is 'appropriate' in a context like Sierra Leone encounters difficulty, given the complexity in understanding what the 'local' really is. With little effective recent training at the SLNM, there is a strong legacy of M. C. F. Easmon's very British understanding of an African national museum. His portrait is a focal point of school tours at the SLNM which begin with an introduction to Easmon who is heralded as the founder. South African Dorothy Cummings was the longest running Curator the National Museum and she remains a

port of call if staff require guidance. The existing 'heritage' narrative in Sierra Leone is still anchored in European contact, indicated by the MRC's list of National Monuments. Paradoxically the SLNM's own 50th anniversary exhibition returned to this narrative as it traced European contact from 1462.

Joseph's plans exhibited a nostalgia for the colonial past in an ill-advised attempt to return the SLNM to its somewhat imagined 'glory days'. Joseph was labelled an outsider by staff at the SLNM, though in a different context he might be considered far more 'local' than an otherwise 'white' British intervention.

The British Museum's Africa Programme took a very different approach in an attempt to move the museum away from this legacy and reach a different kind of 'local'. This was informed by a performative and vibrant heritage which is participated in by Sierra Leoneans today and enables the SLNM to lead in a cultural discourse which is separate from the politics of the MRC. The redeveloped gallery used locally available resources, skills and expertise. This intervention was successful and reclaimed by the MoTC in the press conference which launched its opening. Nonetheless, the programme had to compromise its aesthetic and 'story telling' approach, introducing more textual interpretation than had been initially envisaged. I suggest the importance of text lay in the idea that a museum should be an authority and representative of expectations surrounding the idea of a national institution.

Street's (2001, 1995) notion of 'social literacies' is useful in this context as a tool for thinking about text. Street argues that literacy is a social practice rather than a technical or neutral skill, noting 'it is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being' (2001: 7). In this sense there are 'multiple literacies' which arise in multiple social contexts for different uses. I suggest that literacy at the SLNM is about its symbolic representation of an institutionalised professionalism rather than simply about 'text'. The idea of what a museum is or should be and the kind of knowledge it represents in Sierra Leone continues to be bound up in notions of 'learning' and 'education'; terms which are

deeply embedded in their autocratic use by aid agencies, development programmes and governmental poverty reduction strategies. Targeting Sierra Leone's exceptionally low literacy rates is an important project as is increasing access to languages and literacies of power which remain in the hands of a minority. I suggest the SLNM is currently linked with this minority and thus needs to uphold its side of the bargain in order to live up to popular expectation, whether or not this is in the long term a useful strategy.

As emerged through Pa Kargbo's story, text can have powerful symbolic associations even if it emerges through a colonial past. Heritage and development interventions have been associated with colonialism because they appear to construct generalised truths about peoples' values or needs. In this context, however, residues of these generalised values are still valuable. This is not to suggest that this should be taken at face value as 'locally appropriate', but rather that the relationship between what is 'local' and what is 'foreign' is more complex than the current nexus of culture and development allows. Both Pa Kargbo and the SLNM meet with difficulties that are derived from their engagement with both the colonial past and subsequent interventions. In the case of the SLNM a current intervention may indeed be more 'locally appropriate' than their existing idea of 'museum work' allows.

In the following chapter I continue by returning to the potency of particular values and ideas which come from the outside and are instrumentalised by those who currently hold responsibility for shaping a future Sierra Leone. I explore the ways these focus on transformational rhetoric which present a set of ambiguities concerning the role the past is to play in this future.

## **4. Negotiating the role of heritage in national transformation**

In the previous chapter I explored the problems associated with making any straightforward distinction between the 'local' and the 'foreign' in Sierra Leone. The 50th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule provides the context for this discussion, bringing ambiguity into the relationship between colonialism, aid, intervention and expectations of 'local alternatives'. A long history of foreign influence shapes relationships with interventions and aid in the present, as individuals attempt to reach an understanding of what is 'locally appropriate' in Sierra Leone. The following chapter also concerns intervention, however it is particularly focused on the discourses of development that emerge as a result and the way these re-emerge through discussions of broader national change and transformation.

'Change' is central to Sierra Leone's most recent development policy, informed by both international discourse and the current Government's political manifesto. This Government has been successful in embedding its rhetoric of a 'new era of reform' which supports increasing political and civic responsibility within Sierra Leone (International Crisis Group 2008). This builds on earlier recommendations made by the international community and the post-war Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding the importance of establishing a more profound sense of patriotism and national consciousness. This chapter explores the way 'culture' and 'heritage' fit into this vision of change which is largely constructed through global development discourse and governmental national policy. Like the previous chapter, I explore this through three different contexts. These include the importance of development discourse at the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, notions of change in the education sector, and, returning to my earlier discussion, attempts to inspire patriotism through the slogan 'unity in diversity', during the 50th anniversary of independence

from colonial rule. I argue that the role of 'culture' and 'heritage' in wider national development remains ambiguous at each of these encounters, overlooking its potential to play a far greater role in Sierra Leone's future.

## **Change at the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs**

### **THE MINISTRY**

The Sierra Leonean Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTC) was established in 1973 with responsibilities over 'tourism, the Hotels and Tourist Board, cultural affairs, monuments and relics, the Sierra Leone National Dance Troupe, museums, entertainment clubs and organisations' (Abraham 1978: 30). The Ministry building currently occupies the former Chinese Embassy, located along King Harman Road, west of the centre of Freetown. The third floor of the MoTC building is allocated to the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, headed by Brima<sup>10</sup> and aided by his Assistant Director, Mohamed<sup>11</sup>. They share the building with the Directorate of Tourism which is often prioritised as the most important of the two. Tourism is emerging as a potentially central industry for Sierra Leone and the Directorate of Tourism tussles for authority in this sector with the National Tourist Board. The National Tourist Board (previously the Hotels and Tourist Board) technically sits under the MoTC although in practice it is run quite independently by its Director, Cecil Williams.

The sector is the focus of the recent multi-donor (incl. UNDP, IMF, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, World Bank and WTO) Integrated Framework (IF) for Trade Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries programme (Government of Sierra Leone and UNDP 2007; WTO and UNDP 2006), which included tourism development and collaboration with the National Tourist Board in Sierra Leone. Two members of staff at the Sierra Leone National Museum (SLNM) attended tour guide training supported by the IF programme in 2010 and gained certificates endorsing them as members of the National Association of Certified Tour Guides. Much of the training was focused on conducting tours around Freetown, covering the landmarks to Sierra Leone's colonial

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<sup>10</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

past which currently dominate the construction of a national heritage. The programme distributed 5,000 'Tourism Maps' of Sierra Leone and Freetown (Government of Sierra Leone and UNDP 2007) which could later be bought in town on street corners for Le20,000. A second tier project, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), was approved in January 2012, specifically oriented to supporting the development of eco-tourism in a three year, \$3million programme. Increasingly, eco-tourism is being used as an alternative model of sustainable tourism in developing countries, to the kinds of uncontrolled mass tourism as discussed in relation to Angkor Wat by Winter (Winter 2007).

A new Minister, Victoria Saidu Kamara, was appointed in 2011 after the former Minister, Hindolo Sumanguru Trye, was promoted to Minister of Labour and Social Security. Saidu Kamara has been keen to present herself as particularly committed to developing the tourism industry in Sierra Leone. She recently aligned herself to the second tier EIF programme and emphasised her commitment to a collaboration between the Directorate of Tourism and the National Tourist Board in the management of the initiative (Awoko 2012). An association with such a high profile programme financed by the international community is clearly valuable and those working under the Directorate of Cultural Affairs have also been keen to show their role in promoting tourism. Brima was involved in the first phase of the IF programme as a lecturer and co-ordinator for the tour guide training course. He was also involved in an application for funding to prepare a tentative proposal of natural and cultural sites to be considered for UNESCO World Heritage status, granted in January 2011. Brima met with a UNESCO committee in February 2012 to discuss the proposed sites which included the Gola Forest, Tiwai Island and Bunce Island. During a trip to London in the week before this he drew on the second tier EIF programme and noted that these sites have all been identified as potential future eco-tourism destinations (Directorate of Cultural Affairs 2012).

Although tourism remains the broader operational focus of the MoTC, the Directorate of Cultural Affairs has also been engaged in trying to pass a National Cultural Policy. In its

current version, tourism plays a minor role and is highlighted as a potential threat to 'local communities'. In particular, the Policy is concerned by the 'negative influences of tourism on the youth and children to guard against the erosion of moral values in the societies' (Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs 2011: 54). This document draws heavily on international development and heritage discourses, including multiculturalism, human rights, poverty alleviation and the 'preservation and protection' of heritage. Its current form is a revised version of a policy largely written by Julius Spencer between 1992 and 1994. I met Spencer in 2010 at his offices on Circular Road, Freetown, where he works as editor for *Premier News*, one of Freetown's many newspapers. Spencer was Chair of the Monuments and Relics Commission (MRC) between 1992 and 1993, and claims he left the post due to increasing disillusionment with the cultural sector (Julius Spencer pers. comm). These turbulent years were however also marked by a military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser who established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) in 1992 and suspended the constitution until he was sent into exile in 1996. Spencer was arrested by the NPRC in 1994 for writing a controversial article accusing Strasser of corruption in *New Breed*, a newspaper initially established in support of the NPRC (Ceessay 2012). He has recently been involved in another controversy, accused of claiming extortionate expenses as member of the official anniversary celebration committee, discussed in the final section of this chapter.

The current version of the Policy has retained Spencer's suggestion concerning the creation of a new National Commission of Arts and Culture (NCAC). Spencer noted that this independent commission was proposed to provide a new form of management over the cultural sector which could bypass the inefficiencies of the MoTC (Julius Spencer, pers. comm). The suggested role of the NCAC, as stipulated in the current version of the Policy, places it in charge of 'Museums and Monuments, Research and Documentation; Creative and Performing Arts; Cultural Industries and Enterprises; and Administration, Marketing and Finance' (Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs 2011: 65). MoTC employees, particularly those associated with the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, unsurprisingly see a different advantage in the NCAC as an effective body which

officially establishes the role of Cultural Affairs beyond its current remit. The proposed NCAC is understood as an important arm of Cultural Affairs which would oversee the work of the MRC and the SLNM, rather than forming an independent body as was originally intended. The creation of the NCAC is regarded as a key output and reason for enacting the Cultural Policy. Nonetheless, the Policy is yet to be passed by parliament but this may change as President Ernest Bai Koroma settles in to his second term after the November 2012 elections.

**MOHAMED, ‘ATTITUDINAL CHANGE’ AND THE YOUTH**

Mohamed was Cultural Officer at the MoTC before he was promoted to Assistant Director of Cultural Affairs early in 2011. Before this he completed a prestigious BA in Gender Studies at Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone’s primary university. Mohamed was formally on the original Sierra Leonean steering group for the Reanimating Cultural Heritage project which also included staff from the SLNM and a representative from the MRC. However, in practice, his role in the project was limited. Despite this, he frequently dropped in to the SLNM to mediate messages from the Director of Cultural Affairs, the Permanent Secretary or the Minister at the MoTC. He is quite an entertainer and fond of public speaking, often representing the MoTC or, more specifically, the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, at smaller public events.



Figure 14. We Yone Cultural Dance Troupe performing at Caribbean Fusion along Sanders Street in Freetown. These weekly events were hosted by the Cultural Officer at the MoTC, but drew to a close in May 2010. Photo: author.



Mohamed is in his early 30s and frequently referred to himself as a member of the Sierra Leonean 'youth'; this is reflected in his personal enthusiasm for working with youth groups. He has successfully managed to integrate this work into his remit as Cultural Officer and Assistant Director. When I began fieldwork in 2010 Mohamed was co-organising a weekly cultural evening which included performances by We Yone Cultural Dance Troupe, a group of young performers living in Freetown and Regent (figure 14). The event was held at Caribbean Fusion, a restaurant in the centre of Freetown owned and run by Valerie who returned to Sierra Leone in 2008 after twenty years spent in the UK and the USA. The performances began with songs sung in Temne, followed by a short piece of improvised theatre with a 'positive message'. This included HIV prevention, birth control, domestic violence and theft, amongst others. Mohamed was keen to add to this by organising an 'educational message of wisdom' for the 'youth' which was delivered by one of their 'elders'. This included an engaging history of Sierra Leone presented by Obai Wurie, an enthusiastic radio DJ who hosts a popular radio station in Freetown aimed at the youth demographic. It also included an introduction to Rastafarianism by the leader of Rasta Youths, another organisation supported by Mohamed. The programme ran its course and ended in May 2010. Mohamed continues to support youth groups including 'Youth Arise!!!', Community Concern Network and the National Youth Coalition; this focus should be understood in the wider post-conflict context of Sierra Leone. The 10 year civil war has widely been understood as a 'crisis of youth', an interpretation informed in part by Paul Richards and his students' ethnographic work with young combatants in the 1990s and early 2000s (1995; 1993; Peters 2011). As noted by Fanthorpe and Maconachie (2010), this narrative has framed post-war reconstruction and influenced the high numbers of internationally funded but locally run NGOs which focus on the 'youth problem'. The 'crisis of youth' narrative also informed a revised National Youth Policy, passed by Tejan Kabbah's post-war government in 2003 and targeted at 'youth development' to provide a 'sound base for a stable and peaceful Sierra Leone' (Ministry of Youth and Sports 2003).

When we first met, Mohamed generously offered to put together an itinerary for me as an introduction to 'culture' in Sierra Leone. This was largely informed by his own

agenda concerning the 'youth problem' and included a number of visits to the many youth groups spread across Freetown. It also included a trip down Mohamed's 'memory lane', where he narrated the lead up to the civil war and the role of Sierra Leonean 'culture' in instigating the conflict. Central to this narrative was the problem of Sierra Leone's 'lumpen youth' which he associated with ongoing problems of unemployment and poverty. This terminology has been used in the context of Sierra Leone by Abdullah to refer to 'unemployed and unemployable youths, mostly male, who live by their wits or who have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or underground economy' (1998: 207). Marx' notion of the lumpenproletariat was used by Franz Fanon in relation to 'this cohort of starving men, divorced from tribe and land, [which] constitutes one of the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonised people' (Fanon 1961: 81). Fanon's revolutionary vocabulary was also quoted in one of the Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) first propaganda documents entitled *Footpaths to Democracy*, which begins 'each generation must out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it' (Fanon 1961: 206 in RUF 1996: 1). Indeed Mohamed specifically referred to this document in his discussion, noting that it was written by Sierra Leone's 'lumpen youth...before they were given guns'. Abdullah (1998) argues that lumpen youth were mobilised by early post-independence politicians as *rarray boys*, or thugs, to scaremonger the opposition. Christensen and Utas (2008) show how unemployed young men, often ex-combatants, also played a central role in the violent political strategies of the 2007 election campaigns in Sierra Leone.

Drawing on this context, Mohamed positioned his own role as an advisor who understood the youth, yet was able to make a change as a 'professional'. 'In Sierra Leone', he observed, 'culture and development are one and the same. Sierra Leone possesses both good and bad culture. It is our job to eradicate the bad and preserve the good'. Drawing on the language of Sierra Leone's second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II), *Our Agenda for Change*, he highlighted the need for 'attitudinal change' as 'cultural change', again linking the Directorate of Cultural Affairs at the MoTC with these broader post-conflict and developmentalist concerns. The Attitudinal Change Campaign is part of the PRSP II as a precondition for achieving the broader strategic

priorities of electricity, transportation, trade and human development. The introductory paragraph to this section reads:

The state of *backwardness* of Sierra Leone is a clear indication that we have not been doing things in a manner that would move our country forward. The call for a change of attitudes among Sierra Leoneans is not new but is being given added impetus. There is a need for change in attitudes towards one another, change in attitudes to work and responsibilities and change in attitudes towards the nation. All of these changes should translate positively into progress and development for Sierra Leone. (Government of Sierra Leone 2008: 111, my emphasis)

Although this document is written with input from Sierra Leone's development partners, it is largely credited to the current president, Ernest Bai Koroma. Governmental ownership is an increasingly important concept within multi-donor budget support mechanisms and government formulated national poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) have been identified as an important tool for readdressing power relationships between donor and recipient. The extent to which these actually result in redress has, however, been questioned provided that PRSPs are often written with donor priorities in mind (for example Woll 2008). Sierra Leone's PRSP II emerged as the result of a long consultation process between government and the countries development partners, including the UK's Department for International Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Monetary Fund and the International Development Association (IMF and IDA 2009).

Regardless, Sierra Leone's PRSP II is often referred to as 'Koroma's Agenda for Change' within Sierra Leone. It is written in his voice, emphasising a collective 'we' regarding the changes that the document proposes. 'Attitudinal change' is linked in with the President's broader manifesto which highlights the importance of accountability in the development process and played a role in his 2007 election campaign (International Dialogue on Peace Building and State Building 2012: 9). Key to this was establishing a

'new social contract' which emphasised the role of the State in providing services and the need for citizens to uphold their side of the bargain (*ibid*; International Crisis Group 2008). The establishment of the donor funded Anti-Corruption Commission in 2008 was a central component of this promise which promoted long-term governmental reform and new political discipline (International Crisis Group 2008). Koroma's political manifesto in 2007 concerned the need to move Sierra Leone forward from a dependent, post-conflict, recovery context to broader government-led national development (*ibid*).

Though framed as developing increasing autonomy and national independence, the PRSP II draws heavily on international development discourse, reflecting the collaborative process which preceded it. Besides the strategic priorities, the focus on governmental transparency and civic responsibility has since secured crucial donor contracts to: re-establish power supplies to Freetown (International Crisis Group 2008); implement a national infrastructure development project (World Bank 2011); and secure substantial international support for the Free Maternal Healthcare Bill (Donnelly 2011). It draws heavily on recommendations made by Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which found the 'extraordinary failure of leadership' and the 'endemic greed, corruption and nepotism' to have played a central role on igniting and prolonging the civil war (TRC, Vol. 2 2004: 27). The commission called for a new kind of citizenship built on a 'new culture of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance' (TRC, Vol. 2 2004: 9). Despite this international influence, the PRSP II is understood as a defining moment in Koroma's political career by supporters of the APC Government in Sierra Leone. Interestingly, Koroma's term has also been praised by the international community, labelled as a 'new era of reform' after the turbulent post-independence years (International Crisis Group 2008).

#### **MOHAMED, ROSTOW AND CHANGE**

As well as drawing on the language of the PRSP II, Mohamed also presented his own model for change during a discussion at the opening ceremony of a new Institute of Tourism and Travel at the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology.

Mohamed had been invited to the event as a guest speaker and representative of the MoTC. I joined him along with one of his friends, Sahr, who worked for the National Forum of Human Rights. Sahr, like Mohamed, was particularly engaged with youth groups and was, at the time, involved in a project to set up support centres for female ex-combatants. He noted that support had been forthcoming for the disarmament and reintegration of young men, but that women were largely ignored in this process; a problem which has recently also been highlighted by Megan MacKenzie (2009). MacKenzie's research into the UN's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process in Sierra Leone explores inconsistencies in the ways the roles of men and women in the civil war were constructed. She argues this de-emphasised the agency of female soldiers by framing their experience through languages of victimhood. This discussion feeds in to a broader international concern over women's rights in Sierra Leone, touched on in the recommendations made by the TRC (2004) and the UN (UNHRC 2002; UNHRC 2001; UNHRC 2011). Part of the problem identified by Sahr was that Sierra Leone was 'stuck' in the 'traditional age'. He identified gender inequality, or as he put it 'still having gender issues', as a defining feature of 'traditional society'. Agreeing with Sahr, Mohamed commented that parts of Sierra Leone are still 'primitive and completely backwards'; he defined 'backwards' as still believing in magic and 'false idols'. Mohamed drew a comparison with Europe in the 'dark ages', 'before you people joined the path to civilisation'. Returning to the PRSP II's statement on 'attitudinal change', this also accused Sierra Leone of 'backwardness', inhibiting the country's capacity to 'move forwards'.

This discourse became common place during the weekly meetings and visits organised by Mohamed. An important part of his understanding of 'attitudinal change' was concerned with acquiring the 'productive mindset' of the West and leaving elements of Sierra Leonean culture behind. He continued 'we still have the mindset of the European dark ages, God made us to learn, we should not reinvent the wheel'. This somewhat awkward statement appears to be an internalisation of the broader 'myth' of development built on a model of Western progress which has been reviewed by development critique (for example Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). Mohamed moved on

to explain that he understood his own role at the Ministry as providing support for Sierra Leone in changing its 'culture', to enable it to effectively follow the West. Paying homage to Rostow's (1960) stages of economic development, he explained that Sierra Leone was currently split between stage one, 'traditional society' and stage two, 'preconditions for take-off'. Mohamed had his own interpretation of what defined each stage. Stage one related to 'fatalism', explained as 'having no plans; leaving everything up to God', whilst stage two related to having 'political structures, democracy and tolerance'. 'During the war', he continued, 'we reverted backwards to traditional society, but now we are beginning the leapfrog to maturity!'. The last stage, 'maturity', was defined in terms of order, 'when people don't jump the queue, or scramble for transport, when people play golf and work in offices'. Central to this idea of 'maturity' is a physical embodiment of an imagined West, used to negotiate his own identification of some of the problems faced by Sierra Leone and associated with 'traditional society'.

'Culture' is central to Mohamed's analogy of change, providing the reason behind Sierra Leone's continued difficulties as well as the tools for 'leapfrogging'. 'Leapfrogging' is itself a term with 'international development' connotations, having been used to discuss the technological potential for developing countries to skip industrial and technological stages deemed damaging to the environment, such as logging and the use of coal-fired power plants (Goldenburg 1998). In Mohamed's case, 'leapfrogging' was rather about not needing to 'reinvent the wheel', taking onboard elements of Western culture to propel Sierra Leone forward.

#### **THE MINISTRY OF EVERYTHING**

Mohamed supported his understanding of 'culture', and thus his role as Cultural Officer with a broad definition. During one of my meetings with him in 2010 he noted:

As Cultural Officer, I use E. B. Tylor's definition of culture; culture is a comprehensive whole including value, beliefs, traditions, customs, practices, and every other capability of *humans* (I replace 'man' – I am educated and gender aware), in his *or her* environment. Here we are the Ministry of Tourism

and Cultural Affairs; therefore, we are the Ministry of Everything. (Mohamed, cultural officer at the MoTC 2011)

In the above quotation, Mohamed references Edward B. Tylor's iconic definition of culture from the first page of *Primitive Culture* (Tylor 1958 [1871]), repeating it almost word for word:

Culture, or civilisation, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (Tylor 1958 [1871]: 1)

In the context of our discussion, however, it was subject to what Mohamed termed his own personal critique; namely his substitution of *man* with the more 'gender aware' *human*. He noted this was informed by his recently acquired degree in Gender Studies, but it also slots into his wider professional concerns to engage in broader national development, also highlighted through his work with youth groups.

Mohamed's use of Tylor had the affect of emphasising the importance of his profession. Such a broad definition of culture as encompassing 'every other capability of humans' appears to legitimise his later claim concerning the MoTC as the 'Ministry of Everything'. The same words were used at a press conference at the SLNM in April 2011 organised to launch the rehabilitation of the permanent displays, supported by the British Museum's Africa Programme. As discussed, the revised gallery now houses a collection of masquerade costumes representing a number of Sierra Leone's esoteric societies. Mohamed began by introducing Brima, the Director of Cultural Affairs at the MoTC, as the 'Director of Everything'. This flattering introduction was supported by Brima, who continued by mentioning his work with Sierra Leone's esoteric societies, firmly positioning his own role as expert:

For those of us who know about these things, as advisors and experts, they are not secret societies, they are traditional schools, or esoteric societies. These social programmes are teaching people things that are not taught in schools, sometimes they replace schools...these social programmes helped to set up agriculture in areas in Freetown. (Director of Cultural Affairs, speech at the SLNM press conference, April 2011)

In this statement Brima expands the traditional remit of the Directorate of Cultural Affairs to include broader development programmes, in this case education and agriculture. This narrative taps into the 'culture for development' discourse that informs the nexus of culture and development that I discuss earlier in this thesis. As I explore in the following chapter, this discourse also pervades Sierra Leone's draft Cultural Policy which aligns with UNESCO's proposal to broaden the remit of such policies to outline the role of 'culture' in national development (UNESCO 1995: 40-43). Returning to Brima's speech, esoteric societies are introduced as central to national development through their description as 'social programmes', by providing a local alternative to international intervention. Crucially, however, the Directorate of Cultural Affairs is presented as ingrained in these wider trajectories of national change and transformation. In this narrative, Mohamed, Brima and the Directorate of Cultural Affairs emerge as key players in Sierra Leone's future despite the relative lack of governmental and international agency interest, compared to the Directorate of Tourism.

Though the cultural sector does not feature in the PRSP II, Brima's comments align the MoTC with Koroma's broader rhetoric concerning 'attitudinal change', informed by a similar discourse of 'autonomy'. Earlier I quoted the definition of 'attitudinal change' included in the PRSP II, where it warns against 'backwardness', associating it with poor attitudes towards 'one another', 'work', 'responsibilities' and the nation. Koroma's *Agenda* for national development proposes greater governmental responsibility in driving change through political and social reform, rather than remaining dependant on change led by Sierra Leone's development partners. Of course these partners remain



influential to reform, financially backing initiatives that conform to their individual agendas and concerns, yet the message which emerges from the *Agenda* is one of a wider national duty to drive national transformations from within. A framework of 'culture as everything' conforms to this in the way it is used by Mohamed and Brima, proposing that the potential for future change can lie within Sierra Leone's own 'culture'.

Despite this alignment, Mohamed's earlier discussion of 'backwardness' and not 'reinventing the wheel' appears as an odd contradiction. Rather than drawing on the nexus of culture and development, or the 'autonomy' message in the PRSP II, Mohamed does the opposite by using a particular understanding of the West as a proposed model of change in Sierra Leone. 'Traditional culture', represented by 'magic', 'folklore' and 'leaving everything up to God' comes to define everything that is 'backward'. Returning to Mohamed's description of his own role concerning Sierra Leone having both 'good' and 'bad' culture, there is some ambiguity in what is 'good', or worth supporting, and what is 'bad' and can be left behind. Although the 'culture is everything' rhetoric proposes a more positive relationship between culture, heritage and development, it also adds to this lack of clarity. Arguably, it limits the Directorate of Cultural Affairs by broadening its agenda to include areas which are the remit of other specialist ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, rather than focusing on its own agenda.

## **Change through the school curriculum**

One of the key concerns regarding Sierra Leone's future in the aftermath of the civil war was access to education. With over 70% of schools abandoned during the civil war and huge regional disparities in quality before that, educational reform was identified as a key priority by both the government (MoDEP and NLTNPS 2003: 23; Government of Sierra Leone 2008) and the international donor community (UNICEF 2000; UNICEF 2002; The World Bank and The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2007: 78; DFID Sierra Leone 2011: 3). This instigated a number of

interventions into the education sector. Below I discuss this with regard to UNICEF's role in developing a new teaching syllabus and supporting a nationwide teacher training programme. In both cases UNICEF and the National Curriculum Development and Research Centre (NCDRC) drew on the discourses which later informed the PRSP II. This included references to 'culture' and 'heritage', although embedded in wider vocabularies concerning national development. Moving on, I introduce two teachers whom I interviewed and discuss their reflections on the role of 'culture' and 'heritage' in Sierra Leone's future.

### **UNICEF AND THE 2005 TEACHING SYLLABUS**

In 2007 the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) published a new Education Sector Plan (MEST 2007). This built on a capacity building programme instigated by UNICEF called the 'Accelerated Learning Plan', targeted at both civil servants working under MEST and primary school teachers (UNICEF 2000). A new teaching syllabus for primary and secondary level school children was developed in 2005 by the NCDRC for MEST. This was done in collaboration with UNICEF who had run a series of workshops for employees of the NCDRC. The new syllabus draws heavily on development vocabulary with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS prevention, health and sanitation, population growth, peace education and civil society strengthening.

These discourses are touched on by the majority of subjects. Pre-Vocational Studies is entirely devoted to 'personal and national development' with lessons ranging from classifying key nutrients in local food stuffs, caring for younger siblings, to cleaning cooking pots and learning simple needlework to mend clothes (NCDRC 2005a: 40-51). Physical Health Education is particularly geared toward health and sanitation focusing on food and nutrition, importance of access to clean water, avoiding disease, and personal cleanliness (NCDRC 2005a; NCDRC 2005b). Interestingly, this vocabulary also dominates subjects which might otherwise cover 'culture' or 'heritage', in this case Social Studies and Creative and Practical Arts. The primary school syllabus for Creative and Practical Arts covers a range of different crafts from raffia work and weaving, to making and playing local instruments. HIV/AIDS prevention and dealing with societal

stigma is however drawn on for subject matter throughout school years three to five (NCDRC 2005a: 3-9; NCDRC 2005b: 2-9). Children are asked to 'model characters for short stories, poems and songs from health charts on HIV/AIDS' (NCDRC 2005a: 3) and teachers are encouraged to teach 'dramatisation through dances depicting people with HIV/AIDS' (NCDRC 2005a: 6).

When I began working at the SLNM, I was interested in exploring ways in which the National Museum might play a greater role in local schools and so attended a number of meetings with teachers and the Museum's education officer. During these meetings, Social Studies was deemed by teachers as the most relevant subject to integrate into a proposed museum programme. A closer inspection of the new syllabus, however, suggests that this also draws heavily on development vocabulary. Social Studies forecasts the 2008 PRSP II with a focus on 'changing attitudes' for peace education and civil society strengthening. Primary school year three, for example, focuses on 'developing social values and attitudes' (NCDRC 2005a: 161) and 'understanding and respecting different communities' (NCDRC 2005a: 83). The latter includes suggested lesson plans which focus on exploring diversity within a community, for example describing different religious institutions in year four and 'customs pertaining to language, greetings and respect for authority' in year five (2005b: 71). In years four and five, the Social Studies syllabus aims at supporting citizenship through explaining 'the need and functions of public services, ministries, corporations, voluntary organisations and their contributions to national development' (NCDRC 2005b: 77). Interestingly, understanding the role and functions of international agencies in Sierra Leone, including the UN, the World Health Foundation and the Organisation of African Unity, is also part of Social Studies in year five (NCDRC 2005b: 172), highlighting the visibility of these organisations and their current significance to Social Studies' broader agenda of 'developing skills leading towards good citizenship and patriotism' (NCDRC 2005b: 71).

The syllabus does mention 'heritage' though in support of a wider peace-building agenda, drawing on international discourses of multiculturalism and diversity, such as are presented in UNESCO's 1995 *Our Creative Diversity* report (UNESCO 1995).

Teachers in year three are encouraged to discuss 'local customs and traditions in our community e.g. births, marriages, deaths and other celebrations' in term one, and 'our national holidays' in term two (NCDRC 2005a: 72). Central to both terms is 'demonstrating a spirit of tolerance' and 'appreciating their own cultural background' (NCDRCa 2005: 76). Suggested learning activities include asking students to make a comparison between Christmas and Eid-ul-Fitr, or to talk about a birth or naming ceremony from their own family. The syllabus identifies 'projecting further our cultural heritage and national image' (*ibid*) as a key objective throughout years three to five, although what is included as 'heritage' remains vague. The focus on nationalism slots in to recommendations made by the TRC concerning developing a 'new form of citizenship and building patriotism' (TRC 2004, Vol. 2: 122) and this was later influential to the Attitudinal Change Campaign in the PRSP II. Teachers are encouraged to organise lessons about national holidays, such as independence day, to 'demonstrate a spirit of national consciousness'. This includes asking students to 'give reasons why this occasion calls for happy celebration', 'show ways in which pupils participate in celebrations' and 'let pupils draw the national flag' (NCDRC 2005a: 45).

#### **'CHANGING DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS', REVIVAL AND LOSS**

UNICEF have carried their work with the education sector forward through a teacher training programme named 'Emerging Issues'. A key aspect of this programme is changing current 'destructive behaviours' in Sierra Leone (UNICEF and NCDRC 2008), slotting in to the 'attitudinal change' campaign introduced in the PRSP II. The course was organised through a number of workshops, each relating to one of four development oriented themes: human rights; civics and democracy; gender; and health and environment. Along with more general teacher training, the course had a particular focus on expanding teacher knowledge in support of the national curriculum, specifically where it merged with the UN's broader development trajectory. I met with Mr. Gassama<sup>12</sup> in June 2010, who was at the time Acting Head of Curriculum at the NCRDC and had just returned from one such workshop in Kenema which had focused on the 'gender issue'. During this meeting he mentioned that the workshop had

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<sup>12</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

concentrated on combating 'barriers to education'. These, he argued, were 'cultural attitudes, such as early marriage and not educating the girl child'. He continued 'we need to revive culture and advocate for the greater impact of culture on development issues'.

This contradiction, where culture is both a 'barrier' to development and acknowledged as important to Sierra Leone's future, became more apparent as Mr. Gassama further elaborated on what he meant by 'revival'. This was in relation to the SLNM which entered the conversation through my own introduction as a Ph.D student undertaking research at the Museum. Commenting on the lack of Sierra Leonean interest in the SLNM, Mr. Gassama reflected 'today, people compare it to a big cemetery, full of old dead things'. Directly referencing the UNICEF teacher training programme, he suggested that the Museum would be more popular should it focus on modern 'emerging issues', such as 'knowing our leaders' and 'the gender issue'. As Acting-Head of Curriculum at the NCDRC, there is no reason that Mr. Gassama should have launched into a discussion of the value of the SLNM as a cultural heritage institution, particularly given the relative disinterest in the Museum in Freetown as a whole. What is interesting here, however, is his choice of words: 'revival'. His use of the term suggests that Mr. Gassama felt value lay in something from Sierra Leone's past, now lost, yet his suggestions for the SLNM were fixed firmly in the present. Hopes for the present were expressed through UNICEF's language of 'emerging issues', drawing on the vocabularies for change informed by national policy and international intervention.

'Revival', used in this context of ambiguous 'cultural revival', was not uncommon in discussions with teachers. Sharing Mohamed's concerns with the 'youth problem', many equated this with a sense of cultural loss in the younger generation. Interesting in terms of the scale of intervention from 'Western' development agencies, this loss was widely associated with increasing exposure to Western cultural influences. An often repeated concern was over changing ways of dressing with students preferring to dress in Western, over African, styles.

Mr. Thomas<sup>13</sup> was a senior teacher at the SOS International School in Freetown. SOS is an international charity which provides a home and education for orphaned children. In Freetown this is as an SOS village; the village sits alongside the SOS school which also admits private fee paying students. At the time of writing, this is regarded as one of the best schools in Freetown and provides education for the children of Freetown's rising upper middle classes. Commenting on the importance of 'culture', Mr. Thomas observed 'in the past people would wear their traditional attire, you could distinguish ethnic groups by what people wore. Today you see them all with their trousers hanging at their knees, listening to that rap music, and talking the white man's language'. This statement must be understood as referring to an imagined past, conforming to rigid ethnic categories which have widely been shown to be a product of the colonial classificatory imagination (Hall 2002; Eltringham 2004). Kandeh (1992) shows how this was no less the case in Sierra Leone where constructions of ethnicity are deeply embedded in processes of ethnopolicisation, beginning with the British Tribal Administration (Freetown) Act of 1905 where ethnic groups identified in Freetown were encouraged to live in segregated communities under colonially identified 'tribal heads'. He also shows how tribal distinctions framed education policies in the protectorate, the area surrounding the colony located along Sierra Leone's Western Peninsula. These programmes encouraged 'tribal patriotism' through schools targeted at particular ethnic groups. Despite this complexity, Mr. Thomas's concern with 'loss' was reflected elsewhere through, for example, 'African Fridays' in Freetown, whereby office workers swapped their suits and shirts for 'traditional attire'.

Mr. Thomas was anxious that a change in the way young people clothe themselves reflected a broader problem that 'culture is dying out, we are forgetting our ways'. Moving on from his comment about ethnic groups, he was particularly concerned about what he observed as an increased sexual laxity among the young which he attributed to Western influence. He described young girls who exposed their shoulders, backs and chest, and wore short tight skirts or trousers with 'no shame'. Mr. Thomas commented

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<sup>13</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

on his memory of the way women dressed in the past, noting that it was more 'respectful to tradition'. He hoped that potential workshops at the SLNM would be able to help change this and 'inspire young men and women to wear their culture'. Like Mr. Gassama, Mr. Thomas discussed this in a broader context of development through a repetition of the need for a 'change in attitudes'. He commented that 'we have lost our ways, our traditions. In Sierra Leone we must return to culture so we can change the behaviours of the youth and move forward'.

As with his connection of marking ethnic difference through clothing, this connection between gendered 'covering up' and tradition is not so much based on fact as an imagined past. Mr. Thomas, like many of Freetown's middle class, was a Pentecostal Christian. As noted by Comaroff and Comaroff (1997), a central component of Christian missionary work in the 19th century was dressing 'naked' African bodies in European cloths as a mode of physical and moral conversion. The British Museum's collection of photographic prints recording missionary work in the late 19th Century show how these transformations were taking place in Sierra Leone. Images from an album put together by William Vivian in 1889 depict missionary life in the south-east of Sierra Leone with members wearing high-collared shirts and long skirts. A particularly interesting photograph depicts a 'mission girl' in a high-necked pleated gingham dress stood next to a young woman with a cloth loosely wrapped round her body and described as 'the wife of a heathen' (figure 15). The image is likely to have been taken near Rotifunk in Bumpe Chiefdom, which was a base of the American United Brethren in Christ Mission. 'Covering up' remains a central component of Christian, in particular Pentecostal, church services in Freetown where women are discouraged from wearing tight clothing, trousers, or short skirts and encouraged to wear head ties. These conservative attitudes to dress emerge from the Evangelical roots of Pentecostal doctrine born in early 20th century Los Angeles, as discussed by Gifford (1994; 2004). The Pentecostal Church in Sierra Leone and its relationship with the management of past is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.



Figure 15. A photograph likely taken by William Vivian in 1889, comparing a 'mission girl' with a 'wife of a heathen'. The composition of the image clearly shows the missionary attitudes to dress and how this visually separated converts from non-converts. Image: SierraLeoneHeritage.org. 2012.

Mr. Thomas's assertion that a 'return' to Sierra Leonean 'tradition' would solve his particular concern is somewhat contradictory. As is increasingly central to anthropological discussions concerning clothing and fashion, boundaries between what is traditional and what is imported are often ambiguous (Allman 2004; Hansen 2004). This is certainly the case regarding 'covering up' in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Thomas's reflections are however interesting in relation to part of Ivaska's

(2002) work, which explores legislation banning miniskirts, along with other tight clothing and skin lightening creams, in post-independence Tanzania. A campaign led by the Youth League of Tanzania's ruling party in the mid 1960s argued specifically that these items were antithetical to 'national culture', representing increasing Western influence. What constituted 'national culture' was, however, contested, coexisting 'in uneasy tension with another imperative: the production of a self-consciously "modern" culture as a tool for national development' (2002: 591). Ivaska quotes a ministerial memo from 1966 which claimed a central task of Tanzania's official cultural brokers was 'to sift and purify [traditions] in order to remove or lessen elements that are inappropriate in that they are shameful or disgusting for a condition of civility and modern development in general' (*ibid*). A number of contradictory policies emerged. The ban on miniskirts coincided with 'Operation Dress-up' which mandated 'modern



dress' for Tanzania's Maasai. Traditional Maasai dress was decried as 'uncivilised' and 'unhygienic', and an affront to Tanzania's broader 'modern development' (2002: 594). Ivaska uses this to argue that ideas of 'tradition' and clothing were highly politicised and intimately bound up in national debates over the construction of the 'traditional' and the 'modern'.

Early post-independence in Tanzania represents a very different context to early 21st century Sierra Leone, not least in the political pressure and subsequent violence which accompanied the miniskirt ban. What is, however, interesting is the 'uneasy tension' which Ivaska explores emerging in between ideas of modernity and tradition. A similar tussle is arguably taking place as Mr. Gassama and Mr. Thomas discuss the potential for the National Museum to play a role in 'reviving' or 'returning to' a more 'Sierr Leonean' past. Mr. Gassama expressed these concerns through the vocabularies of UNICEF's training programme. This should be expected in his official capacity as Acting Head of Curriculum given that the NCDRC collaborates with UNICEF to revise the curriculum. However in a similar fashion to the revised syllabus where 'culture' and heritage is embedded in broader national development discourse, these vocabularies also framed Mr. Gassama's comments about 'tradition' and the past. I suggest the 'uneasy tension' between tradition and modernity emerges through Mr. Gassama's notion of 'revival'; the past holds something which is imagined as important and essentially 'Sierr Leonean', yet his vision for change is so embedded in international discourses and high-level policy that the particulars of this past are lost. Mr. Thomas's construction of 'tradition' is less obviously concerned with development but highlights a similar concern. Building on broader discourses of Sierra Leone's 'youth problem', Mr. Thomas targeted revealing dress as an indication of increased promiscuity. In order to 'move forward', he commented on the need to look back to an imagined past where 'tradition' was not affected by negative Western influences. Meanwhile, his very idea of 'tradition' is informed by Western influences in both the past and the present. Ideas of what constitutes Sierr Leonean 'culture' and 'heritage' are again ambiguous as they emerge in discussions about the country's future.

Returning to the focus of the last chapter, the official 50th anniversary committee also attempted to define this future of transformation, once again drawing heavily on development discourse in the process. This is discussed below.

### **‘Unity in Diversity’**

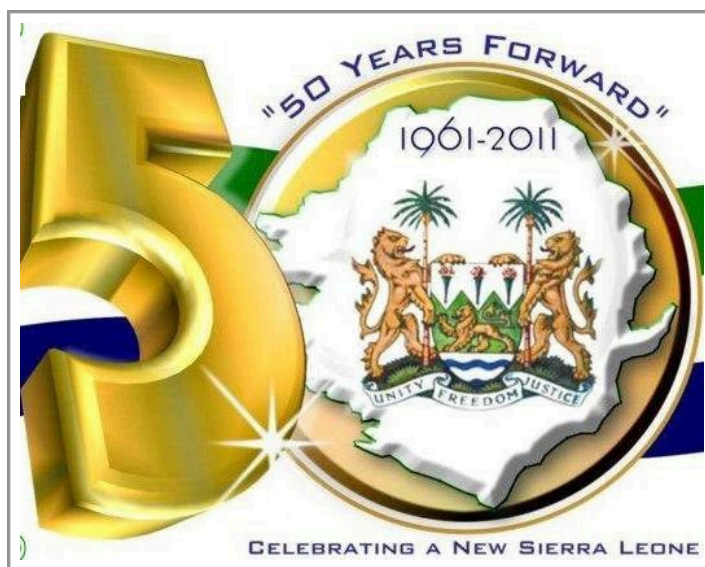


Figure 16. The official 50th Anniversary symbol. The 50 is in gold, signifying the golden jubilee. The centre of the '0' is marked by a map of Sierra Leone, onto which is imposed the national coat of arms. The national flag of Sierra Leone can be seen in the background.

#### **PRESIDENT KOROMA AND THE COMMITTEE**

As discussed in the previous chapter, Sierra Leone marked 50 years of independence from British colonial rule on the 27th of April 2011. President Ernest Bai Koroma announced the creation of an official celebration committee in May 2010 ‘to lead, coordinate and make the anniversary reflective of the great aspirations that the heroes of our independence had for this country’ (President Ernest Bai Koroma 2010). The committee was largely composed of returned members of the Sierra Leonean diaspora. The first chair was Dr. William Conteh, former Director of Diaspora Affairs, and both his Executive Secretary and Personal Assistant had been educated in the USA. Although this committee was heralded by Koroma as an ‘independent, non-partisan national committee’, the discourse which proceeded to mark the committee’s ‘vision’ was firmly grounded in the government’s broader political manifesto and national development

policy. In a speech officially launching the lead up to celebrations, Koroma reflected on the 'high points of our history':

We have had low moments of war, corruption, injustice, and bad governance, but we have also won global accolades for making, building, and sustaining peace. We are amongst the first ranks of nations in the developing world that have changed for integrity and uprightedness; our country boasts of hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women who are making great sacrifices to feed, clothe, and educate their families...with members from every region in the country, this committee is reflective of our aspirations for unity; with programs slated for every district, the celebrations will showcase the beauty of our diversity; with events planned from every month of 2011, we will get every Sierra Leonean, at home and abroad, to be part of our Jubilee. (President Ernest Bai Koroma 2010)

In this speech Koroma asserts his own role in the societal transformations in Sierra Leone which he draws upon as reasons for celebration. Developing 'integrity and uprightedness' was a key objective of the Government's Attitudinal Change Campaign and the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Government of Sierra Leone 2008). 'Attitudinal change' was of course also directed at civil society; Koroma's speech intimates the success of this initiative through the sacrifices being made by 'hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women'. The anniversary was presented as a defining moment of his political career, finally marking a transition from the country's turbulent past by looking '50 years forward' (figure 16). This was echoed in documents published by the committee which built on the idea of transformation as a moment of celebration. The 'call for golden ideas' issued in September 2010, for example, commented:

Sierra Leone is ready to embark on a new and momentous chapter of development and growth. The occasion of its golden jubilee affords a timely opportunity to pause, reflect, and learn lessons from the past 50 years. It is also an opportunity to determine a vision for the future that revives national

pride and patriotism and consolidates peace and development. ('Golden Ideas' application form 2010)

The anniversary committee chose to centre their 'vision' for celebration around the slogan 'unity in diversity', also touched on by Koroma in his speech. This multiculturalist discourse builds on recommendations made by Sierra Leone's TRC and expanded upon in the 2008 PRSP II regarding the need to establish a sense of citizenship and patriotism. Referring to Sierra Leone's multiple ethnic groups, the TRC found that that 'negative and limited interaction between Sierra Leone's constituent groups...in turn created the greatest challenge to the concepts of nationhood and citizenship' (TRC, Vol. 2 2004: 5). As has already been discussed, part of the recommendations for overcoming this build on peace education and the 'teaching of tolerance and understanding' through the national curriculum (TRC, Vol. 3 2004: 134). As also noted above, the PRSP II's proposal for 'attitudinal change' also drew on this vocabulary. A key objective of the initiative was to promote 'greater tolerance for difference in opinions, party, political, ethnic and regional affiliation' (Government of Sierra Leone 2008: 111).

'Unity in diversity' as a slogan has been widely used elsewhere, not least in the 50th anniversary celebrations in Nigeria (Nigeria at 50 2010) and Ghana (Ghana@50 2007; Lentz and Budniok 2007: 50): both nations with multiple ethnic groups. Lentz and Budniok's (2007) account of the Ghanaian jubilee in Accra suggests that in this context the slogan proved unsuccessful with an over-representation of northern Akan symbols in the celebrations. This included the use of the Akan ad-inkra symbol, signifying 'only God', in the centre of the '0' in '50', marginalising other groups. Kente cloth became the official dress-code for the celebration, with the jubilee secretariat issuing a call for all Ghanaians to wear the cloth on independence day, despite woven kente also being associated in particular with Akan heritage (Lentz and Budniok 2007: 532). Rather than reflect diversity within Ghana, Akan heritage was used to distinguish Ghana within a broader, united, pan-African identity, matched in Ghana's official anniversary tagline: 'Championing African Excellence'. 'Unity in diversity' has also been used widely by

transnational organisations to promote a multiculturalist agenda. UNESCO draws heavily on this discourse in its 1995 *Our Creative Diversity* report, which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Cultural freedom, it is argued, 'encourages creativity, experimentation and diversity' (*ibid*). The term was also used by the European Union. McDonald expresses a similar concern to Lentz and Budniok in this context, noting that the slogan exists as an 'optimistic ideal', failing to adequately deal with the tensions that emerge when constructing 'sameness' in a context of extensive difference.

The anniversary planning committee drew up a proposal in May 2010 where they outlined their own understanding of 'unity in diversity' under their main slogan: '50 Years Forward - Reflection, Celebration and Vision for the Future'. The five key 'objectives' listed in the proposal are:

- to foster patriotism and boost national pride;
- to see Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad better informed about the development aspirations of Sierra Leone;
- to boost the profile of Sierra Leone abroad;
- to ensure the full participation of all Sierra Leoneans, wherever they may be, in the 50th anniversary celebrations; and
- to leave a lasting legacy as a memorial to the celebrations (50th Anniversary Planning Committee 2010: 1.1)

These objectives should be understood as emerging from the broader national development rhetoric which President Koroma reflected on in his speech. 'Unity' emerges through a language of 'participation', again informed by the 'attitudinal change' manifesto and the TRC report by engaging civil society in national transformation. Likewise there is a strong focus on building national consciousness. The vision does, however, divert from both the TRC's concerns about regional disunity and the wider global use of 'unity in diversity' which often emphasises value in the recognition of

cultural specificity and difference. Koroma touched on this multicultural value in his speech when he commented on the need to 'showcase the beauty of our diversity'.

The construction of Sierra Leonean 'diversity' remains ambiguous beyond a recognition that celebrations should take place across the four main regions of the country in the anniversary committee's proposal. This is perhaps reflected in the official anniversary symbol which draws on the national imagery of the coat of arms, the national flag and the land itself (see figure 16), rather than any heritage-related imagery such as was employed by Ghana (Lentz and Budniok 2007). The proposals contain no mention of Sierra Leone's multi-ethnic makeup and any form of national 'heritage' is left behind in a document which is firmly oriented towards the future. The only reference to a particular community included in Sierra Leone's 'diversity' is the idea of 'Sierra Leoneans abroad'. The diaspora is identified as a 'fifth province' and included in the events planned for the summer of 2011 through 'grand promotional and fundraising tours geared towards boosting Sierra Leone's profile amongst her citizens based overseas' (50th Anniversary Planning Committee 2010: 2.1).

#### **THE SCANDAL**

As the 27th of April 2011 drew closer, rumours spread that the committee had received a number of significant donations from the primary mining companies working in Sierra Leone, yet no concrete plans for the event had been announced. In February 2011 the committee's secretariat accounts were leaked by the *Sierra Leone Standard Times*, exposing the apparent mismanagement of funds. These figures were then republished over Twitter by Vickie Ramoe, a local celebrity and author of the popular blog, *Swit Salone*. Ramoe grew up in the United States, and moved to Freetown in 2007 (Ramoe 2012). She became widely known in early 2010 during the launch of SLBC's *Vickie Ramoe Show*, self-styled as 'Sierra Leone's Premier Lifestyle TV Show'. She was hired by the anniversary committee as Public Communications and Relations Officer in 2010 and Ramoe's republishing of the accounts successfully dissociated herself from the scandal. Her involvement in exposing the figures ensured that they were circulated globally. Her damning account of mismanagement published through her blog was, for

example, circulated by Ade Daramy, Chair of the UK Sierra Leone Diaspora Network, in February 2011 via Yahoo Groups (Daramy 2011).



Figure 17. Magbaily Fyle, elected a the new Chair of the 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee in February 2011. The photo was taken at an event held at the SLNM in May 2011. Photo: Rosalie Hans

Central to the accusations was that senior members of the committee had claimed extortionate expenses for the trips which were advertised as 'grand promotional and fund-raising tours' to further engage Sierra Leone's diaspora. Members were alleged to have spent \$80,000 on a ten day trip to Nigeria in September 2010 to 'gather Sierra Leoneans in Lagos and Abuja' (Ramoe 2011). In addition, the Chair and Executive Secretary made a number of visits to the United States to 'sensitise the diaspora about the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary' and to 'raise funds'. Ramoe claims that the group spent \$100,000 on just one of these trips, attended by seven committee members and orchestrated to present actor Jeffrey Wright with an award as 'goodwill ambassador' for his work as co-founder of the Taia Peace Foundation. This was backed up by the leaked accounts, re-published in *The New People Newspaper Online*, which accused the Chairman, the Executive Secretary and the Chairman's PA of collecting expenses including \$25,134, \$18,467 and \$5,900 respectively. Julius Spencer, mentioned above with regards to the Cultural Policy, was also implicated, accused of claiming Le700,000,000 in expenses (approx. £100,000) for fireworks, which had already been donated by the Chinese Embassy. An investigation was launched by the Anti-Corruption Commission in February 2011 and prosecutions were ongoing in July 2012 (Anti Corruption Commission of Sierra Leone 2012).

Given the high profile nature of the anniversary and the close connections between the committee and the APC government, this scandal presented a moment of acute embarrassment for President Koroma. As discussed, the initial planning of the event became engrossed in political rhetoric promoting Koroma's term in government as a moment of national transformation. Central to this 'new era of reform' was a new transparency and accountability of those in power and this came crashing down as the scandal unfolded.



Figure 18. (left) The Pademba Road dressed for celebration in the national colours. This was as a result of 'clean-up campaigns' which saw groups of volunteers paint the town in green, white and blue on Saturday mornings in the lead up to the 27th April, 2011. Photo: author.

#### **DRESSING IN THE NATIONAL COLOURS**

A new committee was formed in March 2011, headed by Magbaily Fyle, a prominent Sierra Leonean historian and academic (figure 17). A few members of the old committee were able to retain their posts, one of which was Charlie Hughes, Chair of the MRC. With limited remaining resources, the celebrations took a more modest approach. Regional tours were scrapped and the committee rather concentrated on preparing Freetown for the large numbers of visitors expected over the week-long national holiday.

Regardless of this new pared down approach, Freetown witnessed a spectacular visual transformation in the month leading to the 27th of April, emerging as a vision of green, white and blue; the colours of the national flag. 'Clean-up campaigns' were revived on Saturday mornings and paint was distributed to groups of volunteers who covered lamp posts, railings, pavements, roadside rocks and even trees in the national colours (figure 18). Bunting was erected along the main streets, strung up on wooden electricity pylons, tree branches, roof tops and walls. The National Museum attached an enormous



flag to the building's roof and put up a new sign with 'Sierra Leone National Museum' written in green, white, and blue tube-lights, both donated by the MoTC (figure 19).

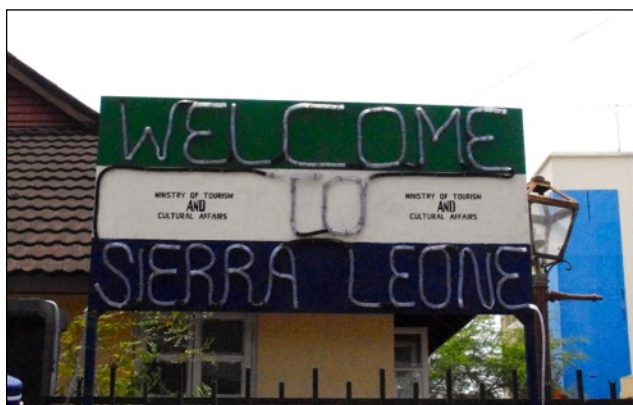


Figure 19. The Sierra Leone National Museum's new signpost, supplied by the MoTC. Photo: author.

Commercial motorbike riders and taxi drivers attached flags to their wing mirrors and the

King Kids official anniversary song, 'Mama Salone', blasted out of the rickety commercial minibuses. The lyrics of this catchy song, again, marked a moment of transition and burgeoning national pride:

How old are you Mama Salone?  
I am fifty years old now  
That's why you are fifty years Mama Salone  
Oh hooooooo  
God come and take control  
Free free free, we are free  
This is our breaking point  
We are free at last

The popular music video shows the five girls in green, white and blue satin dresses, dancing in front of the law courts and the enormous cotton tree in the centre of Freetown (figure 20).

This visual campaign created an offshoot industry benefitting Freetown's numerous small-time entrepreneurs. Tailors were inundated with orders for gowns, suits, dresses and shirts in green, white and blue, capitalising on the rumours of inflated prices for green, white and blue sewing cotton and cloth (figure 21). White cotton was dip-dyed in the national colours and sold as bed spreads and table cloths. Second-hand shoe traders

along King Jimmy's Wharf set a premium for shoes in white, lacing them with blue and green; the stalls in Big Market were awash with Sierra Leone beaded necklaces; and roadside nail parlours offered fake talons to 'show your culture', alternating nails in white, blue, and green varnish. The official 50th anniversary symbol was cheaply reproduced on caps, badges, T-shirts, bags and notebooks and sold across Freetown. One particularly entrepreneurial member of staff at the SLNM commissioned miniature flags to be sewn and threaded onto wooden masts decorated with shells. She sold these alongside necklaces and bracelets imported from China.



Figure 20. A still from the King Kids official video for their hit single, *Mama Salone*. They can be seen dancing in front of the Law Courts in the centre of Freetown. Image: You Tube.

Sia traded cigarettes, chewing gum, matches, and soft drinks on a small stall along my road and provided welcome respite from the heat under her umbrella on the long walk home up the hill. One afternoon in April 2011 she was having her hair braided with green, white and blue extensions woven in to her new cornrows. She remarked 'today I am proud to be a Sierra Leonean, I am showing my culture'. Sia, along with thousands of other Sierra Leoneans, planned to go to the national stadium on the 27th. A rumour spread around Freetown at the time that President Koroma had declared that

admittance would be free for those dressed in the national colours. Sia, however, noted that this was not the reason for her new hairstyle, but rather that she wanted to show her support for a new Sierra Leone by 'celebrating together'. This visual assertion of 'unity' was accessible and could, through individual entrepreneurship, quite literally be bought into by the majority of Freetown's residents to varying degrees. Sia's comment on 'showing my culture' is concerned with an imagined national culture, a somewhat 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) developed around a visual recognition of 'Sierra Leoneanness' through the national colours. In this sense, the failed attempts to inspire patriotism and mark change in Sierra Leone made by the original anniversary committee were replaced at this more local level as individuals made their own commitment to national 'unity'.



Figure 21. A group of tailors on the 26th of April frantically trying to finish orders for clothes and flags in green, white and blue. They were at the time working on outfits for a group of dancers who would be performing at the National Stadium on the 27th. They claimed to have been working for three days straight, with no sleep. Photo: author.

## **Conclusion: Fragile nationalism?**

These festivities were momentary, built around the celebration of an event which stood on fragile ground. As discussed in the previous chapter, the commemoration of 50 years of independence from British colonial rule concerned the negotiation of a complex relationship between the colonial past and a present influenced by intervention. Perhaps more concerning is the transiency of this event which promised so much, yet in

the long run delivered very little. Sierra Leoneans appeared content with wearing the national colours and seeing Freetown dressed for celebration. They momentarily invested in the rhetoric of transition and change by embodying the 'national pride' and 'patriotism' that is of central concern to the call for 'attitudinal change' in the PRSP II. The week long holiday was full of celebration. Families came in droves to hang out along Lumley beach, churches and mosques held day long services, people lined the streets to watch processions and masquerades, and invited friends and family home to eat. The flags, necklaces and gowns will continue to play a role in Sierra Leone, re-paraded on future independence days and when the national team, the Leone Stars, play the second round qualifying match for the African Cup of Nations in September 2012. However, the bunting has now been taken down and the road side paint faded; the 50th anniversary scandal has arguably left a longer legacy in the press than the day itself as the court case continues at the Anti-Corruption Commission. The election in November 2012 swiftly took over the transformational rhetoric surrounding the anniversary as the country prepared itself for an event which will serve as a more pragmatic test for real change in Sierra Leone.

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the ambiguity that emerges as different sectors attempt to negotiate the role 'culture' or 'heritage' has to play in Sierra Leone's future. In the examples I have used, this future is deeply engrained in wider national development policy. Such policy, informed by both international development discourse and political rhetoric, focuses on developing 'national consciousness' through languages of autonomy, civic and governmental reform, and building patriotism. 'Culture' and 'heritage' is acknowledged as important to this, yet its particular role remains largely undefined. Although the national flag has a longer history in Sierra Leone, first hoisted at independence in 1961, in this instance it also became enmeshed in this discourse, briefly, and somewhat superficially, representing national transformation.

Billig's (1995) thesis on 'banal nationalism' provides a useful model for understanding the efficacy of green, white and blue in this context. Billig differentiates between a 'flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion' and the 'flag hanging unnoticed

on the public building'. Although the above example from the 50th anniversary sits firmly within the former, it draws on the latter. The Sierra Leonean national flag represents the kind of familiar 'ideological habit' which constitutes everyday routine 'reminders' of nationhood (*ibid*). Returning to an earlier discussion, the flag is central to Social Studies in the new school syllabus. Suggested lessons include 'our national holidays', 'demonstrating a spirit of tolerance' and asking pupils to 'draw the national flag' (NCDRC 2005a: 76). These everyday 'reminders' were central to the celebrations as the deeper underlying civic tensions identified by the TRC or the PRSP II were traded for a moment of national unity under a green, white and blue veneer.

Billig is clear that his notion of 'banal nationalism' does not equate to 'benign nationalism' (Billig 1995: 7). Everyday 'reminders' of nationalism, such as the flag, remain evocative and are far from innocent, producing in his example of the USA, 'institutions which possess vast armaments' (*ibid*). His discussion does, however, concern 'established nations'. Indeed 'banal nationalism' is developed as a route to questioning 'hidden' forms of Western nationalism and moving the discussion on from peripheral 'dangerous and powerful passions' (Billig 1995: 4). Sierra Leone is not an 'established nation' in this context. Although Sierra Leone as a country is globally accepted with clearly defined borders, its recent civil war stands as testimony to the fact that it remains fractious. As discussed, developing a stronger and more unified civil society is a key objective of both international and national development policies concerning the country's future. In his discussion of 'established nations', Billig draws on Benedict Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities' to argue 'every nation must have its history, its own collective memory. This remembering is simultaneously a collective forgetting: the nation which celebrates its antiquity, forgets its historical recency' (1995: 37). Such memories work to 'naturalise' the nation and enable people to 'forget' the often recent 'construction of the nation' (1995: 38). I suggest that as Sierra Leone celebrated its 50th anniversary, this 'collective memory' and 'celebration of antiquity' was absent. Billig notes that 'there is no gap between a country and its people' (Billig 1995: 78), thus if Sierra Leone exists then so do Sierra Leoneans. This being the case, there is still a great deal of ambiguity surrounding what it is that being

'Sierra Leonean' really entails. The 'reminders' or 'flags' of nationhood which Billig refers to in 'established nations' seem to struggle to move beyond the top-down rhetoric which currently dominates broader developmental concerns and policies, making them rather more 'benign' than his thesis proposes.

The current Governmental development strategy explored in this chapter speaks of deeper transformations such as 'attitudinal change', encapsulating governmental and civic reform within a framework of greater national consciousness and patriotism. What remains somewhat unclear, however, is what this patriotism is built on. How does Sierra Leone's 'heritage' fit in to broader rhetoric's of change and how might these contribute to creating an 'established nation'? These questions are explored in the following chapter.

## **5. Negotiating ‘dysfunctional’ heritage practices in Sierra Leone**

The last chapter explored Sierra Leone’s national development policy and the way this frames reflections on the role of ‘culture’ in development. I suggested that through these discussions, there is a great deal of ambiguity concerning the role of ‘tradition’ within a politicsised rhetoric of change and transformation. Sierra Leone’s most recent poverty reduction strategy emphasises the need to establish a greater national consciousness as well as a more fundamental change in attitudes ‘toward the nation and each other’. Yet where such nationalism is publicly expressed it draws on a rather superficial form of ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig 1995), overlooking the potential for heritage to play a more fundamental role.

In this chapter I look more specifically at what might constitute ‘heritage’ in Sierra Leone, and existing attempts to align this with development. I begin by exploring the draft Cultural Policy and the language used to define the relationship between culture, heritage and development. I argue this is largely informed by international ‘culture for development’ discourse which highlights the potential of this sector to contribute to a more ‘locally appropriate’ or ‘bottom-up’ development programme. However, the Policy also briefly highlights complexity where elements of this heritage are not easily aligned with broader development. A similar conflict emerges through UNESCO’s 1995 proposal for outlining the global role of ‘culture for development’, where certain cultural practices or attitudes clash with the UN’s broader universal agenda. Sierra Leone’s draft Cultural Policy draws heavily on the discourse in UNESCO’s 1995 report by presenting a strategy which rejects these problematic practices. In doing so, it remains ambiguous where the particulars of this conflict are concerned. I argue that this ambiguity can be understood in relation to the complexity in negotiating cultural forms which are both powerful and deeply problematic, conflicting with the broader notions

contested performances and practices, and the strategies employed in negotiating problematic heritage and its role in Sierra Leone. In the contexts I have explored, these concern the reframing of events in a way that enables them to fit in with professional or personal attitudes toward development, whilst simultaneously allowing the original, or an element of the original, to remain.



## 6. A Pentecostal ‘culture for development’

In my first week in Freetown I took a taxi from my home in Wilberforce, down the long and steeply winding Hill Cut Road into the centre of Freetown. A bright red and blue sticker was attached to the dash board with a warning: ‘No More Devils, Praise be Jesus’. The radio was tuned to a Pentecostal preacher hoarsely bellowing into his microphone ‘let Chelsea win the Champions League, in the name of Jesus, the Father, the Holy Ghost. Let them prosper. Praise be Jesus!’. We passed under a banner along New England, advertising the ‘Battle Axe Ministry Power Jam Power Crusade’, promising to hold a ‘final battle against household wickedness and bush devils’ (figure 30). I remembered this journey as I sat and chatted with Bertha<sup>19</sup>, the Acting Curator of the National Museum, a few days later, and she posed the question which was to follow many an introduction in Sierra Leone: ‘are you a Christian, or a Muslim?’. She, along with an increasing middle class majority in Freetown, was a Born Again Christian. As I later discovered, so too were many of the staff who worked there.

Gifford (1994), writing in 1994, spoke about the ‘Pentecostal explosion’ that had swept across Africa since the 1980s. Writing seven years later in 2001, Casanova predicted that the Pentecostal Church will soon pass Catholicism ‘to become the predominant global form of Christianity of the 21st century’ (2001: 435). This is no less the case in Sierra Leone where, as noted by Shaw (2007), the country has seen an unprecedented number of conversions since the end of the civil war in 2002. The Sierra Leone National Museum (SLNM) is a hub of Pentecostal activity, with the two senior employees being committed members of the ‘Born Again’ community in Freetown. Posters and flyers advertising Deliverance and Thanksgiving services (figure 31), Pentecostal Crusades and fundraising events have a place in the foyer and on the main notice boards, and the SLNM provides a venue for Pentecostal book launches and drama productions. This relationship with the Born Again community goes back to the time of the former

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<sup>19</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

Curator, Celia Nicols, who was also an active member of the same Church and would allegedly try to convert unsuspecting visitors with a pile of Pentecostal flyers she kept in her top draw.



Figure 30. Pentecostal banners are a common feature of the Freetown landscape, commonly advertising 'battles' and 'crusades'. This one was erected along Jomo Kenyatta Road, near New England. Photo: author.

It was not my intention to focus on this global phenomena. Returning to my taxi ride, the Pentecostal Church preaches against those elements of 'heritage' in Sierra Leone which remain evocative for many. Sierra Leone's masked 'devils', or debuls, are portrayed as representatives of the Christian Devil, harking back to the 19th Century Christian missionary movement in Sierra Leone which gave these esoteric beings their now widely recognised name. The Pentecostal Church shares with its predecessors an unremitting disregard for non-Christian tradition, associating it with danger, savagery and darkness.

As I progressed through my fieldwork, it became impossible to ignore the Pentecostal Church and its seeming centrality to daily life at the National Museum and much of Freetown. In April 2011, I was invited to church with Bertha, a member of the Christian Life Era Ministry International. The Church has one of the biggest congregations in Freetown and the service was conducted in temporary premises in Brookfields, while a new church building was under construction in New England. The congregation has

expanded from 1200 members in 2007, to over 3000, and the new church building anticipates even greater numbers, rumoured to hold a capacity of 5000. The new building is entirely funded by donation from the expanding congregation. Even the church's temporary premises were impressive, of a scale and quality which is rare in Freetown. The enormous building was clad in white patterned tiling and lit with numerous electric bulbs powered by an enormous and expensive generator.



Figure 31. Posters advertising Pentecostal events were frequently displayed at the National Museum. This one is advertising a deliverance ceremony, and was mounted in the foyer to the SLNM. This may seem a somewhat contradictory location. Text on the bottom right hand corner reads: 'bring the sick and oppressed and demon possessed! Witchcraft yokes and Satanic bondages will all be destroyed'. Photo: author.

Pentecostalism captivates Sierra Leoneans in their thousands, drawing unprecedented wealth from a community who donate the little they have to these already wealthy institutions. The church offers something deeply evocative which neither the state, nor the international donor community, delivers for the sector of society among

which most of my research was conducted. The National Museum struggled for nearly a year to procure funds to cover the costs of the paint and labour to spruce up its peeling interior in time for the 50th anniversary, and met a wall of obstacles related to the lack of capacity of local builders and the sourcing the expensive shelving when it wanted to build a modest storage area in an upstairs room. The Christian Life Era Ministry, on the other hand, took just over a year to construct its sumptuous new church building which sits atop a grand car-park, reserved for its wealthier congregation members.

The Pentecostal Church is arguably both about 'development' and 'culture'. It sells a future of transformation, built on personal success, prosperity, modernity and globalisation. However, rather than attempting to embrace local culture and build on

existing knowledges, this Church encourages its congregation to break from the past and leave tradition behind. It thus appears to contradict the increasing focus on 'bottom-up' intervention which currently informs the development and heritage sectors. The National Museum is deeply involved in this contradiction, despite being an institution which might appear a likely space to champion the importance of 'tradition' in a context of change and transformation. This chapter asks what it is about the Pentecostal Church which makes it so popular in Sierra Leone, and whether there are any lessons we can learn from it when developing a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between 'culture', 'heritage', and 'development' in Sierra Leone. I begin with a description of a film entitled *The Pains of Love*, which was produced by a Sierra Leonean Pentecostal film company as a way of drawing out some of the key themes of this chapter, concerning spiritual warfare, prosperity, modernity and globalisation.

## **The Pains of Love**

Omotola Bright is a friend of both the former and the current Curator, and frequently visited the SLNM during my fieldwork. She is a budding film star and on one occasion announced that she wanted to hold a premier for the screening of her first film, *The Pains of Love* (figure 32), at the Museum. The film itself is produced by Life Herald Film Productions, run by Evg. Felix Jeremiah who is also co-ordinator of the World Christian Friendship Association Ministries on Lower Waterloo Street in Freetown. Jeremiah is currently studying for a Ph.D in the United States and notes that Life Herald Film Productions began as a 'Christian News Company' in 2007 as a result of a mission that the 'Lord revealed in a dream three times within six months in 2000 AD' to 'advance and glorify His Kingdom with dynamic and powerful productions' (WCFA Ministries 2009). *The Pains of Love* and his first film, *Evil Foundation*, follow the hugely popular Pentecostal film productions in Nigeria and Ghana, recounting a classic tale of conversion, satanic machinations and the eventful triumph of Jesus over evil. Sierra Leone is relatively new to the Pentecostal film industry, which forms a defining feature of the global Pentecostal movement. Part of the Church's success is attributed to these 'Pentecostal media flows' (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001: 5), or

'mediascapes' (Appadurai 1990), of images, brochures, pamphlets, books, films, songs and sermons which are 'nothing short of miraculous' given the distances they travel, and the difficulties of such travel for many of its congregation members (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001: 5). Shaw notes that Sierra Leone was introduced to the Pentecostal film industry during the war, commenting that Nigerian Pentecostal videos and audiocassettes began to circulate in Freetown during the period of ECOMOG military intervention (Shaw 2007: 83). Nigerian ECOMOG troops arrived in Freetown to drive the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council junta out of government in February 1998 and they remained until the January 1999 Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgency into Freetown which lasted for three weeks.



Figure 32. *The Pains of Love* DVD. The 'witch-doctor' can be seen in the top left hand corner of the DVD sleeve waving his broom in the air, whilst Omotola Bright is in the bottom left. Sierra Leone is relatively new to the Pentecostal film industry which remains largely dominated by Nigerian imports. Photo: author.

Returning to *The Pains of Love*, the storyline follows the marital problems of Janet and James which begin with James' difficulties in finding a job, whilst Janet works for an NGO. This comes to a head when Janet's mother, acted by Omotola Bright, arrives and complains 'no woman should feed a man, how can you use your money to satisfy a street boy!'. Both

Janet and James are Born Again Christians and pay a visit to their Pastor who advises them to pray to the Holy Ghost 'so that his glory can increase your wealth'. Eventually, through repeated visits made to the Pastor by Janet, James is offered a job by another church member, Brother Peter. James becomes Managing Director of Brother Peter's new 'diamond mining firm', complete with a generous cheque for \$1,000,000 and a four-by-four Land Rover recently purchased on a business trip to China. Although Janet continues to go to church, James engages in increasingly 'un-Christian' behaviour, using

his money to buy beer and to draw the attention of scantily-clad women. This makes him susceptible to the 'influence of Satan' and he is tricked by his new secretary, whom he calls his 'sexretary', into an affair. The secretary turns out to be a 'witch', making a number of visits to a Mende speaking 'witch-doctor' outside of Freetown. She is given a bundle of 'herbs' by the witch-doctor to add to James' food causing him to refer to her as 'my wife'. The secretary also uses her powers to blind Janet, who is cast out from her home and seeks refuge with the Pastor.

In the final scenes a 'spiritual battle' ensues between the Pastor and the secretary, whom the Pastor recognises as a Satanic 'demon'. The Pastor is able to block her powers with his Bible and so the secretary returns to the witch-doctor who tells her to sacrifice a seven month old baby and 'bath in its blood' to become 'spiritually fortified'. A final battle sees the Pastor fighting both the secretary and the witch-doctor with his Bible . They are given the option to 'confess Jesus is the Lord and repent', both refuse, and the Pastor calls on the Holy Spirit who strikes them with lightning. James and Janet are reunited and pledge their commitment to Jesus and the Pentecostal Church.

In this film, Janet and James are differentiated from the witch-doctor and the secretary in a number of ways. Janet and James live an aspirational lifestyle with a car, a television, a laptop and mobile phone. They rent in a flat in Freetown and speak English, sit down to dinner together in the dining room, drink Coke along Lumley Beach and go shopping for expensive cloths in shops, rather than markets. The secretary, on the other hand, lives in a crowded compound shared with her sister who looks after numerous children from their village. She has no mobile, nor a car, and walks to visit the witch-doctor who clearly lives out of town. Unlike the rest of the male characters, the witch-doctor is dressed in a simple red cloth tied round his waist and wears cowries round his wrist, rather than Western-style suit, shirt and watch. He is found in a forested area and speaks poor English, as well as Mende, suggesting he lives outside of Freetown.

The witch-doctor is associated with a Christian Satan throughout the film and the actor's performance provides a suitable parody of spirit possession with wild bulging

eyes and bodily convulsions. He stands and waves his hands over a calabash which acts like a wizard's cauldron, puffing up clouds of smoke and emitting green lightning bolts. Despite the artistic license used to depict the film's magical villain, the character is likely to be based on a traditional 'mori man', or diviner, identified by his clothing and control of esoteric powers. The witch-doctor gives the secretary a bundle of 'herbs' to add to James' food so that he will 'not see other women'. 'Herbs' or 'leaves' are part of the ingredients which makes 'hale', a term broadly used to refer to a material substance with powerful inherent properties, often used in amulets (Phillips 1995: 53). Knowledge concerning the manipulation of such medicines is central to a diviner's work (Shaw 2002: 140), although here it becomes indicative of the villain's Satanic connections.

This film highlights several key themes which emerge in the literature that surrounds this global phenomenon. The first is the centrality of 'spiritual warfare' in Pentecostal doctrine, which presents a continuous battle between the powers of darkness and light. Traditional beliefs and esoteric powers become associated with the dark realm of Satan, and the Church combats this through its power derived from God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. By engaging in this battle, the Church advocates a break from tradition; the past is not only dangerous but also considered to limit the success of the Church's march toward modernity (cf. Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001; Gifford 2004; Meyer 1998). This Pentecostal modernity is another important consideration in this chapter, designated through the integration of prosperity and upward mobility into the aspirational future that the Church claims to offer its congregation (cf. Shaw 2007; van Dijk 2001). In the film, Brother Peter epitomises this modernity. He is a personal friend of the Pastor recently returned from a business trip to China who offers James the chance of success. This is thwarted by James' lack of commitment to the Church which drives him to not only squander his wealth, but also makes him susceptible to demonic possession. These themes, and the way they emerge at the SLNM, are discussed below.

## Spiritual warfare and rupture

### **JESUS WAS A WARRIOR!**

The ability of Pentecostal doctrine to confront indigenous spiritual forces has been highlighted as key to the global popularity of the Church by the recent anthropological literature on Pentecostalism (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001; Laurant 2001; van Dijk 2001; Gifford 1990, 2004; Meyer 1999; Shaw 2007). Robbins comments that 'this openness to local spiritual languages allows P/c [Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity] to . . .



mean different things in different places . . . yet even as it absorbs

Figure 33. Bishop Cyril Luke at the Christian Life Era Ministry International Church's temporary premises in Brookfields. Photo: author.

local content, P/c dualism also maintains its globally recognisable shape as a struggle between the divine and the demonic' (2004: 129). As becomes clear in Meyer's ethnographic work in Ghana (1992; 1998; 1999), these 'spiritual languages' possess very real and frightening power for those who encounter them. Her work explores demonisation of Ewe gods and spirits, and how this speaks to concerns regarding the positionality of these forces in an increasingly 'modern' and global Ghana. In this context, one of the primary roles of the Pentecostal church is in offering protection from the misfortune associated with spirit possession and the malpractice of local sorcerers, described by one of her informants as 'a little bit of Jesus and a little bit of magic' (Meyer 1999: 177).

In Sierra Leone, Shaw explores the arrival of a 'demonic agent' in a play performed by a Pentecostal youth group in Freetown that resembles a 'masked cult association spirit',



clad in white and red cloth (2007: 80). As is noted by Robbins, Pentecostal doctrine 'encourages believers to view daily life as dominated by an ongoing struggle between God and local, demonic "territorial spirits," and which often promotes rituals of "deliverance" designed to rid believers of demonic influence' (2004: 122). Elements of this warfare can be seen in the final scenes of *The Pains of Love* where the Pastor strikes the witch-doctor and the secretary down with the force of his Bible.

War-like imagery was central to an Easter Sunday service I attended at Bertha's church. It was given by His Grace Bishop Cyril Luke who had flown in from the UK to deliver his sermon (figure 33). He is a trustee of the Christian Life Era Ministry, based in Southwark, London. The Ministry is officially a 'charity', supporting churches in Ghana, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau as well as Sierra Leone, though donors are predominantly local congregation members. The Bishop's striking appearance matched his booming voice, clad head to toe in a sparkling white suit accessorised with substantial gold signet rings and a heavy golden watch. He gave his words gravitas by marching up and down the tiled stage, stamping his feet and raising his fists up toward the heavens. He had the full attention of the congregation who responded in unison to his instructions to stand and sit where appropriate, break into song, dance, pray and repeat 'Amen!' at frequent intervals. The service began with a moment of 'personal prayer' which was both private and deeply public as members of the group swayed from side to side, raised their arms, wept and audibly called out to God. After this moment, the Bishop roared, in English:

Jesus was a man, he was a Roman. He had immense power, he was athletic. He was a Gladiator! A great warrior! If you saw him he'd tower over you, you would cower underneath him. Up-line devils run and hide, we will rid Salone from demons, in the name of Jesus! (Bishop Cyril Luke, CLEMI 2011)

The Bishop continued by commenting on the 'feminine depictions of Christ' in 'European churches', with long hair and 'a women's eyes and mouth'.

Jesus is depicted as a 'warrior' in this passage, later substantiated through the Bishop's interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The period between the placing of Jesus' body in the tomb and his resurrection was described as a time when Jesus 'endured three days in the fires of Hell'. This was presented as proof of his masculinity and the reason the guards of the tomb let him pass.

#### **DELIVERANCE AND RUPTURE**

The Bishop continued:

To be saved by Jesus first you have to *fall* at the foot of the cross, you have to accept your sins...then it is the *impact*, you burst with repentance! You have to suffer! The more you suffer the higher you will rise!...like a bouncing ball, the harder you impact, the higher you rise...Yesterday we hit the bottom, we killed our brothers, we fell. We went to Campbell Street to see the devil. Satan colluded with our Ministers. On impact, we suffered, we forgot Jesus, now we are repenting! Our suffering will make Sierra Leone rise! We will prosper in the name of Jesus! Jesus is our man! Our warrior! Our Saviour! (Bishop Cyril Luke, CLEMI 2011)

Bishop Cyril Luke's sermon alluded to the idea of 'deliverance' when he referred to the 'impact' of 'falling at the foot of the cross' in this part of his sermon. 'Deliverance' entails the 'radical transformation of the self through rupture with a sinful past', by literally 'delivering' demons out of the body. These events are the main stage of the battle between good and evil (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001: 6).

Deliverance is key to the process of becoming 'born again', where individuals forsake their previous life and are literally 'reborn' into a new one. Among those I met in Sierra Leone, people often introduced themselves as 'born again' rather than 'Pentecostal'. Often this could be traced to a moment where they underwent a conversion from Catholic, Methodist or Anglican Christianity. For many, this was described as a deeply emotional experience, but also as something felt physically in the body. 'Deliverance' is often described as a painful process as those conducting the service battle with

demonic forces, causing bodily convulsions (van Dijk 2001: 226; Shaw 2007: 86). Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001: 8) note how these events entail a private experience of personal transformation which must be made public to gain recognition within the Church. The greater degree of public suffering during deliverance, the more profound the salvation.

'Demons' are thought to enter the body through several means, the most significant being during rituals which traditionally involve calling on spirits such as name-giving ceremonies and initiations (van Dijk 2001: 225). Meyer's (1999) work in Ghana demonstrates how demons can pose a threat through bloodlines either as a result of curses laid on a person's ancestors which are inherited, or a more recent curse directed at the individual by rural kin. She recounts contexts where members of the Ghanaian Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Peki repeatedly suffer from witch attacks orchestrated by jealous and less affluent family members. This has led scholars to link deliverance with a moment of 'rupture' from the past where familial ties are often broken, adding to the notion of quite literally being 'born again' into a new, Pentecostal family. Meyer highlights a key advantage of cutting such ties for successful and urban Pentecostal youth, where familial obligations mean the majority of ones wages are sent back to the village (1999: 181). These obligations prevail in Sierra Leone, though as Shaw notes 'such kinship ties that remain are precious when several members of...[the] immediate family may be lost, killed, living in a camp far away, settled elsewhere with other relatives, or without the resources, even if physically present, to support others' (2007: 76). Though Shaw's comments are based on research undertaken in 2001, when the end of the war remained uncertain, family was still important in 2010 where even distant relatives living outside of the city visited the Museum to greet Bertha and sit and chat in her office.

Besides breaking family ties and driving demons out of the body, deliverance also entails making a break from certain practices or rituals. These include visiting traditional healers or being in contact with esoteric objects and substances, all of which make the Church and its congregations vulnerable to demonic attacks. Such attacks may

result in 'blockages', limiting 'upward mobility' despite investment in the faith. Van Dijk notes that this is a common diagnosis for Ghanians struggling to immigrate due to problems accessing visas, work permits or passports (2001: 224), whilst Gifford (2004: 85) and Meyer (1999: 178) highlight economic shortfall or difficulty in finding employment as a symptom of such attacks. Van Dijk discusses this as a 'battleground between a superior future and an inferior past' (2001: 216), highlighting the importance modernity and change to Pentecostal doctrine.

Rather than focus on individual deliverance, the Bishop's sermon at the Christian Life Era Church explored a moment of national deliverance. As he spoke, he waved a small Sierra Leonean flag. Sierra Leone is depicted as 'falling' as a result of participation in traditional life or going 'to Campbell Street to see the devil', referring to the debul masquerades discussed in the previous chapter. His narrative also highlights political corruption as central to this fall: 'Satan colluded with our Ministers'. As has been discussed by Richards (2000; 2009), and Shaw (1997), political corruption in Sierra Leone is deeply engrained in cosmologies of esoteric power, with associations drawn between the consumption of wealth and ritual processes entailing the consumption of human flesh and blood. Richards (2009: 501) discusses this in relation to concerns that political figures and 'big men' transform into wild animals and undertake attacks on children and young women, particularly during election campaigns.

The Bishop's sermon notes that as Sierra Leone fell, it eventually 'hit rock bottom' during the civil war, 'when we killed our brothers'. I suggest this is the moment of deliverance, the impact, from which the Bishop preaches Sierra Leone will 'rise'. Although Sierra Leone was part of the Pentecostal 'wave' that spread across Africa in the 1980s, many Born Again Christians converted during or after the civil war (Shaw 2007: 72-73). Furthermore, in the Bishop's narrative, the suffering experienced during the war seems representative of the enormity of Sierra Leone's salvation from which Sierra Leone will 'rise' and 'prosper'. This was symbolised during the sermon by placing the national flag on-top of the large wooden crucifix on the stage. His 'bouncing ball' metaphor is used as a way of explaining this interpretation of 'deliverance', as the

'harder you impact, the higher you rise'. The Bishop's sermon might allude to Sierra Leone's future post-war recovery here, although in this case change is reliant upon intervention by a Christian God. Rather than being dependent upon international and governmental action, the Bishop's narrative places Sierra Leone's future in the hands of the congregation by proposing that national salvation can be bought through prayer and continued commitment to the Church. This highlights a central component of the Church which differentiates Pentecostalism from other forms of Christianity in that salvation is 'this worldly' rather than 'other worldly', and thus the benefits of commitment to the Church occur in the present rather than received later in Heaven. Often termed the 'prosperity gospel', this is a defining feature of Pentecostal concerns with modernity, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Post-war recovery is also the focus of Shaw's (2007) recent discussion of Pentecostalism in Sierra Leone. Rather than providing a tool for future prosperity, however, Shaw is concerned with the way 'spiritual warfare' provides a mechanism for externalising traumatic memory. Her paper describes a play performed by the Youth Ministry of the Gospel Prayer Ministries Church in Freetown which follows a young married couple, Nancy and Job. Job's jealous mother-in-law attempts to meddle in the marriage and consults a mori man to try to kill Nancy and her unborn child. A similar climax to *The Pains of Love* sees the arrival of the Pastor who prays over the mother-in-law, who 'screams and falls to the ground as the Holy Spirit enters her' as a result (2007: 85). Shaw uses the play to argue that this media, along with prayer, Bible reading and watching Pentecostal films, forms a 're-narration' of violent memories which enables GP Ministries' youth 'to "forget" them, transforming demonic memory into Pentecostal memory' (2007: 88). This mode of re-narration externalises violent memories as part of a wider war between God and the 'Underworld', and thus the youth 'learn to experience their memories in ways that enable them to be worked on, fought, and transformed' through prayer (2007: 89). Local masked spirits and debuls come into this narrative as a central part of the 'underworld' (in the GP youth play this is represented by the mori man), influencing the 'spiritual and moral condition' of Sierra Leone which led to the war.

## **The SLNM: A Pentecostal contradiction?**

### **JESUS' PROTECTION**

The SLNM seems a contradictory location for Pentecostal activity given the nature of its collections, a large proportion of which might be classified as 'demonic' by the Church. Many of the objects at the SLNM are considered to be dangerous by those who work there; this is both a concern and, for some, a moment of pride. Staff noted that the SLNM was the only government building not to be attacked during the RUF's three week incursion into Freetown in January 1999. The RUF occupied the President's residency, and looted and burnt down prominent governmental buildings in the city, yet the SLNM remained untouched. A popular rumour amongst staff noted that although 'rebels' had been seen in the courtyard and had shot bullets through the windows, they did not enter the museum because they feared the objects. One staff member noted 'this has been our blessing, people believe if I take it today, I will not profit because of the demonic spirits'. On other occasions the lack of visitors was blamed on the objects because 'people see the museum as an African shrine where demons are!'. Of course, another plausible and likely explanation is that insurgents fighting for the RUF had no interest in the SLNM. The majority were conscripted outside of Freetown and are unlikely to have known what the dilapidated building was, let alone what it contained. Nonetheless, this narrative of danger remains and is often repeated.

Despite the potential danger associated with objects at the SLNM, 'Born Again' staff members maintained that these posed little threat as their power was diminished due to the protective 'power of Jesus'. One morning I was working upstairs along with Bertha and Miriam<sup>20</sup>, the Education Officer, sorting through objects which needed labelling before they could be photographed and uploaded into a new digital catalogue. We were at the time handling a number of large wooden figures, some of which had been removed from the display cabinets in the main gallery. I was handling a Limba figure which entered the collections in 1964. It was bought from Abu Bakar Sesay, a Sierra Leonean trader who supplied the SLNM with a number of interesting and unusual objects in the 1960s, predominantly from the north and east of Sierra Leone.

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<sup>20</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

Many of these objects are Loko and Limba in origin and have ritual associations. They were supplied with unusually detailed contextual information compared with much of the collection. The figure I was working with was a female figure with feline features, barbed teeth, scarification marks on her breasts and cheeks, and wearing a cloth cap. It stands at about 50 cm. The original description notes that it was associated with the Gbangbani society and used by a Limba 'herbalist' called Yako-Sara who could 'tell the future of people who came to him for advice', suggesting he may have been a diviner. As I turned it over, something sprayed my hand with liquid; the shock made me jump and I had assumed it was some kind of insect, or a leak from the ceiling given the heavy rain outside. Miriam was immediately concerned as she felt that there was a demon in the room who was set on 'disturbing' us and was joined by Bertha in evoking Jesus' protection through prayer.

After the event we discussed what had happened. Miriam was no longer worried, noting that as a 'Pentecostal, a true Christian', 'we do not accept any traditional beliefs recognising them as an abomination. When Jesus died he left us his spirit to protect us from demons!'. Bertha added to the discussion, commenting 'the white man was very clever. He came slowly and peacefully with his religion'. This quote comes from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, in which one of his characters, Obierika, famously comments:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Achebe 2010: 124)

Achebe's novel is an account of the changes faced by a fictional Igbo village, Umuofia, as a result of British colonialism and Christian missionary work in the late 19th Century. The story's protagonist, Okonkwo, is sent into exile for seven years and struggles to come to terms with the changes which have been wrought on his village when he returns. The above passage is spoken by an elder of Umuofia, Obierika, as he brings

Okonkwo up to date, describing the how the conflicts between tradition and change bought by the church have caused a rupture in society. Eventually Okonkwo commits suicide when he realises that his village will not fight alongside him to send the 'white man' away. Bertha's choice to use a quotation from this novel is interesting given that her own religion in many ways replicates these early missionaries in its complete condemnation of traditional beliefs. She noted that it was at her church that she had encountered the passage from Achebe through a sermon delivered by her Pastor, and thus it had already been taken out of its original context. Bertha gave her own meaning to Obierika's words and used them to contrast Christian missionary activity with her understanding of the spread of Islam in early 18th century. She noted that whilst Christian missionaries 'were not eager for numbers' and wanted to 'preach the truth' (hence 'slowly and peacefully'), Islam accepted traditional beliefs and 'continued to allow people to worship false gods'. Historical accounts of the spread of Islam across West Africa have recognised that Islamic missionary activity tended to incorporate indigenous rituals, rather than preach against them (Bravmann 1980; Jalloh and Skinner 1997). This is no less the case in Sierra Leone where, for example, Qu'ranic texts and incantations play a central role in activating the protective qualities of certain substances or materials (Ferme 2001: 1-23). Amulets, or small protective packages known as *sebe* often contain sheets of cloth with texts from the Qu'ran, wrapped in herbs, cloth and string.

Bertha suggested that Christianity offered protection from demonic forces where Islam failed, as its primary concern was saving souls and promoting the 'truth', rather than conversion at the expense of allowing 'false gods' to remain. Miriam noted that this was the reason Muslims form the majority in Sierra Leone (the 2004 census estimated the total Muslim population at 71.3%, Pew Research Centre 2009) and that 'the power of Jesus' had not successfully eradicated all threat from 'demons'. She added to this, arguing that that 'even orthodox Christians - the Methodists, the Catholics and the Anglicans - accept some traditional practices in secret'. Being Pentecostal, 'these demons cannot affect us here at the Museum, we have Jesus, he is stronger than all of it'. Of course in reality the religious make-up of Sierra Leone is far more complicated than



this. Being 'Muslim', 'Methodist', 'Catholic' or 'Anglican' incorporates a great deal of variation, particularly where attitudes to divination, esoteric knowledge or traditional medicines are concerned. Indeed I met a several Muslims both in and outside of Freetown who also rejected traditional beliefs and practices, associating them with a past they felt Sierra Leone needed to move on from. Despite this, what is important here is that Pentecostal staff at the SLNM perceive a world in which the objects contained in the Museum pose a real and continued threat, and that their choice to become Born Again Christians provides them with the protection required to mitigate this.

#### **BELIEF**

This protection comes from the Church's complete rejection of 'false gods'. For staff this broader rejection becomes personally potent through the strength of their own belief. On a different occasion, Bertha and I were discussing a collection of military dress worn by the Kamajors, or Civil Defence Force, during the recent civil war which are thought to have entered the SLNM's collections in 2004 (figure 34).

The term 'kamajor' has come to represent civilian militias from across Sierra Leone, though traditionally this is a Mende term associated with 'traditional hunters' (Ferme and Hoffman 2004: 75). Kamajor militias are known for employing esoteric powers gained as a result of initiation into special hunter guilds, later criticised by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a ploy to extract money with initiates forced to pay large sums to society heads (TRC, Vol. 2 2004: 77- 78). Although the kamajors initially claimed to offer protection to civilians, they have also been associated with the grave human rights abuses that characterised Sierra Leone's civil war (TRC, Vol. 3a 2004: 213-219; Ferme and Hoffman 2004; Hoffman 2011). What set these militias apart from their counterparts was their mode of dress, clad in ronko shirts and trousers which were often adorned with amulets, or 'sebe', containing protective substances. Such shirts were impregnated with medicine which was thought to guard the wearer from bullets, as well as more esoteric forms of harm, also 'merging the wearer into the complex, labile, dangerous world of battle' (Richards 2009: 504). Richards (2009) has argued that it was this 'world' which rendered ronko shirts effective as 'technologies of

dress'. He narrates a story where a 'peace worker' tried to 'test' the efficacy of the shirt by shooting a bullet at a kamajor warrior, wounding his left shoulder. Rather than serving as a 'bullet proof vest', Richards' argues that the shirts potency lies in the improvisatory and unregulated technologies of war, dependent not only 'on the weaver's art, but also on the warrior's rite' (2009: 505).



Figure 34. Three of the SLNM's ronko shirts on display for the museum's 'Peace and Conflict' exhibition in April 2011. They are accompanied by a selection of images taken by Médecins Sans Frontières. These shirts are thought to have been worn by the kamajors, or Civil Defence Force, during the recent civil war. Photo: author.

Little is known about the kamajor objects at the SLNM as they are not thought to have been accompanied by any documentation. This unique collection includes the five ronko shirts or vests, a pair of trousers, four caps, and a couple of unusual masks, all adorned with sebe packages containing protective medicine. When I began fieldwork in 2010, these objects remained hidden at the bottom of a chest of draws in the main storage room, although this changed as they were finally accessioned in 2011 during the digitisation process. They were then displayed as part of a 'Peace and Conflict' exhibition at the SLNM in early 2011, where they accompanied a series of gruesome images taken by Médecins Sans Frontières during the war and donated to the SLNM by way of the West Africa Museums Programme. There has been a lot of interest in these formidable objects. A loan was requested by the Special Court of Sierra Leone for a preview of its planned Peace Museum in April 2011. It was however turned down,

partly as two of the shirts had already been chosen for a trip to London where they were displayed at University College London to mark the launch of the 'Reanimating Cultural Heritage' website.

The 'Peace and Conflict' exhibition was taken down in April 2011 to make space for the SLNM's 50th anniversary exhibition, discussed in Chapter 3. As we dismantled the display of ronko shirts, I asked Bertha whether she believed the kamajor outfits really did protect their wearers. Contrary to my expectations, her answer in many ways supported Richards' (2009) conclusions, as she noted that if she were to wear the shirt, it would have no affect. She claimed that as she does not 'believe in juju', but rather 'believes' in Jesus, the shirt would sit like any ordinary shirt were she to put it on. Though she did not doubt the potency of the garment, it would only have affect for those who 'let demons in' and it was these demons who, she noted, influenced the wearers of the shirts to 'do those bad things' during the civil war.

'Belief' in this context concerned faith, rather than whether these objects had the potential to be effective. Bertha and Miriam's faith enables them to maintain their roles at the National Museum because it controls the power inherent within objects that have the potential to be dangerous. Dangerous objects are tolerated as a result, though perhaps not particularly liked. Tours of the gallery by Miriam skirt over the glass case containing a series of amulets or packages containing hale, collectively described as 'juju items', while visitors are swiftly moved on to the cabinet of less controversial cooking utensils and clay pots. Nonetheless, those objects remain in the case and in the collections, and like the kamajor military dress, are dealt with professionally on a daily basis. The kamajor ronko shirts are now on permanent display in the gallery after returning from their trip to London along with two new calico mounts and a text-heavy interpretation panel.

## **A Pentecostal modernity**

Corten and Marshall-Fratani note, 'Pentecostalism provides the most striking example of the paradox of difference and uniformity, or flow and closure, that seems to be at the

heart of processes of transnationalism and globalisation' (2001: 1). Whilst 'open' to dealing with local demonic threats, this doctrine also shows considerable global uniformity in the languages and images which are drawn up through its sermons, pamphlets, films, plays, posters and so on. One such moment of uniformity is that of 'spiritual warfare', discussed above, another its unremitting desire to break from the past as a way of accessing a new Pentecostal modernity.

#### **CRUSADES AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

A focus on modernity is arguably one of the defining attractions of the doctrine in developing contexts, which currently forms the biggest market for conversion (Robbins 2004). Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001) explore this in relation to Pentecostalism offering an 'alternative route to modernisation', relating to the 'failed promises of the nation-state' (2001: 3). As noted above, spiritual salvation is 'this worldly', and thus members of the church believe they can access increased material wealth, professional success or better health through prayer and commitment to the church. This is a central draw for new converts and the Pentecostal churches in Freetown take advantage of this by encouraging large public events called 'crusades'. Crusades are touring missions which are coordinated by both local and foreign Pentecostal organisations. They often take place in public spaces such as playing fields or sports stadiums, with specially erected stages and enormous sound systems. These events can run through the night, sometimes lasting over 24 hours. Rather than delivering a traditional sermon, they include prayer sessions and the performance of particular 'miracles' often relating to physical healing or the driving out of demons that are 'blocking' the upward mobility of the congregation.

During fieldwork I lived for a month in an area called Grassfields in Lumley. The 'field' is not particularly 'grassy', but is rather a large dusty area used regularly by the local community as a football pitch or a place for children to play. It is also the location of frequent crusades. During the sessions the preachers' voice would reverberate through huge speakers ensuring that the Pentecostal message was heard by every household within a mile radius. It would rise in volume and pace, inciting numerous climactic

points throughout the night. On one memorable occasion the preacher fuelled an en-mass call for luxury 4-wheel drive vehicles, as he stamped his feet and boomed into his microphone 'Jesus buy me a four-by-four! Give us prosperity! Buy me a four-by-four! It is done! He has come! You will see it, you will have a car!'. Miriam described these events as 'giving glory to God', but also noted that they 'encouraged souls', commenting that people who were not Born Again Christians were drawn to them. One was hard-pushed to ignore the promises of prosperity delivered at such intensity of noise, with numerous participants all committed to energetic prayer from dusk till dawn.

In this sense, the church offers an alternative form of 'development' to the State and its development partners. Members believe fervently in its ability to cure illness, provide the conditions for personal success and the associated perks which many associate with modernity including a flashy car, a big house, a laptop computer and a smart-phone. Returning to an earlier discussion, the Church arguably plays a role in Sierra Leone's post-war recovery. Unlike the Government, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone or the TRC, however, it does so through fighting off dangerous demonic forces and praying for prosperity, rather, for example, than rebuilding an electricity infrastructure, putting war criminals on trail or providing 'Peace Education' in schools. Key here is also the recent academic focus on the potential for 'heritage' to play a role in 'healing' (cf. de Jong and Rowlands 2008). A key component of the RCH project was to explore whether dispersed Sierra Leonean museum collections could play a role in post-war civil society strengthening, likewise in Chapter 4 I argued that 'building national conciseness' in Sierra Leone is a project which needs to be more deeply engaged with heritage than dressing in the national colours allows. The Pentecostal Church, however, seems to abandon 'heritage' and the Sierra Leonean past, seeking its moment of recovery in modernity and promises for the future.

Evidence for the Church's success is seen in the everyday. Congregation members display their own moral rigour through the public consumption of wealth (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001: 9), attending church services in their finest and most expensive cloths, donating large sums of money, and arriving in shiny new cars or chartered taxi's

depending on their means. Ironically, much of the wealth of this new urban middle class is likely to come from jobs in internationally funded NGO's or development programmes, still one of the highest employers in Sierra Leone. However, here this is converted into an even more powerful sign of success, demonstrating that 'God is on my side' (a hymn sung at the Christian Life Era Church service).

Whether or not being Born Again really does result in greater personal prosperity, the grandeur and scale of its church buildings exude immense wealth and power. These buildings compete with many of the new internationally funded Government ministries in size. Freetown's Pentecostal churches distribute flyers, posters, and banners on a scale that far exceeds more subtle attempts to influence deeper change through the curriculum, or the 'attitudinal change' campaign led by the most recent Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP II, Government of Sierra Leone 2008). Preachers are flown in from London, Accra, Lagos and Los Angeles and address the congregation in expensive suits, gold chains, shiny shoes and open arms. When compared to many of the scruffy brigade of International NGO workers, Ph.D students and aid researchers, these visiting foreigners impress on a whole different level.

#### **MODERNITY AND PROFESSIONALISM AT THE SLNM**

Born Again staff members were fully accepted by their respective ecclesiastical communities despite the fact that they encounter potentially demonic objects on a daily basis and publicly define their work as 'guardians' of the kinds of institutions and rituals the Church openly condemns. The seven new masquerade costumes displayed in the museum are tantamount to this, and although supported by the British Museum's interventions at the SLNM, museum staff were involved and take some of the credit for the display and the other changes taking place. Despite this, both Bertha and Miriam remain important members of the Born Again community and receive frequent visits from other members who come to the SLNM to greet them. In a congregation of approaching 3000 members, Bertha was personally friendly with the Pastor and a member of the Church committee, often given seating priority during services. Bertha regularly commented that she 'knows everyone in Freetown', and this certainly

appeared to be the case as most of her time was taken up with visits. People wait to see her for hours on end in the foyer if she is engaged with another visitor or busy elsewhere. These connections are hugely beneficial for the museum and, as she noted herself, 'keeps the museum going' through offers of unpaid support. This includes small but important tasks such as assisting with the annual 'holiday school', moving heavy furniture to clear space for events, delivering letters, or running small errands.

An explanation is likely to lie in Bertha's generosity with both her own time and her limited resources. Having said this, I wonder whether the Church's association of personal success and prosperity with salvation might also be significant here. The Pentecostal Church in Freetown is largely a 'middle class' affair with an often literate congregation who come to services equipped with well thumbed bibles to make notes. However many more inhabitants of Freetown remain unemployed, desperately poor and illiterate following the war. Unemployment is still common within Freetown's Pentecostal community, though they may be educated this certainly does not guarantee paid work (Shaw 2007: 72).

Although working at the SLNM does not secure a reliable wage, with salaries often remaining unpaid for months on end, it nonetheless provides reasonably secure employment and distinguishes these women to some extent. Employees of the SLNM refer to themselves as Civil Servants with wages coming directly from the National Budget via the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. Their posts result in invitations to small public events as special guests and representatives of Sierra Leone's cultural sector, such as the relatively low key performances and exhibitions held at the British Council. Additionally they are invited to speak on Sierra Leone's numerous radio stations, including Culture Radio and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation station. In recent years working for the SLNM has also resulted in opportunities for travel. Celia Nicols, the former Curator, was funded by the West Africa Museum's Programme to study for an MA at Leicester, whilst Bertha has travelled to the Gambia, Kenya, and the UK for training initiatives, and to China in to partake in the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition. These are considerable perks in a context where very few

have the opportunity to travel outside of Sierra Leone. Although employees of the National Museum might be accused of safeguarding objects which may be harmful to the congregation, I wonder whether the public status of the Museum works to soften the conflict between the past and the Church's vision of modernity.

This questions what a museum is in Sierra Leone and the nature 'professional museum work' as it is understood and currently valued by this Pentecostal community. During my fieldwork it seemed that access to computers, personal office space and overseas trips were more definitive of success at the SLNM, and thus more valuable, than knowledge about collections. I don't think this is particularly unusual; these modest signs of institutional wealth show that the SLNM is engaged in international support circles and thus infers a certain amount of internationally recognised value. Perhaps more importantly, it builds the social capital of its employees by engaging them in professional practices which have, until recently, been reserved for well-paid politicians and NGO workers. 'Knowledge' about Sierra Leone's esoteric objects and practices is, however, more contentious. 'Too much' knowledge may indicate a level of familiarity which goes beyond that which is accepted in maintaining the identity of staff as modern Born Again 'professionals'.

On occasion it was possible to observe how the possession of such 'knowledge' could become potentially compromising, demonstrating a tension between the Museum staff's professional identities and their membership of the Church. For example, it was evident that Bertha had a much greater knowledge of the Bondo society than she made known and that she was reluctant to make her possession of this knowledge public. Bertha spent the early part of her childhood in the north of Sierra Leone near Makeni, however she moved to Freetown to attend the Annie Walsh Memorial School in the 1960s. It was in Freetown that she underwent initiation into the Bondo Society, although today she is keen to highlight that this was not her choice, but she was pressured into doing it by her family. She was a Catholic during her youth, but converted to the Pentecostal Church shortly before the war. Bertha describes with great emotion the moment she became 'Born Again'. As the Pastor placed his hands on her



head and prayed for her, she felt the 'demon' that was put inside her during initiation leave her, to be replaced with the Holy Ghost. At this point Bertha says that she 'forgot everything' the society had taught her.

In September 2010, Bertha was asked to appear in a short documentary about Bondo masks, produced by the Ballanta Academy of Music for the Reanimating Cultural Heritage project's website. The documentary shows a selection of helmet masks in the SLNM collection, as well as a performance of the Ndoli Jowei by the National Dance Troupe. Before her interview, Bertha expressed her concerns over appearing in this film as she was worried that it would appear that she 'knew too much', and people would draw the assumption that she remained involved in the society. She noted that in Freetown, 'people assume I am Krio', relating here to the idea that she grew up and was educated in Freetown, rather than in rural Sierra Leone. Eventually the film was made and Bertha was pleased with the result. In her capacity as 'expert', she follows a standardised narrative about a women's society which is concerned with beauty and femininity, noting that that the mask is danced for entertainment and public pleasure. This is widely known and commonly accepted 'knowledge' which did not unveil her former associations with the society, but rather confirmed her status as 'expert' within an accepted and adequately 'modern' framework.

#### **GLOBAL MEMBERSHIP**

Corten and Marshall Frantani's (2001) edited volume on *Transnational Pentecostalism* charts the global popularity of this church, noting that 'individuals, fuelled by images, ideas and resources from elsewhere, re-script their lives...finding new ways to appropriate and inscribe themselves within a global modernity' (2001: 1). 'The essays in this collection focus on the global nature of this church across Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America and the global flows of images and ideas, opening up 'access to information and new possibilities' (2001: 5). Marshall-Frantani's own article on the merging of the 'global' and the local' in Nigerian Pentecostalism notes that the Church offers 'an overarching sense of belonging and common purpose' through its transnational networks (2001: 85). These networks are both real, such as the Christian

Life Era Ministries International which spans across the UK, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, and 'imagined', with smaller local churches often drawing on transnational vocabularies in their titles (*ibid*; van Dijk 2001: 221). Such networks 'extend beyond the national to the global, even if the particular mission or ministry to which a believer belongs is small, it carries with it the sense of belonging to a global movement and access, if not immediately to financial or technological support, to resources such as literature and ideas' (Marshall-Fratani 2001: 85). These transnational networks exist in Sierra Leone and transport people whose lives rarely involve travel much further than to a different province in Sierra Leone, into a new global world. I explore this below with the story of Samuel<sup>21</sup>.

Samuel is the brother of a friend of mine, Jacob<sup>22</sup>, who lives in a large Temne village called Masingbi on the road from Makeni to Magbaruka in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. This area is largely Islamic and the majority of the residents of Masingbi are members of one of the village's many mosques, although a school and a small church were established by a North American Methodist mission in the 1950s. Samuel and Jacob's family have 'blood ties' through their maternal grandfather with the elderly Paramount Chief of the Konike District, who also lives in Masingbi. The family lives in a house that was built by their grandfather and lies opposite the Methodist School; the children were all baptised as Methodists after their grandfather.

Jacob was initiated into the local Poro society when he was very young, due in part to his families lineage and the chiefly associations with the society. The Poro society is the main male initiation society in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and the Ivory Coast and arguably the most widespread society across West Africa (de Jong 2007: 11). Initiation took place in Masingbi's Poro bush before the war; a place Jacob says became increasingly hostile as the war progressed. This does not seem to be due to a fear of encountering dangerous military men, but rather esoteric beings Jacob and his family referred to as 'strangers'. Their family yard was backed by bush and few ventured alone

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<sup>21</sup> I have used a pseudonym to partially protect the identity of my informant.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*.

along the perimeter after dark. The family was insistent that I closed and locked the shutters to my room at night which made it stiflingly hot. After a few nights I asked about the thieves I had mistakingly assumed I was being protected against. This presumption insulted the family who reprimanded me, commenting that there are no thieves in Masingbi. Rather their concern was with non-human 'strangers' who came from the bush and disturbed the village at night (cf. Shaw 2002: 46-69). Interestingly, the Poro bush, as well as the Bondo bush, have now been moved out of Masingbi and young men and women travel to smaller surrounding villages to be initiated.

Samuel was too young to be initiated before the war. Masingbi was attacked by the RUF in 1996, and the family fled to the RUF stronghold in Makeni after spending several months in hiding in the forest. They stayed with some relatives before the children moved to Freetown where they were later joined by their mother in a flat along the Kissi Road, and later on the Eastern Road toward Wellington. It was in one of Freetown's Pentecostal churches that Samuel became 'Born Again'. He noted that he made this decision as it became increasingly clear to him that 'people need to fundamentally change their ways to gain the favour of Christ' as a result of the violence he witnessed as a child growing up in the civil war.

After the war, Samuel returned to Masingbi and chose not to be initiated into the Poro society. This was despite complaints from his uncle, Mohammed. Masingbi now has its own Pentecostal Church, the Marantha Pentecostal Mission Church, which is led by Pastor Wullie. The Church does not have its own building, but shares the original Methodist Church building. The Pastor is a Mende from Kailahun and came to Masingbi from his family home in the south-east. He is known for inviting numerous guest preachers; I attended a service led by a preacher from Bo who had trained for three years in the United States. Masingbi is largely a Temne village, but the congregation began the service by singing a hymn in Mende. Pastor Wullie delivered his sermon in English and he began by calling the congregation the 'Princes and Princesses of the King - God - the King of the nation of Christians!'. He continued 'you are no longer Temne, Mende, Limba or Loko. Forgot your tribe! Expel the Devils from your community! You

are citizens of Christ, you have been reborn as Christians'. Samuel is an important member of this small congregation, leading the group in Bible study, discussions, prayer and song.

Samuel works as a teacher in Masingbi, but, like the majority of teachers, is not included in the national teachers' payroll as he is unable to afford the teacher training course. The Government imposed a crackdown on 'illegal teachers' in 2010 after the 2007 Education Sector Report which found that the majority of schools in rural areas were reliant upon unqualified teachers (MEST 2007: 7). This has been a focus of international aid programmes engaging in education since the end of the war, many of which have provided short-term teaching courses for those whom have not undergone formal training (UNICEF 2011).

Samuel has dreams of moving to Freetown to live with his older brother, Jacob, but is cognisant of the costs involved in doing so and the difficulties of finding a job in a city school without formal training. Jacob is bright and very successful, funding his way through a Law degree at Fourah Bay College through his work at the Centre for Security Development and Analysis. He also receives financial assistance from a relative living in the United States. Jacob describes himself as a 'modern man', thoroughly knowledgeable about both Sierra Leonean and international news and an avid listener to the BBC's World Service. He was elected leader of the Student Union from 2009 and 2010, attends public political debates and his job has given him the opportunity for travel, most recently to Ethiopia, Gambia and Belgium.

Although Samuel would like to emulate his brother and become a Freetowner, he does not currently have the means to do so. In Masingbi, however, he is respected and well known for his religious piety. Villagers come to him for advice. For example, when I was visiting he was engaged in providing marital advice for a man whose wife had returned to her mother's village. Samuel is also a 'modern man' in his own way, rejecting the local Poro society and refusing to partake in the rites associated with his lineage, and rather choosing membership within a transnational church. The Church encourages him to

read and to teach. Its English services further distinguish Samuel and the other congregation members from the majority of Masingbi's residents, most of whom speak Temne and some Krio. Those who are English-speakers include the wealthy Lebanese diamond trading community who moved in to the area in the 1960s, and those who have returned to the village after time spent living in Freetown. The focus of the service I attended called for a new citizenship, beyond 'tribe' or 'nation', linking this congregation with places across the world. Certainly on a smaller scale, membership within the Born Again Church in Masingbi means that Samuel is automatically welcomed in Born Again churches in Freetown when he visits his brother.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explores a contradiction. As discussed in Chapter 1, a significant part of the international aid community increasingly seeks to establish a development framework that embraces local traditions and knowledges to support a more locally-informed model of change. Likewise, recent studies of heritage and museum work have increasingly tuned in to the need to take a 'grass-roots' or 'bottom-up' perspective when considering the ways in which the past and its traditions are valued. Meanwhile, a different international force is gaining influence in Sierra Leone which contradicts these movements. The Pentecostal church is increasingly popular and seems to tap into widely held concerns and needs. Although its doctrines have not permeated daily life in the same way as vocabularies of development, they nonetheless have a conspicuous presence, encouraging the construction of huge buildings, inspiring mass public gatherings and reaching wide audiences through advertising and popular media culture. In relation to the themes of this thesis, the biggest contradiction of them all is the relationship between the Pentecostal Church and the National Museum, where staff members spend their Sundays praying for the triumph of Jesus over rural demons, and then spend their week working in an institution which, to some extent, protects them.

In this chapter I have focused on these contradictions by asking what sits behind the popularity of the Pentecostal Church and exploring how this relates to the SLNM. The

Church offers protection from the forces which it preaches limit ones capacity to move forwards. At the SLNM it enables Born Again staff to work with objects that may otherwise pose a threat, thus helping them to do their jobs and retain their positions in society. It is on the one hand a relevant institution which engages in local concerns of both the esoteric and the more everyday variety. Yet it also seems to represent something much broader for its congregations associated with social and spacial mobility. As noted in the sermon from Masingbi, its congregations consist of 'global citizens'. Through they may not themselves ever have the opportunity to travel, they partake in a global world through flows of media and ideas.

Marshall (2001) draws on Appadurai's (1991) 'crisis of the nation-state' to explore the way the Nigerian Pentecostal Church sits within continuous flows of global media which inform 'scripts' of 'imagined lives'. These scripts 'whilst interpreted in terms of local, every-day experience, are taken from global repertoires, and as such provide means for imagining communities outside or in defiance of the nation-state's bid to monopolise the resources of community formation' (2001: 280). As such, 'imagined transnational communities' emerge, positioning people globally through an alternative 'vision of modernity' and providing 'the means by which individuals and communities may inscribe themselves within it' (2001: 282). Arguably, becoming a 'citizen of Christ' in Masingbi provides a similar moment of inscription, providing Samuel with the images and ideas required to reconcile his aspirations of modernity with the reality of his life in rural Sierra Leone. Likewise it seems to present a similar advantage at the SLNM, supporting the transformation of a job which concerns the past into broader rhetorics of modernity and change. These discourses are highly evocative, and aligning ones professional career with them is very important for those engaged in the cultural sector.

The Pentecostal Church clearly captures the imaginations, hopes and aspirations of urban Sierra Leonean's in a way that 'heritage' does not. It is interesting to compare this with the literature on museums as ritualistic secular spaces (Duncan 1995), 'cathedrals of identity' (Adams 2003), or 'cathedrals of urban modernity' (Lorente 1998). Lorente

writes of the history of the museum 'if the existence of a cathedral-church was in medieval [European] times one of the defining criteria to distinguish between a 'city' and a 'town', the provision of public museums became, from the Enlightenment onwards, one of the most typical urban features' (1998: 1). Elaborate architecture, ritual-like engagements with objects and the role of the museum in disseminating authoritative texts or 'scripts for viewing the world' (Adams 2003: 136) have all contributed to the notion that museums can be compared to a secular church. Sierra Leone's National Museum is certainly no 'cathedral' but perhaps it needs to become one in order to be more relevant to the Sierra Leoneans who seek membership to these models of modernity proposed by the Pentecostal Church, and those of transformation and change currently being proposed by the Government.

## Conclusions

This thesis began with a discussion of the 49th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule, as it was marked by the Sierra Leone National Museum (SLNM) on 27th April 2010. This event, executed in collaboration with a small youth-based NGO called Community Concern Network, provoked a number of questions concerning the relationship between 'culture', 'heritage' and 'development' in Sierra Leone. Whilst these have largely been framed as part of a mutually beneficial alliance in seeking to achieve greater local relevance in the wider 'culture for development' literature, a rather different set of conflicts and negotiations emerged as the group abandoned plans suggested by the SLNM in favour of a development theme. Discussions after the event suggested that whilst maintaining Sierra Leonean traditions was considered important, members of the group chose not to focus on this theme as it conflicted with their aspirations to play a role in Sierra Leone's future.

This thesis is concerned with the recent conjunction of culture, heritage, and development that has emerged in response to the 'cultural turn' in development, and the 'development turn' in heritage and museum studies. In Chapter 1 I traced the nexus of culture and development, exploring how both development and heritage studies have followed an almost parallel critical theoretical trajectory. Of central concern is the acknowledgement that both 'development' and 'heritage' should be understood as discursive constructs, reflecting global power structures which persist today. Despite originating in a particular historical context, these terms have been applied as though they were universally relevant, overlooking the potential for alternative ideas, resources and skills to have value and meaning. As a result, critical engagements with these concepts propose that a more 'grass-roots' approach is needed. What interests me is the way this has led to a series of initiatives which concern both development and heritage, and in particular a powerful 'culture for development' rhetoric which proposes that development initiatives based in existing 'culture' will provide a more



sustainable and empowering form of change. It should be noted that 'culture' has been used to broadly refer to 'local cultural contexts', but it has also been applied quite specifically to engage further with culture as 'heritage' or 'tradition'. This is certainly the model that has been adopted by UNESCO and its World Commission for Culture and Development (UNESCO 1995; UNESCO 2010). It is also the vocabulary which increasingly informs heritage projects seeking to work in developing contexts, such as archaeological excavations, conservation projects, museum collaborations or capacity building initiatives.

These 'culture for development' projects all take an important step forward, looking beyond the more traditional concerns with preserving, collecting and building knowledge about the past, to rethink the role that 'heritage' plays, or could play, in the present. Yet what are the implications of this rhetoric as it emerges, and in the context of Sierra Leone, becomes instrumentalised by those who work in Sierra Leone's cultural sector? From a development perspective 'culture for development' arises through a concern that the 'local' is overlooked, sidelined by international aid agencies and multi-national organisations who have been shown to impart 'top-down' blue-prints of 'progress'. Similarly, from a 'heritage' perspective, the focus on 'development' arises as a means of further exploring the value of the past to the present, beyond the focus on preservation and collection which has dominated Western heritage discourse. These are important concerns, however this thesis highlights that further complexities emerge as discussions of 'culture', 'heritage' and 'development' meet in Sierra Leone. I suggest these meeting points, or encounters, question the ease with which 'culture for development' discourse is applied to both development and heritage intervention. Whilst this rhetoric emerges from a concern with the need to embrace local contexts, knowledges or skills, a different set of agendas emerged in the context of my research in Sierra Leone. Here 'culture for development' seems embedded in broader concerns about the relationship of the past within a transformational future, and the personal and professional aspirations of my informants as they begin to negotiate this. As such, the relationship between culture and development is at times tense. Rather than

foregrounding local or grass-roots agendas, 'culture for development' is, in this context, embroiled in a negotiation of modernity, politics and broader international influence.



Figure 35. President Ernest Bai Koroma's reinvention as the 'Cultural President' in April 2012.

I introduced this thesis with Sierra Leone's 49th anniversary of independence. Likewise, much of its content concerns the activities, frictions and discussions which encircled the lead up to and celebration of the 50th anniversary. These annual national holidays were not an intentional focus, but in many ways they epitomise the crux of this research being both about marking the past, but also unavoidably about laying claim to and making plans for the future. The 50th anniversary was a highly political event, marking the President's

leadership through the rhetoric of a 'new era', and represented by the transformation of Freetown into a city of green, white and blue. As discussed in Chapter's 3, 4 and 5, encounters of culture, heritage and development were abundant in the lead up and celebration of this event as my informants attempted to negotiate their professional concerns with the past in relation to their hopes for the next 50 years. Given the centrality of this moment to my fieldwork, it thus seems fitting to conclude with the 51st anniversary in 2012. This moment suggested that Sierra Leone's cultural sector has a greater presence today than it did when I began my fieldwork in 2010. Despite the sector remaining comparatively sidelined, a closer alliance of 'culture' with wider governmental agendas appears to be on the cards: in 2012 a new slogan was added to the Presidents re-election campaign, referring to Ernest Bai Koroma as Sierra Leone's 'Cultural President'. Related material in the national colours shows a picture of the

president wearing a blue gown and embroidered cap, accompanied by two sangbay drums (figure 35).

## **51st anniversary of independence**

On the 27th April 2012, the President addressed the nation from the National Stadium and listed his government's achievements since being elected in 2007, in preparation for the coming elections in November 2012 (President Ernest Bai Koroma 2012). The event also included the inauguration of an annual 'Cultural Festival' to be organised by the MoTC (Director of Cultural Affairs, pers. comm.). This would include performances by regional dance troupes who had been invited to Freetown, and a daylight lantern parade (whilst the original night-time version still took place on Easter Monday that year). The climax of the Festival, however, included a moment of rather significant 'flag waving' (Billig 1995). 1002 women, men and children achieved Sierra Leone's first Guinness World Record title for the 'largest Sampa dance in history' spanning six minutes and twelve seconds (Director of Cultural Affairs, pers. comm). The Guinness World Record (2012) website describes this dance learnt during initiation into the women's Bondo or Sande society as 'a folk dance traditional in Sierra Leone'. The dancers were organised into thirty-lines, divided into three groups of eight who each wore one of the national colours - green, white and blue - from head to toe. This gave the impression of a huge,

dancing, national flag (figure 36). Tailors had been employed especially for the event by the MoTC, and they set up a work station in the Ministry grounds. The record was officially recognised by a Guinness World Record adjudicator who had been invited from the UK, and the entry will appear in the



Figure 36. 1002 men, women and children performing a 51st independence day version of a Sampa dance, at Sierra Leone's National Stadium. The event has been recorded as Sierra Leone's debut entry into the Guinness World Record archive, to be published in 2013. Image: Guinness World Records, 2012.

2013 published edition. The Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Victoria Saidu Kamara, is quoted commenting on the achievement:

I am still reflecting on the feeling of excitement from the citizens of Sierra Leone when we made the grade and won the record and the official certificate was issued to Mama Salone. I was dancing for joy and even crying with joy for this remarkable achievement for the country. As the first female Minister of Tourism. (Guinness World Records 2012)

The event was sponsored by the Mariatu Kargbo Foundation which has a particular focus on the education of girls. Mariatu Kargbo grew up in Sierra Leone, but moved to China in 2004 where she pursued her career as a singer and featured on Xingguang Dadao, a Chinese televised talent show. She has since succeeded in becoming relatively well known in China, releasing her first album, Thank You China, in 2012. Her biggest hit, 'Married Chinese', is sung in Mandarin and charts her move to China, and desire to find a Chinese husband:

我是来自非洲的姑娘 I am a girl came from Africa,  
心中向往神秘的东方 Yearning for the mysterious Orient  
背起行囊寻找梦想 Packing up my things looking for my dream  
那是龙的故乡 That is the Chinese dragon's hometown  
这里的人淳朴善良 People here are honest and kind-hearted  
所有微笑挂脸庞 With smiles on their faces  
这里小伙大大方方 Boys here are generous  
听说最会心疼姑娘 I heard they are really good at taking care of girls  
让我遇到钟情的儿郎 Let me find my Mr. Right (translated by Qin Zhang 2012)

In 2009 she entered the Miss World competition for Sierra Leone and famously performed *biàn liǎn*, a Chinese Sichuan performance involving rapid mask changing, traditionally only learnt by men. The video, officially sponsored by the MoTC, can be found on You Tube. According to China Daily it was taught to her by Hu Dongxiao, a well known master of *biàn liǎn*, who agreed to break tradition of only passing the skill to Chinese men after Mariatu volunteered for the Red Cross rescue mission after the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008 (Chen Nan 2012). When she appeared on the Chinese talent show she announced her desire to become the 'first black-Chinese' and her website notes her 'dream to bring Africa - China cultural heritage together to improve social harmony' (Mariatu Kargbo International 2010). This was officially recognised in May 2012 when President Koroma made her Cultural Ambassador for Sierra Leone in China, after her involvement in the World Record attempt. Earlier in January 2012 she donated four television sets, a DVD player and a flood light to the SLNM via the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs whom she had invited to her Beijing home in 2011. This donation was mentioned independently by both the Acting Curator and the Director of Cultural Affairs as a significant step forward for the SLNM when they visited London in February and March 2012. The Acting Curator has installed one in her office, and another sits proudly in the second office space at the entrance to Gallery Two. These are switched on for the arrival of important guests and the Acting Curator noted that these links with an 'international superstar' and her donation of electronics proved to the public that the Museum was finally 'moving forward'.

## **Valuing tradition**

Sierra Leone's debut entry into the Guinness World Records conforms to the particular application of 'culture for development' which currently dominates heritage work at the MoTC and has been discussed in this thesis. The event was described by the Director of Cultural Affairs as a highlight of his career and evidence that the Government was finally beginning to 'take our traditions seriously'. This comment builds on a key debate within development studies which has engaged with the importance of valuing existing resources and skills in the development process.

'Development' has been explored as a continuation of colonial relationships which re-asserts the power of Western nations through intervention. Crush's volume on *The Power of Development* highlights the imbalances which continue to exist between those who fund and direct development initiatives, and those who should benefit from them. Many have rejected development as a result of this imbalance (Sachs 1992; Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). Others have proposed ways in which it can be adjusted, such as through participatory research methods (Chambers 1992) or taking an 'actor-orientated approach' to further understand the operation of development projects on the ground (Long and Long 1992). Radcliffe and Laurie's (2006b) 'development with identity', on the other hand, foregrounds the importance of existing skills, resources and institutions as a potential development resource. Heritage studies has recently recognised this debate through, for example, exploring the value of heritage in bolstering local identity and pride (Kreps 2003; Kreps 2008), providing a means of economic growth (for example Choi 2009; Choi et al 2010; Burtenshaw 2011) or failing to do so (Winter 2007), and dealing with post-conflict recovery (for example de Jong and Rowlands 2008). This notion of heritage value has been central to the work of the World Commission of Culture and Development whose reports (UNESCO 1995; UNESCO 2010) outline UNESCO's approach to working with heritage in 'developing contexts'.

This context is critical to understanding the Director of Cultural Affairs statement concerning a perceived governmental recognition of 'tradition' by 'taking it seriously'. As I have discussed elsewhere (Chapter 4), members of the Directorate of Cultural Affairs employ 'culture for development' rhetoric as a means of legitimising the role of this relatively sidelined sector within the 'development' work of the more influential ministries. At this top-ministerial level, 'culture' and 'heritage' are valued through their perceived contribution to broader development, given that this is the current priority for the Government and the country's influential development partners. Of course the record breaking performance itself had little to do with 'tradition', and its *value for* 'development'. Rather, it reflected the importance of demonstrating that 'tradition' can be adjusted to slot in to a particular *understanding of* 'development'.

## **‘Developing’ tradition**

Sampa are professional dancers, associated with the Sande and Bondo societies and so they are traditionally women; this version was presented by 1002 women and men. Many of the dancers were school children from Freetown, accompanied by individuals who had been invited to perform other acts in the Cultural Festival. This was likely to do with the logistical difficulties of assembling 1002 female dancers, however Brima also commented on the importance of avoiding ‘gender discrimination’ and inviting ‘all walks of life’ to participate in the event when we spoke during his visit to London in September 2012. It is also interesting to note the Minister’s comments published in the press which presented this as a performance that reflected her own position as ‘the first female Minister of Tourism’ (and the only female cabinet member at the time), again drawing heavily on popular development rhetorics relating to gender equality in Sierra Leone.

Sampa performances have in the past coincided with celebrations occurring after the re-entry of new initiates into the community (Lamp 1988: 92). They have historically also featured as an important part of wider public events. For example the ‘ministry masquerade’ discussed in Chapter 5 invited a group of Sampa dancers to process from the MoTC building down to the final event on Lumley Beach. This is, however, based on a longer history of performance for chiefs (*ibid*) and other dignitaries. Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip were, for example, invited to attend a performance of ‘the old ways’ in Bo in 1961, the year of Sierra Leone’s independence. The event included a number of Mende masquerade presentations and a performance by a group of Sampa dancers who danced for the couple and their invited guests (British Pathe 1961).

The 51st independence day performance was arguably also for the benefit of ‘dignitaries’, albeit with a particular ‘development’ agenda. It took place after the public Cultural Festival had ended and the stadium had emptied, in front of a select group of onlookers including the event sponsor, Mariatu Kargbo, and the official Guinness World Record adjudicator. President Koroma was not present in person, however this event

was a clear moment of state pageantry in the form of a giant national flag. This slots in to the popular interpretation of 'building national consciousness' (Government of Sierra Leone 2008) through the repetition of the national colours which has proliferated during Koroma's presidency (Chapter 4). An imagined third 'dignitary', or intended audience, was arguably the international community. This was after all a 'World Record' performance which exceeded all comparable dances in number of participants and length of time, as included in the Guinness World Record archive. It presented an image of Sierra Leone to this community as a 'united, progressive, nation', building on the country's post-war 'Strategy for National Transformation' (MDEP and NLTNPS 2003), and challenging associations with child soldiers and endemic violence.

This event was not intended to showcase the potential for the Sampa dance to play a more prominent role in wider development, yet it was nonetheless an event which brought 'culture' and 'development' together. When Crush (1995: 3) refers to the 'power of development' he is concerned with the way development discourse and practice has historically sought to 'manage' and 'transform' non-Western contexts, by employing a model of modernity based on Western skills, institutions or economic models (for example Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* 1960). In Sierra Leone, 'transformation' and modernity remain potent in visions for the future, particularly within this relatively middle class milieu. This 'vision' is derived from international development discourse, and its application by aid agencies and governmental poverty reduction strategies, such as the 2008 Agenda for Change (PRSP II, Government of Sierra Leone 2008). Like many of the other examples in this thesis (Chapter 4; Chapter 5; Chapter 6), this event concerned the negotiation of a particular 'tradition' to determine its relevance, and by proxy the relevance of the MoTC, to Sierra Leone's 'developed' future. Rather than highlighting the importance of building on existing skills, institutions or resources in wider development, the concerns of the MoTC are dominated by a need to show how such traditions can also be representative of a 'modern' Sierra Leone.



## **Problematic tradition and modernity**

As noted above, 'culture for development' rests on the idea that existing cultural forms are valuable to development. The record breaking Sampa dance, however, managed to gloss over a central problem with regard to the broader application of this idea in the context of Sierra Leone. Sampa dancers are in other contexts representative of the female Sande and Bondo societies. Like the widely exhibited Soweï mask, the dance thus represents practices which, according to international bodies such as the World Health Organisation, contravene universal human rights through the continued practice of female genital cutting (Chapter 5). This highlights a central theme of this thesis which has concerned moments where 'heritage' conflicts with 'development'. This is both directly, as in the example above, and indirectly, through wider ontologies of what it means to be 'developed'. This point is discussed below.

The idea of 'development' is evocative in Sierra Leone. The future of the country is a concern for many and discussions about recent governmental policies or infrastructure development projects can be overheard across Freetown in crammed public taxis and mini-buses, bars, in court yards, street corners or between stall holders. For the middle classes, development is not only about access to healthcare, fuel and electricity, but a wider concern about being perceived as 'developed' or 'modern'. This 'modernity' has many guises, but includes education, living in the capital, having secure employment, access to travel, and, crucially, being engaged in, or knowledgeable of, national development vocabularies. Sierra Leone's many Pentecostal churches offer another potent representation of modernity, built on personal prosperity and global flows of individuals, images and doctrines (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001; Gifford 2004; Chapter 6).

What these middle-class depictions of modernity share is a tense relationship with many of Sierra Leone's traditions, particularly those associated with initiation societies (Chapter 5; Chapter 6). In some instances such practices represent the antithesis of an imagined modernity, be it through the use of esoteric (or demonic) forces, violence,

contravention of human rights law, or because they simply represent a past which many feel the country has moved on from. The focus on 'transformation' in the current governments political strategy, particularly the 'Agenda for Change' campaign, reinforces these tensions (Government of Sierra Leone 2008; Chapter 4).

Similar tensions are recognised by UNESCO's *Our Creative Diversity* (1995: 29-30, 46) where it is acknowledged that certain traditions contravene the UN's universal human rights. As a result 'bad practices and unacceptable behaviour' are rejected. In Sierra Leone, however, this tension requires a more complex strategy. Though initiation societies may not be included in this particular vision of modernity (although of course in other contexts they may be considered fully 'modern', cf. de Jong 2007), they nonetheless remain powerful. So much so that at the SLNM staff members engage in a spiritual warfare against them, fortified by their Pentecostal Christian beliefs (Chapter 6). Likewise the MoTC was unable to stop the disruption caused by a dangerous rural masquerader, nor was it even possible for an employee of an international NGO to fully reject his memory of the 'true' Soweï (Chapter 5).

As a result of this, problematic practices and societies are subject to multiple incarnations, as both 'developed traditions' which sit easily within idea of transformation and modernity, and their powerful other (cf. de Jong 2007). In this sense, certain narratives or knowledges are considered appropriate in a heritage or museum environment, whilst others are part of a deeper and everyday engagement with powerful forces which do not sit comfortably in this 'modern' middle-class context. For example, although the Museum is full of objects believed to be dangerous by staff and requiring protection offered by the Pentecostal Church, these are not the narratives which are made public through exhibition texts or tours. Thus, in certain circumstances the Acting Curator chose not to divulge her knowledge of the Bondo society since a demonstration of her expertise in such matters might be perceived to conflict with her own identification as Christian, educated and urban.

## **Local expertise**

Crush notes that in the context of development, 'Western knowledge is inseparable from Western power' (1995: 3). Both development and heritage work have been criticised as emerging from a Western world view which values Western (and often academic) knowledge over and above alternative 'local' expertise. Adjusting this imbalance is central to the 'cultural turn' in development (Pieterse 1995; Radcliffe and Laurie 2006) and the increasing focus on local skills and resources discussed above. Development initiatives increasingly draw on languages of building partnerships and collaborations, or working with local stakeholders, in order to encourage local ownership and sustainability (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 111; Cornwall and Eade 2010). Re-assessing expertise is also increasingly important within heritage and museum studies. 'Source community' projects within ethnographic museums tend to de-value the notion of the museum and its academic curatorial credentials as an authority, seeking rather to locate expertise within communities whom have continued connections with museum objects (Peers and Brown 2003). Similarly, many capacity building initiatives driven by Western heritage institutions and research projects seek to respond to local knowledge through building partnerships with museum staff and the local community (The British Museum 2012), or developing a locally 'appropriate museology' (Kreps 2008).

However, this thesis has, in the context of my research in Sierra Leone, built further complexity into the application of projects which build on 'local expertise'. A central component of the debate within development studies concerns the tendency to dichotomise 'local' knowledge, from top-down 'global' knowledge (Crewe and Harrison 1998; Radcliffe and Laurie 2006b; Tsing 2005; Yarrow 2008). However, as has been demonstrated elsewhere, Western development discourses are often repeated in non-Western contexts to meet particular ends, such as acquiring a 'global membership' (Ferguson 2004), or 'giving grip' to future aspirations (Tsing 2005). This was certainly apparent in the context of my research in Sierra Leone where languages of development were evocative and emerged during discussions of Sierra Leone's

'culture' (Chapter 4). As discussed above, this was crucial as a means of legitimising a self-identification with a Sierra Leonean 'modernity'.

A similar context emerged at the SLNM. Here the British Museum's Africa programme had to compromise over the use of text in the gallery, given the importance of this for staff and the Museum's largely middle-class visitors (Chapter 3). This conformed both to the model of museology which has emerged as a legacy of its amateur and British origins (underpinned by limited training) and broader associations of this institution with a particular form of professionalism, based within the middle-class ontologies of 'modernity' discussed above. During my fieldwork, staff at this institution were more concerned with raising its professional credibility, than making it more 'locally relevant'. As such, it was Mariatu's donation of electronics during the 51st anniversary which caused the Acting Curator to declare this as evidence that the Museum was 'finally' moving forward.

## **Intervention?**

A central part of the 'culture for development' debate concerns the ethics of intervention given the power disparities outlined in terms of expertise and resources which often follow a North to South directionality. Despite attempts to resolve this through an increasing focus on existing expertise and resources, intervention remains a contentious issue (Rahnema 1997; Sachs 1992; Boast 2011). This thesis has emerged as part of an intervention in Sierra Leone's cultural sector, the Reanimating Cultural Heritage research project. My fieldwork also coincided with the British Museum's Africa Programme's capacity building at the Museum. It thus seems fitting to reflect on the role of intervention over the last three years, and whether it should continue to play a role in the future.

A strong case of support for intervention concerns the need to encourage Sierra Leone's cultural sector to adopt a measured and grounded approach to presenting 'heritage'. It is important to consider the consequences of the way the sector is currently embedded within frameworks of transformation and 'modernity'. This works to consolidate class-

based divisions, further excluding the significant proportion of Sierra Leoneans who are not supported by the state and struggle to find employment. For example, though 'youth' feature strongly in the agenda of the MoTC's Cultural Officer, representing 'youth culture' aside from rhetorics of the need to 'change attitudes' is a much bigger project (Chapter 4). Likewise the Museum is an alien and unknown institution to the majority, particularly those who live outside of the capital. During an interview with Dorothy Cummings, who was curator of the National Museum throughout the 1970s and 80s, she mentioned that in its early days rural traders who came into Freetown to sell their produce would frequently make visits to the Museum. This is certainly not the case today and the objects which were in display in 2010, reflected a somewhat antiquated and static image of Sierra Leone's material culture and its associated practices.

The British Museum's Africa Programme has attempted to play a role in addressing this imbalance. The exhibition training programme encouraged the creation of seven new masquerade costumes which replaced an old ramshackle display of 'Sierra Leone's flora and fauna', including a withered elephant ear, a scrunched up snake skin and a case with a selection of models of sea creatures made from shells (Chapter 3). The new costumes from across Sierra Leone are representative of the masquerades people are familiar with today, rather than the forlorn and moth eaten costumes from the collections which preceded them. The process of commissioning the costumes encouraged members of Freetown's existing Hunting and Ode-lay societies to come in to the Museum and they even established a 'society bush' by cordoning off one of the upstairs rooms where they made their final preparations (Paul Basu, pers. comm.). The project supplied a sound system and a CD of recordings of traditional Mende music to play in the Gallery. When I was conducting fieldwork this CD was occasionally 'lost' to be replaced by Akon, a popular African-American R&B artist, or P-Square, a Nigerian R&B duo. The ability to play music has the effect of turning a stiff and static exhibition environment, almost frozen in time since 1957, into a more vibrant and social space.

It is difficult to disentangle the British Museum's intervention from the RCH project at the SLNM. They have over the last three years worked alongside each other in, for

example, auditing and digitising the collections, and were planned so as to complement each other in this way. One of the main outputs of the RCH project, the [www.sierraleoneheritage.org](http://www.sierraleoneheritage.org) website, includes the British Museum's own ethnographic collections from Sierra Leone and this collaboration continued in 2011 with an exhibition of objects from both museums held at UCL to launch the digital resource.

Arguably this website currently has a limited reach in Sierra Leone. Current bandwidths are not wide enough to play the video-media, and images are cumbersome to load. This will however hopefully change as Sierra Leone becomes connected to the underwater high-speed fibre optic network, funded by the World Bank's West Africa Regional Communications Infrastructure Program. There is of course a more significant problem regarding the 'digital divide'. Russo and Watkins (2007) express concern over the 'new literacy' required to use digital technologies. A resource such as the RCH website relies on a degree of ICT literacy which goes beyond word processing and sending emails, to being confident in using search functions, drop-down menus, following links and so forth. The development of these skills requires frequent access to computers and the provision for appropriate training, something which is already biased toward those living in urban areas with a degree of economic stability, enabling them to take the time out to learn and access the relevant facilities. There are, however, numerous NGOs which now supply training without charge though once again, these are centered in, but not exclusive to, the main cities.

As I have explored, 'culture' and 'heritage' are deeply embedded in concerns over modernity and development for many of my informants. I suggest this is about more than a particular exhibition or event, but rather part of a broader set of negotiations involving current politics, ideas of what a future Sierra Leone should look like (including those held by the Pentecostal Church) and changing attitudes towards certain elements of this culture and heritage. This raises an important issue. Through tracing multiple sites out from the museum I have explored how notions of 'culture' and 'heritage' are situated within and influenced by a much wider context. At present heritage and museum professionals must justify the importance of this relatively

sidelined sector by engaging with political 'development' rhetorics whilst also maintaining their personal connections with a 'modern' middle-class milieu. Given the ongoing problems of social inequality, particularly with regard to access to education, the demographic of this group of professionals is unlikely to change in the near future. Likewise the sector will continue to need to demonstrate its relevance to the more pressing concerns faced by Sierra Leone, determined by the country's international development partners and its future political leaders. As such, the Museum and the MoTC are limited in their capacity for significant change and are likely to remain largely disconnected from the wider social and cultural context of many of the practices they nominally represent. Thus it remains to be seen whether the British Museum's on-going intervention or the RCH resource will institute any long term, sustainable changes in approach to thinking about 'heritage', or the kinds of narrative that are considered appropriate to a 'modern' museum context.

Despite this, continued intervention may have a different role to play. The British Museum's Africa Programme, the RCH project and even Mariatu Kargbo's donation of TVs and flood-lights, connect institutions which struggle to be relevant to a future of change and transformation with a world of foreign expertise and funds. This world is evocative for those who work in the sector. It has important implications for acquiring social capital by providing opportunities for travel, building skills in computer literacy, having established international links, or office equipment associated with having a stable profession (such as personal TV screens). Having an impressive website such as that provided by the RCH resource is a key part of this. Perhaps, however, this is less to do with its content than the symbolic value of the website as representative of modernity and professionalism.

Intervention may thus have a deeper role to play in assisting the cultural sector in its attempts to be seen as relevant to the future by creating these links. On a different level, initiatives such as the Africa Programme and the RCH project may also be important in working to soften the disjuncture between ideas of modernity and development, and Sierra Leone's more complex heritage practices and objects. Although, current staff at

the SLNM may be less inclined to independently embark on another collaboration with Freetown's Ode-lay and Hunting societies, the Africa Programme's intervention means that these groups are represented in a national institution and will continue to be so. Likewise the RCH resource brings potentially dangerous or difficult objects into a new digital space. Given the complexity surrounding appropriate knowledge discussed above, I propose this resource may have a role to play in providing a new context within which these objects can be 'known' and which fits into the role the Museum and the MoTC are carving out for themselves in Sierra Leone's future.

## **Experts and academics**

I wish to use these final paragraphs to ask a question which has concerned me throughout this research process. As noted above, academics and professionals working in development and heritage have argued over the implications of carrying out interventions which are derived from discourses largely created in powerful Western nations. The solution has been to critically engage with this disparity and seek alternative frameworks which are more flexible and context based. Yet ultimately this also results in the imposition of ideas which come from the outside. However responsive a project might seek to be to the 'local' context, like the process of doing ethnography (Davies 2008), it cannot be separated from the academic or professional traditions within which it is based.

Throughout this thesis I have tried to understand the context within which those working in the cultural sector construct their own understanding of their professional roles as well as the values they accord to 'heritage'. At the same time, I have been critical of some of the conclusions they draw, despite my wish to remain impartial. When writing up three years of research, one is encouraged to make recommendations either in terms of future academic foci or operational changes through policy and practice. We become 'experts' and attain the rights to shape future interventions, be they through organisations such as UNESCO or smaller scale research projects and collaborations. In a context like Sierra Leone this means that these interventions remain led by outsiders,



providing expertise and advice on how professionals should approach their roles, even if this advice is to be more locally responsive.

In reality, 'culture for development' changes very little in the way it emerges in the context of my research. It provides a new discourse which, as I have explored, is evocative at a top-level for many of the same reasons modernist models of 'development' or Eurocentric models of 'heritage' have been in the past. Its significance might be understood as a key to participation in a global world and an important language of social and professional capital. Likewise, projects which sit at the nexus of culture and development still rely on Western academic expertise to ultimately provide a framework for their interventions. At the SLNM this concerned the need for the institution to evolve from its roots in 1957 to be more locally relevant. The RCH resource encourages a revived interest and pride in Sierra Leone's cultural artefacts and practices which, I think, may provide a more suitable base on which to build a stronger national consciousness than 'dressing in the national colours' or attaining Guinness World Record holding status. Ultimately, however, this is still based on an assumption that Western expertise has a role to play in contexts like Sierra Leone.

As a concept, 'culture for development' is far from revolutionary. Although it highlights the importance of valuing and responding to locally informed knowledge, skills and resources, it by definition continues to rely on foreign 'expertise' when it comes to applying this on the ground. Furthermore, this thesis has explored how 'culture for development' is limited by the broader political and professional context within which those who are in a position to direct change in Sierra Leone work. I propose that the pairing of these discourses does, however, force a reconsideration of the complexities and contradictions which emerge as people attempt to negotiate the role of the past in a context of rapid social and cultural change. There is an important role to be played here, however the operation of this concept needs further critical attention if it is to have a more significant outcome.

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