

Table of content

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of abbreviations.....	iii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research problem and background.....	2
1.2 Research questions and selection of the case.....	6
1.3 Research design and methodology.....	9
1.4 Data collection.....	12
1.5 Data analysis.....	15
1.6 Researching other cultures. Some reflections on being an outsider.....	17
Access to informants.....	19
Time.....	20
Researching in post-war environments. Some ethical considerations.....	21
1.7 Thesis outline.....	22
PART I. RECONCILIATION	
2. Perspectives on reconciliation.....	24
2.1 Locating reconciliation.....	25
2.2 Defining reconciliation.....	25
2.3 Who reconciles?.....	30
2.4 Justice, truth and forgiveness: ingredients of reconciliation or competing aims?.....	31
2.5 Reconciliation and justice.....	33
Beyond justice as a response to crime.....	36
2.6 Reconciliation and truth.....	37
2.7 Reconciliation and forgiveness.....	38
3. An African Way of Reconciliation?.....	41
3.1 A shift toward the local in peacebuilding and post-conflict justice.....	41
3.2 The myth of harmonious 'tradition'	43
3.3 Concluding remarks.....	48

PART II. SIERRA LEONE

4. Understanding the war in Sierra Leone.....	50
4.1 The context: the centrality of patrimonialism.....	51
4.2 The birth and the life of Sierra Leonean patrimonial state.....	53
4.3 Culture of violence.....	57
4.4 Patrimonialism on the local level.....	59
4.5 Crisis of youth.....	63
5. The war – a chronology.....	66
5.1 The RUF incursion.....	66
5.2 The democratic intermezzo.....	71
5.3 The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and its aftermath.....	74
5.4 The Lomé agreement and the road to peace.....	76
6. The National Transitional Justice Institutions.....	79
6.1 The SCSL and TRC.....	79
6.2 The reflection of international justice on the local level: the Charles Taylor trial.....	84
The purpose of trying Charles Taylor.....	87
Discussion and Analysis.....	89

PART III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

7. Community reconciliation in Sierra Leone.....	93
7.1 Meaning(s) of reconciliation.....	93
7.2 Achieving ‘kol at’ and restoration of community cohesion.....	95
7.3 Of truth and trust: the dynamics of reintegration.....	100
7.4 Chiefs, youth, human rights and reconciliation.....	105
8. Ceremonies and ritual practice in reconciliation.....	108
8.1 Traditional belief systems.....	108
8.2 In the communities.....	113
Moa.....	113
Bahun.....	117
Tula.....	121
Konga.....	123

8.3 Discussion and analysis.....	126
Restoration of the relationships with the spiritual world.....	126
Community cohesion.....	129
Ex-combatant reintegration.....	131
Closure.....	134
8.4 Reconciliation and secret societies.....	134
8.5 Individual sacrifice and cleansing.....	136
8.6 Fambul Tok.....	140
Truth-telling.....	141
Restoration of traditions.....	144
Development.....	145
Discussion and analysis.....	146
9. Conclusion.....	148
Final remarks.....	153
ANNEX 1 – Research sites.....	155
ANNEX 2 – List of Interviews.....	156
ANNEX 3 – Chiefdom map.....	161
ANNEX 4 – Community shrine in Moa.....	162
ANNEX 5 – Fambul Tok ceremony.....	163
ANNEX 6 – SCSL Outreach posters.....	164
Bibliography.....	166

Abstract

Sierra Leone was torn apart by a violent conflict that lasted for over a decade between 1991 and 2002. The deep physical and emotional scars it left on the people and their communities and the destruction of the country's socio-economic and institutional foundations are still visible today. But Sierra Leoneans have also shown an extraordinary ability to deal with the painful and violent past and to move on. This does not mean that the victims would be able to easily forget the suffering they endured or that the return and (re)integration of the ex-combatants into the society would always go smoothly and effortlessly. Yet, if you ask around in the villages across the country, people almost always answer the same: "We have reconciled". What do they mean by that? And how have they achieved it?

These questions form the core puzzle of the present thesis. It explores the process of reconciliation and restoration of relationships at village level in Sierra Leone, with a particular focus on the role of local ceremonies. While its main concern is with the specific circumstances in Sierra Leone, it also aims to contribute to the debates in transitional justice and peacebuilding fields regarding the 'local' practices of reconciliation in African post-conflict societies.

The thesis argues that Sierra Leonean communities have used a wealth of 'local' practices and techniques to remake social relationships and restore community cohesion in the aftermath of the war. Ceremonies and other ritual expressions have played an important part in this process by facilitating ex-combatant reintegration, fostering restoration of the relationships among the living and with the spiritual world and providing a symbolic closure. However, there are limitations. First, the widely declared unity in the villages they helped to foster largely meant restoration of the pre-war social order, with many of its injustices. Second, they are rooted in the local communities' history and are not easily transferable to the national level. It would therefore be a mistake to present the 'traditional practices' as a panacea for successful reconciliation.

These 'cultural resources' have also been severely impacted by the war. In the processes through which the communities strive for reconstruction and reconciliation also these practices are being renewed and reshaped as people appeal to the past as well as adjust to new realities. They have shown a high degree of adaptability to the contemporary needs of combatant reintegration and rebuilding relationships after the war and therefore deserve our attention.

List of abbreviations

AFRC - The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

APC - All People's Congress

CDF - Civil Defence Forces

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

DFID - Department for International Development

ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States

ECOMOG – ECOWAS Monitoring Group

EO - Executive Outcomes

HRW – Human Rights Watch

ICC – International Criminal Court

ICTR - International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

IDP - Internally Displaced Person

ISU - Internal Security Unit

LRA - Lord's Resistance Army

NaCSA - National Commission for Social Action

NCDDR – National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

NDMC - National Diamond Mining Company

NPFL - National Patriotic Front of Liberia

NPRC - National Provisional Ruling Council

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

OAU – Organization of African Unity

RUF - Revolutionary United Front

SA TRC – South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission

SCSL - Special Court for Sierra Leone

SLA - Sierra Leonean Army

SLPP - Sierra Leonean People's Party

SSD - Special Security Division

TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission

ULIMO - United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy

UNAMSIL - United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

UNICEF –United Nations International Children's Fund

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UNSG - United Nations Secretary General

Acknowledgements

This study has been long in the making and could not have been completed without the help and support of many people.

I would like to thank my supervisor, doc. PhDr. Dagmar Moravcová, CSc., for her ongoing support and valuable comments. I owe gratitude to the Department of International Relations and the Faculty of Social Sciences for a financial contribution towards my first fieldtrip and towards my War Studies degree at King's College in London.

I am grateful to many people in Sierra Leone. I would like to thank all those people whose names I promised to withhold who took the time to answer my questions. They often interrupted the work on their farms, postponed their trip to town, or stopped going about their daily business to speak to me. Their valuable responses form the core of this dissertation. For their generosity and hospitality, I will stay forever indebted to them.

I am especially grateful to Michael A. Samai and his family for looking after me, Alan Nyuma for getting me safely to the most remote places and keeping my spirit up with his great sense of humour, and Musa Konneh and Ishmail Brima for being there whenever I needed them. I would also like to thank Mr. Dankwa of the Adventist Vocational Training Centre in Lumley for all his practical advice on doing research in Sierra Leone, his invaluable help in finding me research assistants and transport and for sharing with me his experience of living in the country during the war. I also owe much gratitude to all my assistants/interpreters - Daniel, Nathaniel, Augustine and Nicolas. I would particularly like to thank Richard and Rafael for getting access to communities around Kabala and acting as interpreters locally. There are a number of experts from NGOs in Freetown and in the provinces to whom I am very grateful for their advice, comments and opinions. Some that should not stay unmentioned are: David Lamin, Abdul Tarawalie, Desmond Williams, Rosalind McCarthy, Alex Nalo, Mahmoud Kargbo, Edward Abu, Suleiman Jabatti and the staff at the Save the Children office in Kailahun. I am also sincerely thankful to Fambul Tok, and especially to John Caulker for letting me witness two Fambul Tok ceremonies, and to Peter Mboyawah for arranging this in Kailahun. I would also like to thank Dr. Joe A.D. Alie for taking the time to discuss my research and provide input on both of my fieldtrips.

I am thankful to my family and friends who over the years tolerated my preoccupation with the thesis and my resulting absence in many of the moments in their lives that mattered to them. But above all, my gratitude and appreciation goes to my husband, Erik. I have been ‘working on my dissertation’ for the most part of the ten years that we have known each other and he has patiently walked along by my side through every single stage of the research process, always ready to discuss new and old ideas, give suggestions and read the ever growing number of draft versions. He acted as my second supervisor as well as the first critic, he was the major funder for my two field trips to Sierra Leone and on the latter he also took up the role of my research assistant, lending me another pair of eyes for observations, another pair of hands for the lengthy interview transcribing process and a shoulder to lean on in the times when things just were not working out. It is only thanks to his support and unending patience that this thesis saw the light of day.