

# Acknowledgements

This book is the outcome of combined efforts to make ethnographic field research and anthropological writing possible. At a time when the social sciences are suffering greatly from a lack of institutional and financial support, and when long-term fundamental research is neither considered 'useful' nor 'productive' in our modern economies, I count myself lucky to have had the opportunity to conduct this project fully and wholeheartedly. I have many debts to acknowledge, only a few of which I am able to mention here.

The research was funded by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, where I became part of the Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast (UGC) research group headed by my Ph.D. supervisor, Professor Jacqueline Knörr. My gratitude goes to her first for trusting my abilities to become 'anthropologized' and for making her own academic circle a humane and compassionate environment. The UGC group became a true family in the few years that I spent at the Institute, and I address my deepest thanks to my second supervisor, Wilson Trajano Filho, as well as to Jonas Klee, Christoph Kohl, Agathe Menetrier, William P. Murphy, David O'Kane, Markus Rudolf and Anita Schroven for their continuous support and many efforts in commenting and reviewing my earlier work. Nathaniel King, in particular, played an important role, as he became my Sierra Leonean mentor and directed my attention to the Peninsula. My greatest debt goes to Maarten Bedert, my 'doctoral brother', who shared with me the ups and downs of doing a Ph.D., and who has remained a great friend and colleague ever since. The last of the UGC members, Christian K. Højbjerg, left us prematurely and with a durable sense of loss in April 2014. His work remains a great source of inspiration to me, and I hope that my chapters on initiation societies do justice to his ideas and earlier comments.

I owe an immense debt and gratitude to the many people who welcomed me in Sierra Leone and who appear, in one way or another, in this book. At Fourah Bay College, Professor Joe D. Alie and Dr Sylvanus Spencer offered me

institutional grounding and support. In Freetown, the members of the Bonthe Family helped me during the earliest stages of my fieldwork and encouraged my research on Sherbro identity. In this respect, I want to express my gratitude to Jacob A. Tucker, Horatio Max Gorvie, Solomon Caulker, Floyd Alex Davies and Evangelist Solomon Max Gorvie. Special thanks go to David K. Tucker, my Krio and Sherbro language teacher, who followed my first research endeavours on the Peninsula, and to the many people who made my stay at YMCA Freetown a memorable one.

On the Peninsula, my thoughts go to Jonathan K. Charma, my research partner, for the great work accomplished during my stay, and for all the big and small adventures that we experienced on the way. Jonathan died in November 2020, but he remains very much alive in this book. I assume that he would have been proud to see the final result of our quest and that he would have cooked fresh crab to celebrate – a plan that we had formed back in 2019, but that never materialized. On the Peninsula, my research was facilitated by the local authorities of settlements and by the families and friends who hosted me and shared their daily life with me, including: Iyamide Claye and her daughter Augusta, John P.K. Leigh and Ramatu Leigh, Deborah Dowu Salaam, Daniela Dove, William B. Small, Hannah Koroma, her daughter Tenneh Koroma, George P.C. Nicol, his sons Margai and Oseh Nicol, Francis D. Shyllon, Kolleh and Irene Smaila, Mr Yanka, who gave me the Sherbro name Yemah, Edward B. Benga, David Douglas, Pa ‘White’ Johnson and his family, Jonathan Cole, Alhadji Slowe, Pa Tua and Pa Yamba, Gibrila Kargbo, Elisabeth Jabu Leigh, Fatmata and Esther Charma, Theophilus Walker, Bai Bangura, Ebu N. Turner, Samuel Small, Magnifique, Francis Kappia, Daniel Macauley, Paul ‘Shinose’ Bangura, Joseph S. Jalloh, Chernor Jalloh, Hassan Kanu and many others who accepted me in their midst. Special thanks are due to Greg van der Horst, Mohamed Gbondo and David Yarjah for their friendship.

Over the years, I have benefited from many insights, comments and discussions as I presented sections of this book to academic audiences. I am indebted to the many scholars who provided me with ideas and inputs. At the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, where I completed the final revisions, particular thanks go to Professor Pierre-Joseph Laurent and Dr Marie Deridder for our rich discussions on West African perspectives. During the last stages, the manuscript also benefited from close readings and comments from Brian Donahoe, John Eidson, Thomas H. Eriksen, Adam Jones, Peter Mark, Steven Reyna and Joseph Opala. I also wish to thank my two reviewers for Berghahn Books, who provided careful reading and insightful suggestions. As a book deserves to be beautiful too, I want to express my gratitude to Jutta Turner for designing the maps and Astrid Baudine for reworking the photographs. Finally, the book could not have been completed without the help of Jennifer Cash, whose careful work on the narrative considerably improved the manuscript.

Friendship is a great privilege and many people have contributed to enlivening academic life in Germany and beyond, among them Faduma Abukar Mursal, Laura Balzer, Maarten Bedert, Sophie Besancenot, Marie Deridder, Soledad Jiménez Tovar, Lourdes Madigasekera-Elliott, Manuela Pusch and Roberta Zavoretti. In France, I was lucky to become part of an amazing circle of Sierra Leonean women, thanks to whom I could keep a taste of Sierra Leone in Europe. I want to thank them for encouraging my ethnographic work and valuing it as an important mission. In this regard, Myriam Kamara became a wonderful knowledge broker and an amazing friend. I also want to address my deepest gratitude to Bintou Minte, who was (and is) ever-present and encouraged me at the most difficult times, and Isabelle Bognini-Garcia, who made me (and still makes me) realize and actualize my strengths as a human being. These relationships were more than I could ask for.

This work is also the result of a peculiar family story that started in Sierra Leone in 1984. I am the second generation to grow fond of this country, after my parents, Jean-Claude Ménard and Grażyna Kręcka. I am amazed at their respective trajectories and am proud to uphold their heritage. They passed on their curiosity for life and their love of discovery.

Finally, I would not have seen this project through without the love, patience, daily support and sense of humour of my partner, Thomas Cacchioli. Two wonderful girls were born during the course of this project, and the writing acquired a whole new meaning, with Alicia talking about the book that mum (endlessly) writes and Maïa sitting on my lap.

Parts of this research have been published previously, and I am obliged to Brill and Springer Nature for giving me permission to reuse my work in this new form. Sections of Chapters 4 and 5 were published under the title ‘Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion Related to a Creole Language: “Krio” as an Ambivalent Semiotic Register in Present-Day Sierra Leone’ in the coedited volume by Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho, *Creolization and Pidginization in Contexts of Postcolonial Diversity. Language, Culture, Identity*, published in 2018 by Brill. Parts of Chapter 7 were published in a book chapter entitled ‘Poró Society, Migration and Political Incorporation on the Freetown Peninsula, Sierra Leone’ in the coedited volume by Christian K. Højbjerg, Jacqueline Knörr and William P. Murphy, *Politics and Policies in Upper Guinea Coast Societies, Change and Continuity*, published in 2017 by Palgrave Macmillan.