# The Government -
# Chieftaincy Power Nexus in Sierra Leone

## -   Implications for Conflict Creation

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1990s, Sub-Saharan African countries have experienced an increasing official recognition of the Chieftaincy as an institution by governments[1]. Though the Chieftaincy in a historical perspective generally has had a strong position in the local communities across sub-Saharan Africa, governments have in the past often taken an oppositional, and in some cases repressive, stand towards the Chieftaincy. In this perspective the contemporary trend of official recognition and empowerment presents a significant shift in the Government-Chieftaincy relationship. Catherina Boone (1998: 130) argues that a reconfiguration of power has occurred after the cold-war, where "new forms of social mobilization and new patterns of state-society relations" have emerged; and as Englebert (2002: 1) notes: "Several governments have passed constitutional reforms restoring, recognizing, or providing traditional leaders with a measure of incorporation". The focus of the international community's dominant development and state-building agenda of 'rolling back the state', decentralising government, and empowering civil society seems only to have supported this trend (Buur & Kyed 2007: 11-12).

These developments have re-affirmed the African Chieftaincy as a focal point in studies exploring contemporary African politics and state-formation processes. Hence, Richard Sklar (2001: 8) noted in a key address at the University of Ibadan in

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[1] Malawi, Nigeria and Botswana are the typical examples of states that in a long-term perspective have been pro traditional authority.  Examples of other countries that have later revised their constitutions in some way or the other empowering traditional authority is South Africa in 1996 , Ghana in 1992, and Uganda in 1993.(Englebert: 2002). Even countries that have earlier been repressive and banning traditional authority have changed their position, like Tanzania and Burkina Faso (Ibid). One of the best examples is, however, Mozambique. Once extremely repressive with regard to the chieftaincy, the government now empowers the traditional authority through, among other initiatives, the decentralisation process currently taking place (Buur & Kyed: 2007).

Nigeria: "In African political studies the role of traditional institutions in relation to the modern state commands increasing scholarly attention".

## 1.1 The Government-Chieftaincy Nexus in Sierra Leone

January 18th 2002. Sierra Leone's decade long civil war was officially declared over by president Kabbah. A new dawn for Sierra Leonean politics, power configurations, and structures of political authority was around the corner. It was the beginning of post-war Sierra Leone's pressuring tasks for restoring political authority and basic infrastructural needs throughout the power vacuums and destructions brought about by the civil war. Among other implications, the civil war had profound impact on the Sierra Leonean chieftaincy. At the end of the war, only 36 percent[2] of the Paramount Chief positions were filled. As a response, the Government of Sierra Leone perceived the rehabilitation of the Native Administrations and the Paramount Chieftaincy[3] to be one of the most immediate concerns of the post-war state building process (UNAMISIL April 2003: 4). However, Sierra Leone's history gives evidence of governments, which are not always seeking to empower the Chieftaincy. On the contrary, repression and coercion has ever so often characterized the relationship between the government and the chiefs. As this thesis will argue, the power synergies in the Government-Chieftaincy nexus in Sierra Leone often had profound implications for conflict-creating scenarios and modes of accountability in the local communities.

Although the brutal civil war in Sierra Leone during the 1990s has initiated a growing interest in this small West African country within the academic field, remarkably few studies have systematically explored the relationship between the government of Sierra Leone and the chieftaincy in relation to conflict-creating scenarios and modes of

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[2] This amounts to 53 active Paramount Chiefs out of a total of 149 positions.
[3] The Paramount Chief is the traditional head of the chiefdom, with administrative and customary judicial responsibilities. S/he is elected by the chiefdom councilors for a lifetime appointment, but can be removed by the government of Sierra Leone. (UN 2003)

accountability. (This relationship will throughout the thesis be referred to as the Government-Chieftaincy nexus). Several studies have either explored the impact of government practices on the chieftaincy (e.g. Cartwright 1970, 1978; Barrows 1976) or the implications of traditional rule and authority for conflict-creation (e.g. Fanthorp 2001, 2005; Richards 1996). In contrast, this thesis addresses the analytical dimension and literature gap, which lies in the conjunctions between the Government-Chieftaincy nexus and the implications of this constellation of power for conflict-creating scenarios.

**Figure 1: Map of West Africa**



Source: United Nations Maps,
 Website: www.un.org/debts/catography/profile/westafrica.pdf

The thesis thus investigates how power is constructed in the Government-Chieftaincy nexus during different important contextual periods in Sierra Leone's state formation process. Also, the thesis explores what implications the power configuration has for accountability and conflict-creating practices. Further, it appears as if most studies

concerned with exploring aspects relating to the resurgence and empowerment or the undermining of traditional authority opt for somewhat simplistic and uniform conceptualisation of authority and power, analyzing the resurgence of the Chieftaincy predominantly in *de jure* terms. Few studies, however, explore how there might be resurgence within one layer of the Chieftaincy's authority and power while other layers are being undermined. At the same time this thesis aims at understanding what impact the government strategies pursued towards the Chieftaincy have in both *de jure* and *de facto* terms. The suggestion here is that the power and authority of the chiefs might have become empowered within some areas while undermined in others. Thus, it is interesting to explore how a certain constellation of empowerment-disempowerment in the layers of the Chieftaincy's authority and power might have implications for accountability and conflict-creating practices in the local communities.

## 1.2 Theoretical Perspectives

In a theoretical optic many Africanists (e.g. Fatton 1988; Ismail 2008; Mamdani 1996) are arguing that it is virtually impossible for any government in Africa to penetrate the whole of society with its ideas and policies and create social control. This is why many scholars suggest the African state might try, and needs, to incorporate the Chieftaincy into its network of alliances and loyalty. However, though these contributions explore how social control in Africa works, or do not work, what they lack is an explicit focus on, and link to, the theoretical literature on what constitutes the bases of power, how power is created, and what the effects and implications of different power constellations are. This thesis will therefore investigate the Government-Chieftaincy nexus by reflecting its synergies in different theoretical and conceptual understandings of the concept power. In this regard, it is therefore also an objective to contribute to further developing the theoretical field on analyzing power.

This will be done in two ways. Firstly, throughout the analysis of the thesis it will be investigated, which conceptual aspects on power are pertinent from the Sierra Leonean case. By doing so, the thesis draws on a broad conceptual map of diverse understandings in the scholarly community on what power is. The thesis explores to which extent it is possible to connect the views of the '*power over*' and '*power to*' perspectives by understanding these paradigms as certain links in a power process, rather than maintaining, enforcing, and recreating the epistemological split between these understandings, as so many scholars do. Secondly, the findings of the thesis will be reflected in some of the classical contributions on power and social control, which only recently have been started to be applied to the African context. These theoretical grandmasters are Wright Mills and Antonio Gramsci. Mills (1956) presents some interesting ideas on the attributes of power-elites, in terms of being small exclusive networks situated in the top echelons of society connected through formal and informal channels. In a similar perspective, Gramsci (1971) advances how the power-elite, in order to create social control and hegemonic domination, first and foremost needs to be influential in the ideological sectors at the lower levels of society. In his writings these sectors are presented as the spheres creating and legitimizing discourses as well as enabling political action.

## 1.3 Problem Statements

The thesis therefore aims at developing a nuanced understanding of how the complex synergies between multiple layers of law, *de facto* strategies of control, ideology and culture intervene and create a multifaceted sphere of power in the Government-Chieftaincy nexus and the implications such power re-configurations have, or might have, for modes of accountability and conflict-creating practices. Such conflict-creating practices could in the worst case jeopardize the fragile state of affairs in the Sierra

Leone post-war environment. On this background the thesis aims at answering three research questions:

- **What are the dominant modes of power constituting the Sierra Leonean government-chieftaincy nexus during contextual changes in different historical periods?**

- **What implications does the government-chieftaincy power nexus have for conflict-creating practices in the rural communities?**

- **To which extent can the findings of the thesis be reflected in the theoretical arguments advanced by Mills and Gramsci on power-elites and hegemonic domination, and in which regards do their concepts need adjustments to the Sierra Leonean context?**

## 1.4 Contextual Changes and Research Focus

The focus of this thesis is on three significant historical periods that constitute contextual changes in Sierra Leone's the state formation process, which are especially important for the government-chieftaincy nexus. As Chabal argues (1994) power configurations are unique in any state-formation process, and they become especially visible as well as deconstructed through significant contextual changes and ruptures in the state-formation process. It is therefore especially interesting to analyze the government-chieftaincy power nexus during times of change and rupture.

These periods are colonialism; early independence; and the post-war era. Each of these periods thus constitutes individual case studies which on the one hand enables the analysis of how the Government-Chieftaincy nexus operates during different

contextual changes and on the other hand shows how the Government-Chieftaincy nexus has developed over time. In addition to the dominant arguments in the theoretical literature, which will be presented in the next chapter, the analytical importance of these contextual changes became evident from the findings of a four month field-trip to Sierra Leone, in the spring of 2009, where interviews were conducted with a number of Paramount Chiefs and governmental Chief Administrators[4] in the Local District Councils, as well as with government representatives, NGO representatives, local youths, and university staff from Fourah Bay College (Freetown University). Pilot interviews were also conducted in Ghana with, among others, the expert on African politics, Dr. Kwesi Anning[5]. A contextual understanding of the most important dynamics (theoretical and empirical) of explorative interest within each of the historical periods concomitantly found that the most potent modes of the Sierra Leonean Government-Chieftaincy nexus can be framed within a pre-war period where the central aspect is the differentiation of political parties, and a post-war period where the central aspect is the decentralization of power[6] to the Local District Councils as well as the conduct of local elections.

*The Pre-War Period*

Starting with the pre-war dimension in a historical perspective, the boundaries and relations between the urban and the rural elites in the North and the South appear to be the key analytical focal point for understanding Government-Chieftaincy synergies in Sierra Leone. Hence, in 1967, Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP), which had strong ideological bonds to the Chieftaincies and the Mende-dominated South-Eastern rural

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[4] The Chief Administrator is the highest government representation in the Local District councils. Thus, his title as 'Chief' does not have anything to do with the Chieftaincy in a vocabulary sense.

[5] Interview with Dr. Kwesi Anning was undertaken, in March 2009, at the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAPTC) in Accra.

[6] Decentralization can according to Cathrine Boone (2003) be understood as "state-building strategies that involve real devolution of political and administrative prerogatives".

parts of Sierra Leone, lost the election to the All Peoples Congress (APC). APC was predominantly based on Northern Temne elites and the Freetown Crio elite, and contrary to the SLPP the APC did not have the Chieftaincy as a power base. Thus, the change of government in 1967, from a SLPP-led to an ACP-led government, represents an interesting contextual change in the textures of the Government-Chieftaincy power nexus. This is particularly important for understanding what implications the differences in power bases and ideology of the SLPP and the APC entailed for the strategies pursued by the government towards the Chieftaincy in order to create social control and the implications hereof for conflict-creating practices.

### *The Post-War Period*

In the post-war period, the decentralization process is the most pertinent issue.  In the general literature, Buur and Kyed (2007) have taken the lead addressing some of the key issues in this specific endeavour emphasising that a politicised Chieftaincy, in the context of decentralization, might lose some of its downward accountability. However, their research is mainly focused around the southern parts of Africa, not including any studies from West Africa. Therefore, a study of Sierra Leone appears to be pertinent. The field work conducted in Sierra Leone showed that the impact of the decentralization process is especially interesting in relation to the Chieftaincy's resource base, the politicization of local elections, and the implications for accountability.

### 1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter Two presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis, which connects the ideas of Africanists' writings on Government-Chieftaincy relations in Africa with a broad conceptualization of power encompassing a number of scholars.

Chapter Three presents the thesis methodology, which is based in the abductive strategy. The dominant methods in the analysis of empirical data are the 'structured, focused comparison', and 'triangulation'. The chapter also presents the case studies carried out in the South-Eastern parts of Sierra Leone as well as the key actors interviewed. Furthermore, the use of primary and secondary data is discussed as well as their influence on the thesis.

Chapter Four investigates the historical dimension of Government-Chieftaincy nexus in Sierra Leone in relation to the colonial era and the role of the SLPP during early independence. Chapter Five explores what implications the victory of the APC in 1967 elections had for the government strategies pursued towards the Chieftaincy and conflict-creating practices, which can also be linked to the root causes of the civil war. Chapter Six focuses on the Government-Chieftaincy nexus in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. The chapter explores 1) the immediate post-war SLPP government discourse and initiatives pursued towards the chieftaincy; 2) the *de jure* and *de facto* impact the Local Government Act of 2004 had on the power of the Chieftaincy; and 3) the possible implications this reconfiguration of local authority might have for conflict creation. Chapter Seven explores the extent to which the Chieftaincies in the south– eastern parts of Sierra Leone are politicized in the context of local elections and the implications for accountability towards the local communities. The chapter also explores how the local population perceives the legitimacy of the different levels of government.

Chapter Eight concludes on the research questions by suggesting how power is constructed in the Sierra Leonean Government-Chieftaincy nexus and its implications for conflict-creation as well as summing up to which extent Mills' and Gramsci's

theoretical ideas on power-elite theory and social control are usefulness in the Sierra Leonean context. Furthermore, the conclusions are reflected in the light of the dominant discourse on Government and Chieftaincy relations in Africa. In <u>Chapter Nine</u> the findings of this thesis will be put in perspective by some further reflections on the possible implications of the recent government reform, the Chieftaincy Act 2009, in terms of conflict-creation.

# Chapter 2: Theory and Concepts

This chapter presents the three theoretical fields employed in this thesis. The first theoretical field presents the dominant theoretical arguments on the Government-Chieftaincy nexus within the academic literature in relation to the specific contextual changes the thesis explores. These arguments have been instrumental in focusing the analytical scope of the thesis. Furthermore, the analyses conducted in the thesis will reflect back on these dominant arguments and asses to which extent they are relevant for the Sierra Leonean case. The second theoretical field elaborated on is the different theoretical perspectives on what constitutes power. The discussion will operationalize a broad range of views on power in order to assess, which perspectives are especially pertinent in the workings of the Sierra Leonean government-chieftaincy nexus. The third theoretical dimension presents the views of Mills and Gramsci, as well as a number of Africanists, whose writings and discussions can be understood as a reflection on the viewpoints of Mills and Gramsci. As mentioned in the introduction, the thesis will be summed up by discussing to which extent the views of Mills and Gramsci are relevant for the Sierra Leonean context and in which perspectives their concepts need adjustment.

## 2.1 Dominant Discourses on the Governments-Chieftaincy Nexus

This section presents the dominant views in the academic literature on the Government-Chieftaincy nexus in Africa within the specific historical periods that this thesis explores.

### Chiefs - Intermediaries of Government Peripheral Control

The dominant contributions on African politics advance that it has always been a key priority for the government to establish control over especially the chiefs. This view is

developed in relation to two dominant and at the same time interrelated issues. On the one hand, the arguments relate to the propensity of the ruling classes to establish hegemonic domination in Africa. On the other hand, it relates to the African state being understood as bifurcated, which means no ruling class has been able to establish social control which penetrates the whole of the Africa society[7].

Starting with the former, Markovitz (Markowitz 1987: 8; Cited in Fatton 1988: 255) defines the ruling class in Africa as an organizational bourgeoisie, which consists of political leaders and bureaucrats; the business bourgeoisie; top members of the military; and members of the liberal professions. Markovitz additionally highlights traditional rulers as an important ruling class. In furtherance, Fatton (Fatton 1988: 255) indicates that the African bourgeoisie has integrated the public and the private spheres into their own domain of power and that this power essentially is tied to the control of the state. Or put in other terms, the power of the ruling classes is contingent by control of the state machinery. As Markovitz (1987) also notes, having access to the state enables a gate-way for building class power why the power-elites in Africa are closely entangled with the government machinery. However, central to Fatton's (1988: 253) argument is that the ruling class in Africa only is in the process of "becoming".

The main elite deficiency of the African ruling class is according to Fatton (1988) its lack of ability to create complete hegemonic domination. The African state can be said to have failed in becoming integral. As Fatton (1988: 254) indicates:

> The integral state is the state of a hegemonic ruling class and as such is capable of "expansion". It is capable of integrating and co-opting into its own institutions potential allies and even antagonistic elements […] The integral state, however, is

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[7] An important issue to highlight in relation to these studies is their rather existentialistic understanding of Africa. It appears that these scholars seem to think that the dynamics taking place across the African continent are one and the same, which of course is far from being even nearly true.

not above society; it is integral precisely because the ruling class has achieved hegemony. […] Thus hegemony makes possible the integral state".

According to Cartwright (1978), two potential strategies are viable for political leaders, or in Fatton's perspective the ruling class, in terms of penetrating society with communication of ideology, beliefs and values as well as effective implementation of policies, thus essentially modes of government control. In the first strategy, political leaders aim at forging direct linkages to the population. This is done through "a direct appeal based on a perceived identity of interests, with intermediaries acting solely as transmission belts or cadres carrying orders and information" (Cartwright 1978: 119). In the second strategy discussed by Cartwright (Cartwright 1978: 119) political leaders can vie for constructing an indirect contact and linkage with the populace. This strategy is based on a direct appeal, not to the populace, but to the intermediaries of the state. In this second strategy it is left open to the intermediaries, which strategies they want to pursue for binding their followers. As Fatton (1988: 255) notes:

> "The fragility of the ruling classes' project is directly related to the peripheral nature of African societies […] The African state has yet to develop the means and resources with which to penetrate all sectors of society. Authoritarianism coexists therefore with a definite lack of authority".

To bridge such gap as stressed by Fatton, Cartwright (1978: 19-21) argues that it is necessary for the political leaders in Africa to develop the second strategy, which is based on ties to intermediaries, who can link the more remote areas of the state to the capital city and the government. These intermediaries, or as Markovitz mentions the traditional elites of the periphery, are in the African context understood by the dominant view in the literature as the chiefs. As von Trotha (2006) argues, the chiefs can be understood as double 'gate keepers'. On the one hand, they are in a position to mediate and implement national politics in the local arena while on the other hand able to advocate the local interests at the national level. This structure of centre–

periphery relations was according to Mamdani (1996) created during colonialism when the British established what can be understood as indirect rule, which empowered chiefs to rule in the Protectorate's chiefdoms as long as they stayed loyal to the capital centre. However, Bengali (2007) also notes how the chiefs already were powerful authorities in the pre-colonial time, having a strong standing in the religious, mystical, and cultural sphere of the African society.

From these perspectives we can thus understand the dominant power-elite nexus in Africa as one between the power-elite in charge of the central government apparatus and the chiefs - the key agents linked to the cultural, ideological and authoritarian spheres in the rural areas. For the government to create social control, the suggestion in these dominant views is that the rural elites, the Chieftaincies, are the important intermediaries that the government needs to be linked to. However, as the following section advances by presenting the dominant views on the chiefs at time of Independence, the chiefs were often able to withstand government pressure.

Thus, the following empirical analysis will reflect back on the above presented arguments and assess the extent to which the Sierra Leonean Chieftaincy is perceived by the various governments as a strategic and necessary ally for creating modes of social control.

### The Government-Chieftaincy Nexus in the Era of Independence

The scholarly work on the relationship between the African state and the chiefs from the mid 1960s until the late 1990s developed their arguments around one dominant theoretical proposition. They argued that the chieftaincy after the colonial era has manifested itself as a hegemonic sphere of local authority - an antagonistic force contesting the authority of the state. The arguments often indicate that sub-Saharan African states are not able to establish consolidated control over its entire territory. In

the areas beyond the control of the state, the Chieftaincy resides in what is portrayed as a residual sphere of governing not only able to resist pressure from the state but also to some extent able to influence state policies through various forms of resistance. Key terms referring to the dual perception of the African state in these writing are *two publics* (Ekeh 1975), *mixed government and polity* (Sklar 2001)*, and Janus-faced states* (Fatton 2003), the point being that each of the two domains of authority is portrayed as quite distinct from each other, a relationship often portrayed through antagonistic terminologies (See also e.g. Zolberg 1966;; Cartwright 1978; Hyden 1983; Dijk & Nieuwaal 1996, 1999; Herbst 2000;; Young 2001;; Skalnik 1996).

For the purpose of this thesis the empirical findings will reflect back and assess the extent to which the Chieftaincy during the early years of Independence was able to challenge the authority of the government, and can be understood as an antagonistic force.

### *Government-Chieftaincy Nexus in the Era of Democratization and Decentralization*

The more recent contributions are, however, giving more emphasis to the paradox between the acceptance of traditional authority at the same time as African states in a broader perspective are experiencing increased levels of democratization, liberalisation and development. In contrast to earlier writings, the main argument is that the chieftaincy is gradually becoming an administrative Chieftaincy, an extension of the state, rather than an antagonist or oppositional sphere of authority. As a number of scholars have recently argued, modernisation and democratisation in the African context is not necessarily undermining the traditional and informal sphere of African society (See e.g. Chabal[8] and Daloz: 1999).

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[8] Chabal and Daloz rejects in 'Africa Works' (1999) the argument that modernization in an African context leads toward - in a western perspective - a more "rational" and gradually more secularized state. In addition they argue that the political elites in Africa are embedded in what a western discourse would understand as irrational

The most recent publications on the role of the African chieftaincy in the contemporary era of democratisation, decentralisation and official recognition of traditional authority are authored and edited by Lars Buur and Malene Kyed (2005, 2007). Their focus is the implications this deeper integration of the chieftaincy into the state could lead to. The findings from their studies suggest that a politicization of the Chieftaincy is occurring with the implications that the chieftaincy is losing some of its downward accountability towards the local community[9] (Buur and Kyed: 2007). Chieftaincy's lack of accountability, due to government linkages, has often been portrayed to be the case during the colonial era of indirect-rule (Lonsdale 1986, Chabal 1994; Mamdani 1996). Some scholars therefore stress that the novel way of co-opting chiefs into the government structures - the establishment of an African administrative Chieftaincy - might prove to be essentially a novel way of centralising the state bureaucracy under the banner of decentralization.

Thus, the empirical analysis will suggests to which extent the era of decentralization in Sierra Leone has turned the chiefs into an administrative chieftaincy, and whether the Chieftaincy has experienced a loss of downward accountability, which, it is suggested by Buur and Kyed, has occurred elsewhere.

## 2.2 Operationalization of Power

As mentioned in the introduction, the thesis wishes to establish a link between the Sierra Leone Government-Chieftaincy nexus and theoretical and conceptual

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beliefs and practices, such as religion, witchcraft, and the occult. As they indicate: While it is true that the African elite usually subscribes publicly to the Western separation between the irrational and the profane, there is ample evidence that their political behavior is affected by religious beliefs, which has overwhelming cultural weight". (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 65)

[9] Viewed through the lenses of a Western discourse, the chieftaincy is in this perspective therefore loosing that same overall mode of legitimacy and representation celebrated as the democratic imperative for linking it to contemporary state-building endeavours.

perspectives on power. This is both in order arrive at a better understanding of how the Government-Chieftaincy nexus works and as an attempt to contribute to the theoretical debate on the workings of power. Thus, it is the view of the thesis that by integrating these perspectives they will mutually inform each other, which following chapter on methodology will elaborate on in terms of the abductive strategy of conducting research.

### *Power – Forceful and Coercive or a Progressive Potential*

This following discussion will break down the concept of power into a scale going from a hard to a soft dimension instead of solely conceptualizing power in terms of an act of force or as a relationship of reciprocity and consensus. Reviewing scholars writing on power most of them adhere to either one of these perspectives. For the explorative purpose of this thesis it is, however, necessary with a broad conceptualization since the aim is to understand, to which degree the power is exercised as a coercive and repressive force as well as to which extent the power relations are based on consensus. As Hyden (2005: 8) emphasizes:

> "A good power analysis must take into account that power has many faces and that its uses and effects vary. The face of power may look intimidating at times but facilitating, even reconciling at others".

In Easton's (1958) writings, power is not inherently a negative phenomenon. While the traditional power theory would characterize the relationship between the power-holder and the power-subject in terms of dominance and opposition, Easton emphasizes that it is important to distinguish between the fact that B is accepting A's will and the reasons why B is accepting it, since this relationship might not necessarily be characterized by dominance and opposition. Though the acceptance by the power subject might be reflected in terms of the fear of A's power it could also be reasoned by modes of legitimacy. If the latter applies then the power relationship is not based

on conflict and dominance. The power relation is better understood as a form of consent (Easton, 1953: 132). Easton thus approaches power as a 'creating potential' in politics, a constructive and productive phenomenon, not necessarily a conflict inherent relationship. Power as a progressive phenomenon is also apparent from other scholars writing on power. Among these is Wrong (1979) who criticizes scholars like Kaplan and Laswell (1950) for solely understanding power in terms of sanctions and force. As Laswell and Kaplan argue, power should be understood in terms of "the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivation for nonconformity with the policies intended" (Kaplan & Laswell 1950: 75). Wrong (1979: 21), however, merely states that power is the "capacity to produce intended and foreseen effects on others". He thus argues that on the one hand power exists without necessarily being exercised, as indicated by his focus on power as a capacity, and on the other hand that power can potentially include consensus and absence of conflict.

Breaking down the concept of power, covering the whole spectrum of dominant scholarly views, five sub-concepts emerge: Force, Manipulation, Persuasion, Authority, and Accountability. The two extremes are then in the one end of the power optic Force and in the other end Accountability, which will be further discussed below in order to arrive at a operationalized understanding of the concept. These dimensions of power (going from a hard to a soft dimension) are shown in the Figure 2.

**Figure 2: The Conceptual Dimensions of Power in the Academic Literature**

*Power as Manifest and Structural*                                    *Power as a Capability and Relational*

| Intended Power |
|---|

Force — Physical, Psychic

Manipulation · Persuasion · Authority · Accountability

Coercive · Induced · Legitimate · Competent · Personal
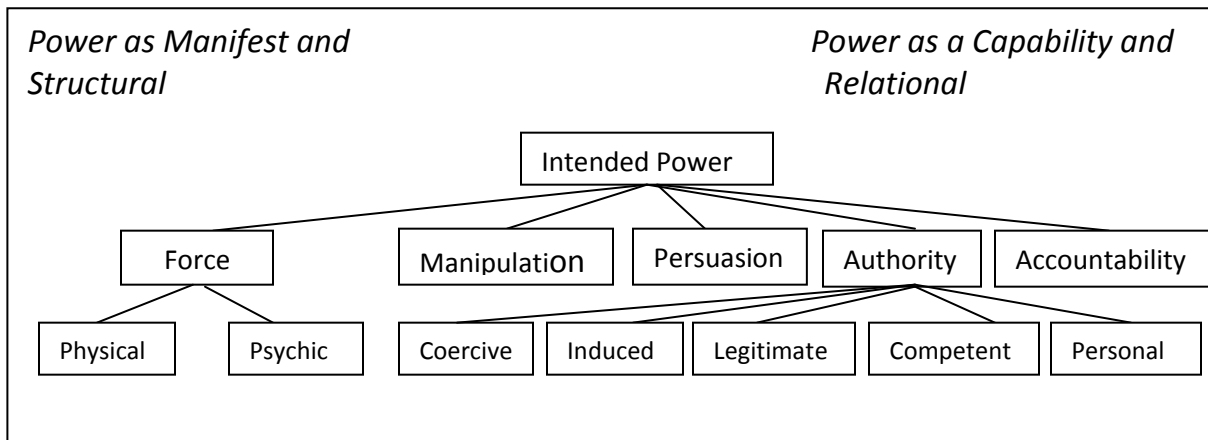
Source: Author's own construction based on Wrong (1979)


***Force***

Wrong (1979: 24-25) highlights an important distinction to be made between force and coercion, which tends to be misunderstood. Stated very simplistic, force is the biological or physical act; it is the delimitation of human beings as physical objects; it is an act that is not constituted on a relationship of reciprocity; it is an active form of power. The ultimate form of force is therefore violence, but it can also be non-violence[10]. It is thus necessarily a manifest form of power. However, when reflecting on coercion Wrong (1979: 26) maintains this concept should be defined as "the threat of force in human affairs", which is a potent element in nearly all concrete power relations. As this shows, coercion is not necessarily a manifest or an actual act. David Easton (1958: 183) presents a similar view arguing that:

> "There is a significant difference between actually eliminating a person from the political system by jailing him and merely threatening him with incarceration. When only threats are made, the individual may be inclined to obey, thereby participating in an authority relationship, whereas in the case of pure force the individual continues to refuse to obey but is nevertheless compelled to conform to the decision of the authorities".

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[10] A non-violent for of force can e.g. be the methods employed by peace-activists using their bodies as a physical counter-power, such as 'sitting in' or going on a strike, thus forcefully or bodily trying to prevent others actions.

Force is thus an act of dehumanizing people, but it can also be a way to re-establish future credibility and willingness to use force, thus recreating the underpinnings of coercive authority relations, where power-subjects fear the threat of the power-holder using force (Wrong 1979: 27).

### *Authority and Accountability*

In the latter less manifest end of the power specter, one is essentially dealing with notions of authority. Authority diverts from persuasion, force, and manipulation because it relates to an un-tested form of power. As Easton stresses: "Anyone, who is regularly obeyed, is an authority" (Easton 1958: 182). The concept of Authority can in its relational, un-manifest, and untested power form be linked to the understanding of power in terms of accountability. In Chabal's book *Power in Africa: An Essay in Political Interpretation* (1994), one of Chabal's (1994: 54) key arguments is that: "To understand political accountability is to understand how power becomes power, how it is exercised, how it is constrained and how it dissipates" As apparent from the quote, Chabal understands power as a relationship based on modes of accountability. Thus, a relationship that constitutes the bases from where power is created. Chabal's argument is likewise visible in the work of Lonsdale (Lonsdale 1981; *Cited in* Chabal 1994: 54) who stresses how:

> "Political accountability is therefore part of the moral calculus of power; it concerns the mutual responsibilities of inequality. Because it raises questions about the control of power and its purposes, accountability must also be concerned with political organisation. For if power is not to some extent shared there can be no effective base from which it may be controlled, nor any protected right to discuss its purposes".

Thus what is very central to these views is that power should be understood as a relationship based on some sort of reciprocity, which in turn is understood in terms of modes of political accountability.

To understand political accountability is an exploration of how the "members" of a (political) community has obligations towards each other. The reciprocal links and processes can be understood as the institutional, traditional and symbolic mechanisms that downwardly can be thought of as the rulers' discharge of responsibilities, and upwardly by the ways in which the rulers are being held accountable for their exercise of power. More broadly it can be understood as the formal and informal factors that impinge on relations between rulers and ruled (Chabal 1994: 54) or as Lonsdale argues - the moral calculus of power. Linking political accountability to the understanding of power thus shows how power in this perspective should not be understood solely in terms of force and coercion. Chabal insists that where there is no accountability there is no sharing of power but only force (Chabal 1994: 55). As Chabal (1994: 55) stresses:

> "In a state of war, absolute lawlessness or absolute violence, there is no political accountability but only force. But power is a relation of reciprocity between members of a political community. Where there is only force there is no power".

In the optic of the understanding of Chabal and Lonsdale changes in the nature of power relations are therefore intimately linked to understanding how political accountability transforms (Chabal 1994: 55), why the focus of a power analysis in this perspective is on how the relations of political obligations and reciprocity work.


### *'Power To' and 'Power Over'*
The writings of social scientists on power have essentially different foundations for the way they approach the concept of power. Put somewhat categorically, scholars either approach power in a non-structural, action-orientated power-view or in a more classical structural one. In the former view, rules- and resource-structures are understood as bases from where power is generated through concrete relationships, while the latter view conceives these structures as a form of power in itself (Kraft &

Raben 1995: 14). These distinctions can be broadly reflected within what is often referred to as the '*power over*' and the '*power to*' paradigms. Scholars associated with the '*power over*' perspective often portray power as a resource in a structural sense. Even though the power is exercised in a relationship, the power is not contingent of this relationship. It is more thought of as a property, which the power enactor is in the possession of and which exercise is primarily negative and suppressing since acted over people. This paradigm is the one, which scholars like Laswell, Kaplan and Bierstedt propagate. Within this perspective resource and rule structures are often equated with the state or other dominant structures in the society (Kraft and Raben 1995: 7-15).

The '*power to*' perspective, however, would rather look at rules- and resource-structures as something created in the power relationship in a non-structural, action-orientated sense. As Easton notes, power is the *creating potential* in politics and is "a relational phenomenon not a thing someone possesses" (Easton 1953: 142). Within the '*power to*' perspective power is a potential that everyone possesses and can activate. This implies that power cannot be attached to certain centers but is fundamentally a multi-cantered phenomenon, omnipresent in all individual and group relations (Kraft and Raben 1995: 7-9). The power is not necessarily manifest. It is a capability. Power is therefore not a resource or a structure in itself. It is not something that can be taken, divided or given away. It is fundamentally a concrete relationship. Power structures are then the combined effect of concrete and institutionalized relations. (Kraft and Raben 1995: 15)

## 2.3 Framework of Alternative Power Perspectives

From the theories on state-chieftaincy relations and the theory on power, two dominant perspectives are pertinent, as Figure 3 below shows. One view holds that

government power influences, and makes contingent, Chieftaincy power. It is a top-down process where the government, because of its control over the state bureaucracy, is in a position to control the chiefs. In a power-theoretical optic, the government is exercising '*power over'* the chiefs. This perspective also applies to the understanding of the chiefs residing in a residual sphere. As the view holds, because of the chiefs structural position, their placement in the peripheral areas of the bifurcated African state, they are either able to withstand government pressure or able to influence national policies.

**Figure 3: Power Processes Explored**

| 'Power Over': Power as Manifest and Structural | 'Power To': Power as a Capability and Relational |
|---|---|
| Government Power ↓↑ Chieftaincy Power ↓ Conflict Creation | Government Power ↔ Chieftaincy Power ↓ Conflict Creation |
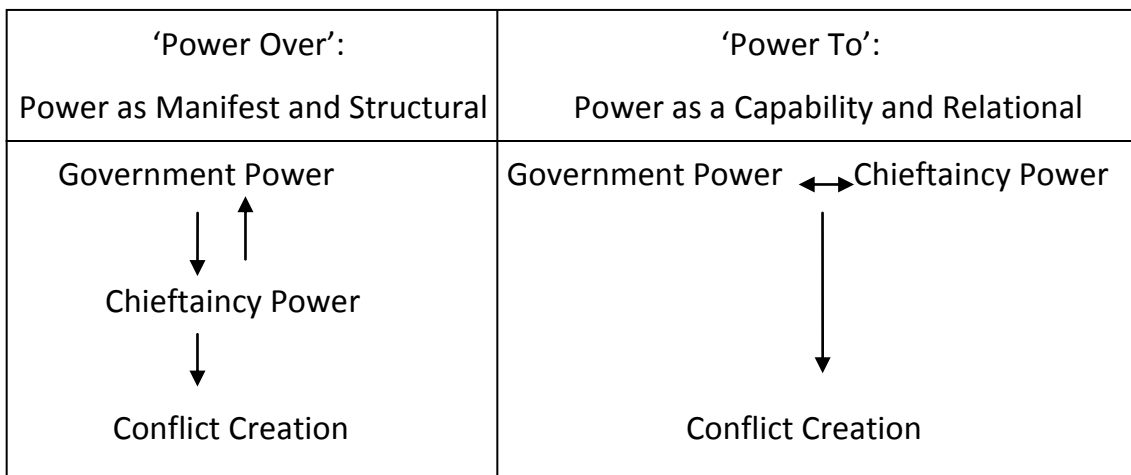
Source: Author's own construction

However, in the alternative perspective, the *'power to'* perspective, power is contingent by concrete relationships. The power capability created in the Government-Chieftaincy nexus, is contingent by this nexus. The power capabilities of the chiefs and the government are created through a concrete relationship, which can be based on modes of reciprocity and accountability.

Thus in terms of the theoretical question asking, which modes of power characterizes the government-chieftaincy nexus, the thesis explores whether dimensions of consensus, reciprocity and accountability are pertinent – this being a relational understanding of power - or whether modes of force and violence are the dominant aspect, thus showing that the nexus is better understood in terms of the *'power over'* perspective.

The findings of this thesis will not reflect only one of the relations shown in Figure 3. It will rather constitute a combination of perspectives. Hence, within some dimensions the government is probably exercising control over the chiefs and in others the chiefs influence the government; and again in other areas they might empower each other by entering into a structure of accountability. The interesting research objective is then to explore the textures in the power relations, in order to understand to which extent they can be understood as a relational '*power to*' optic and alternatively when they constitute a top down *'power over'* perspective. As the Figure 3 shows, the analysis of these perspectives is subsequently linked to an understanding of conflict-creating scenarios. It is then interesting to understand, which type of power constellations creates what kinds of conflict-creating scenarios.

## 2.4 Mills and Gramsci on Power-Elites and Social Control

As mentioned, the thesis will end by reflecting the findings of how the power processes in the Sierra Leonean Government-Chieftaincy nexus works in relation to Mills' and Gramsci's theories on power-elites and social control. It will also be discussed in which regards these theoretical and conceptual ideas need to be refined in order to reflect the African context. A number of both older (e.g. Cohen 1981; Fatton 1988) and more recent studies in African politics (e.g. Ismail 2008) have taken their theoretical point of departure from the writings on power-elites and hegemonic

domination by the theoretical grandmasters, Mills and Gramsci. However, central to these scholars' arguments is that while ruling classes do exist in Africa they are only in the process of becoming a power-elite[11].

### *The Power-Elite*

Mills' Power-Elite Theory propagates that a somewhat narrow 'power-elite', residing in the top of society, undertakes the major political decisions. Mills' view of power thus differs from the one propagated by the 'pluralists' arguing that a number of different competing elites have an impact on the policies being implemented (Ismail 2008: 261). As Mills (1956: 1) notes:

> "The power-elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the environments of ordinary men and woman; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences. Whether they do or do not make such decisions is less important than the fact that they do occupy such pivotal positions".

In the theoretical optic of Mills and Gramsci, the power-elite is located in three dominant sectors. These are the military, the private business and corporations, and politics (Mills 1956: 2). Ismail (2008: 263; See also Cohen[12] 1981) discusses Mills' conceptualization of elites as consisting of three horizontal features. These are:

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[11] The relevance of Mills' theory to the African context has been especially propagated by Cohen (1981). He goes to the extent of arguing that Mills' Power-Elite Theory is better suited for exploring elites in some of the smaller African states than in America, which was the original focus of Mills' analysis in 1956. As Cohen stresses, the limitations of Mills' Power-Elite Theory is that it deals with the structures of power in the whole of the United States, which is a "highly complex and differentiated society with no homogenous culture and no traditional ruling class" (Cohen 1981: 12). Of particular relevance for this thesis Cohen stresses that "one way of meeting these methodological problems is to study elite cultures within relatively small-scale, developing nation-states". (Cohen 1981: 14)

[12] Much in line with Mills, Cohen in his writing on the Crios in Sierra Leone argues that a power-elite can be understood as a collective of people who are in control of the commanding positions in society. These people share a range of interests, which stems from related types of training, public duties and the ways in which they lead their life. (Cohen 1981: XVi)

"…their arrow-head location at command posts; their power and influence governmentally, financially, educationally, socially, and culturally; their shared elite culture (values and beliefs); and accumulation patterns, marked by similar social and associational life".

The reason, why Mills (1956) argues that a somewhat coherent power-elite exist, despite of the fact that the power-elite is conceptualized to be located in different sectors of society and geographical locations, is based on his central argument that they are connected through informal networks. Similarly, Cohen (Cohen 1981: 11) notes that the elites have often grown up under very similar conditions. For instance, they come from the same neighborhoods and have attended the same exclusive schools and universities. Here they forge bonds and comradeship, which is maintained throughout adulthood by being parts of the same clubs and involved in the same recreational activities. These relations are fertile ground for the elite to forge informal networks, cliques and circle of friends, eventually making them a coherent group of exclusiveness.

### *Social Control*

Mills' understanding of the power capabilities of the power-elite is not solely founded on his proposition about the centrality of their positions in the top echelons of society. In Mills' (1956) view the extents to which the power elite can maintain social control is contingent by the elite's capabilities to incorporate other classes into a network of dominance and alliance. This evidences Mills' inspiration from Gramsci's (1971) notions of hegemonic domination. To be in a position of hegemonic domination entails that the power-elite is capable of convincing other classes to accept the values of the power-elite in the political, moral and cultural spheres of life (Ismail 2008: 262). Following Sallach (1974: 41), Gramsci's understanding of hegemony is a process "in which a dominant class, which controls the economic and political institutions in society, also possesses privileged access to the primary ideological institutions of the

society". These are institutions of a religious, cultural and educational nature as well as the communication and media sectors. The access to these institutions and ideological spheres is used to advocate the elite's values, which in turn enforces the dominance of their structural position in terms of what beliefs and world-views are legitimate (Sallach 1974: 41). As Roger (1982: 22) argues the hegemonic class is the one, "which gains the consent of other classes and social forces through creating and maintaining a system of alliances by means of political and ideological struggle".

Summing up, Mills' and Gramsci's notions of power elites and social control constitute a mixed epistemological understanding of power. In a '*power over'* perspective, Mills and Gramsci discuss how a power-elite exists due to their privileged positions in the top echelon of society. However, the relational *power to* perspective also appears pertinent in Mills' and Gramsci's discussions of what enables the elite to transcend society. As they emphasize, it is necessary for the power-elite to create relations with the ideological spheres of society in order to implement their values and maintain social control.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

The thesis is conducted within a qualitative research paradigm, transcending the specific scientific disciplines of political science, history and anthropology. Qualitative research is well-suited for studies whose objectives are to explore, generate new insights, and establish new causal links among rival explanations in an analytical terrain, which is complex, generally not very well understood, and characterized by multiple untested angles (Ritchie 2003). As discussed in the introduction, the focus of this thesis is of such nature.

As its methodological framework the thesis employs abduction, which is an especially well-suited research strategy for the research endeavors of this thesis with its advocacy of a dynamic interplay between theory and empirical data. Furthermore, the thesis triangulates a wide range of data and information obtained through qualitative methods. The predominant ones are focus-group and in-depth interviews and text analysis of numerous different primary and secondary sources. Also, the thesis makes use of a number of quantitative surveys. The collecting and analysis of these sources have been carried out within the framework of the 'focused and structured comparison'. The present chapter presents in more depth how each of these methodological approaches has been employed in the thesis.

## 3.1 Abductive Strategy of Analysis

The abductive methodology, as shown below in Figure 4, encompasses both inductive and deductive strategies and reasoning. As Olsen and Pedersen (2005: 136) argue:

> "As with induction, abduction starts with empirical data, and perhaps even with inductivist strategies, which entails trying to identify what lies behind what one has observed, categorized, typologicalised, etc. Thus one makes a qualitative leap from the data to the determining principle that can explain the data's structure and correlation".

Abduction is different from induction, since induction observes empirical data and formulates a general rule, while abduction is interested in explaining *why* there appears to be a connection between a set of variables and *what* the determining principles and causal links are (Halkier 2001: 41). At the heart of the abductive methodology is an understanding of the research process as a constant exchange between the theoretical and empirical work. These two spheres so to say inform each other with the aim of gaining an 'empirical founded and theoretical informed, analytical knowledge' (Halkier 2001: 44). The central aspect is that the researcher utilizes "open" terms, concepts and methods, which enables the research process to proceed in an unexpected and changing direction (Halkier 2001: 44). In that regard, the thesis has operationalized the concept of power within a broad framework encompassing diverse and rival explanations so that the empirical dimension is instrumental in further developing the theoretical framework of power and social control.

**Figure 4: The Use of Abductive Strategy of Analysis in this Thesis**
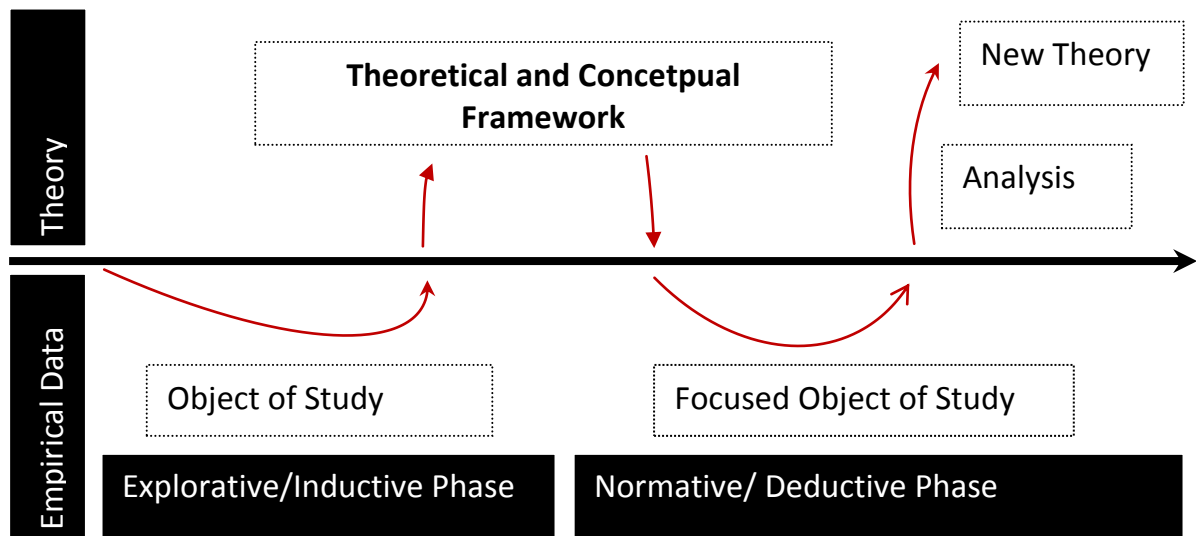


Source: Author's own construction

The ontological and epistemological underpinning of this methodology thus focuses on understanding the object under study and the process of gaining Dynamic knowledge. Besides of objects, human societies are inhabited by subjects whose interaction is dynamic and include the researcher who can never be in an external position to the research process. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be culturally sensitive and understand the context in which the dynamic elements take place. Accordingly, it is important that the researcher is reflective around his own role in the production of meaning[13]. (Halkier 2001: 43)

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[13] In contrast to the natural sciences, qualitative epistemologies, such as social constructivism understands meaning - not as a universal truth - but as constructions embedded within and created by historical and social contexts (Fuglsang & Bitsch Olsen 2004: 349). Meaning is constructed in the interaction between actors' mutual interpretation of each other. Thus, knowledge is not a direct reflection of reality, but an interpretation of reality shaped by the social and cultural context (Fuglsang & Bitsch Olsen 2004: 351). The hermeneutic tradition employs a similar logic, emphasizing that the researcher will always be surrounded by pre-understandings. In Gadamer's perspective, when a researcher interprets reality *pre-understandings* will play a significant part in the research process, such as the selection of variables, the theoretical and empirical focus, and the actual interpretation of data. The essential key is that our understanding of reality will always be comprised by predispositional understandings. As Gadamer points out, our world-views are conditioned by *prejudice.* Not in terms of being judgmental as such, but prejudices understood in terms of being the roots that connect us to our own cultural heritage, tradition and history. These dimensions are what create the basis of our understanding. (Bitsch & Fuglesang 2004: 322)

Thus, in order to develop a focused theoretical and conceptual framework, the first phase of the work on the thesis was exploratory and inductive in character. Before entering Sierra Leone I visited the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAPTC) in Accra, Ghana and conducted an interview with Dr Kwesi Anning as a preparation for my stay in Sierra Leone. Dr Anning was instrumental in providing contacts in Freetown and presented a valuable input to the first delineation of the problem area.

### The Exploratory Phase

The explorative phase was in concrete terms carried out through two initiatives. Prior to deciding on the research focus, the theoretical framework, and an interview guide, I resided in a typical Freetown community, Bonga Town. Daily conversations, participation and observations in the Bonga Town community presented a unique opportunity for gaining a contextual understanding of social dimensions, such as culture, the occult and mystique, religion, politics, and general views on how to manage, and "behave". On different occasions I participated in meetings with the local chief to sort out disputes with our local landlord. During the exploratory phase I also consulted a number of researchers at Fourah Bay College, Freetown University. Though these experiences do not figure directly in the findings presented in the thesis, they have been an important contextual backbone when meeting informants and in the interpretation of data. Context teaches the researcher!

During the exploratory phase I also undertook a Pilot Study in the Bo District in the southern part of Sierra Leone. Informal interviews were conducted with a number of different informants. The only real criteria for the first interviews were that the informants discussed the general themes: 'chieftaincy, government and conflict creation'. Subsequently, I concentrated on the issue-areas the interviewees were most concerned with and specified the questions during each round of interviews until a

sense of structure started to emerge. This was instrumental for delineating and focusing the scope of work. Thus the pilot study informed both the focused and structured framework of the investigation and the selection of cases and their focus.

**3.2 Role and Importance of Case Studies**

George and Bennett define a case "as an instance of a class of events". The class of events is understood as a specific phenomenon of scientific interest. The general aim of the case study approach is often to build theory by developing an understanding of how the causes of either similarity or difference between cases work. A case study is a well defined aspect of a historical period that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical period in itself (George & Bennett 2005: 17-18). George and Bennett also advocate that the case study approach is an especially suitable method in terms of conceptual validity when dealing with fuzzy variables and concepts, such as 'power', which they highlights as being one of the concepts "notoriously difficult to measure"(Ibid).

In the methodological design of the thesis the case study approach has therefore been an important type of analysis in order to arrive at a contextual and tangible understanding of the *modus operandi* of power. Furthermore, as the case study approach advocates, the thesis only explores a defined aspect of the historical periods: colonialism; early independence; and the post-war era. As discussed in the introduction, the phenomenon under study - the government-chieftaincy power nexus and its implications - can be framed and delineated within a pre-war and post-war case study, which in turn the following sections will elaborate on.

***Pre-War Case Studies***

The pre-war focus spins around the implications of the change of governments, which came about at the end of colonialism and during the early years of independence up until the elections in 1967. This is an important era because it shows the dynamics and implications of three diverse configurations of the Government–Chieftaincy nexus, these being the Colonial Administration; the SLPP government that succeeded the colonial government in 1951; and the APC government headed by Siaka Stevens that won the elections in 1967 (Shillington 2005). Furthermore, following the elections in 1967, the APC introduced the One-Party State in Sierra Leone (Legum & Drusdale 1969). This meant that the following decades, which eventually lead to the war in 1991, were not characterised by any change of government. In furtherance, as noted by Cyril Obei[14] in a discussion at the Nordic Africa Institute, Momoh, who was Prime Minister Siaka Steven's successor until the war broke out, did not bring about any significant changes in the politics and practices of the APC. He basically followed the same *modus operandi* that the government led by Siaka Stevens had set as precedence.

In the uncovering of these historical cases, a one month stay at the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) in Uppsala, in January 2010, gave access to certain archival material, which would otherwise be very difficult to get a hold of. The Sierra Leonean collection at NAI includes some key primary sources, not used in most other studies; the most important ones are the transcriptions of debates in the House of Representative. These reports consist of exact transcriptions of the debates as they took place providing a gateway in the time-space continuum for examining and presenting evidence for what the political discourse and resonance was at that time. In

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[14] Cyril Obei is one of the leading researchers on post-war state building in West Africa and is Programme Coordinator of the research cluster 'Post-Conflict Transition, the State and Civil Society in Africa' at the NAI in Uppsala. The discussion took place late January, 2010, at the NAI.

furtherance, all the key actors that this thesis is interested in are represented in the House of Representatives, including the Government (the SLPP), the Opposition (the APC), and a representation of Paramount Chiefs.

Other historical sources include memoirs of Paramount Chiefs and the writings of the late 19th century's anthropologists. Furthermore, official commission reports on the outcome of the 1967 elections (unofficially written by the two dominant political parties) have also been important sources in order to understand the historical discourse and ideology relating to the Chieftaincy at that time. These are the Dove-Edwin Commission and the National Reformation Council's White Paper. The fieldwork conducted in the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone is also an important integral part of this historical analysis.

### Post-War Case Studies

The post war cases relate to the implications of the state-chieftaincy power nexus within a framework of reforms. These reforms are the Local Government Act (2004) and the Chieftaincy Act (2009). These are important reforms because they both directly and indirectly influence the powers of the chiefs. The post-war case studies thus focus on what formal and informal changes the novel legal framework of the Local Government Act surrounding the chiefs have brought about, as well as the implications for conflict-creating scenarios. The Chieftaincy Act will be reflected upon on a more general level of analysis then a case study.

Undertaking this investigation, the most important empirical data are derived from fieldwork conducted in the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone as outlined in the following section. Newspaper articles have also proven to be a valuable source of information, especially to gain the view of civil society organisations. The Sierra Leonean newspapers are widely employed by civil society organisations to disseminate

their views. Though predominantly a qualitative thesis, a range of quantitative surveys are also incorporated as an important feature of the triangulation of methods.

### *Field Work in South-Eastern Sierra Leone*

The explicit focus of the field work has been on the Government-Chieftaincy nexus in the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone with interviews undertaken in the districts of Pujehun, Kailahun, and Bo as shown in the map below. There are several reasons why these districts were chosen as the focus of the field work.

The south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone are distinct from the rest of Sierra Leone in several aspects. First, in these areas there is a strong dominance of the Mendes (See Appendix 4). Furthermore, in a historical perspective, the Mendes and the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone have been the basis of most influential group within the political sphere constituting the dominant power-base of the SLPP. Also as indicated in the map in Figure 5, the south-eastern parts are likewise the richest areas in terms of possession of natural resources. Consequently, history shows how the south-eastern parts have always been the dominant battle field in terms of political, ideological and economic struggles.

Secondly, the organizational structure of the Sierra Leonean Chieftaincy in the south-eastern parts is distinctively different from the Western areas. During the Colonial era, the western areas were not part of the protectorate and its judicial framework of Native Administration, which was the case for the rest of the country. In the western areas, instead of using Paramount Chiefs the British thus employed the system of Headmen. Since the Headmen were ruling within the colony, and thus being under British law rather than upholding native law, their powers were much more delimited than that of the Paramount Chiefs. Thirdly, the civil war was both initiated and had the

most severe impact on the country and the chieftaincy in the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone (UN 2003).

**Figur 5: Map of Sierra Leone and Field Worksites**
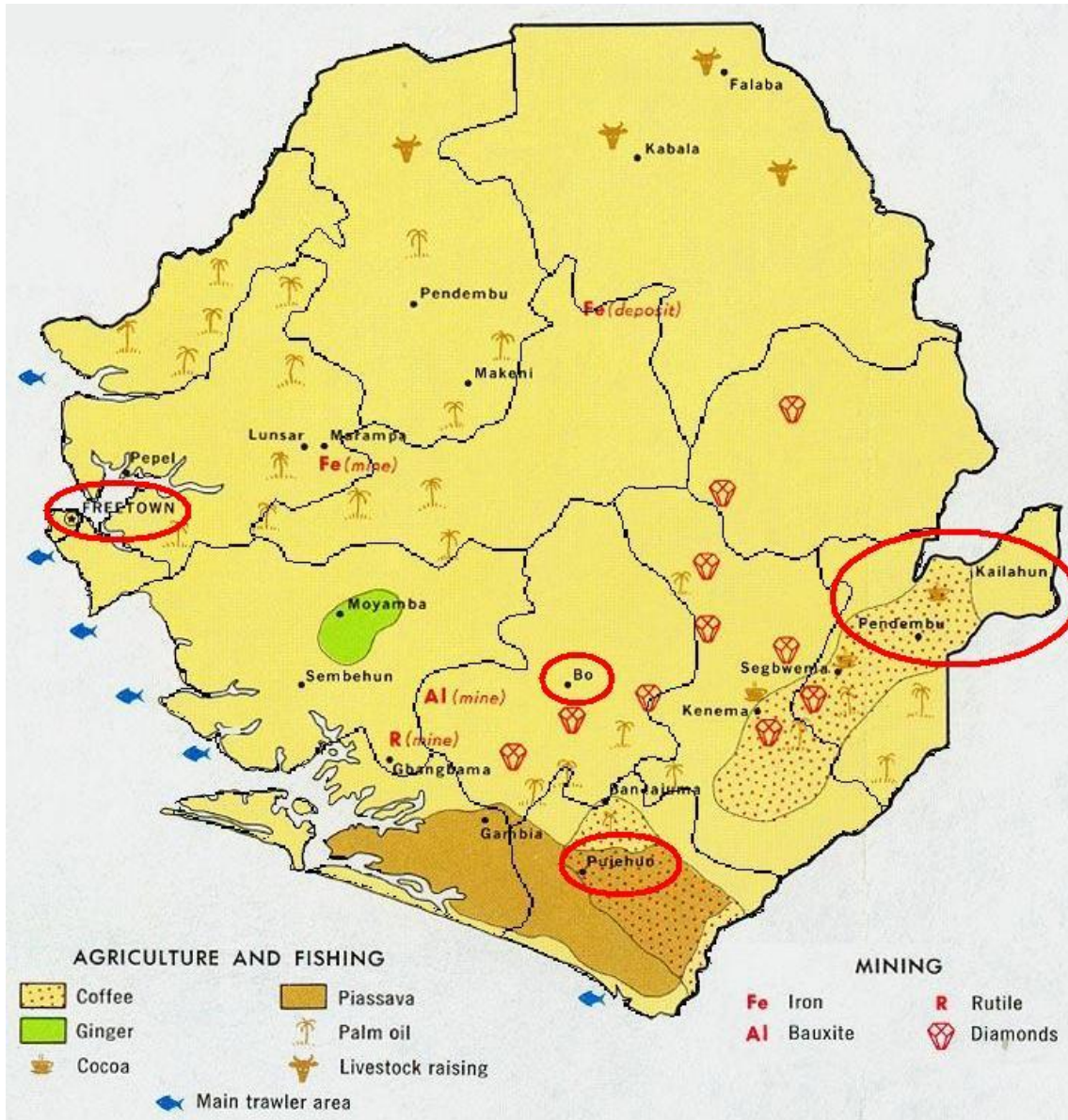


Source:  Author's own construction based on various maps

In order to be able to detect a general resonance among the interviewees without having numerous variables to consider focus has therefore been on conducting interviews in these areas. Thus, in terms of the ethnicity and political domination the selection of fieldwork sites can be understood as being homogenous.

However, analytical sensitivity has been taken into account in the analysis by the fact that resource wealth in the chiefdoms and proximity to the capital of Freetown and the border areas, where the war broke out, might have an impact on the responses of the interviewed. As shown on the map in Figur 5, the chiefdoms where the interviews have been conducted vary according to economic wealth and geographical location. While Bo and Pujehun are situated in areas rich in minerals and natural resources and with a developed infrastructure, Kailahun district's dominant resources are cash crops. However, the poor infrastructure[15] in this periphery area makes trading with Freetown and the rest of the country difficult. Furthermore, here on the borders to Liberia and Guinea, was the place where the war initially broke out and where the conflict intensity was at the highest (See appendix 5). Thus, in terms of economic bases and proximity to the capital Freetown and the areas in which the war broke out the selection of cases are heterogeneous.

The most significant bias in relation to the findings of the fieldwork carried out is then that the chiefs interviewed could potentially present a more negative picture of the actions of the APC than those of the SLPP based on the presumption that the south-eastern chiefs, in a historical perspective, have been part of the SLPP power-elite.

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[15] When going to Kailahun to conduct the interviews it was in the beginning of the rainy season. The only viable means of transportation proved to be motorcycles. Along the road we meet several trucks, busses and 4×4 Land-cruisers stuck in the mud. Around these vehicles there was informal settlements of passengers waiting on their third, fourth and fifth day.

However, the views of the Chief Administrators should be able to counterbalance this bias, since they are working with the government of the day.

### Selection of Informants

The groups of informants interviewed within each of the districts are the Paramount Chiefs and Chief Administrators (See appendix 1). Due to time-, resource-, and bureaucratic constraints it was difficult to be able to interview a wide number of Paramount Chiefs and Chief Administrators. It took several visits to the 'Ministry of Local Government and Community Development' to access the permanent secretary and subsequently get hold of a written permission to conduct research in the mentioned districts. Consequently, considerable considerations have been devoted to the selection of which Paramount Chiefs to interview. In a methodological terminology the type of sampling employed is according to Ritchie (2003: 78) a 'non-probability' or 'purposive' sample. What this means is that the units of analysis, which is the Paramount Chiefs, have been selected to purposively reflect a certain feature. The sampling is therefore not statistically representative. As Ruben and Ruben (1995: 66) emphasize, in this type of sampling three of the key dimensions are that the informants represent a range of views, are knowledgeable about the theme of the investigation, and they are willing to talk.

The first criterion of selection was that the Paramount Chief's economic and structural position varied, which meant some of the them should represent a Class[16] A chiefdom, while others should represent a Class B or C Chiefdom. Also, the chiefs were selected according to each of their specialised knowledge, extra positions, and word-of-mouth in the local communities about their governing. This was to insure that despite of the

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[16] The Chiefdom Class refers to the size of population paying taxes as well as the chiefdoms natural resource-base.

fact that no more than five Paramount Chiefs were interviewed, each of the interviewees would be both knowledgeable and available for in-depth interviews.

For each of the three districts the Chief Administrator was also interviewed using the same interview-guide as the one used for the Paramount Chiefs (See Appendix 2). This was done due to two main reasons. Firstly, in order to gain an understanding of how the decentralization process worked from the point of view of the highest placed administrative person in the Local District Councils (LDC), thus, representing the most knowledgeable and contextually attuned source on the subject. Secondly, the interviews with the Chief Administrators were also important in order to assess the validity of the views of the Paramount Chiefs. This was especially the case in relation to the more sensitive questions relating to how the State-Chieftaincy power nexus operates. While the Paramount Chiefs might have an incentive to blur the picture of the extent to which the chiefs can be linked to conflict-creating scenarios, the Chief Administrators can be perceived to be in a position to speak more freely and possibly being less biased. Triangulating the views of the Chief Administrators and the Paramount Chiefs should therefore enhance the validity of the general picture the statements presented even though the pool of interviewed is not statistically representative.

### Bo District Case Study

Among these fieldwork sites, most attention has been given to interviews in the Bo district since it presented a unique opportunity to understand how the politicization of the chieftaincy in the local government elections works and the implications hereof. The interviews conducted in the Bo District included: Interview with Paramount Chief Kangbai; two focus group interviews, one with politically and organizationally involved local youths and one with a random selection of youth willing to participate; in-depth interview with the Chairman of the Tikonko Youth Council; interview with the local

NGO the 'Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement', which has a specific focus on solving conflicts related to the actions of chiefs; and several informal conversations with people residing in the area including family members of Paramount Chief Kangbai.

## 3.4 Reliability and Validity

Rubin and Rubin (1995: 85) mention that "if the research is valid, it closely reflects the world being described", and if the research is reliable, other researchers studying the same area of investigation will be able to reproduce the investigation and get the same results. Carrying out this research endeavor in ways enhancing the reliability, generalization and validity, two different methods have been employed - namely the structured, focused comparison and triangulation of data. The following sections will elaborate on these methods in turn.

### *Structured, Focused Comparison*

When conducting qualitative case studies, the method of 'structured and focused comparison' is a powerful method for gathering information and standardized knowledge from a small number of cases (George and Bennett 2005: 67). According to George and Bennett, in order to achieve standardized and generalized knowledge the research-design should clearly identify the universe of the exploration in terms of the specific classes and sub-classes of events being studied (George and Bennett 2005: 69). The case study design should then be developed in a structured way, which enables comparison in order to create a cumulative generation of knowledge and theory (George and Bennett 2005: 69-70). This is done by standardizing the questions asked in the different cases. (George and Bennett 2005: 69)

After the completion of the pilot study an interview guide was formulated (see Appendix 2) in line with the above mentioned 'focused and structured comparison' approach with open response categories. The questions of the interview guide were focused on the theme of the state-chieftaincy power nexus and its potential links to conflict-creation by use of different standardized questions.

However, since the interviewees represented different types of actors in terms of wealth, educational background, level of English language proficiency, and political and authority position, the exact framing of the questions in the different interviews varied. While e.g. the Paramount Chiefs are authority figures, which command much respect, it was often necessary to pose the sensitive questions relating to their stature in a somewhat indirect manner. In interviews with youths who came from poor and marginalized backgrounds, it was often necessary to discuss the questions in a more narrative form relating to their personal experiences. In the interviews with the youths my research assistant, James Salinga Dauda, was of outmost importance. Most importantly, he was able to translate the questions into *Mende,* when necessary, enabling the respondent to reply in their mother tongue; but also James familiarity with the Bo District, where the youths were interviewed, was very instrumental in terms of accessing the youths, as people in Sierra Leone are quite nervous about strangers in general and about the exact nature of this research mission. In this regard, James was an important factor in order to gain the confidence of the youths. However, none of these interviews have been recorded on a tape recorder, since the youths met wished to stay anonymous out of fear that Paramount Chief Kangbai should learn about their involvement.

*Triangulation of Methods*

Triangulation of methods has been the dominant method employed In order to enhance the validity of the findings. The logic of triangulation is that when several different modes of collecting and analyzing empirical sources result in the same findings, reliability is strengthened. However, if different results emerge the research question and the methods employed need to be altered (Mabry 2008: 221). The diverse methods employed in this thesis are, as discussed, different types of interviews including informal and unstructured interviews, as well as in-depth and focused group interviews; direct participant observation; elaborate descriptions; and text and discourse analysis of a broad range of primary and secondary sources.

# Chapter 4: Chieftaincy during Colonialism and Early Independence

The findings of this chapter advance two main arguments. The first argument holds that the persons entitled as chiefs by the colonial government were already powerful authorities and highly influential in the ideological sphere of the Sierra Leonean society before the introduction of colonial rule. This is an important observation in relation to Mills' (1956) and Gramsci's (1971) work, since arguing that for the power-elite to be in a position to penetrate the whole of society with social control, values and beliefs, they need to be linked to the underlying ideological institutions.

The second argument advances that the colonial government and the first African political party in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone's People Party (SLPP), pursued a similar strategy towards control of the chiefs. This strategy can be reflected in a power optic of reciprocal obligations and accountability and shows that the politics after independence in Sierra Leone was quite different from that of many other African states, which often tried to undermine the power of the chiefs in pursuit of a nationalist ideology.

One of the explanations presented on the consensus-based relationship between the SLPP and the chiefs is that these two groups were in fact part of the same power-elite. This perspective thus diverges from Mills' and Gramsci's perspective, which makes quite a clear differentiation between the power-elite, and the ideological institutions in society.

**4.1 Secret Society – Pre-Colonial Power Structures**

This section argues that the chiefs were already powerful authorities before the colonialisation – this, however, within a different framework of authority and power. As Bangali[17] (2007) advances regarding the time when a colonial government was established: "Each residential unit had its own lineage political organization, a Council of Elders, which formed the machinery for maintenance of public order". Furthermore, the chief, who at that time was usually the local warlord[18], was one of the most important authorities within the Council of Elders. The major functions of the council were to mediate in the courts of human and spiritual justice. As Bangali mentions these courts "validate the correct patterns of human relationship, create beliefs, discourage aggressive or disruptive behaviour, regulate economic activities, protect the community from territorial aggression, and counteract the destructive forces of witchcraft". (Bengali 2007)

The power and authority of the Council of Elders is deeply embedded within and contingent by the men's secret society, the Poro (Bangali 2007), which as emphasized in historical and contemporary sources were the most important pre-colonial structures of power and authority, both in terms of its governing of everyday life and its validation of the correct beliefs and practices. Cole, who himself was initiated, mentions how Poro means "the ancient and sacred laws of the fathers" (Cole 1886; Cited in Wright 1907: 423). In a similar optic Little (1949: 199) suggests that:

> "The secret societies are an embodiment of and a means of canalizing supernatural power […] Like the medieval church, they lay down various rules of conduct, proscribe certain forms of behavior, and are the sole agency capable of remitting certain sins".

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[17] Bangali is the Chief Administrator of the Bo District Council and has written several <u>unpublished</u> papers on the chieftaincy in Sierra Leone for the use of various NGOs. The one cited here is termed 'Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms'. A copy was obtained from a visit at Bo District Council, in June 2009.
[18] The interviewed Paramount Chief also noted how they descendent from families of great warriors and kings.

In furtherance, Wright (1907: 423) notes how: "the society trains, circumcises, tattoos, and re-names the boys of the tribes, and is substantially the native government of the country". An indication of the structural power these societies were perceived to have by the late 19th century's anthropologists[19] is indicated in the writings of Fitzgerald Marriott (1899: 24) who recommended the colonial administration in Sierra Leone to utilize the Poro society for creating modes of law and order in the British protectorate. For the purpose of the thesis it is important to highlight the position of the chiefs within these ancient modes of authority and power. Little (1949: 199) gives an informed account of this:

> "[T]he connection between the Poro and political authority has always been very strong, and the two mutually reinforce each other […] It goes almost without saying that no person can hope to occupy any political office in the chiefdom without being a Poro member. The chief himself is the society's official patron in all matters external to its business […] No chief, and this point is equally significant today as in former times, could be appointed without the Poro approval, and the society had, inevitably, a major voice in his nomination".

Thus, as these historical sources suggest, pre-colonial Sierra Leone already had a quite developed structure of authority and power within which the chiefs had an important position. Furthermore, these power structures constituted an ideological sphere validating, which beliefs and behaviors were acceptable within the communities.

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[19] In the writings of the last centuries,' explorers and anthropologists present much divided views on the workings of these societies. While John Matthew's writing in the late 17th century observed these societies as a "wise political institution … disseminated through the entire country for the purpose of putting an end to disputes and wars" (Matthews 1788: 82), others like Joseph Corry wrote with antipathy that the Poro society was a "confederation by solemn oath," of which "the bewildered natives felt the effects and dread the power". (Corry 1807: 134; *Cited in* Magaziner 2006: 24)

**4.2 Colonialism**

The relationship between the colonial administration and the chiefs was marked by different periods of colonial rule. As Walter Barrows (1976) as well as Crowder and Ikeme (1970) argue, following the initial set up of the colony in 1896, where the British's focus was on territorial consolidation, a Laissez-faire period followed from 1920 -1937, and finally a period of Reform commenced in 1937 and lasted until Independence in 1961. (Barrows 1976: 98-101)

*The Colonial Laissez-fair Period*

In the Laissez-faire period the colonial government granted the chiefs in the peripheral areas extensive internal freedom and little attention was directed towards the ways in which the chiefs ruled "their" native land (Barrows 1976: 98-99) that the chiefs had had been granted through the 'land tenure' system, which also entitled the chiefs royalties and precepts from mining and commercial activities (West Africa November 1985: 2365). The Laissez-faire stance of the British is indicated by Governor Blackhall's response to a Temne chief. The Temne Chief wanted the Governor to mediate in a dispute between his and the neighboring chiefdom. However, as Blackhall responded: "I cannot interfere in the dispute between yourself and the Sussus; but I trust that God will give victory to the right". (Joko Smart 1968)

In return for their benefits, the chiefs were expected to co-operate with the colonial government. According to Christopher Allen (1968: 307) the chiefs' benefits, which also included salaries and allowances "turned them into government employees". The chiefs' duties covered several important dimensions of social control, such as reporting on any non-native migration (Jackson 2005: 53), supervising the collection of local tax; upholding peace and order; and existing as a link of communication to the protectorate (Crowder and Ikeme 1970: 407-436). Some observed the trend that the

Chiefs became "the most powerful economic class in the provinces" as well as "social and political elites controlling the lives and destinies of their people" (West Africa November 1985: 2365). Furthermore, the definition of 'natives' and 'native land' was unwritten and enforced by the chiefs in terms of customary law, hence Jackson (2005: 53) stresses that: "Locally, the authorization and protection of traditional rights by the traditional authorities makes the chiefs extremely powerful". Thus, as these sources suggest the relationship between the colonial government and the Chiefs[20] was one of mutual empowerment. This is also apparent from the memoirs of Paramount Chief Mannah-Kpaka (1939) who writes:

> "Now to-day, the relation between our people through us chiefs and the Government are cemented by friendly understanding and respect for each other. We thank Government for the efforts they are putting forward for the improvement of the Protectorate. May God Almighty give them strength in this direction."

### The Reform Era

In the Reform era, this casual attitude towards the chiefs changed with the introduction of the Native Administration scheme, in 1937. The Native Administration embodied a number of different ordinances, which were aimed at creating more control with the chiefdoms and the chiefs (Barrows 1976: 101). The ordinances instated personnel, as shown in Figure 6 below, in key functions, which the chiefs had previously been presiding over. According to Barrows (1967: 107) the Treasury made a distinction between public funds and the Paramount Chiefs own funds, which distanced the Paramount Chiefs from his individual followers. The Chiefdom clerk became more of a public servant than the Paramount Chief's private secretary.

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[20] Several of the Paramount Chiefs met during the elaboration of this thesis reflected back on the time of their great grandfathers during the colonial era as a time of Chieftaincy greatness, the colonial masters being considered as an honorable government generally doing well for Sierra Leon (Interviewees: 4; 6; 10).

**Figure 6: Chiefdom Administration Anno 1937**

| Administration | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Finance** | **Paramount Chief**<br>**Chiefdom Speaker**<br>**Section Chief**<br>**Section Speaker**<br>**Town Chief**<br>**Village Chief**<br>**Village Speaker**<br>**Chiefdom**<br>**Councilor**<br>**Opinion Leader**<br>**Local Tax Payer**<br>**Health Overseer** | **Justice** |
| **Treasury Clerk**<br>**Court Clerk**<br>**Revenue**<br>**Collector** | | **Local Court Supervisor**<br>**Court Chairman**<br>**Court Clerk**<br>**Courtier**<br>**Chiefdom Police**<br>**Bailiff** |

**Chiefdom Council**

**Chiefdom Committee**

Source: Bangali, 2007

Also, "in the spirit of reform" the colonial administration encouraged that the Paramount Chiefs to be elected were literates. The chiefs educated at the 'Bo School for the Sons and Nominees of Chiefs' were especially popular. Lastly, a crucial aspect of the change brought about by the ordinances was how the control of the local courts was officially removed from the Paramount Chief and handed over to a Court Chairman[21]. Barrows' key argument in relation to these institutional re-configurations is that the institutional buffer and the increased education of the chiefs, which also had the effect that the chiefs started to form exclusive circles of friends amongst "outsiders" including lawyers, politicians and intellectuals, created a 'cultural barrier' and distance between the chiefs and his subjects in terms of the direct personal interaction - an interaction, which appears to be an important feature of the chiefs'

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[21] This change was brought about by the Chiefdom Court Ordinance (1963).

ruling and power base. As Barrows (1976: 108) mentions in relation to the Mende chiefs:

> "The Mende chief owed much of his authority to personal qualities rather than to religious status or to institutional position. The individual chief who judges cases fairly, who reciprocated the tribute given to him by followers, who listened to what they had to say, who ate with them, married their daughters, protected and helped them – this chief was likely to enjoy widespread support in his chiefdom".

This quote demonstrates the significance Barrows gives to the direct contact by which the chiefs listened to his subject; made reciprocal distributions; judged cases fairly; and mingled with his subjects through ordinary daily activities. Also, these aspects of chieftainship appear to apply for the Limba chiefs[22], which Finnegan's (1963: 242-243) account is evidence of. As he writes:

> "The foremost virtue always attributed to the Limba chief is his ability to "speak" [...] In the first place, the virtue of "speaking" refers to the Limba chief's duty to be affable to his people. He is expected to speak honourably and kindly to those around him, return their greetings, and never be proud or remote [...] It is often claimed by the Limba, a man can never win the chiefship by mere money, but only if he "loves" people [...] The other aspect of this particular virtue of the chiefs is according to the sense of "speak", which could more precisely be translated as "reconcile", "persuade people" or "try cases".

Finnegan's account of the Limba chief's ruling is much in line Barrows presentation of the characteristics of the Mende chiefs. The chief's authority is derived and maintained through a direct contact with the subjects maintained through the ruling and mediation in the courts. The buffer that was created between the chiefs and the subjects through the Native Administration schemes can thus be understood as a quite significant change in the framework and foundation of the chief's power base. The direct contact became weakened. In furtherance, this novel framework of reforms was, according to Barrows (1976: 105), employed tactically by the elite-opposition and

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[22] For a detailed historical account of different cases mediated by Limba Paramount Chiefs, see Siegle, P.E. (1988).

unsuccessful candidates in the chiefdom. The ordinances, which provided a legal framework for the conduct of the chiefs, were used by opposition ruling houses to plead to the central government that the chiefs in power were ruling badly. Thu,s the native administration made possible complaints against chiefs in power (Barrows 1976: 107-108) and set in motion elaborate schemes of warranted and unwarranted complaints. Consequently, by late colonialism in the 1940s and 1950s, several chiefs were disposed and forced to resign by the colonial government. This created insecurity around the chiefs that were becoming more dependent on government decisions and policies. (Barrows 1976 110)

In these regards, while the chiefdoms during the Laissez-faire period were somewhat isolated and autonomous units, the policies of the colonial government during the Reform period created a closer integration of chiefdom politics into national politics. The chiefs were essentially, at least formally, dependent on, and influenced by, what was taking place in the capital of Freetown.

**4.3 SLPP Power-Base**

The political struggles for power during late Colonialism and early Independence can be understood as a confrontation and positioning between the elites of Sierra Leone's three main ethnic groups, the Crios[23] predominantly residing within the colony, the Temnes in the northern parts of the protectorate, and the Mendes in the southern part of the protectorate (See Appendix 4). During colonialism the most visible ethnic divide was one between the Crios of the colony and the "natives" of the protectorate, each group governed within a different legal framework[24] which according to Kandeh (1993: 90) institutionalized cultural and ethnic differences. However, contextual

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[23] The Sierra Leonean Crios are "liberated" Africans which came to Sierra Leone with the missionaries in the 18th century, after being freed as slaves Europe. (Shillington 2005)

[24] The Crios predominantly residing in Freetown had been under British law, while the "Natives" living in the protectorate had been governed indirectly by the Native Administrations.

changes in late Colonialism had the implication that at the time of independence, the Mendes was the dominant ethnic group in the political landscape, and in the subsequent years, political competition was predominantly between the Mendes against an alliance between the Crio and Temne elites.

The reason why the Mendes had manifested their importance as a group at the end of colonialism reflects an increasing importance of the economic and educational development of the southern parts of Sierra Leone. As indicated from the map in Figure 5, the most important mineral enclaves are located in the southern areas, while the northern pastoral parts had become more marginalized, since its weak resource base presented less economic incentives for development. Also, in terms of education the North had become marginalized (Keen 2005: 14). The Mende dominance in the political sphere was manifested Sierra Leone's constitutional conference taking place in London in 1960 (Shillington 2005: 1362) which Kilson (1960: 774) argues was "a convenient arrangement for perpetuating Mende dominance in Sierra Leonean politics". This argument is substantiated when looking at the ethnic configuration of Sierra Leones first government party, the Sierra Leone's Peoples Party (SLPP), which was founded in 1951 as a response to the Independence conference.

During SLPP's first leadership by Milton Margai, 38.9 percent of the cabinet was Mende, and when his brother Albert Margai took over, this figure increased to 42.9 percent (Kandeh 1993: 92). Thus at the time of Independence, the Mendes and the SLPP dominated the political arena. However, another interesting observation is that SLPP can also be understood as a means to perpetuate the interests of the Chiefs. As Allen (Allen 1968: 308) mentions:

> "The SLPP was principally composed of the educated relatives of chiefs, like the Margais, though it included some non-relatives, and Creoles."

The development strategy of colonial administration for the South, which both included an economical and educational dimension, founded a rural educated elite that was both linked to the government bureaucracy and the educated town elite as well as to the chieftaincy. As noted in the previous section, among other institutions the 'Bo School for the Sons of Paramount Chiefs' had the effect that the family members of the ruling houses benefited from education and formed exclusive network of friends amongst the Freetown educated elite. As a World Bank report points out: "The Sierra Leonean education system became an elitist system that excluded the majority of the population", an educational system which was largely focused on creating an influx of educated Africans in the government institutions. (World Bank 2007) Thus, at the time of independence, an educated "native" and "creolized" African elite, including the sons of the chiefs, was able to challenge the educated Freetown Creole elite (Bøås 2001: 12). Though this elite predominantly included Mendes the 'chief-factor' meant that it also included educated chiefs from the North, thus to some extent cutting across ethnic and geographical divisions. (Keen 2005: 16)

**4.4 SLPP Government-Chieftaincy Nexus: Consensus and Reciprocity**
The following sections present evidence showing that the relations between the SLPP and the Chiefs can be understood as a mode of consensus, reciprocity and accountability. This is evident from an analysis of the three historical events: The 1955 northern riots; the 1967 national elections; and discourses and political decisions in the House of Representatives. Furthermore, these sources also show that the chiefs in the North, despite of being Temne, are siding against the Temne based APC party in favour of the SLPP. What this suggests is that the SLPP's power is predominantly based on the support of the chiefs, thus transcending factors such as ethnicity. In the following, each of these historical periods will be analysed in depth. A quick overview

of the following line of argumentation, in terms of empirical findings and theoretical perspectives, is presented in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7: The SLPP-Chieftaincy Power Nexus: Reciprocity and Accountability**

| Historical Events | Issues | Response | Theoretical Perspective | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The 1955 Northern Riots** | Tribal Authorities and chiefs were increasingly misusing funds for personal benefits.<br><br>People in the local communities rioted against the chiefs due to discontent.<br><br>Cox Commission recommended: Investigations of chiefs and Tribal Authorities and more super vision and the disposing of a number of chiefs. | Milton Margai followed some of Cox Commissions recommendations, by investigating actions of chiefs and tribal authorities. Nine chiefs were disposed.<br><br>When the British left parliament Milton Margai compensated Tribal Authorities and Chiefs, which were investigated, and re-instated the nine disposed chiefs. | The SLPP exercised **downward obligations** towards the chiefs and Tribal Authorities. | |
| **The 1967 Elections** | The SLPP was contesting the APC in the national elections. | The chiefs especially from the North made it virtually impossible for APC members to campaign. | The chiefs exercised **upward obligations** towards the SLPP. | Accountability |
| **Discourse in House of Representatives Debates** | APC wanted to:<br>- Dismiss by-laws written by chiefs on the grounds of being *ultra vires*.<br>- Investigate disturbances in Samu chiefdom, arguing the Tribal Authority had assaulted APC members. | Both motions were dismissed.<br><br>The SLPP and the chiefs supported each other discursively, both arguing the APC wanted to undermine the powers of the chiefs as an institution. | Same **ideological platform** of chiefs and the SLPP evident.<br><br>Clear **consensus** between SLPP and chiefs on issues relating to the chieftaincy. | |

Source: Author's own construction based on empirical findings

*The 1955 Northern Riots*

One of the dominant interpretations on the causes of the riots taking place in the North in 1955-1966 suggests that the staff working in the Tribal Authority (TA) increasingly utilized their office for personal benefit, such as the acquisition of wealth. As Cartwright points out: "The chiefs in particular were tending less and less to distribute wealth they acquired to their people" and the "external checks on the Paramount Chief and the TAs had been sharply reduced as African self-government increased" (Cartwright 1978: 137). In response to this the British and the Cox Commission recommended that there should be applied more control over the chiefs and the TAs (Cartwright 1978: 138). As Governor Maurice Dorman stressed:

> "I strongly disapprove of 'big men' taking advantage of ordinary men… All these forms of extortion have got to stop. The Government will find ways and means to stop them". (*Cited in* Cartwright 1978: 138)

Responding to these events, Margai had two overall strategies he could pursue, however, each of them with possible implications. On the one hand, Margai could accommodate the Cox Commission's recommendations and strike down on the corrupt chiefs and establish more control over the chieftaincy as an institution. The implication of this strategy is that Margai and the SLPP would possible lose the support of the chiefs. On the other hand, he could continue to support the chiefs. This might, however, trick the creation of alternative political parties or mass-based movements constituted on anti-chief sentiments[25] (Cartwright 1978: 139). Margai responded by taking some steps to accommodate the Cox Commission. He started an investigation into the actions of certain chiefs, commenced on the process of reinstating Court Presidents and disposed of nine chiefs. The central point is, however, Margai's subsequent actions, once the British ministers withdrew from the legislative council in 1958. Margai not only compensated several of the TAs and chiefs who had been under

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[25] Parties Such as Parti Democratique de Guinee and the Convention Peoples Party of the Goald Coast were political parties which had successfully employed anti chiefs campaigns to win elections (Cartwright 1978: 139).

investigation, he also reinstated the chiefs he had previously disposed of. (Cartwright 1978: 140)

Keen concludes on the events taking place during the northern riots in terms of the SLPP and Margai "extended patronage to selected northern chiefs and seems to have sought to cement their loyalty by tolerating abuses against their own people" (Keen 2005: 14). Thus, Margai eventually empowered the chiefs, favoring their office (and loyalty) above the interests the rural subjects.

This scenario also indicates the incentives of the northern chiefs to support the Mende based SLPP. As these incidents and the last period of colonial reform demonstrate, the office of the chiefs had been closer integrated into central politics and sensitive towards what went on in the Freetown capital. The fear of being disposed, as many chiefs had been experiencing in the previous years, still existed. Thus, for the chiefs to be on good terms with the SLPP government entailed a stronger protection of their positions. As Kilson argues in return of support the SLPP would grant the chiefs more control over their own affairs (Kilson 1963).

While these previous sections showed how the SLPP government protected the position of the chiefs by carrying out downward obligations the following section will present evidence of some modes of upward obligations carried out by the chiefs in support of the SLPP.

### The Role of the Chiefs during the Elections in 1967

Another way of illuminating relations of reciprocity between the SLPP and the Chiefs can be derived from the political environment prior to the 1967 elections, when the newly founded APC was running against the SLPP. According to Allen (1968: 310)

Albert Margai opted for a strategy of forcing members of Parliament to cross over to the SLPP. Doing so, the Native Authority Courts and chiefs would jail and harass supporters of the opposition if they did not comply. According to Allan's analysis, the traditional authorities and the courts were so effective in using their extensive power that the only place in the South the APC could campaign was in Bo. In the North it was virtually impossible. As Allan (1968: 310) mentions, the chiefs were quite instrumental in disrupting APC's election campaign in several ways:

> "Permission to open an office in the Northern capital, Makeni, was refused; prominent APC supporters in Bombali and Kambia were banished to the South; APC MP for Kambia West was imprisoned by a native court; the office in Port Loko was closed soon after its opening and the organising secretary jailed".

Thus, as these examples show the chiefs had a profound ability to undermine the APC's campaign during the election that can be understood as the chiefs exercising upward obligations towards the SLPP[26].


### *Political Discourses in the House of Representatives*

Another important source of empirical evidence that demonstrates how the SLPP-Chieftaincy nexus was based on consensus and reciprocal empowerment, as indicated from the analysis above, can be found by examining the discourses of debates in the House of Representatives. The composition of seats in the House of Representatives is a sign in itself of the empowering stand towards the chiefs of early Independence[27]. In the 1956 constitutional reforms, the chiefs were empowered in the formal and national political arena by being granted more representation in the government's

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[26] According to Keen (2005: 17) another way in which coercive tactics were employed by chiefs was through the use of the Poro secret society.

[27] From 1924 until 1965, only five Paramount Chiefs were represented in the government Cabinet, three Mendes, and two Temnes. Before 1924, the Creoles had been the only group represented in the legislative council (Kandeh 1992: 24), a development which indicates the Mendes strengthening position during late colonialism.

legislative chamber. As it was at the time, and still is today, one Paramount Chief from each of the 12 districts in Sierra Leone is given a seat representing his own district (West Africa, November 1985: 2365). The following section explores the discourse within the House of Representatives in two debates, which provides a unique empirical source for the understanding of the political discourse on the SLPP-Chieftaincy nexus of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

### *The Control of Residence, 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1958*

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1958, a debate (Control of Residence 1958: 223) took place, which concerned a number of by-laws[28] written and instated by the Tribal Authorities in a number of chiefdoms. These notices defined who strangers in chiefdoms were.

Analysing the debate a clear pattern emerges. On the one hand, the SLPP government and representation of Paramount Chiefs stood united giving support to the chiefs who wrote the by-laws and the power of the chiefs to make by-laws in general. The opposition, on the other hand, argued that the chiefs had exceeded their judicial mandate by making these by-laws and forwarded a motion on the dismissals of the by-laws on the grounds of them being *ultra vires*.

The support to the Chiefs is clearly apparent from the key speaker from the SLPP government in this debate, the Minister of Lands, Mines and Labour (Control of Residence 1958: 225-226), who stressed that:

> "I want to emphasise clearly before I sit down that all we are asking Honourable Members to do is to support the Government in upholding the hands of the chiefs in making rules and regulations which will be conducive to good governance [...] I am giving a warning to the House that we should not begin to

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[28]An example of these by-laws is from the Faima Chiefdom making the following orders quoted in the House of Representatives (Control of Residence 1958: 230): "This order may be cited as the Tribal Authorities (Faima Chiefdom)(Control of Residence of Strangers) Order, 1958, and shall be deemed to have come into force on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1958(…) "Stranger means a native who does not belong to or who does not ordinarily reside within the District in which the Chiefdom is situated at the coming into force of this order".

do anything that would interfere with the rights and authority of the Paramount Chiefs of this country".

Evident from this extract, as well as the arguments of other ministers taking part in the debate, is the resonance around the argument that the power of the chiefs should be upheld and respected. From the speeches delivered by the opposition taking part in the debate, the resonance evolved around the contradictory argument that the chiefs were exceeding their powers. As among others, Mr. Mbriwa (Control of Residence 1958: 230) of the opposition argued:

> "The Minister for Lands, Mines and Labour was trying to defend the Chiefs; I am advising the Chiefs that this is a very critical motion, which I expect them to listen to very carefully". (Reference, see also Wallace Johnson)

In similar tongues, Mr. Roger Wright (Control of Residence 1958: 133) of the opposition stressed that:

> "Some persons on the other side (SLPP) have taken this thing to make a propaganda speech as stated by the Minister of Lands, Mines and labour and the Premier that we want to usurp the rights of the Paramount Chiefs."

The motion on the dismissal of the by-laws on the grounds of being u*ltra vires* was put to vote and lost (Control of Residence 1958: 242). As is indicated by these extracts, the pattern is clear. Although officially the debate is concerned with a limited number of specific cases of by-laws the arguments evolve around government support to the Paramount Chiefs on a more ideological level. This finding is important with regard to the theoretical research question. As noted in the theoretical discussion it is a key dimension for the power-elite to also use ideological means to create social cohesion and control, which from the discourse in the House of Representatives appears to be an important strategy of the SLPP.

***Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom, 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1962***

On the 28th of November, the leader of the APC opposition, Siaka Stevens, put forward a motion suggesting that the government should set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate disturbances, which had taken place in Samu Chiefdom, Kambia District (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 58). In Siaka Stevens' perspective one of the root causes to the disturbances was that the local Paramount Chief had jailed the APC candidate who won the general election in the district. According to Siaka Stevens (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 59-62) the Paramount Chief had given him the following account of what went on in Samu:

> "The Paramount Chief gave me the impression then that nobody could stand in his Chiefdom without his consent or without permission […] The forces of law in this country seem to be divided because when you come into the former Colony area or Western area everything is in the hands of the Police who are supremely in charge of Law and Order. The moment you cross the railway line at Songo, trouble begins to take place and one does not know who is in charge. The N.A. could arrest you, the police could arrest you and that was exactly what happened in Samu."

Stevens' understanding of what took place in Samu chiefdom stood in stark contrast to the understanding of the government. As among others, the speech delivered by the Prime Minister suggested that the confusion was caused because supporters of the APC began to beat up the Tribal Authority. According to the Prime Minister, since the APC had won the seat in the area, they thought they were above the Tribal Authority (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962:  68).  A speech by Honourable Y.D. Sisay follows the same line of reasoning as the Prime Minister, arguing that:

> "The A.P.C. won the election in the area and the supporters of the A.P.C. felt they were on top of the world and that they could do anything. They told the people that the rule of the Paramount Chiefs was at an end and that there was no more authority of the Tribal Authority". (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 74)

An interesting aspect of this debate is the intensity by which the representation of Paramount Chiefs was involved in the discussions. One of the key persons partaking in the debate was one of the few female Paramount Chiefs of Sierra Leone, Madam Ella Koblo Gulama. Gulama presented a number of points showing different dimensions of the issues at bay in the Chieftaincy-Government relations. As Madam Gulama (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 83) argued:

> "It is true that after the general election the A.P.C. supporters felt that since they had won the election in the area, the Paramount Chiefs have lost favour and they could no longer be controlled by them. They were going to set up their own native administrations and, perhaps, in Samu they thought that Mr. Janneh was to be their Paramount Chief. And so they started doing all these diabolical things we know the A.P.C. supporters did in Samu".

Apparent from this quote is how Madam Gulama presents exactly the same explanation regarding what had taking place in Samu chiefdom as the SLPP government. Focus is on how the APC does not respect the authority of the chiefs and the ribal authority. Another extract shows clearly the strong support and faith the chiefs have in the SLPP. Madam Gulama (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 84) rounded up her speech in the following words:

> "Our Prime Minister has fortunately been upholding the hands of Paramount Chiefs in this country and that is the only type of Prime Minister I will follow in any government".

The debate quite explicitly shows how the political stand on chieftaincy matters is divided between the government and the opposition. As Paramount Chief Bai Bairoh II (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 140) stressed:

> "The idea of asking for an enquiry into the conduct of the Paramount Chief originates from certain members on the other side (APC) who always try to molest the position of chiefs. There are so many other things that happen for which an enquiry is not asked for. Always it is Paramount Chiefs. They should have to think seriously and properly about the position of chiefs in this country".

The motion for a Commission of Enquiry was put to vote and lost. These extracts should give an indication of the unity that exists in Parliament between the Chiefs and the SLPP[29]. Reading through the debates it becomes ever more clear how the SLPP government and the Paramount Chiefs continually empower and support each other, while the APC opposition, as noted by Paramount Chief Bairoh above, in numerous debates are trying to target and undermine the honorability, authority and power of the chiefs. Thus, regarding the research questions posed in the thesis, the ideological, as well as consensus and accountability based understanding of how power is created and maintained is evident from the discourse in the House of Representatives.

## 4.5 Power-Conflict Perspective

During colonialism two distinctive forms of power appeared to be pertinent in the relations between the colonial administration and the chiefs. The colonial Government--Chieftaincy nexus during the Laissez-faire period (1920-1937) was characterized by modes of reciprocal obligations, consensus and accountability. However, during the Reform period (1937-1961) this relationship assumed a more top-down attuned character. The chiefdoms became more closely integrated into national politics and the chiefs' position became less secure. As the disposing of several chiefs witnesses the dimension of force, and subsequently coercion, became the dominant dimension of national power in the colonial Government-Chieftaincy nexus.

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[29] An interesting observation in relation to the events taking place in Samu chiefdom, which this last debated evolved around was that during the northern riots, Milton Margai had ruled in favour of the sitting Paramount Chief, Bai Sherbro Yumkella. This had the effect that the leader of the other ruling house in Samu chiefdom, Yolla Bangura, sided with the APC. Subsequently in 1963, Bangura and his family were banished from Samu chiefdom by Margai's government. (Cartwright 1978: 127)

The character, the SLPP-Chieftaincy nexus appears to be based on, is modes of accountability and reciprocity. While the SLPP empowered and protected the office of the chiefs within the framework of national politics, the chiefs supported the SLPP, in among other ways, by making it virtually impossible for the APC to campaign in the elections. Thus, it appears that the SLPP, like the colonial government, perceived the Chieftaincy to be an important sphere to be connected to in order to create social control. However, what this historical analysis also evidences is that rather than understanding the SLPP government and the chiefs as two differentiated elites they are essentially part of one and the same power elite. Thus, besides of reciprocal obligations, the linkages between the SLPP and the chiefs appear to be based on, and reinforced by, a cultural and ideological foundation.

In a conflict perspective, it thus appears as if the reciprocal understanding is not solely a moral calculus of power as advanced by Lonesdale and Chabal. As the above empirical analysis shows that while the accountability relations between the SLPP and the chiefs created a somewhat stable power relationship where consensus was the dominant power characteristic, one of the underlying incentives for creating links of reciprocity also appears to be a way to exclude other contesting sources of power, such as the subjects in the North and the APC members during the election campaigns. As the analysis shows, links of reciprocity and accountability are essentially employed to empower and legitimate specific agents to use manifest forms of powe,r such as force and even violence. Thus, in a theoretical optic, the '*power over*' and '*power to*' perspectives are interlinked and both part of a process of establishing social control.

# Chapter 5: APC Government, Elections and Civil War

This chapter explores the implications of the rise to power of the All Peoples Congress (APC) party in the 1967 elections for the Government-Chieftaincy nexus and conflict-creating scenarios in the local communities. As a result of the analysis undertaken, the findings of this chapter lead to an understanding of the role of the Chieftaincy in the events leading to the civil war. The said understanding diverts from the explanation advanced by the dominant discourse within the academic community. In a power perspective the findings of this chapter show that the '*power over*' perspective was dominant in the APC party's strategy towards the chiefs because they did not share the same ideological platform as the SLPP. Hence, this shows the importance of the Chieftaincy in Sierra Leonean politics.

## 5.1 Formation of the APC

The formation of the APC can be understood as a Temne and Crio response to the Mende and Chieftaincy elitism of the SLPP. The SLPP was increasingly seen as a corrupt party abusing its political platform especially in regard to the protection of the northern chiefs, abusing its local populations, and misusing chiefdom revenues for personal benefits. (Daramy 1993: 29; 63; Kandeh 1992: 81; Keen 2005: 14). As discussed in the previous chapter, Prime Minister Margai's response to the northern riots in terms of supporting the chiefs, which he eventually did, could trick the formation of a mass-based party facilitated by anti-chief sentiments. This scenario appears to be exactly what happened. Ordinary people in the North felt that the SLPP was siding with the chiefs by tolerating their abuses. In a developmental and economical perspective, Keen (2005: 14) also mentions how the SLPP party did little to:

"Reverse the perception that infrastructure and education in the north had been neglected under colonial rule, when Christian missions had focused on the south and when export-led growth was concentrated on districts around the rail-line to the south-east".

These factors appear to be central in constituting APC's political platform, which was mainly supported by Temne and Crios[30]. This is evident when looking at the ethnic configuration of the APC cabinet once in power. By 1973, 41.1 percent of the APC Cabinet was Temnes while only 12.5 percent were Mendes. (Kandeh 1993: 92)

## 5.2 The Role of the Paramount Chiefs in 1967 Elections

In 1967, national elections were held with APC as the winner. However, political turmoil including a military coup had the effects that it was only by 1968 that the APC could start engaging its work as the *de jure* and *de facto* government in power (Fischer (1967). For the purpose of this thesis, rather than going into a detailed account of these political events and military coups[31], it is particularly relevant to explore the role of the Paramount Chiefs in the national elections as well as in relation to the APC governments' subsequent One Party Constitution.

### *The Dowe-Edwin Commission and the National Reformation Council*

As a result of the political and military turmoil surrounding the national elections two commissions were established, which investigated the legality of declaring the APC as the winning party of the elections and instating Siaka Stevens as Prime Minister. These commissions were: The Dove-Edwin Commission and the National Reformation

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[30] Another indication of the north-south divide is one of Siaka Steven's first actions when he became Prime Minister. The rail-way line running through the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone, which constituted the dominant infrastructural source of southern development (See map in Figure 5) was closed down by Siaka Stevens. Thus, in order to travel from Freetown to e.g. Kono traders had to move through the heartlands of APC power base in the North, and thereby strengthening Temne traders' influence. (Keen 2005: 15)

[31] For a detailed account of the events during the 1967 elections, see Allen (1968), Bantu (1993), and Fischer (1967).

Councils White Paper. The Dowe-Edwin Commission stressed that the conduct of the elections had been in accordance with the 1961 Constitution of Sierra Leone and approved the election results. The National Reformation Council, however, maintained that the conduct of the elections was faulty, and the real winner was in fact the SLPP. The central issue these commissions refer to in the advancement of their positions is whether it was in accordance with the Sierra Leone Constitution, that the Paramount Chieftaincy elections for the House of Representatives had not been finalized before the APC was announced as the new government. As the discussion below will indicates, these commissions show the importance and influential position of Paramount Chiefs within the framework of national and formal politics and that the chiefs have strong leanings towards the SLPP making it difficult for the APC to win the elections through constitutional means.

As is evident from several paragraphs[32] in the Dove-Edwin Commission, it clearly sides with the APC stating that it was right to appoint Stevens before the election of the Paramount Chiefs (Extracts presented in Daramy 1999). The central argument of the Dove-Edwin Commission is that Paramount Chiefs should follow the line of the Government in power and not side with a political party. Said in other words, the Paramount Chiefs are not allowed to vote in the House of Representatives on which party should be elected as the government.

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[32] 104. In not waiting for the result of the Paramount Chiefs elections before acting under his powers the Governor-General, Speaker Sir Henry, was manifestly right.

108. We think the Governor-General was right. The result of the Paramount Chiefs Elections would not have helped him at all in coming to his decision. The most those Elections would reveal is that twelve Paramount Chiefs had been elected, each for his own District and nothing to do with the Parties.

111. We repeat, no Paramount Chief could change his place as a representative of his District to say he is a Paramount Chief S.L.P.P Member or A.P.C. He cannot be any more than an Independent with leanings towards the Government in power.

The National Reformation Council appears to be of a different opinion as several extracts are evidence of (National Reformation Council; Extracts presented in Daramy 1999: 58-59): As these extracts[33] show, in contrast to the Dove-Edwin Commission, the National Reformation Council argues that the election of Siaka Stevens was faulty, since the Paramount Chiefs' Election had not been finalized before his appointment. As the National Reformation Council's White Paper in paragraph 29 (See footnote below), it should be possible for the Paramount Chiefs to support the party of their choice since the Constitution of Sierra Leone manifests the people's freedom of association. Thus, by not allowing the Paramount Chief election to be finalized before announcing APC as the winner it is the view of the National Reformation Council that this decision was based on an unsound foundation, since the voices of the Paramount Chiefs were not heard.

Implicit in these arguments, it is clearly expected that the Paramount Chiefs would have voted for the SLPP. Prior to the official declaration of the election results several of the Paramount Chiefs running to be elected had signed documents stating that if they became elected they would only support an SLPP government (Allen 1968: 20).

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[33] 27. The National Reformation Council does not agree with the conclusions reached by the commission as regards the position of Paramount Chiefs in the House of Representatives. It is the view of the National Reformation Council that, since the House of Representatives consists of Ordinary as well as Paramount Chief Members, no House of Representatives can be legally constituted before the elections of both categories of Members have been duly concluded in accordance with section 30 of the constitution.

29. Also, although as a matter of practice and expediency, Paramount Chief Members may be expected to throw their lot in with the party in power, it is legally possible, having regard to the entrenched provisions of the Constitution with regard to freedom of association, for such members to exercise their right to support any political party of their choice.

35. Regrettably, the Governor-General in appointing the Prime Minister on the 21st day of March, 1967, never took notice of a single Paramount Chief Member… In this respect the National Reformation Council cannot accept this part of the Report.

From this perspective, it appears to have been a necessity for the APC to exclude the Paramount Chiefs from the voting puzzle in order to size power. This is also evident from the House of Representative Debates, where the representation of Paramount Chiefs had been a heated topic for years. As Siaka Stevens stressed in a debate taking Place in the House of Representatives[34] in 1962, the position of the Paramount Chiefs in the House of Representatives eschews the balance of votes. This is due to the fact that even though the Paramount Chiefs ought to be independent, or so to say back-benchers, they are dependent on the "good-will" of both the party in power and the Ministry of Internal Affairs why they will always vote in favor of the government party, the SLPP.

### APC One-Party Constitution

As the previous analysis has shown, the APC party's power base rested on anti-chiefs sentiments and had long promulgated that the role of the chiefs in the House of Representatives was undemocratic and should be changed. However, an interesting twist in APC's stand towards the chiefs once in power manifests the centrality of the Chiefs in the formal sphere of politics. Once in power, the APC took several measures to insure the loyalty of the chiefs in the House of Representatives. In the APC government's One-Party Constitution No. 12 implemented in 1978, it was stated that for the Paramount Chief to be elected for Parliament, they should be a member of the APC – the APC being the only recognized political party[35]. This not only contradicts the criticism Siaka Stevens himself presented in the House of Representatives in 1962 it

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[34] "If I was a Paramount Chief and I knew that Paramount Chiefs were under the Ministry of Internal Affairs I would be very careful not to do anything that would be prejudicial to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I can see that on the Government side you have twenty-four Ministers including junior Ministers. Out of a total of sixty-four Members of Parliament there are about nineteen backbenchers. In other words, there are more officers on that side than there are men. In ordinary democratic institutions you should have more men than officers. It will be very difficult sometimes for Members to exercise the right which they have as vigorously as they ought to do". (The Emergency Bill 13th of January, 1962: 532-533)

[35] This also applied to the army (Keen 2005: 16).

also collides with paragraph 111 of the Dove-Edwin Commission (presented in footnote 30 above) which was the justifying source of APC's rise to government power.

Thus, once in power the APC appeared to take a quite different stand towards the chiefs than when they were in opposition. As will be substantiated in more detail below, the APC opted for a strategy of seizing control over the chiefs based on forceful and coercive means[36].

**5.3 APC Government-Chieftaincy Nexus: Force, Manipulation and Civil War**

The following section explores the views of the Paramount Chiefs and Chief Administrators interviewed on the characteristics of the APC-Chieftaincy power nexus and its implications for conflict-creating scenarios. What the interviewees consensually argued was that the APC manipulated and interfered grossly in the elections of the Paramount Chiefs. At times, the APC imposed unpopular candidates and candidates not descending from ruling houses. Further, the Paramount Chiefs and Chief Administrators argued that these events should be understood as one of the important root-causes leading to the civil war. As the subsequent section also shows, these views and perspectives are not very central in the academic community's dominant discourse on the extent to which the Chieftaincy can be linked to the root causes leading to the civil war. Though the findings of the thesis do not decisively present a rival explanation to the dominant understanding within the academic

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[36] An important clue indicating the importance of the chiefs in Sierra Leone anno 1968 can be derived from the findings of Cartwright's own field work conducted this same year. Based on his surveys he found that 42 percent of his respondents considered the Paramount Chief to be the most important local authority figure in terms of initiating local projects, whereas 1 percent mentioned the local MP. Further, 47 percent of his respondents indicated that they would contact the National Government through the Paramount Chief while only 9 percent would direct this contact through the local MP (Cartwright 1978: 126).

community it does present an understanding of some of the textures in the events leading to the civil war, which few scholars have paid sufficient attention to.

### *Paramount Chiefs on APC Manipulations in Chieftaincy Elections*

During the interviews with the Paramount Chiefs the resonance around the arguments that APC's manipulation in the conduct of the Paramount Chieftaincy elections, interestingly came out of a set of questions not directly focusing on this issue. Thus, the chiefs were not encouraged to answer in a certain manner. In fact, all of the Paramount Chiefs interviewed were asked about the role of the Chieftaincy in the events leading to the civil war, and whether or not chieftaincy practices had in fact been generating conflict. Interestingly, all the Paramount Chiefs said that the Chieftaincy had indeed been a part of the problems leading to the civil war (Interviewees: 5, 6, 10, 11, 12). They, however, also stressed that the predominant reason why was connected to specific political practices, taking place in the late 1960s. As they consensually emphasized, the late 1960s was a point in time and the commencement of an era where government interfered in Chieftaincy practices, which had devastating effects as the civil war is an evidence of. Thus, even though none of the Paramount Chiefs or Chief Administrators specifically connects these practices to the APC, since they all argued it was the workings of the government of the late 1960s and on-wards, it can be deduced that they are implicitly inferring to the APC.

When asked to elaborate on what kind of interferences that was taking place, the Paramount Chiefs interviewed consensually answered that the government interfered in the elections of the Paramount Chiefs. In their perspective, it appeared to be one of the key objectives of the governments to install chiefs whose loyalties and accountability resided with the government.

An example of how these concerns were illusively expressed is an interview with the Paramount Chief of Pendembu (Interviewee 10). He made the following utterance in a discussion on political interferences in Paramount Chieftaincy elections:

> "That was going on before the war. Yeah. There was some political influence. If a party in power supports a particular candidate for the chieftaincy, whether or not that person is voted in as the right candidate, there will always be some maneuvering by the political party in power to ensure that their own candidate is winning, being elected as Paramount Chief […] That time before the war, I witnessed that, I witnessed that. I was a teacher here before the war, and I was here when the last chief before me was elected, and other chiefs even before him. In other areas not only here (there was) much of political influence. The central government (APC) was seriously and grossly interfering in the election of Paramount Chiefs. You know, to the dissatisfaction of the people in the chiefdom".

The Paramount Chiefs interviewed also stressed that the imposed rulers did not know how to rule. Rather than ruling in the interest of their subjects, these imposed chiefs ruled in the interest of themselves and the central government, the APC. What was also highlighted as a significant cause of conflict-creation was how many of the imposed Paramount Chiefs did not descent from within one of the particular Chiefdom's ruling houses. The Paramount Chiefs' lack of lineage was discussed as one of the most important reasons why the chiefs were not accepted by the populace and why people revolted against their authority. This view was vividly expressed by Paramount Chief Kangbai (Interviewee 6):

> "Previously, before 1961, there were chieftaincy houses. Nobody could contest to become Paramount Chief unless one belonged to a ruling house. But after 1961, as we went along the line, there were a lot of political interferences in the chieftaincy system. Because some governments said, if they elected candidates of their choice to become Paramount Chiefs, they would be able to influence the people when it comes to election times. That was why we were getting bad chiefs […] It was very bad for the chieftaincy. Because of the tendency that you may elect somebody the people would not want".

In this paragraph, Paramount Chief Kangbai touches on a very important issue. He discusses how one of the governments' incentives for interfering in the Paramount Chief elections was for them to install chiefs who in turn would rally and influence the populace in their favour when it came to the national elections. This issue about the imposed candidates not descending from ruling houses appeared throughout the interviews as being one of the main causes of concerns. In similar tones as Paramount Chief Kangbai, the Paramount Chief of Pendembu (Interviewee 10) discussed how:

> "The government by then, before the war, was imposing some candidates on them. Some in fact did not belong to ruling houses, you know. That was happening anyway. And those were some of the causes of the war, though there were a lot of other factors, you know. […] Definitely some ruling houses were being manufactured by the central government. And that is one of the factors that even made some, the institution you know, to go down the drain. But as I said, chieftaincy is hereditary. It's a hereditary something. But where somebody does not belong to a ruling house and he is imposing, he is manufacturing that house, imposes on people. At the end of the day it will lead to chaos, those were some of the factors (leading to the war)".

In my interviews with the Paramount Chiefs, there is a strong resonance around the arguments that APC interfered in the Paramount Chieftaincy elections, manufactured ruling houses, and that these practices can be understood as an underlying cause of the civil war. This was because the imposed chiefs were not accepted by the populace, since not descending from ruling houses and ruled in favour of their own and the APC government's interests. This same view echoes through the SLPPs post-war political discourse on the chiefs and the civil war. As a contribution to the SLPPs national symposium (Government of Sierra Leone 2003) mentions:

> "Experience in the past showed that governments interfered with the elections of Paramount Chiefs. People were imposed on some chiefdoms as Paramount Chiefs who did not hail from recognized Ruling Houses, and at times unpopular candidates hailing from recognized Ruling Houses were also imposed. To forestall this bad practice, the Ministry working jointly with the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme produced a Code of Practice for Chiefdom Administration, which was submitted to be approved by the cabinet. The Code

of Practice entails modalities for the conduct of Paramount Chief Elections. It is clearly stated in the Code that Paramount Chieftaincy elections are a traditional election and that the election of a Paramount Chief is the responsibility of the Chiefdom people, through the Chiefdom Councilors and not that of Government or Political Parties or outside parties. Government has no candidate and Political Parties must refrain from interfering".

This paragraph substantiates the view-points of the interviewed Paramount Chiefs. As the Symposium problematizes past governments interfered in the elections of Paramount Chiefs by imposing candidates who did not descent from Ruling Houses or were not favored by the Chiefdom's population. Thus, there exists consensus amongst the Paramount Chiefs interview and the SLPP in relation to the intervention of the APC in the elections of Paramount Chiefs.


### Chief Administrators on APC Manipulations in Chieftaincy Elections

As discussed in Chapter 3 on methodology, the views of the Chief Administrators whom I interviewed and complementary information from secondary sources has been important, since the Paramount Chiefs and the SLPP could possibly be inclined to deny any explanations linking the chieftaincy's authority *per se* to the civil war. It is therefore valuable information that all of the Chief Administrators interviewed argued that APC interference in Paramount Chieftaincy elections did in fact take place, and that it was an important reason why the chieftaincy can be linked to some of the root causes leading to the civil war. The Chief Administrator of Bo District Council especially captured this scenario in a quite detailed and complex manner. As the Chief Administrator (Interviewee 3) indicated:

"Before independence, even after independence, Paramount Chieftaincy was purely free from political interference. The British for example allowed the people to select their own ruler without interference. But after independence, especially after 1967, you had a lot of political interference in Paramount Chieftaincy elections. Because the government, the parties, when the political parties were struggling for power they used to (try and get) the support of

Paramount Chiefs because in those days the Paramount Chiefs had great powers over his citizens. More or less he was the conscious keeper of all the people under him. So the politicians for example went through the Paramount Chief to be able to capture the votes of the chiefdom people [...] It is dangerous, very dangerous. In fact that is what has eroded the powers of the Paramount Chiefs. Now they carry not much respect [...] because you know, party A and party B are contesting to win election to form a government. And they find in the chiefdom the Paramount Chief as a powerful person who could control the consciousness of his citizens, of his people. So they try to get the Paramount Chiefs' opinion. I mean to buy his support. By buying the support of the Paramount Chief, (what happens), party A that has bought the support of the Paramount Chief, now it happens that party B wins the elections. They are going to victimize this Paramount Chief who was supporting party A that has lost".

As stressed by this Chief Administrator the political parties try to influence the Paramount Chiefs and their elections, because the chiefs are the conscious keeper of their people. Thus in order for the politicians to rally support in the local arena they need to be on good terms with or have control over the Paramount Chiefs. However, Bangali also touched upon another important issue. If the Paramount Chiefs do not side with the winning party they might subsequently be victimized by the new party in power. Thus, there appears to be consensus between the interviewed Paramount Chiefs and Chief Administrators, which, as noted in the methodological chapter, is an important fact in terms of the validity of these statements.

A number of secondary sources also support the views presented by the Paramount Chiefs and the Chief Administrators on APC manipulation and interference in Chieftaincy business. They, however, do not make the link, as the interviewee do, to the events leading to the civil war. Keen (2005: 16) mentions how the APC would often support the ruling houses whose candidates had not succeeded in being nominated as Paramount Chiefs and were in opposition to the SLPP ruling houses, a tactic which created conflict between opposing ruling houses and violence within the chiefdoms.

These conflict scenarios became ever more magnified once the APC government introduced the one party state, since it had the effect that political contestation was moved from the national level to the chiefdom level (Keen 2005: 18). Another measure of interference in the power of the chieftaincy is highlighted by West Africa Magazine, which further support the view-points of the interviewed. As they write:

> "Following the assumption of power by the APC, in April 1968, those chiefs who had been staunch supporters of the SLPP government and who had not switched allegiance immediately came under mounting pressure from both the APC government and their own intra-chiefdom opposition elements. Consequently, inquiries were commissioned to look into the conduct of the "rebellious" chiefs. Nine Paramount Chiefs, all of whom had been staunch supporters of the former SLPP government were deposed." (West Africa November 1985: 2367)

An interesting observation in relation to the other findings presented in the thesis is that among these APC disposed chiefs were Paramount Chief Madam Ella Koblo Gulama and Bai Sebora Yumkella of Samu Chiefdom. As evident from the House of Representative Debates analysed in Chapter 4 Gulama took a very critical stand towards the APC. At the same time she openly declared in the discussion on the Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom in 1962, that the only government she wished to follow was the SLPP. The same applies to Paramount Chief Yumkella, who following the riots in the North had been supported by Margai and sided with the SLPP. While the Paramount Chief of the other ruling house following these events had sided with the APC. However, in 1963, he and his family were banished by Margai's government and subsequently in 1968, when the APC came to power, Paramount Chief Bai Sebora Yumkella, was disposed.

### Academic Community on Chieftaincy and Civil War

Though several studies have discussed the corrupt practices of past government, this focus on linking political interferences in Paramount Chief Elections with the events leading to the civil war has by and large astonishingly been neglected in most studies examining the root causes leading to the civil war. Fanthorp, who is the most well-know scholar writing on the Sierra Leonean Chieftaincy and conflict-creation, appears to be aware of the possibility that APC manipulated the Paramount Chieftaincy elections. However, throughout his writings the following lines are the only attention he really directs towards this issue. As Fanthorp mentions:

> "It is also noteworthy that attempts by the APC regime to impose paramount chiefship candidates of his own choosing to the Chiefdom Councils, a strategy for controlling networks of access to mineral deposits and other resources often met with fierce and protracted local resistance". ( Fanthorp 2001: 383)

However, a point of note is how he does present some specific links between these political interferences and modes and resistance to the civil war. The dominant argument in the academic community[37] portrays the Chieftaincy in somewhat broad terms as a root cause to the civil war. As Richard Fanthorp (2001) argues the original source of the destructive behaviour leading to the civil war was intimately linked to the legacy of the colonial system of native administration, which was manifested through the Chieftaincy (2001: 372). As Fanthorp (2001: 386) writes "localizing techniques of rural sociality are no longer inclusive but exclusionary". In several perspectives these views are likewise supported by the dominant scholar's writing on the Sierra Leonean civil war, Paul Richards (2005: 588), who is arguing how:

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[37] It is interesting to notice how the writings on Sierra Leone by the academic community are dominated by only a few researchers and writers. What is more, looking at who has been involved in many of the elaborated research projects and consultations for the dominant bilateral institutions it is the same researchers as those dominating the academic community on Sierra Leone. What this could imply is that the discourse within the international community is generated from a rather small and enclosed community.

"Non-elite families do not enjoy secure land, labour or marital rights. Many young people view local systems of land tenure and marriage payments as instruments of chiefly exploitation."

These structures of traditional elite exclusion and exploitation are, in the view of Fanthorp (2005: 585), created and maintained to keep the rural poor in poverty and dependence relationship with the chiefs. This has generated deeply rooted structures of conflict in the rural areas. Fanthorp's and Richard's shared emphasis on the heavy fining of especially youths via the local courts seems to be one of the most dominant viewpoints in studies linking the Chieftaincy to the root causes of the civil war. As Jackson in agreement with Richard Fanthorp argues:

"One of the main disaffections of those youths who joined the RUF was connected to the power of chiefs to levy arbitrary fines on those refusing to comply with the chiefs' wishes". (Jackson 2005: 54)

Thus, the dominant discourse within the international and academic community portrays the Chieftaincy in terms of some exclusionary and exploiting features. These features are portrayed as a reason why so many people, especially young people, before the war felt disgruntled, excluded, and experienced other feelings of grievances. The Chieftaincy as a historical institution is thus understood as being an indirect cause leading to the civil war.

The Paramount Chiefs interviewed were also asked whether heavy fining and community labour were used by the chiefs and could have had an effect on the events leading to the war. They were all quite reluctant to commit to this interpretation. As they indicated although there were a lot of people saying that they did not sense it themselves. As the Acting Paramount Chief of Kailahun Chiefdom (Interviewee 11) noted some chiefs might be using extra fines, this was, however, used as a strategy to enable people to settle their disputes amongst themselves. The Paramount Chiefs

interviewed were, thus, very hesitant to fully commit to the argument that the Chieftaincy's authority is conflict-creating as a general phenomenon.

However, the Chief Administrators interviewed agreed that besides of the problem with the fabricated ruling houses and the intervention and manipulation with the Paramount Chieftaincy elections, the Chieftaincy could indeed be understood as a conflict-creating institution on similar terms as the dominant discourse within the academic community advanced, this being predominantly through the use of heavy fines *via* the local courts (Interviewee: 4, 9, 7)

However, two interesting surveys present some findings, which can be interpreted to support the argument that the interference of the APC in the Paramount Chieftaincy elections is an important reason why people experienced grievances and became disgruntled towards their chiefs. The two surveys - the IRCBP 2007 survey and Edward Sawyer's field work - present post-war indicators from the Kenema district, which is situated in the eastern areas where the conflict intensity during the war was the highest (Bellows and Miguel 2006) (See Appendix 5). A set of interesting findings is presented in these surveys in relation to the chiefs as being conflict-generating. Edward Sawyer's (2008) field work from Kenema district shows that after the war "70 percent said that their section chief was 'very good' at resolving conflict (with not one person stating that he was 'poor')" (Sawyer 2008: 400). This is a remarkably high percent of respondents being content with their section chief, when reflected in the civil war explanation arguing that the chieftaincy as a historical institution is generating grievances and conflict. This is especially noteworthy given the fact that the Eastern Region was the district where the chiefs were targeted the hardest during the civil war. This is evident from UN's Post-War Indicators Report (UN April 2003) (See Appendix 3). Another survey showing some similar findings is the 2007 IRCBP survey. It

shows how in Kenema district 46 percent of the respondent is "Trusting local court officials" (IRCBP 2007). Though this last percentage might not appear high it is noteworthy that the average mean of: "Trust in local court officials" based on all the 13 districts in Sierra Leone is 38.46 percent (See Appendix 6). Thus, despite of the fact that according to the conflict victimization index Kenema was one of the districts experiencing most conflicts, the percentage of trust in the local court officials after the war is higher than the average mean. Further, the vast majority perceives their section chiefs as good in resolving conflict. Thus, the puzzle posed here is: how can it be that the one district where the chiefs were especially targeted during the war and perceived to be causing grievances after the war is the district in Sierra Leone where people have the strongest faith in their chiefs and court officials?

Sawyer presents a tentative suggestion, which could be seen to support the understanding that APC interference in the conduct of the Paramount Chiefs was an important reason why chiefs were ruling badly, rather than understanding the chiefs as a conflict-generating institution at a more general level. As Sawyer (2008) mentions:

> "Since the return of peace, new and often younger individuals have filled the shoes of the former chiefs who didn't survive the conflict, and are generally seen as being a marked improvement of their predecessors".

As discussed earlier, only 36 percent of the Paramount Chieftaincy positions were filled after the war. However, the SLPP made it a key priority to revitalize the chieftaincy system, as the following chapter will elaborate on. As indicated by the extract from the National Symposium presented above, this was done in terms of a code of conduct highlighting that the post-war elections of the chiefs should be free of political interference and based on the population's wishes.

Thus, as indicated by the interviews and the secondary sources including the surveys the intervention in the Chieftaincy Elections can thus indirectly be understood as the

reason why the war broke out. It is, however, not enough to say that this is the only way that the chiefs can be linked to the civil war. As the Chief Administrators interviewed emphasized the intervention in the Chieftaincy Elections is an important reason for the civil war, however, not the only reasons since chieftaincy practices in general were creating grievances.

**5.4 Power-Conflict Perspective**

Summing up on the strategies of control pursued by the APC towards the chiefs, the first dimension to emphasize is that, even though APC's constituency rested on anti-chiefs sentiments, once in power APC focused on ensuring the loyalty of the chiefs in the formal and informal spheres of politics. This indicates the importance of this traditional institution in Sierra Leonean politics. In the formal sphere the APC did this through their One Party Constitution, which forced the chief who wanted to be elected for Parliament to be part of the APC. In the informal sphere, as the interviews and secondary sources above note, the APC interfered in the elections and disposed SLPP favoring chiefs. Thus, the APC aimed at controlling the intermediary sphere of chiefs through predominately coercive and forceful means. However, these power tactics were used as a way of creating a base of loyal intermediaries. Thus, through coercive and manipulative means, the APC, like the SLPP, aimed at creating a government-chieftaincy nexus based on accountability and reciprocity by instating loyal intermediaries[38].

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[38] Cartwright presents an analysis of the strategies pursued by the SLPP and the APC towards the chiefs, which is much in line with the findings of this thesis so far. Cartwright mentions there are three different strategies open to a political leader in relation to the chiefs. *Firstly*, the leader can accept the chieftaincy institution and offer substantial support to insure their upward loyalty. *Secondly,* the political leader can support the institution of the chieftaincy, while at the same time try to fill the positions of the chiefs with individuals who are loyal to the party in power. *Thirdly,* the leader can opt for completely bypassing the chiefs, by creating alternative links to rural intermediaries. As Cartwright stresses the SLPP follows the first strategy. The APC on the other hand, though when in opposition their discourse could be understood as an advocacy of bypassing the chieftaincy as an institution, once in power they moved to the second strategy of supporting the chieftaincy while at the same

However, the findings of the thesis also suggest that APC's strategy towards the chieftaincy had profound implications, which can be understood as some of the root causes leading to the civil war - a perspective which has not been given much attention within the academic community's dominant discourse.

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time trying to instate its own loyal chiefs (Cartwright 1978: 132). These are the same findings that this thesis has come up with.

# Chapter 6: Role of the Chieftaincy in Post-War Sierra Leone

This chapter has two main objectives. Firstly, it explores the position of the SLPP government towards the Chieftaincy in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. The findings of this analysis show that the SLPP gave priority to rehabilitate the Chieftaincy, whose authority had almost perished during the events of the war, and establish the type of government-chieftaincy nexus, which existed when the SLPP was in power up until 1967. Secondly, the chapter examines the *de jure* and *de facto* impacts on the chieftaincy of the Local Government Act (LGA) and discusses what kind of conflict scenarios that would be likely to occur within this new administrative structure of local authority and power. The findings of this analysis are two-fold. On the one hand, it is found that power has not been decentralized to the Local District Councils (LDC) to the extent that the LGA indicated as its objective. On the other hand, the impact of the LGA appears to have a negative impact on especially the poorer chiefdoms. The chapter suggests that this could have the implication that misuse of the local courts re-occurs as an alternative source of income for the chiefs, thus, re-creating the type of conflict, which the dominant discourse within the academic community argues was a root cause leading to the civil war.

The conclusions of this chapter are predominantly based on an analysis of the Local Government Act of 2004 together with interviews with Paramount Chiefs and the Chief Administrators in the Local District Councils carried out in the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone.

## 6.1 Post-War Rehabilitation of the Chieftaincy

The following sections show that despite of a shared view within the academic community on the chiefs as being conflict-creating, the SLPP, which regained the government power in 1996, empowered and rehabilitated the institution of the chieftaincy after the war. Also, the political strategies pursued by the SLPP Government in the immediate aftermath of the civil war took a much more empowering stand towards the traditional rulers' authority than the recommendations of consultation processes carried out by key organisations of the international community in relation to the conceptualization of the LGA. Figure 8 below presents the different dimensions of empowerment which the following sections will elaborate on.

**Figure 8: SLPP Post-War Rehabilitation and Empowerment of the Paramount Chiefs**

| Issues | Empowerment |
| --- | --- |
| Fourth State of the Nation Symposium | Discursively stressing the important of the chiefs. |
| Paramount Chieftaincy Elections | Filled the vacant Paramount Chieftaincy positions. Before election process only 36 % of positions filled. Upon completion only two seats out of 149 positions were still vacant. |
| Election Procedures for Local Court Presidents | Empowered the Chiefs to nominate the Courts' Presidents. |
| Charles Margai's Exit of the SLPP | Margai wanted to democratize the Paramount Chieftaincy Elections. Top members and chiefs worked against him, forcing him to leave the SLPP. |
| UNDP Consultation on Local Government Act | Consultation Process recommended that Paramount Chiefs should not be represented in the Local District Councils. Government went against these recommendations and granted the chiefs representation. |

Source: Author's own construction

There are several incidents showing that the SLPP Government perceived the restoration of the authority of the chieftaincy to be one of the most pressuring tasks at the end of the war. This viewpoint is especially significant in the 'Fourth State of the

Nation Symposium' document printed immediate after the war where the SLPP government states: "We are all aware of the importance of the Chieftaincy and the vital role Paramount Chiefs play in the maintenance of Law and Order"; and "Paramount Chieftaincy is a highly honored and respected institution in this country". (Government of Sierra Leone 2002)

Further, by 2002, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development engaged itself in various activities aimed at restoring authority, law and order throughout Sierra Leone. Through various initiatives these programmes created a *de facto* post-war re-empowerment of the Chieftaincy. One of the first initiatives by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development and the National Election Commission was to facilitate elections for the vacant Paramount Chief positions[39]. As discussed in the introduction only 36% of the Paramount Chief positions were filled when the war came to an end. However, upon completion of this election process only 2 seats of a total of 149 were yet to be filled[40]. (UNAMISIL April 2003: 4)

Another important task taken up by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development after the war was the establishment of appointment procedures for the Local Court Chairmen in the 149 chiefdoms. The Local Court Chairman has a quite important and influential position in the chiefdoms being the head of the Chiefdom Council and the responsible authority for maintaining law and order in the chiefdoms via the local courts. As the Symposium Document (Government of Sierra Leone 2002) indicates:

> "The tenure of office of these Chairmen has expired and the Ministry has requested the newly elected Paramount Chiefs in the affected Chiefdoms, in

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[39] According to the Paramount Chief of Pendembu (Interviewee 10) the undertaking of this election process had in contradiction to past elections, been quite cordial and without much political interference.
[40] This means 97% of the Paramount Chief positions were filled upon completion of the election process.

consultation with the Chiefdom committees, to submit nominees to the Ministry for consideration and subsequent appointment as Court Chairman".

As it is stated here, even though the Ministry makes the final approval of the Court Chairman, for a Court Chairman to be elected in the first place he has to be nominated by the Paramount Chief. In the light of the academic community's view on the role of the chief in conflict-creation this is quite a controversial act, considering how the dominant discourse argues that one of the root causes to the civil war was the Paramount Chiefs' fraudulent use of the local courts for personal benefits. Letting the Paramount Chiefs appoint the Local Court Chairmen would, in theory, make it more viable for the chiefs to continue such dubious practices by nominating someone whom they might be able to control, influence, have relations with, or intimidate in order to use the courts as an income generating institution.


### Charles Margai's SLPP Exit - The formation of the PMDC

An additional interesting indication of the continuance of the SLPP-Chieftaincy consensus based power nexus is evident from an examination of Charles Margai's exit of the SLPP. My interpretation of this incident is based on the field work conducted in south-eastern Sierra Leone and suggests that the role of the chiefs was one of the conflicting political issues that stood between the SLPP and Charles Margai. Before, only very few studies have recognized this important aspect of Charles Margai's exit of the SLPP. In 2007 Charles Margai subsequently forms the political party 'Peoples Movement for Democratic Change' (PMDC). This meant the end of an era where the Margai family had been some of the most influential members of the SLPP. From the interviews conducted it appears that Charles Margai was less supportive towards the Chieftaincy than his uncles, Milton and Albert Margai, both former prime ministers, and that this was an important reason why he left the SLPP to form the PMDC.

During the interviews with the Paramount Chiefs and Chief Administrators, I asked them to comment on Charles Margai's position on the Chieftaincy, and to the extent in which they felt this was connected to his exit of the SLPP. The dominant viewpoint, which emerged, was that Charles Margai wanted to "over-democratize" the Chieftaincy by conducting Paramount Chief elections every five year. For example the Chief Administrator of Bo Local District Council (Interviewee 7) noted:

> "He made the utterance, in 2003. Actually I was attending the meeting where he made that utterance. If he became president of Sierra Leone he would democratize, over-democratize, Paramount Chieftaincy Election. Even limit their years of office to five years or ten years. I think that offended a lot of Paramount Chiefs […] That was why they tried to discourage him, even embarrass him, and then he got annoyed, (Laughs) and then broke away and established his own party (this being the PMDC). And the party grew rapid. Within few months the party got strong support from here and there".

Margai's suggestion to limit the office of the chiefs to five-ten years apparently offended them and was understood as a direct challenge towards their authority. Another perspective which surfaced during the interviews was that Margai took this oppositional stand towards the chiefs in order to rally support amongst the younger voters. As Acting Paramount Chief of Kailahun Chiefdom (Interviewee 11) noted:

> "He wanted to get more people on his site (laughs) so that every 5 years, they would do elections for Paramount Chiefs, but people came against it. […] He wanted to convince the youth that every 5 year there should be elections for Paramount Chiefs, which should bring chaos in to the country. People found it not fit".

The Paramount Chiefs oppositional stand towards the idea of democratizing the Chieftaincy appears to have been an important battle ground for years. As Paramount Chief, Madam Ella Koblo Gulama for example stated in a 1962 debate (Disturbances in Samu Chiefdom 1962: 84) in the House of Representatives:

> "We will never follow anybody who suggests to any Prime Minister and his colleagues in the Cabinet that the rule of Paramount Chiefs should be changed and that we should be considered Presidents".

However, as the interviewee argued, the dominant SLPP body went against Margai's position on the chiefs, which indicates another dimension in the continuance of the SLPP-chieftaincy nexus, seeing how the SLPP exercised downward obligations towards the chiefs in terms of protecting an essential traditional dimension of their authority.

### Consultation on the Local Government Act

Other incidents showing a continued SLPP empowerment of the chiefs can be found in the outcomes of a 2003 UNDP financed consultation process for the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. The aim of the consultation process was to involve public opinion on how the future of local government should be constructed (Jackson 2005: 52). The consultation team presented one overall recommendation in relation to the Chieftaincy: In the representative structure of the new Local District Councils, which were soon to be set up, there should *not* be any seats reserved for Paramount Chiefs[41].  However, the government team in charge of drafting what should become the 'Local Government Act 2004' according to Jackson (2005) rejected this as well as a number of other suggestions by the consultation team. In fact, there was not a single district that voted against Paramount Chiefs being represented in the Local Councils. On the contrary several districts wanted to grant the chiefs even more representation. However, in this perspective it should be noted that the chiefs themselves participated in the voting process (Jackson 2005: 52).

The SLPP government thus favored a strengthened Chieftaincy, in spite of the dominant viewpoint within the international community that it is a conflict-generating

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[41] This is according to Jackson (2005: 52): "A reflection of widespread hostility to traditional leaders, especially among more educated citizens".

institution, and a historical root cause to the civil war (Fanthorp 2001, 2005; Richards 1996).

## 6.2 *De Jure* Perspectives on the Local Government Act

This section explores the *de jure* impact on the Chieftaincy's authority brought about by the post-war decentralization process. On the 24ᵗʰ of February 2004, the Local Government Act was signed by President Alhaji Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP.  The front-cover presents the purpose of the Act (LGA 2004: 1) as:

> "Being an Act to consolidate with amendments, the law on local government, and to provide for the decentralisation and devolution of functions, powers and services to local councils and for other matters connected therewith".

The main aims and objectives of the LGA are to set up LDCs[42]  and to decentralize to them key functions which were previously the responsibility of the central government. As apparent from page 16 in the LGA, the impact on the Chieftaincy appears to be quite extensive at several levels:

> "A local Council shall be the highest political authority in the locality and shall have legislative and executive powers to be exercised in accordance with this Act or any other enactment, and shall be responsible generally for promoting the development of the locality and the welfare of the people in the locality with the resources at its disposal and with such resources and capacity as it can mobilise from the central government and its agencies, national and international organisations, and the private sector. (LGA 2004: 16)

This extract shows how two main areas of power are assigned to the LDCs, which have a direct impact on the Chieftaincy. *Firstly*, the LDC is now the highest political authority in the chiefdoms. *Secondly*, the LDC now also has the chiefdom's resources at its

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[42] The District Council consists of a non partisan administration headed by the Chief Administrator who is the secretary of the Local District Council and head of the administration appointed by the Local District Council in consultation with the commission. The Council is a representative body made up of councilors who are elected within the Chiefdoms, each representing a Ward. (LGA 2004: 20 – Paragraph 31:1,2)

disposal[43] (LGA 2004: 16). As apparent from Figure 9 below, though the LDC receives different grants from central government, the post "Own Revenue Source", which is essentially income generated in the chiefdoms, is quite a significant post in the LDCs budget[44].

**Figure 9: Revenue Size of Local Councils in 2005/2006 - US$**
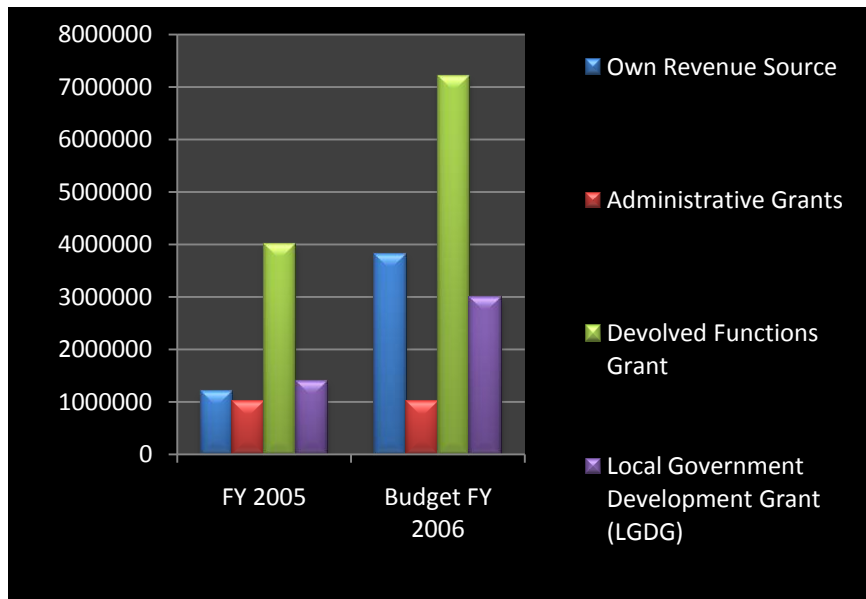


Source: Tommy, 2007

Even though the Chiefdom Council is entitled to a share of the revenues raised from local taxes and mining, and still is in charge of collecting these revenues, the Act states that it is within the jurisdiction of the LDC to determine the ratio to be divided between the LDC and Chiefdom Council (LGA 2004: 33). However, the Chiefdom Council is still responsible for carrying out functions, such as preventing offences in their area; enforcing by-laws; and hold land in trust for the chiefdom's people (LGA

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[43] Other central powers over the chiefdoms includes: the delegation functions to the Chiefdom Councils; approve the Chiefdom Council's annual budget; and overseeing the Chiefdom Council's performance and implementation of budgets. (LGA 2004: 16 - Section 2:h,i,j)

[44] These precepts generated in the chiefdoms cover percentages from local taxes; property rates; licenses; fees; and charges and shares of mining-revenues. (LGA 2004: 27)

2004: 19). Thus, the local court and other judicial issues are still under the jurisdiction of the chiefdom. However, the Local Council's jurisdiction does take a step into the domain of customary law, an area never charged by government or other political bodies before. As the Local Government Act reads:

> "A local council may, where it considers that a local custom or tradition impedes or acts as an obstacle to the development of the locality or obstructs the local council in its performance of its functions, consult the relevant traditional authority for the purpose of resolving the matter". (LGA 2004: 45-Paragraph 94:1)

In so doing the LDC has a customary law office, which shall oversee the functions of the chiefs and the Chiefdom Councils. Therefore, with the inception of the LGA in 2004, the LDC is now the *de jure* the highest political authority in the districts. The LDC has taken over many of the administrative duties of the Chiefdom Council, and most significantly, the LDC is now entitled to a large sum of the Chieftaincy's revenue base. Also, the LDC has the jurisdiction to intervene, or at least question, customary practices.

This picture was also presented in the interviews with the Chief Administrators. There was no doubt how they perceived the new *de jure* balance of power in local Sierra Leone government. As the Chief Administrator of Pujehun Local District Council (Interviewee 4) argued:

> "The Local Government Act 2004 gives more power to the council than to the chiefdom administration; and according to the act of 2004 it says the local council is the highest political body within the district, meaning the chairman and his team they are the political heads. We are the administrators […] because the 2004 (Local Government) Act supersedes the Chiefdom Administration Act."

**6.3 *De facto* Perspectives on the Local Government Act**

The following sections will explore how these *de jure* changes in the framework of local government are perceived by the key actors analysed in this thesis: the Paramount Chiefs and the Chief Administrators. The section thus aims at establishing a *de facto* perspective on the implications of the LGA. The discussion focuses on the two dominant issues that surfaced during the course of interviewing in the south-eastern parts of Sierra Leone, namely revenues and development grants. The following section will elaborate on each of these issues.

***Paramount Chiefs on Revenues***

Revenues were mentioned by all of the Paramount Chiefs interviewed as being the single most important LGA-factor having an impact on their power. What emerged as a similar picture for the three districts where interviews were conducted (Bo, Pujehun, and Kailahun) was that the revenue generated in the Chiefdoms were distributed in a 60/40 ratio, where the Chiefdom Council received the 60 percent and the Local District Council 40 percent. The following section will examine some extracts from the interviews, which represents the resonance in the interviews.

When asked whether the LDC undermined the Chieftaincy's authority the Paramount Chief of Pendembu (Interviewee 10) replied:

> Well, I don't want to say entirely it is undermining or not undermining the authority of the chiefs. The only thing is that there are some aspects of our own revenue sources that have been taken away from us. That is one of the disadvantages. But I don't want to use the word 'undermining'. But it has reduced our own economic or revenue base, because before the Local Council came in the chiefdoms, we were in control of revenue collection.

Several of the chiefs met also raised the concern that the limited amount of funding directed to the chiefdoms made it difficult to pay salaries for the chiefdom administration and fulfill the administrative duties (Interviewee: 10, 12, 11). Not

surprisingly it appeared to be the case that the extent of difficulties highlighted by the Paramount Chiefs corresponded to the availability of resources within the chiefdoms. While the Paramount Chiefs in Kailahun District (one of the poorest regions in Sierra Leone) found it very difficult to meet the criteria of paying their staff, the Paramount Chiefs of the much more resource rich districts of Pujehun and Bo were able to undertake the payments of salaries. Though the funds they received from the LDC was not always enough, they had alternative revenue bases enabling them to pay the chiefdom staff (Interviewee: 5, 6). An important point, which became clear traveling throughout the south-eastern Sierra Leone, is that even though the Paramount Chieftaincy is a powerful institution the material wealth of the chieftaincies varies significantly from chiefdom to chiefdom and region to region. Similarly, it appeared that the impact of the Local Government Act follows the same pattern. As Paramount Chief Kangbai (Interviewee 6) noted:

> "The Chieftaincy is weakened because of the resources that empower the chiefs to do their work. Some chiefs do not even have bicycles, I will not say Hondas[45]. Maybe out of every ten Paramount Chief there is only one that has a Vico[46]. Like in the whole of the Bo district where we have 15 Paramount Chiefs, only three of us have Vicos of our own. The rest uses public transport system, so they have to walk on foot to come to the nurse, (and the) lorry park to come to Bo".

In general there was a clear consensus amongst the chiefs that this new formula for dividing the resources generated within the chiefdom was cutting too deep into the chiefdom account. In their view, this is the most important aspect of the LGA in terms of undermining the powers of the chiefs[47].

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[45] Common expression used for motorbikes

[46] Common expression used for Vehicles

[47] An important issue pointed out by Jackson (2005: 54) is that there have been a number of reports on corruptive practices of the Chiefdom Councils. Since they are still collecting the local taxes, there have been several cases where the Chiefdom Council has reduced the number of actual tax payers in their report to the LDC, in order to keep a larger sum of the tax-revenues for themselves. Since there is not any official registration of taxpayers it is difficult for the LDC to monitor the actions of the Chiefdom Council.

*Chief Administrators on the LGA*

During Interviews with the Chief Administrators and other staff working in the Local District Councils the same problems were highlighted, as in the interviews with the Paramount Chiefs. As the interviewee argued, the Local District Councils were struggling financially. The Development Planning Officer, Julia Theresa Amara, in the Bo District Council stressed (Interviewee 3) that one of the biggest areas of confusion was who had the right to collect what kind of revenues. She also noted another aspect disempowering the LDCs. She pointed out that the financial support from the central government is very low. Consequently, the salaries in the LDCs are too low to attract qualified personnel. Further, qualified staffs often leave after short periods of time for better paid positions elsewhere. Further, most human resources are still placed in the central government while the LDCs are understaffed in terms of qualified personnel. As Amara mentioned: "The central government is not in favour of dissolving total power, only partial" (Interviewee 3). Amara's viewpoints were also central themes in the interviews with the Chief Administrators. As the Chief Administrator of the Bo Local District Council (Interviewee 7) argued:

> "The central government is not happy to devolve powers, and we have been struggling with that, since 2004. I mean you can understand why. The center does not want to lose power. When you send down power, you remain powerless. And that does not taste very well for them. In fact we came from a conference, about two weeks ago. We had a workshop in Freetown, at Bintumani where the Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government, and Community Development had to stand firm that within two month all the ministries that had not devolved should devolve straight away".

There is a clear consensus among the Chief Administrators and other staff interviewed in LDC that the structural foundation of LDCs is being undermined by the government, despite of the fact of what is mentioned and promised in the LGA. This dilemma is also

noted by Jackson in his discussion of the incentives of the Sierra Leonean government to implement the LGA. As he discusses, most donor agencies operating in Sierra Leone, like UNDP, DFID and the World Bank strongly encourage the decentralization of government powers. As Jackson notes:

> "Given the internal politics of the government in Freetown, it is difficult to say categorically that all officials were in favour of decentralisation. Officials certainly knew that this was a route to obtaining external funding. There may, therefore, have been an incentive for officials to 'say the right things' to external donors, particularly the World Bank and the UNDP". (Jackson 2005: 51)

Thus, from the views of the Chief Administrators and staff working in the LDC it appears that these perspectives described by Jackson in 2005, a year after the implementation of the LGA, are still much pertinent.

### Development Funds

The LDC's role in development activities was another area where all the interviews with the Paramount Chiefs overall reflected a strong consensus. This issue area was, however, addressed in much more positive terms. The Paramount Chiefs all stressed that the decentralization of the allocation of development funds and its implementation process through the LDCs made the Paramount Chiefs stronger than previously. While development before the implementation of the LGA had been a centralized phenomenon, development grants are now transferred directly to the LDC that also decides on how and where to use the funding. As Paramount Chief Kangbai indicated (Interviewee 6) when asked whether or not the decentralization process is empowering the chieftaincy:

> "Apart from taking most of the revenues from us, it is making us very strong. It brings power. Government comes to the grass-roots level, the immediate people that will ensures it happens, that it will happen, and that it comes with the Paramount Chiefs and their sub-chiefs. So we appreciate very much that the Local District Council is coming. The local government they bring in power back

to the chiefs in terms of development. Because we now see in our village development taking place, people are taking part in those developments".

However, in relation to these development grants two concerns were raised by the Paramount Chiefs coming from some of the poorer chiefdoms. One the one hand, they argued that there was a connection between access to development grants and the class[48] in which the chiefdom is categorized. As they stressed, the classification of the chiefdoms, which especially depends on how many taxpayers the chiefdoms has[49] and how many other resources are located within the chiefdom, has in turn implications for how much development assistance the different chiefdoms are likely to see (Interviewee 10, 11, 12). As the Paramount Chief of Pendembu (Interviewee 10) noted:

> "When you are in a class A chiefdom that tells you that the number of taxpayers in your chiefdom has increased. And therefore if there is any developmental program there is to come, looking at the input, financial input that comes from your chiefdom, being a class A chiefdom makes you to be considered in terms of development. So that is one of the advantages [....] There is a high possibility that (you get more grants when categorized as class A chiefdom). There is a higher rate of possibility for that because when you have more taxpayers in your chiefdom you are contributing, especially now when you have the Local Council, which slowly and slowly depends on the chiefdoms".

Thus, as highlighted by the Paramount Chief of Pendembu and the other Paramount Chiefs interviewed in Kailahun District, in order to convince the Local Council that your chiefdom deserves, and needs, the development projects available, it is important to show that your chiefdom is contributing in terms of income generation. As they indicated resources give the chiefdoms bargaining power in the Local District Councils. On the other hand, it was also highlighted how the resource rich chiefdoms also have

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[48] The chiefdoms are categorized in terms of classes. It can be a class A, B, C and D. Each class relates to number of tax payers and economic activities as well as natural resources in the chiefdom.

[49] His chiefdom was class B, but as he argued it was officially supposed to be a class A chiefdom according to the most recent census based alone on the number of tax-payers in his chiefdom(5). However, the change in classification was only made every 2- 3 years.

another advantage. This is in terms of precepts from mining activities. As the Paramount Chief of Pendembu (Interviewee 10) further mentioned:

> "Where you have chiefdoms that are in diamond areas, you find out that at the end of the day, the government, the central government, gives them permission for whatever quantity of diamond that is produced in their chiefdom after every six month or so, they are paid dividends. Traditional rulers they have some percentages there. But that is not so for us in Kailahun District because we do not have diamond, we do not have gold. We only have coco and coffee. So those chiefdoms that are in diamond areas they are at an advantage, in terms of revenue mobilization.

This was also mentioned by the Chief Administrator of Pujehun (Interviewee 4) stressing:

> "That subvention is there to take care of salaries in the chiefdoms. And there is what they call area mining, a fund, in areas where there is mining activity, diamond, gold, and so forth, government gives some percentages to the chiefdoms. That one is directly given to the chiefdom administration. The council supervises that money. The way they are utilizing this, it goes directly into their own account, the chiefdom account, supervised by council. In other words, that is one way of government actually empowering them to ensure that they will embark on their own development, but we supervise how those money are being used so that they might not misuse them".

Further, Tommy (2007) mentions in reference to the Local Government Act, that 20% of the mineral revenues go to the Council; 40 percent goes to the land owning family; 20 percent goes to the chiefdom; and 20 percent to the Paramount Chiefs. Thus, as the Paramount Chief of Pendembu highlighted the Paramount Chiefs and the chiefdoms in the rich mineral areas benefit hugely from this formula.

Thus, from these sources it appears that the LGA targets the chiefdoms quite significantly, especially in terms of the new formula of dividing the local taxes. This aspect of the decentralization process has been covered by a number of scholars, such as Jackson (2005: 17) and Sawyer (2008: 402). However, these studies have not

focused on the two most important findings obtained through by the interviews that on the one hand the LGA appears to be more favorable towards the more resource rich chiefdoms in terms of extra mining precepts and bargaining power in the LDC, and on the other hand that the poorer chiefdoms are experiencing difficulties in terms of staff salaries and accessing development funds.

**Figure 10: Impacts of the Local Government Act and Conflict Scenario**

| Central Issues | *De Jure* Change of LGA | *De Facto* Change | Conflict Scenario |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Decentralization** | Government decentralization of key functions to LDC | - Government unwilling to decentralize functions and powers.<br>- Lack of resources in the LDC.<br>- Lack of human resources in the LDC | Dominant discourse in the academic community: Chiefs misuse local courts to generate income is major source of conflict |
| **Revenues Generated in the Chiefdoms** | Tax revenues: 40 % to LDC, 60 % to Chiefdom Councils<br><br>Natural resource revenues in chiefdoms: Chiefdoms get 20%, Paramount Chiefs get 20%, to use for development in their chiefdoms | - Poorer chiefdoms difficult to pay salaries<br><br>- Poorer chiefdoms without natural resources do not get precepts | Majority of poorer chiefdoms are situated in the areas where the war started and conflict intensity was the highest<br><br>Dwindling resource-base and less development projects in poorer chiefdoms presents incentives for using courts for income generation<br><br>Chiefs have influence on who is nominated as Court President<br><br>Decentralization process has not supplied LDC with sufficient human and material resources to effectively oversee the courts via the Customary Law Office |
| **Development Funds** | Chiefs represented in council. *De Jure* empowerment since development used to be centralized | More difficult for poorer chiefdoms to access development funds because of less bargaining power in the council based on the logic that the ones contributing should have more development | |
| **Customary Law Office** | Oversees the functions of the local courts and the chiefs | Lacks enough financial and human resources in order to effectively oversee the courts | |

Source: Author's own construction

## 6.4 Power-Conflict Perspective

Thus, the LGA appears to be having a dual effect on the Chieftaincy. The new distribution of resources represents a challenge to the resource base of the chiefs by taking 40 percent of their revenue base away from their control. However, at the same time the developmental aspects of the LDCs appear to be empowering the chiefs, since they are now taking part in a decision making process with regard to the distribution of development funds previously undertaken by the central government. However, all in all these developments appear to favor the richer chiefdoms and to be more strenuous on the poorer chiefdoms. Another important *de facto* perspective is that although the customary law office is highlighted as very important is does not seem to be functioning properly.

In a conflict perspective several issues of concern emerge in relation to the *de facto* impact of the Local Government Act. First of all, as the Conflict Victimization Index (See Appendix 5), reflected in the map of Sierra Leone in Figur 5 shows, there is a higher rate of poor chiefdoms in the areas where the war started and had the highest conflict intensity. In other districts, such as Kailahun, where several of the interviews were carried out, the concern was raised that poorer chiefdoms were experiencing both more financial difficulties in terms of the new formula of dividing the tax revenues and less bargaining power in the LDCs in terms of development funds.

Reflecting these perspectives in the dominant discourse on chiefs and conflict-creation within the academic community there is a cause of concern. As the dominant argument holds, the source of chieftaincy conflict-creation is often connected to their misuse of the local courts by handing out excessive fines in order for the chiefs to generate an income.

Thus the potential problem is that chiefs in the poorer chiefdoms, because of their shrinking revenue base, will have a stronger incentive to use the courts for income generation.

In a *de jure* perspective there are, however, two mechanisms, which should prevent this scenario from happening. First off all, the chiefs do not supervise the courts anymore. Reforms have been passed so that this function is carried out by a Court President. This was initiated in order to minimize the possibility for chiefs to misuse the courts. However, as showed above, even though the chiefs do not sit in the courts they are the ones that nominate the Court President. This suggests that the chiefs might potentially nominate someone who was loyal towards themselves. Brima Koroma's Local Court Record Analysis, carried out for the World Bank, appears to be substantiating this view. As Koroma writes:

> "Analysis of data revealed that some (53% or 43.1%) of the members of the courts are related to the Paramount Chief. Relationship takes different forms, such as brothers, uncle, cousins, nephews and friends". (Koroma 2007: 17)

Thus, despite of the fact that Court Presidents have been introduced to create more control with the chiefdoms' courts, the Paramount Chiefs still appear to have a direct influence on who these Court Presidents are. The other mechanism introduced to create control with the chiefs and the courts is the introduction of the Local District Council's Customary Law Office. As the Chief Administrator of Bo Local District Council (Interviewee 7) mentioned extra fines would be a huge problem in almost all of the chiefdoms in contemporary Sierra Leone if the Customary Law Office did not keep an eye on what was happening in the courts. As he mentioned: "If they do not have an institution, like the customary law office, controlling them they will charge heavy fines, excessive fines". However, the Chief Administrator of the Kailahun Local District Council (Interviewee 9) - situated in the areas where the war started, having the

poorest chiefdoms, and where the conflict intensity was the highest during the war (See Appendix 5) – stressed, when I asked him about the influence of the Customary Law Office, that they were understaffed and did not have any real power or influence over the courts. This image correlates with the general depiction of the Local District Councils as entities lacking resources and qualified personnel because of the government's hesitation to make a *de facto* decentralization of power, resources and qualified personnel.

These causes of concern become even more magnified when reflected in studies exploring contemporary court practices. As Jackson argues, arbitrary fining is a highly potent issue also in post-war Sierra Leone. The revitalised chiefdom system is according to Jackson (2005) and also to Fanthorp (2005) experiencing a reoccurrence of arbitrary fining. These views are supported by the interview with the Chief Administrator of Kailahun Local District Council. As he worryingly stressed: "Since the war, there has started to be a reoccurrence of heavy fining and Kangaroo courts[50] handing out such extra fines" (Interviewee 9).

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[50] Kangaroo Courts are an expression for extra legal/non-official courts.

# Chapter 7:  Local Elections and Rural Views on Accountability


This chapter analyses how the accountability of local authority is perceived in the rural areas. In doing so, the chapter gives special attention to the views of youth as this group is considered a highly important group to gain the views of. As pointed out in chapter 5: 'The APC Government, Elections and Civil War', the younger generations were in particular targeted and experiencing grievances caused by their local chiefs. Also, this was the dominant group recruited to fight in the civil war (Humphreys and Weinstein 2003). In the following, three sets of different empirical data are examined. 1) First the findings from a case study of the Bo district are presented. The case study shows that a number of local youths and representatives of local youth organisations in the Bo district (Interviewee 13, 14) perceive the conduct of Paramount Chief Kangbai of Tikonko Chiefdom, in the 2004 Local Elections, to be fraudulent, since he was undermining the independent candidate's election campaign in order to favour the SLPP candidate. 2) The second set of empirical data presents the view of the interviewed Paramount Chiefs on their local youth. The findings show that the chiefs share the opinion that the youth do not respect their authority. 3) The third set of empirical data is the 2007 Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project Survey (IRCBP) and the field work conducted by Edward Sawyer. These findings suggest that the rural population has more confidence in the accountability of the local chiefs than in the Local District Council and central government. However, there appears to be an indication of younger people being less supportive towards the chiefs than the older generations.

**7.1 Bo Case Study**

As pointed out in Chapter 6: 'The Role of the Chieftaincy in Post-War Sierra Leone', the implementation of the Local Government Act has changed the structures of power and authority in the local communities. A significant case in point, which has come about with the implementation of the Local Government Act, is the new format for local elections. As the analysis of the history of the Government-Chieftaincy nexus has shown in Chapter 4: 'The Chiefs during Colonialism and Early Independence' and Chapter 5: 'The APC Government, Elections and Civil War', the chiefs often play a central role in terms of either supporting or working against candidates during election times. Thus, with the Local Government Act's new framework of local elections it is interesting to see to which extent the chiefs are still intervening in the conduct of the elections in favour of certain political parties and candidates. This chapter explores these issues through a case study of the Local Elections in Tikonko Chiefdom in the BO district, subsequently the observations are compared with the findings from other studies in order to assess whether there are indications of a general pattern in the studies undertaken.

As mentioned during the methodological reflections of Chapter 3, two focus-group interviews were conducted with younger people in Tikonko Chiefdom. The interviewees were asked to comment on to which extent political maneuvering by the chiefs had taken place during the Local Government elections, in 2004. During the course of the two focus-group interviews, even though the participants were not asked to comment on any specific episodes, the dominant theme in both focus group interviews evolved around the same issues. These interviews have not been transcribed or recorded on a tape recorder, since the participants wished to stay anonymous and were quite anxious about not wanting Paramount Chief Kangbai to know about their involvement. The following discussion is thus based on a consensus of views, which was emphasized and agreed upon by the majority of the people

interviewed. However, specific quotes have been recoded by handwritten notes in order to give the reader a sense of the discourse that occurred during the interviews.

The participants predominantly focused on the involvement of Paramount Chief Kangbai and the teacher John Nyango in the Local Government elections where John Nyango was running as an independent candidate. As the intervieweed stated, the youth supported John Nyango and as they stressed "They could even meet him in person". And as one of the intervieweed also indicated: "There is no youth you meet who say he is a bad guy". However, very agitated a participant stressed that Paramount Chief Kangbai wanted the seat in the Local Council to go to the SLPP candidate, Michael Kposowa, therefore Kangbai did not wish to see John Nyango succeed in the elections. According to the participants, Paramount Chief Kangbai could see that there was a high possibility that John Nyango would get the majority of the votes. Being an independent candidate there was a considerable amount of especially younger voters who preferred him to the detriment of candidates of the SLPP and the APC. Allegedly, Paramount Chief Kangbai called on John Nyango twice, promising him money and the victory in the next elections, but this was conditioned by his withdrawal in order for Kangbai's favored SLPP candidate, Michael Kposowa, to win the Local Election.

However, as the youths stressed, John Nyango had given them his promise that he would not betray them and resign from power by not running for the elections. Further, if he had mistakenly given up power, they argued they would have caused a lot of problems. However, as one of them said: "Kangbai, he is the leader. What he wants to do he will do. Nobody will have to take him to court". Due to the rumours regarding Kangbai's manipulative maneuvering a lot of people felt discouraged about the elections and did not vote. As the youths noted, many people even envisaged that

the elections would be cancelled due to these fraudulent practices taking place. Without really being specific about how it came about a youth said that Kangbai would: "Use other means to change the elections". As the youth mentioned, Kangbai said to the national election committee that his favoured SLPP candidate must win, and the independent candidate should be marginalized, this being John Nyango. And as the youth stressed, in the days leading to the elections Kangbai ordered the imprisonment of 4-5 young participants in John Nyango's campaign in order to "put fear into people" who were going to vote for the independent candidates. In the end John Nyango did not win the election, Kangbai's candidate did. As of now, John Nyango is a supporter of the PMDC, which is also the case for most other independent candidates. From the focus group interviews, it also appeared to be the case that a majority of the youths is supporting the PMDC.

Thus, the resonance in these focus-group interviews revolves around the argument that the youth' favoured independent candidate was marginalized by Paramount Chief Kangbai.

These findings are not the only indication that such fraudulent maneuvering did in fact take place during the Local Government elections. Hence, as Jackson indicates there was a national meeting of Paramount Chiefs before the local elections in 2004, and at this meeting senior government officials assured that the chiefs would have nothing to fear in the upcoming elections. Further, as Jackson (2005: 53) notes:

> "Chiefs have mobilized quickly and have played a major role in the choice of candidates. This is especially so in the Southern Province, a regional stronghold of the government party, the SLPP. Chiefs continue to make public statements throughout the country stating that independents will not be allowed to stand in their areas".

As discussed above, this is exactly the scenario the youths described during the focus-group interviews. Tikonko Chiefdom in Bo district is also situated in the Southern Province, and Kangbai is publicly known as a strong and influential SLPP supporter. It is, however, interesting to make a note of what Paramount Chief Kangbai said[51] (interviewee 6) when I asked him whether or not the chiefs were politicized:

> "The chiefs do not belong to any political parties. The chiefs support the government of the day because the chiefs' authority is also part of government. So we are also part of the functions of government, we are all supposed to be independent. The politicians may enter our chiefdoms giving their usual respect, we allow them to go into the chiefdom to meet the people, discuss issues […] Also, all parties have the right to establish their party offices in any chiefdom as it may please them here. All the answers are here in the constitution, the law".

This was more or less the general answer given by the chiefs interviewed when asked about issues relating to politicization. The chiefs support the government of the day and do not belong to any political party.

The Chief Administrator of the Bo Local District Council (Interviewee 7), which has the jurisdiction over Kangbai's Tikonko Chiefdom and the Chairman of the Youth Council in Tikonko were both asked about the involvement of Paramount Chief Kangbai in the Local Government elections. Interestingly, both of them supported the interpretation presented by the participants in the two focus-group interviews indicating that he had indeed been siding with the SLPP while working against the independent candidate. As the Chief Administrator of the Bo Local District Council answered, when asked whether Kangbai had been interfering in the elections:

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[51] As mentioned in the Chapter 3 on methodology the first interview I tried to get with Paramount Chief Kangbai failed, because he, according to sources close to him, was scared that I might have been an APC agent coming to check up on his actions, since being a known SLPP supporter. As the brother of Paramount Chief Kangbai, Jia Kangbai, mentioned in an informal conversation, the last Paramount Chief in Tikonko had been disposed by the APC.

"Exactly, especially when the SLPP had the chock of the emergence of the PMDC. When the PMDC emerged SLPP had a shock and that shock (laughs) affected them so much (laughs). All these problems started from conflict between Charles Margai and the SLPP. He used to be in the SLPP. He was hopeful. He was hoping to become president or what so ever. He was embarrassed somehow, so he got annoyed and said, well I am going to break away and he broke away and formed his own party".

As pointed out throughout this thesis, the chiefs in Sierra Leone and the SLPP party co-operate and empower each other in various ways and in different situations. The Local Government elections appear to be a new terrain for the Government-Chieftaincy nexus to exercise its powers. However, reading through the literature remarkably few studies have analysed the influence of the chiefs in the local elections. This, therefore, appears to be an important area of research for future studies. This applies both to the local level, as it was highlighted in the Bo case study presented above, and to a national perspective examining the chiefs' interference in Sierra Leonean elections since the time of Independence.

## 7.2 Rural Perspectives on Accountability

Throughout the presentation of the findings of this thesis, observations have been made that the government and the chiefs have been connected by modes of reciprocity and accountability. While the SLPP derived these modes based on a shared ideological platform since both groups essentially were part of the same power elite, the APC interfered in the Paramount Chiefs Elections and appointed candidates that were upwardly accountable. The implications have often been that the chiefs have ruled in favour of the government rather than in the interest of the local populations. This is exemplified by the riots in the North, the maneuvering during elections times, and the social dynamics leading to the civil war. These observations present a puzzle of both empirical and theoretical importance.

With regard to the theoretical aspects, Mills and Gramsci agree that the intermediary power structures the power-elite needs to dominate should be based on an ideological platform, which permits validation and creation of discourses and believes of the power-elite to implement its own views and policies. Chapter 4: 'Chieftaincy during Colonialism and Early Independence', demonstrated that at the time of colonialism the chiefs were already powerful authority figures in terms of their position in the Council of Elders and in the secret societies. But now, a century later, it is necessary to ask how the legitimacy of the Chieftaincy is perceived by the rural population. Whether or not the Chieftaincy can still be understood as the key underlying social group despite of the new structures of local authority and power that the Local Government Act has brought about, which are important for the power-elite to be connected to. Based on the research questions of this thesis the last pertinent question, which needs to be addressed, is whether the chiefs of the post-war era still possess rural legitimacy and accountability or whether years of political interference and co-option as well as the reconstructed post-war framework of local government have weakened their legitimacy and introduced new modes of accountability.

To gain an understanding of this it is useful to look at surveys, which comprises data based on an extensive amount of respondents. In so doing, the following analysis compares the findings of two such surveys in order to asses to which extent they present similar findings. The two studies are the IRCBP survey from 2007 and Edward Sawyers fieldwork carried out in three districts in Sierra Leone.

The IRCBP survey is interesting, since it compares how the rural population perceives the 'contact', 'accountability', and 'trust' regarding the chiefs and the local courts, as well as the Local District Councils, the magistrate court, and the central government. The general picture found in the IRCBP survey is that Chiefdom Government is perceived to be the most important level of government in terms of the dimensions

presented above. This is despite of the fact that the Local Government Act states that the Local District Council now is the highest political authority in the chiefdoms. This picture is pertinent for several aspects. The data-set in Figure 11 below shows the contact between the rural population and the different levels of government in Sierra Leone.

**Figure 11: Contact with Different Levels of Government**
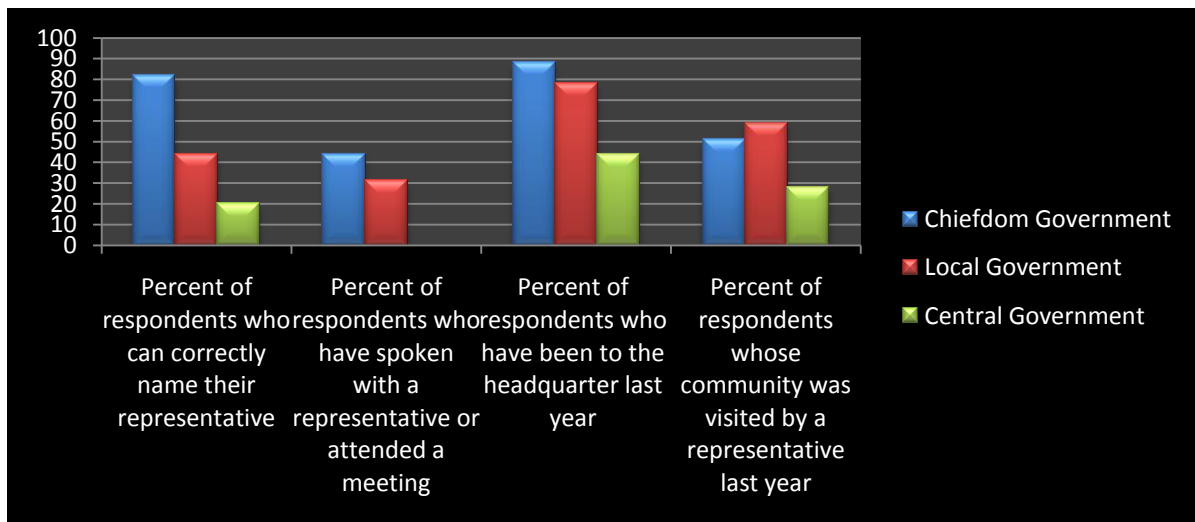


Source: IRCBP 2007, Table IIB1.1

As Figure 11 shows, despite of the fact that the Local District Council has been slightly more visible than the chiefdom government in terms of visiting the different communities, the community has greater personal knowledge of the chiefdom government compared to the other governing institutions (IRCBP 2007, Table IIB1.1). The IRCBP survey has also measured the extent to which the rural population perceives the various forms of government to be 'responsive to their community needs' and the extent to which they 'trust the various levels of government'. Evident from Figure 12 below, a similar pattern as discussed above emerges.[52]

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[52] It is interesting to compare these findings with Carol Logan's (2009) survey on 'Popular perspectives on traditional leaders and democratic institutions in Africa'. Among Logan's findings, she presents a table that describes the perceived trust in traditional leaders and local government in 15 African states, NOT including

**Figure 12: Accountability of Different Levels of Government**
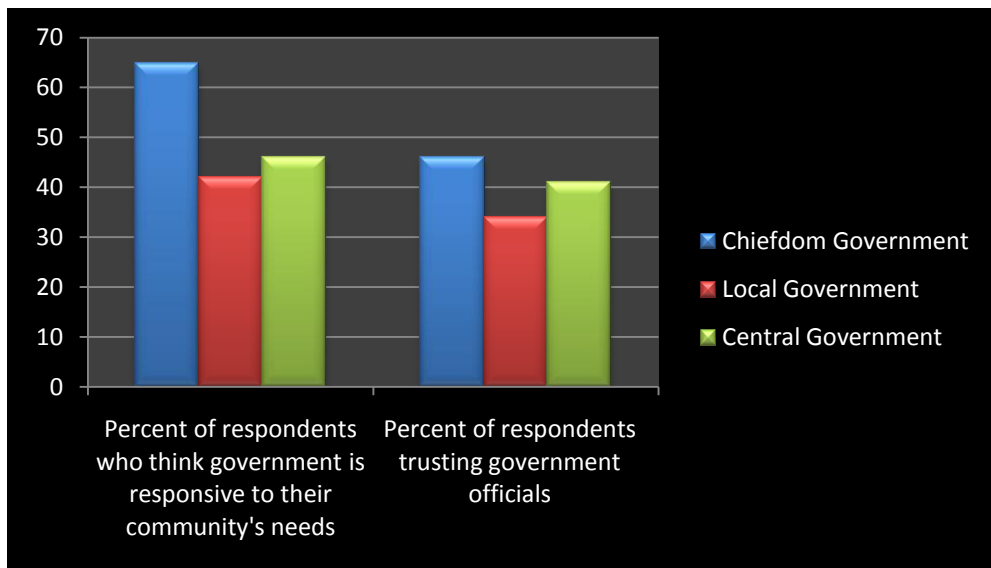


Source: IRCBP 2007, Table: IIB1.2

An overwhelming majority of the respondents think the chiefdom government is more responsive to their needs than the local government. Though less significant, this is also evident in terms of the perceived trust in the different levels of government. The In addition, IRCBP has investigated, which groups the rural populace in general trusts the most as depicted in Figure 13 below. Again a similar pattern is evident. The chiefdom officials are more trusted than the central government and the local councilors.

However, these findings are noteworthy when reflected in e.g. the discontent of the youths interviewed in the Bo district towards their Paramount Chief Kangbai as well as the views of the interviewed Paramount Chiefs suggesting that the youths do not respect the authority of the chiefs. Though it is not possible to generalize from the Bo

Sierra Leone. While the average mean of trust in traditional leaders is 53 percent, the average mean for the local government is 38 percent. Thus, the findings in the IRCBP survey correlate with the general trend analysed in other African countries having a coexistence of traditional authority and local government.

case study and claim that all youths have discontents towards their chiefs, the findings of Edward Sawyers survey outlined below might suggest that there is a case to make on the differences in age.

**Figure 13: Trust in Various Groups**
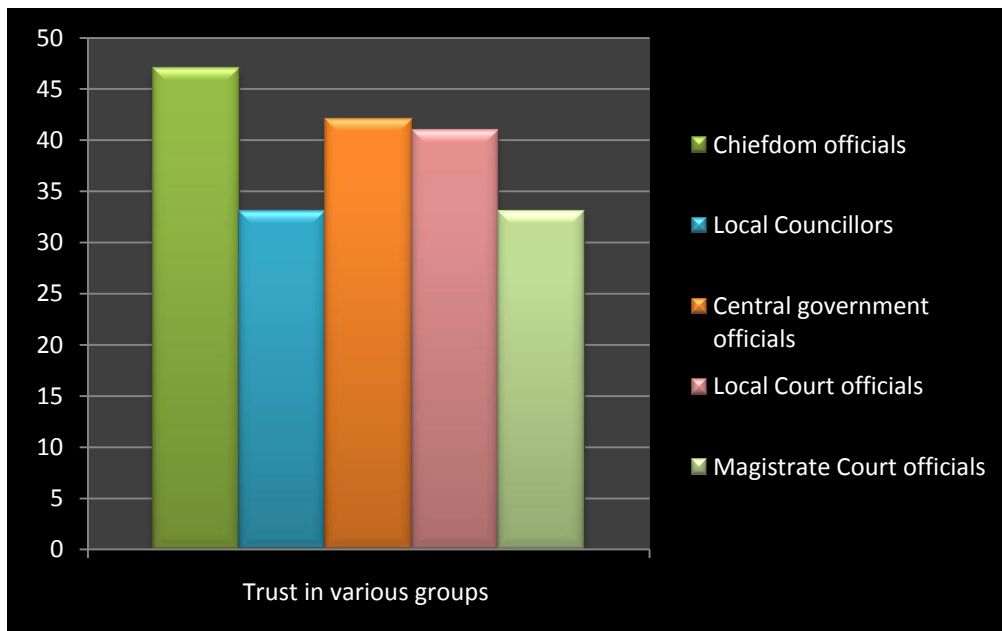


Source: IRCBP 2007, Table IIIB1.1

Edward Sawyer (2008) has made a demographic differentiation in his survey. As indicated in his findings, the youth (25 years and under) shows slightly less support towards the section-chiefs than the upper age group (51 years and above) in terms of the thinking they are 'very good' at solving conflicts, this being 44.4 percent. However, the number for his upper age category is 45.8 percent; therefore the difference is not very significant, but in his responses based on people who perceives the section-chiefs to be 'poor at resolving conflicts' the youth has a much higher representation. Here 7 percent of the lower age category perceives the section chief as being 'poor' while in the upper age category no respondents answered their section chief was 'poor at resolving conflicts'. This view can also be deduced from the interviews I conducted

with the Paramount Chiefs as the majority of the Paramount Chiefs suggested that the youth does not respect traditional authority anymore. When the chiefs called on them in order for them to either undertake community labour or to be disciplined the youth would proclaim human rights and argue that the chiefs did not have any authority over them. As the Acting Paramount Chief of Kailahun (Interviewee 11) noted, when asked about community labour and fining of youths:

> "We used to have what you would call child labour. My son used to go and break wood, bring it in, cook in the house. When we do that they say child labour. These are the things that are bringing problems now you see. Even in the Barri. When we were outside we watched children, right now in the Kailahun Court Barrie. What we do with it. If you arrest them and do anything, they say human rights violation. And they are not going to school. They are not working for their parents. You see the problem we have here. If you do anything, people will say human rights and interfere. They do not work for their parents. Today is Saturday and they are playing football inside in the Court Barrie. This is the problem we have".

**Figure 14: Kids Playing Football in Kailahun Court Barri**



Source: Picture taken by author after interview with Acting Paramount Chief, Kailahun

## 7.3 Power-Conflict Perspective

As Chapter 6 showed, despite of the fact that the Local Government Act provides overwhelming power to the Local District Councils, the government's reluctance to empower the Local District Councils indicates that the *de jure* reconfiguration of power and authority stated in the act still has to be transferred into *de facto* practices. At the same time, the IRCBP survey shows how popular support is still much more favorable towards the chiefs and the Chiefdom Administration than to the Local District Council. As is also found in the 2007 IRCBP survey, trust in the Local District Councils has declined from 2005 till 2007 (See Appendix). Hence, in a power perspective it appears that the chiefs are still the most important intermediary sphere of authority for the central government to be connected to.

However, this trend appears to go against the interests of the youth within two areas. It appears to be the case that the youth has less trust and respect for the chiefs. Also, the new political party, the PMDC, which has a lot of support amongst the younger segments of the Sierra Leonean population, is being marginalized in the local elections. These perspectives point towards a new arena of political marginalization of the younger citizens of Sierra Leone. This is worryingly as the marginalization of younger persons before the war had devastating effects.

# Chapter 8: Conclusions

This chapter has two main objectives. Firstly, it sums up and concludes on the three research questions presented in the introduction and secondly, it compares these findings with the mainstream arguments in the academic literature, which were presented in Chapter 2.

## 8.1 Conclusions on Research Questions

### Research Question 1

The first research question the thesis asked was: **What are the dominant modes of power constituting the Sierra Leonean government-chieftaincy nexus during contextual changes in different historical periods?** Answering this question, the findings from Chapter 4: "Chieftaincy during Colonialism and Early Independence", as well as Chapter 5: "The ACP Government, Elections and Civil War" are of particular relevance. As the findings of these chapters show, accountability appears to be the dominant mode of power, constituting the government-chieftaincy power nexus in Sierra Leone. The major difference is, however, the ways in which these modes of accountability were created. While the APC government established them through modes of force, violence and coercion, the SLPP government achieved it through modes of culture and ideology. In a theoretical perspective this suggests that rather than solely adhering to the *'power over'* paradigm, or the *'power to'* paradigm, it is necessary to understand them as an interconnected power process. The following discussion will draw together the most important theoretical perspectives on power and empirical observations and conclusions answering the research question posed above.

### *SLPP Government-Chieftaincy Nexus*

As the numerous empirical examples presented in this thesis show, the SLPP and the chiefs have mutually empowered each others. As found in Chapter 4: "The Chieftaincy during Colonialism and Early Independence" the power of the SLPP and the chiefs was based on a relationship of reciprocity and accountability. While the SLPP government sustained government power through the actions of the chiefs, the chiefs maintained the strength of their positions through the actions of the SLPP. Thus, the power relationship was based on consensus and reciprocity, not necessarily conflict. This conclusion differs from the understanding of power, which many scholars within the '*power over*' paradigm advance. They argue that power is the exercise where A forces B to do something, which is against B's own will. However, based on the findings of this thesis the SLPP-chieftaincy power nexus can be understood along the lines of Easton discussing power as a creating potential.

However, the scholars advocating a relational understanding of power seem to somewhat neglect how modes of reciprocity and accountability often are exclusionary relations. As the findings of this thesis suggest the accountability between two parties is based on an internal logic of reciprocal obligations, which excludes actors who are not part of the accountability relationship. Lonesdale and Chabal argue that accountability is the moral calculus of power. However, as the findings of the thesis show, it is important to notice the often immoral calculus of power, which exists between actors who are part of an accountability relationship and those who are not. Looking at the findings of this thesis it appears that this relationship often is characterized better by the '*power over*' perspective. The relations of accountability in the SLPP government-chieftaincy power nexus developed a structural foundation of the chiefs' power. In contrast the chiefs' relationship with their subject was often not marked by modes of accountability or reciprocity. Due to their structural position,

maintained through government accountability, they exercised '*power over*' the populations in their chiefdoms. This was both apparent during the events before and after the northern riots as well as in the events leading to the 1967 elections, where chiefs were able to freely abuse their platform through forceful and violent means.

The SLPP government-chieftaincy nexus thus evidences a power process, where the moral calculus of power, i.e. modes of accountability and reciprocity, creates structural power dimensions from where chiefs are able to use force and violent power modes. Thus, '*power to*' essentially enabled '*power over*'. This is apparent from Chapter 4.

### Colonial Government-Chieftaincy Power Nexus

As shown in Chapter 4, the government-chieftaincy nexus during the early years of colonialism, the Laissez-faire period, was also characterized by modes of accountability and reciprocity, however, during the  Reform period, the relations between the chiefs and government assumed a '*power over'* logic. The colonial administration instated personal in key positions, and disposed of a number of chiefs. This meant that the chiefs to a larger extent were controlled by central government and that the colonial actions of disposing chiefs could be understood as a way of exercising *power over* the chiefs, thereby strengthening a coercive dimension in their relationship.

### APC Government-Chieftaincy Nexus

However, the thesis has also found evidence of the reversed scenario that modes of '*power over*' create '*power to*'. From the key findings in Chapter 5, we learned e.g. that this was the case when the APC took over government, in 1967.  As the thesis has shown, the APC put pressure on the chiefdoms' candidates through modes of manipulative, forceful and violent means.  Thus, as the '*power over*' theory suggests,

APC's control with the state bureaucracy placed them in a structural position to exercise '*power over*' the chiefs. However, they did this in order to insure that the chiefs in the chiefdoms were upwardly loyal intermediaries. Thus, through forceful means the APC essentially established links of reciprocity and accountability. As the civil war scenarios, presented in Chapter 5, suggest, once APC had established relations of reciprocity and accountability by instating loyal chieftaincy intermediaries, the chiefs pursued a strategy of '*power over*' towards their subjects, ruling them through force, violence and manipulation, which eventually can be understood as one of the textures of explaining the civil war.

Thus, the general theoretical lines that can be deduced in relation to the government-chieftaincy nexus appear to support Chabal's (1992) notions on power, which advances that the more stable and longer lasting structures of power are based on modes of accountability and reciprocity. However, the dominant modes of power are situated within the '*power over*' perspective in times of significant contextual changes where ruptures in the political community, such as when an APC-led government replaced a SLPP-led government - this being in terms of violence, force and manipulation.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question the thesis posed was: **What implications does the government-chieftaincy power nexus have for conflict-creating practices in the rural communities?** Though the stable relationships in the government-chieftaincy nexus were based on modes of accountability and reciprocity, the findings of Chapter 4 and 5 also showed how these structures eventually created forceful bases of power. On the one hand, the chiefs were enabled to use force, violence and manipulations and on the other hand, due to the chief's upward obligations the lack of accountability and

legitimacy was also an important reason why conflict-creation occurred. Further, people standing outside the relations of accountability were often targeted and ruled through force and violence - ruled by rulers who were not rooted in the chiefdoms ideological and cultural bases - as e.g. shown in the analysis in Chapter 5 of APC's intervention in Chieftaincy Elections, instating candidates not descending from ruling houses or legitimately elected by the constituencies in the Chiefdoms. As Chapter 5 concluded, the implications of these practices can be understood as an important reason why the chiefs can be linked to some of the root causes leading to the civil war.

There are also a number of important conclusions, which can be drawn from the post-war case studies. In relation to the findings in Chapter 6, it was found how the effects of the Local Government Act seemed to especially target the poorer chiefdoms within several dimensions. Three areas seemed especially important. Firstly, due to the new formula for the distribution of the local taxes, where the Local District Councils take 40 percent, it has become increasingly more difficult to pay the chiefdom personnel salaries. Secondly, the poorer chiefdoms also miss out on precepts from mining activities, which the mineral rich chiefdoms receive in order to initiate development projects. Thirdly, the poorer chiefdoms appear to have less bargaining power in the Local District Councils in terms of accessing development funds. Thus, overall it can be concluded, based on the findings from Chapter 6, that especially the poorer chiefdoms are targeted by the Local Government Act. In a conflict perspective this is a cause for concern, especially due to three main reasons. Firstly, the poor chiefdoms are predominantly situated in the peripheral regions of Sierra Leone where the civil war broke out. Secondly, it has been reported that chiefs have started to use the local courts as a means to generate income (misuse of the local courts is one of the dominant explanations within the academic community why the war broke out in the first place). Thirdly, the lack of willingness of the central government to decentralize

the decision-making power and distribute human as well as material resources has the effect that the Customary Law Office, which is supposed to overlook these courts, is not working properly. These different areas could pose a threat to the continued stability, especially in the poorer regions.

The other important perspective in terms of conflict-creation, which was found in the post-war analysis, relates to the local elections. As Chapter 7 showed, during the local elections the chiefs have been grossly interfering with the selection of candidates to run in their chiefdoms. This especially appears to be a problem for a new party, the PMDC, which is an anti-chieftaincy party with very strong support amongst the younger segment of the Sierra Leonean population. Regrettably, these local elections and the chiefs maneuvering against the PMDC appear to be a new terrain of exclusionary practices towards the youth of Sierra Leone. This could, based on historical lessons, lead to conflict-creating scenarios.

**Research Question 3**

The last research question the thesis asked was: **To which extent can the findings of the thesis be reflected in the theoretical arguments advanced by Mills and Gramsci on power-elites and hegemonic domination, and in which regards do their concepts need adjustment to the Sierra Leonean context.**

As presented in the Chapter 2, Mills' and Gramsci' theoretical arguments hold that a somewhat small, coherent and exclusive power-elite dominates the top echelons of society from where they make all the major decision. The power-elite is connected through formal and informal networks, which has their roots in a similar lifestyle,

having grown up under similar circumstances, and been studying at the same exclusive schools.

Mills' and Gramsci' arguments appear to be relevant to the Sierra Leonean context in several ways. First, there actually appears to be a Sierra Leonean power-elite that was created and maintained by the same conditions highlighted by Mills and Gramsci. As shown from Chapter 3's discussion on pre-colonial structures of authority and power in Sierra Leone, the chiefs were embedded within such structures. Thus the view advanced by Mills and Gramsci that the power-elite needs to be connected to such underlying spheres in society seems to be a relevant point in relation to Sierra Leone. This is especially relevant when looking at the political elites at the time of Independence. The SLPP power-elite was indeed a small exclusive network, which came from the same social standing - most of the top SLPP members being sons of the Paramount Chiefs. Further, they had all attended the same schools, exclusively for the elites, which connected them to the educated Freetown elite and most importantly the state bureaucracy that the schools were created to link-up with.

The other dominant argument by Mills and Gramsci holds that for the power-elite to be in a position to transcend society with social control and implementation of values and beliefs they needs to be connected to the dominant underlying social groups who first and foremost need to be in a position to validate what the correct beliefs and values in the lower levels of society are.

This perspective also appears to be relevant in the Sierra Leonean case. As the actions of the governments in power evidence, it appears to have been a key priority to be linked to the chiefs throughout the history of Sierra Leone. In the Sierra Leonean context the chiefs were the dominant agents linked to the ideological and cultural

sphere of the lower levels of society. As advanced in this thesis, the chiefs were not just random people presented with a title by the colonial administration. Before the British arrived, the chiefs were already imbedded within a traditional system of human and spiritual courts, these including the secret societies. As outlined in Chapter 4, the role of these institutions was to validate the correct patterns of behavior, beliefs and practices.

However, on a very central point, Mills' and Gramsci' theoretical ideas need refinement when applied to the Sierra Leonean context. In Gramsci's and Mills' optic a sharp demarcation is made between the power-elite, which resides in the top echelons of society and the underlying social groups of importance, among these the important ideological ones. Nevertheless, as the composition of the Sierra Leonean power-elite shows, it is not possible to make the same clear distinction and demarcation between the different levels of power in the Sierra Leonean society as Mills and Gramsci advance. As especially the case of the SLPP power-elite shows they are linked to the chieftaincy, which is rooted in one of the ideological sectors of the Sierra Leonean society, this being the secret societies of the Poro. These two groups, the Government and the Chieftaincy, can thus be understood as part of one and the same power-elite.

As discussed earlier, one of the most important dimensions for sustaining linkages in vertical power relations is besides of modes of force and coercion, shared ideological beliefs and culture. The interconnectedness of the chiefs and the SLPP thus shows the importance and the sustainability in power relations that are based on shared values and beliefs. Thus, when Gramsci discusses in somewhat broad terms that the strategies of control pursued by the power-elites are a mix of coercive, consensual and

ideological strategies, the Sierra Leonean case gives an especially strong emphasis to the two latter categories.


**8.2 Comparison of Thesis' Findings with the Dominant Discourse**

Based on the above findings and conclusions it is possible to situate the dynamics of the Sierra Leonean government-chieftaincy nexus within the dominant theoretical arguments in the academic literature, which were presented in Chapter 2, and assess the extent to which the Sierra Leonean case, as outlined in this thesis, is in line with or diverge from these perspectives. As discussed in Chapter 2, some dominant arguments can be related to each of the contextual periods this thesis has investigated.


In an overall perspective, it seems clear that the chiefs are indeed the important intermediaries for the government to be linked to in order to establish modes of social control over the peripheral areas. This is, as several scholars advance, an indirect strategy of control. Created during colonialism, it appears to have continued to be the dominant strategy pursued by Sierra Leonean political leaders after Independence. However, the findings of this thesis do suggest that the Sierra Leonean case diverges from the dominant argument on the position and role of the chiefs in early independent Africa. As the dominant arguments state the chiefs are situated in a residual sphere beyond the control of the central government. This also applies to the literature on Sierra Leone. However, it is also advanced how the chiefs are able to resist government pressure, influence policies, and that the relationship between the central government and the chiefs often assumed an antagonistic character. As the findings of this thesis show, this was not the case in Sierra Leone. At the time of Independence, the chiefs' position had been rendered less secure due to the reforms of the terminal colonial period. The chiefs were therefore not in a position to resist government pressure, on the contrary, they were in a quite sensitive position

regarding what went on in Freetown. Neither the antagonistic element was present in the Sierra Leonean case. This relates to the ways in which the first Sierra Leonean political party was essentially made up of the sons of Paramount Chiefs, a conservative party, which predominantly advanced the interests of the rural bourgeoisie, this being the chiefs.

The last dominant argument advanced in the literature is how a closer integration between the chiefs and the state has occurred in the era of democratization and decentralization. It is argued that the chiefs to a growing extent can be understood as an administrative chieftaincy. The implication of this scenario is described by Buur and Kyed as a way in which the chiefs lose some of their downward accountability, - said in another perspective, the chiefs are becoming increasingly more accountable upward toward the state as their official integration into the state bureaucracy becomes stronger.

The findings throughout this entire thesis indicate that the suggestions of Buur and Kyed that the chiefs' integration into the state makes them less downward accountable are quite right. However, as Chapters 4 and 5 analyzing the pre-war government-chieftaincy nexus have shown, this scenario appears to have always been the case in Sierra Leone. Thus, the chiefs' loss of downward accountability in the Sierra Leonean context does not appear to be a problem connected to democratization and decentralization *per se* as advanced by Buur and Kyed.

# Chapter 9: Thesis' Findings in Perspective

This final chapter addresses the recent policy initiative of the APC government relating to the Chieftaincy, namely the 2009 Chieftaincy Act. Comparing the views of Civil Society Organisations on this Chieftaincy Act with the findings of the thesis, the chapter will present some issues of concern as to which direction the Government-Chieftaincy nexus in Sierra Leone is heading.

The Chieftaincy Act was passed in Parliament, in September 2009. The Act's recent implementation implies that the research community on Sierra Leone has yet to present their views on this new legal framework of the Post-War Government-Chieftaincy nexus. Thus, this thesis is one of the first studies to reflect on the likely implications of the Act.

### *Critical Views on the Chieftaincy Act*

On September 10th 2009, the Chieftaincy Act was signed by President Ernest Bai Koroma. As the front cover states (2009: 1) it is an:

> "Act to provide for the qualification, election, powers, functions and removal of a person as Paramount Chief or chief and other matters connected with the chieftaincy."

This Act appears to be a significant contextual change in the legal framework surrounding the Paramount Chiefs. Hence, the Sierra Leonean newspaper, Concord Times News Paper[53] (22 June 2009) notes that the Chieftaincy Act is "The first ever Act to be passed into law for the appointment of paramount chiefs across the country".

During the course of my field work in Sierra Leone the Act's final draft was yet to be passed in Parliament. During the interviews with the Paramount Chiefs and Chief

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[53] Website: http://allafrica.com/stories/printable /200906230535.html

Administrators I tried to obtain their views on this new legal framework but they were quite reluctant to discuss it. However, from the reporting of the numerous Freetown newspapers it seems that especially Civil Society Organizations have voiced their opinion on the Chieftaincy Act openly.

Hence, the Civil Society Organisations all appear to be very critical of the Chieftaincy Act. The 'Civil Society Platform on Chieftaincy Reform' (CSPCR) and 'Partners in Conflict Transformation Picord' (PCTP) have been the most articulate organisations in the debate. The Freetown newspaper, Awareness Times[54]' (May 12 2009) printed a CSPCR position paper on the Chieftaincy Act, which clearly depicts the organization's critical views. According to Awareness Times some of CSPCR's main discontents with the Bill are that:

> "The bill further gives the Local Government Ministry charge over the conduct of Paramount Chieftaincy elections instead of a professional electoral body like the National Electoral Commission (NEC)".

> "The bill grants excessive powers to Local Government Ministry to the exclusion of even the Court in the management and determination of matters arising from the conduct of Paramount Chieftaincy elections".

As these extracts show the general concern of CSPCR regarding the Chieftaincy Act relates to the election of Paramount Chiefs, which will be more centralized and prone to government interferences.

In a similar vein, Awoko[55] newspaper (March 18 2009) presents the view of PCTP-campaigner, Lawyer Mohamed A. Bangura's on the Chieftaincy Act. Awoko newspaper quotes Bangura for saying that the Chieftaincy Bill gives "the government too much autonomy over the dues of Paramount Chiefs." What is also highlighted in this edition

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[54] Website: http://www.news.sl/drwebsite/publish/printer_200512163.shtml
[55] Website: http://awoko.org/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,print,0&cntnt01articleid=5071&cntn

of Awoko is how PCTP perceives the Act to contain several undemocratic elements. Two central concerns are the extensive powers the Act allegedly gives to the Provincial Secretary in the conduct and overseeing of the Paramount Chieftaincy elections and a claim that the government has increased its mandate to remove Paramount Chiefs from their office and interfere in the Chieftaincy Administration.

Besides the Civil Society Organisations, a number of Paramount Chiefs has likewise used the newspapers to voice their concern about the Chieftaincy Act. Hence, Standard Times interviewed in June 2009 a number of Paramount Chiefs.  Among different chiefs the views of Paramount Chief Yovonie-Kangova the Second are presented in the following terms:

> "He said chieftaincy elections should not be politicized. He referred to the bill as critical for the future of this country's chieftaincy elections. He thanked the previous government for treating chieftaincy institution very seriously". (Standard times June 18, 2009)

The central issues of concern thus appear to be related to the centralization of the election procedures by the government, since the main political bodies to oversee the running of the elections are the government institutions, i.e. the central government; the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development; and the Provincial Secretary. Besides of overseeing the election process the government institutions have also been given the key responsibility of broadcasting the results of the elections.

### Historical Lessons as a Cause of Concern

Reflecting these views on the Chieftaincy Act in the historical perspective there seems to be cause of concern. The events leading to the Civil War outlined in this thesis argue that APC manipulation and interference in the Paramount Chieftaincy elections was an important reason why chiefs were ruling badly and in favour of the government rather than their subjects and that they lacked legitimacy, since they were not the populations' favored candidates. The Chieftaincy Act, which has been implemented by

the current APC-led government, contains some of these same elements, however, now within a legal framework. As the critical voices above noted, the Act enhances the possibility for the government to interfere in the Paramount Chief elections. Remembering the issues addressed by the SLPP in the 2004 National Symposium on Paramount Chieftaincy elections it was emphasized that the government had no business in being involved in the elections of the Paramount Chiefs. Rather, it should remain as an election of the chiefs by the population carried out in "traditional" ways. This view is further substantiated by Paramount Chief Yovonie-Kangova the Second who, as quoted above, thanked the previous SLPP-led government for treating the Chieftaincy seriously.

Thus, these perspectives on the Chieftaincy Act present two critical reflections on the future of the government-chieftaincy nexus. On the one hand, the Chieftaincy is still a highly potent factor in Sierra Leone politics. On the other hand, the APC government appears to continue in pursuing the same historical strategies towards the Chieftaincy. This is despite of the devastating effects this could have in terms of conflict-creation in line with the findings of this thesis.

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## Appendix 1: List of Interviews

| Number | Date | Title | Place | Type of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 26/3/2009 | Dr. Kwesi Anning, Head of research Department at | Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPCT), Accra, Ghana. | Recorded |
| 2. | 1/5/2009 | Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement (NGO) | Bo Town | Recorded |
| 3. | 4/6/2009 | Development Planning Officer, Madam Amara | Bo LDC, Bo District | Recorded |
| 4. | 4/6/2009 | Chief Administrator, Pujehun LDC. | Pujehun LDC, Pujehun District | Recorded |
| 5. | 7/6/2009 | Paramount Chief (Class A Chiefdom) | Porteru, Pujehun District | Recorded |
| 6. | 8/6/2009 | Paramount Chief Kangbai (Class A Chiefdom) | Bo Town Court Barrie, Bo Town | Recorded |
| 7. | 9/6/2009 | Chief Administrator, Bo LDC. | Bo LDC, Bo District | Recorded |
| 8. | 9/6/2009 | Youth Chairman, Tikonko Chiefdom Youth Council | Tikonko Chiefdom, Bo District | Recorded |
| 9. | 12/6/2009 | Chief Administrator, Kailahun LDC | Kailahun LDC, Kailahun District | Recorded |
| 10. | 13/06/2009, | Paramount | Pendembu, | Recorded |

| | | Chief (Class B Chiefdom) | Kailahun District | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. | 14/06/2009 | Acting Paramount Chief (Class A Chiefdom) | Kailahun, Kailahun District | Recorded |
| 12. | 14/06/2009 | Paramount Chief (Class C Chiefdom) | Daru, Kailahun District | Recorded |
| 13. | 15/06/2009 | Focused Group Interview with youth | Tikonko Chiefdom, Bo District | **Not** Recorded and Anonymous |
| 14. | 16/06/2009 | Focus group interview with youth | Moyamba Junction, Bo District | **Not** Recorded and Anonymous |
| 15. | 29/7/2009 | Permanent Secretary of Internal Affairs | Ministry of Local Government and Community Development | Recorded |

# Appendix 2: Interview-Guide

**Introductory:**
- **Presentation: Myself and research mission and what it shall be used for**
- **Ask whether it is ok to record the interview**
- **Ask whether interviewee wishes to stay anonymous**

**Local Government Act**
- **Has the Local Government Act provided more powers to the Local District Councils than to the Chiefs?**
- **Development funds: Controlled by LDC or the Chiefs?**
- **Do all chiefdom get the same amount of development funds? Are they politicized?**
- **Does political party affiliation have a say in chief/council/government relations?**
- **Are there any conflicts between the interests of councilors and chiefs?**
- **To which extent do the politicians and local councilors need/employ the chiefs to rally vote during election time?**
- **What is the distribution of local tax between the LDC and the chiefdoms council?**
- **What are the blurry areas in the Local Government Act? Are they causing conflict?**
- **Do the district councils have sufficient resources?**
- **Is the central government (in a de facto perspective) decentralizing powers to the LDC?**
- **How does the LDC generate revenues?**

**Courts and Accountability**
- **What characterizes the strongest classes of chiefdoms?**
- **What kinds of disputes are mediated in the local courts?**
- **What are the chiefs (de facto) linkages with the local courts?**
- **In what type of cases are people given fines and penalties?**
- **Are there any mechanism holding the chiefs accountable towards the local populations? E.g. Rituals, religion, supernatural, economic, kinship?**
- **How are the chieftaincy and the secret societies linked?**

**Chieftiancy Elections**
- **Who can candidate? Education, Resources, Lineage?**
- **Who can vote?**
- **Have there been any Paramount Chiefs from outside the ruling houses?**
- **Under what circumstances are the chiefs disposed by central government/LDC?**
- **Have central government interfered in the elections of Paramount Chiefs?**
- **If so, what were the implications?**

- What historical features make the ruling houses chiefly and traditional?
- Should Paramount Chieftaincy elections be democratized?
- What was Charles Margai's position towards the Chiefs?

## Youth
- Is there any cooperation between the LDC and the chiefdoms with local youth?
- Has the youth been empowered through the LGA?
- Is the chieftaincy especially marginalizing towards youth?

## Democratization
- What impact does democratization have on the chieftaincy? The secret societies? "Traditional" conflict resolution mechanisms?

## Conflict Perspectives
- Which features of chieftaincy practices is conflict creating?
- Which implications does political interference in the chieftaincy have for conflict creation?
- How has the chieftaincy responded to the new local government elections?
- Are they siding with candidates?
- Is government trying to force chiefs to interfere in the local elections
- Were extra taxes, fines, community labour, and customary law in general a significant reason why the civil war broke out?
- Have these fines and extra taxes started to occur again after the war?
- Is arbitrary fining more common in the poorer chiefdoms than the richer ones?
- Is political interference more common in richer chiefdoms than in poorer chiefdoms?

**Appendix 3: Number of Paramount Chiefs before, during and after the war**
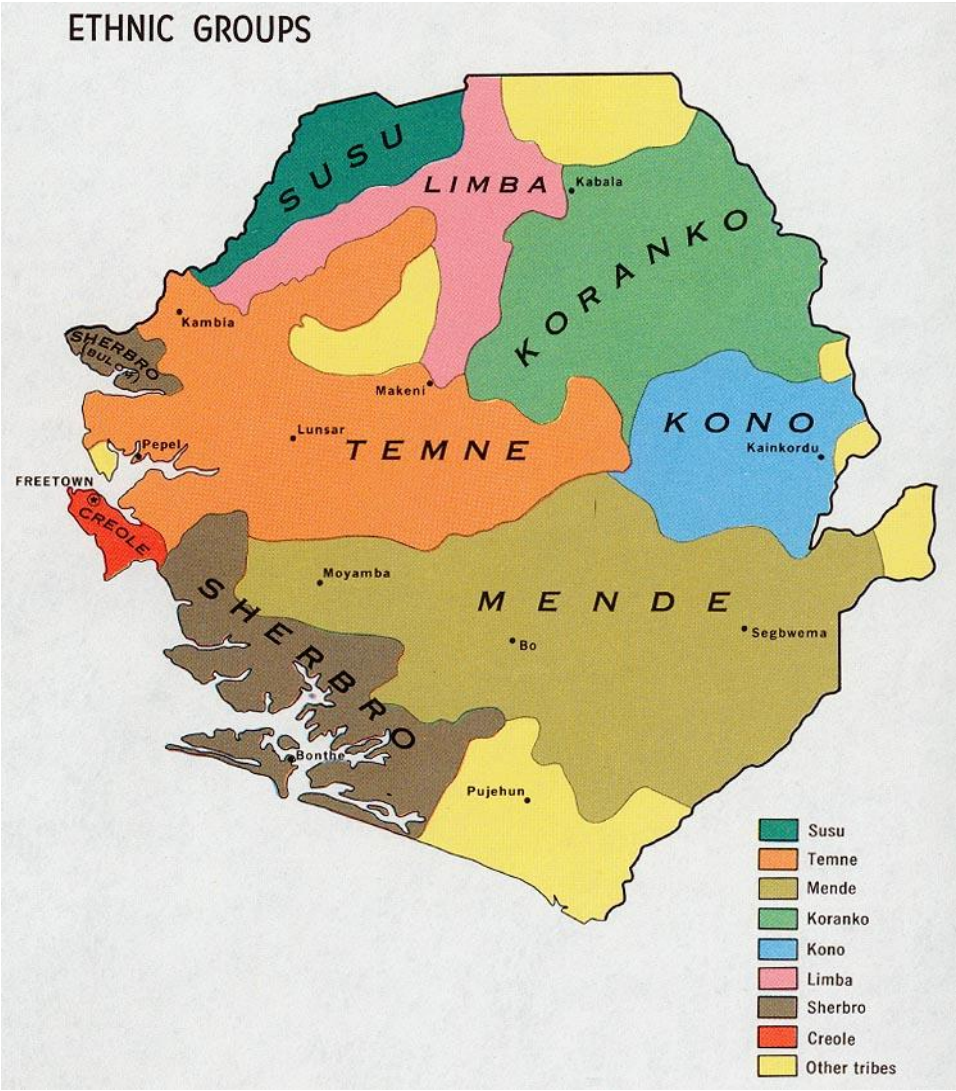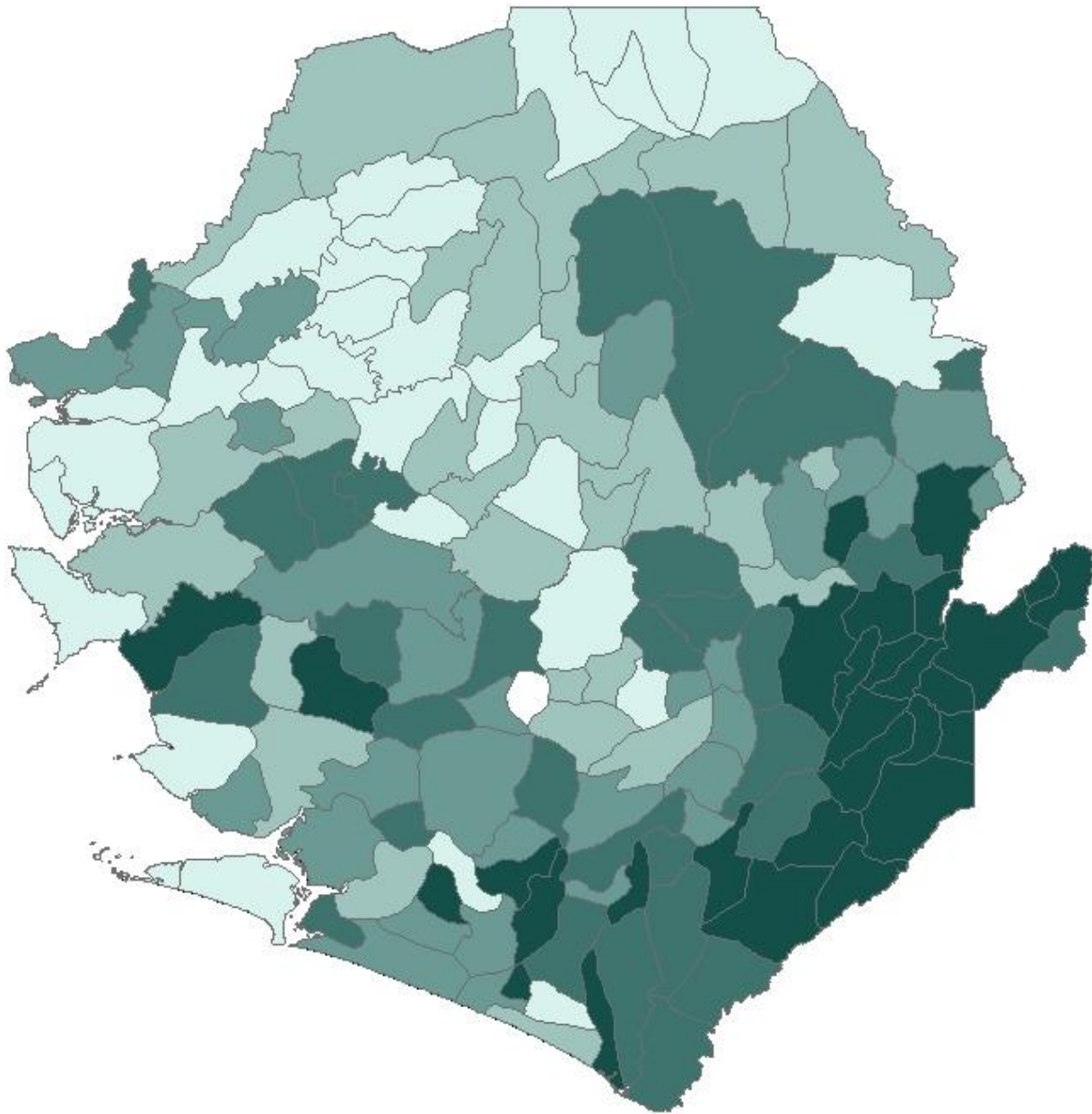


Years:

| 1991 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|------|------|------|------|
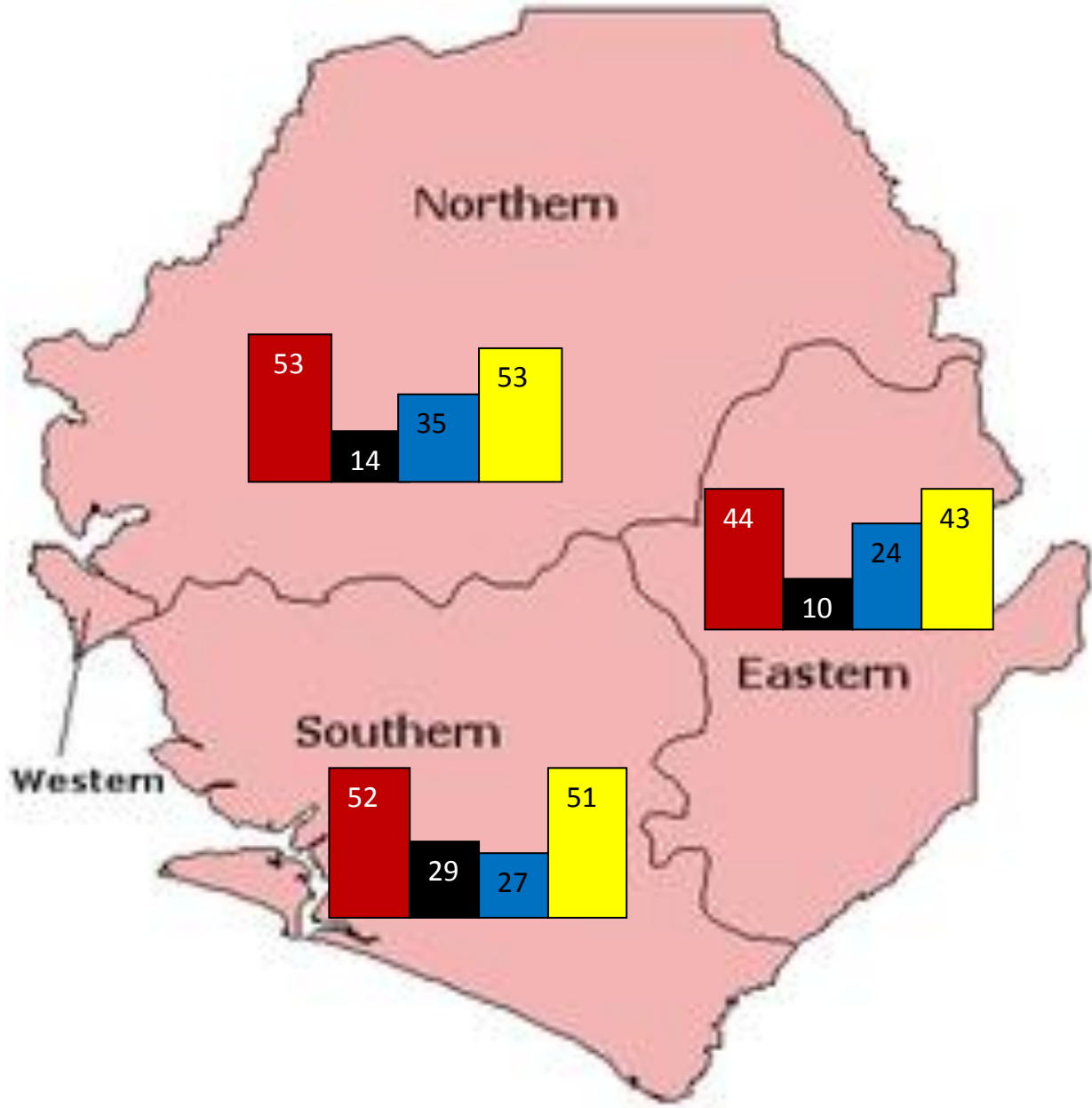
Source: Author's won construction based on UN (2003) Progress Report

## Appendix 4: Map of Ethnic Groups in Sierra Leone



Source: University of Texas Libraries

# Appendix 5: Conflict Victimization Index



Notes: Chiefdoms are shaded in quintiles according to the value of the conflict index for the chiefdom. Thence, the darker the area is, the higher the value on the conflict Victimization Index.  As indicated from the map, the highest value on the conflict victimization index was measured in the eastern region.
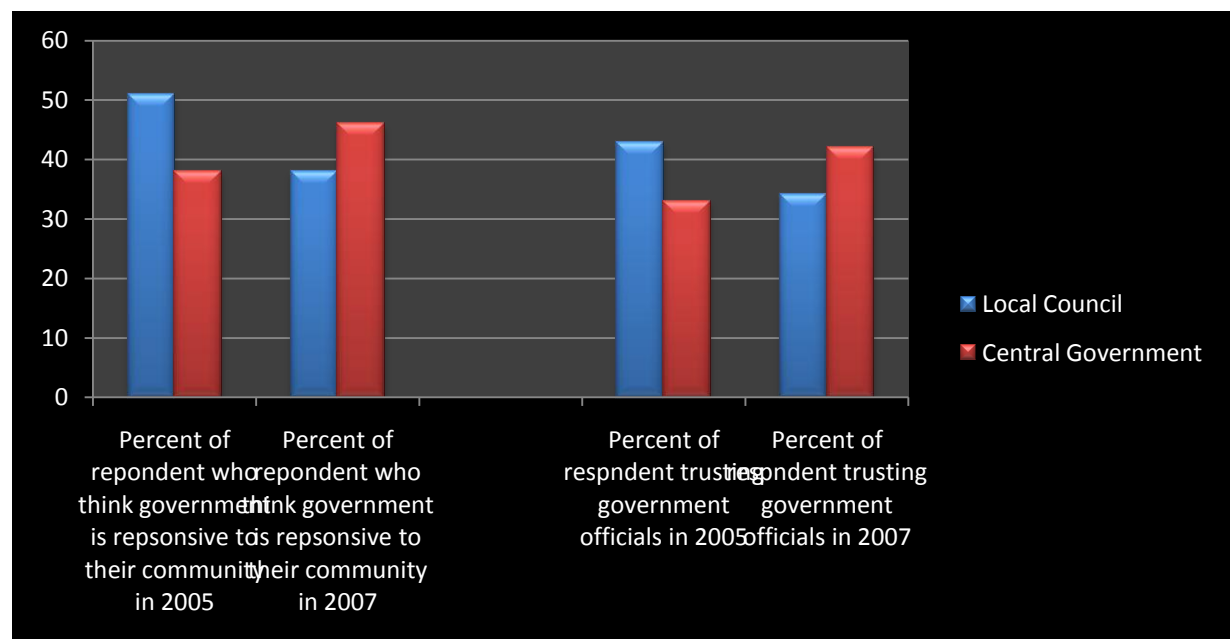
Source: Bellows and Miguel (2006) War and Local Institutions in Sierra Leone

## Appendix 6: Percent of Respondent Trusting Local and Magistrate Court officials

| Districts | Percent of Respondents Trusting | |
|---|---|---|
| | Local Court Officials | Magistrate Court Officials |
| Kailahun District | 31 | 11 |
| Kenema District | 39 | 46 |
| Kono District | 41 | 29 |
| Bombali District | 30 | 21 |
| Kambia District | 38 | 16 |
| Koinadugu District | 37 | 18 |
| Port Loco District | 49 | 50 |
| Tonkolili District | 39 | 36 |
| Bo District | 28 | 25 |
| Bonthe District | 43 | 36 |
| Moyamba District | 22 | 25 |
| Pujehun District | 31 | 40 |
| Average | 35.66 | 29.42 |

Source: IRCBP (2007) Table IIIB1.2

## Appendix 7: Changes in Relative Ranking of Central and Local Government



Source: IRCBP (2007), Table IIB2.1