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Zetterstrom-Sharp, Johanna T. 2017. 'I cover myself in the blood of Jesus': Born Again heritage making in Sierra Leone. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23(3), pp. 486-502. ISSN 1359-0987 [Article]

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2017. Zetterstrom-Sharp, J. 'I cover myself in the blood of Jesus': Born Again heritage making in Sierra Leone. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Forthcoming.

**Abstract:** This article concerns the risky terrain of heritage management in Sierra Leone and its navigation by devout Born Again Pentecostal Christians. It engages with the ever expanding Born Again movement and its narrative of rupture on the one hand, and the increasingly visible heritage sector and its focus on cultural continuity on the other. These positions appear irreconcilable: one experiences the past as a dangerous satanic realm, the other as a valuable resource. However, as this article explores, they frequently meet in the work place as many heritage professionals are also Born Again believers. I am interested in this meeting point as demonic channels and godly practices converge. I argue that Freetown's Born Again heritage professionals do not succeed in their roles despite their religion, but because of it.

**'I cover myself in the blood of Jesus': Born Again heritage making in Sierra Leone**

'The Bishop does respect tradition, because he is born in tradition...But as he grew up to realise, to distinguish, he try [sic] to see that these traditions are not good...But he is not condemning it-o, he is not saying these things are not good, its demonic, he's not saying that...You can judge for yourself, and you can prove it for yourself. You can take your own discretion about it, the reason being that you find your salvation for

yourself... There is no perfection in humanity. Christ says your righteousness is like a filthy rag before him. He says if you say you are not a sinner you deceive yourself.' (Christine. Interview 2014)

'And the holy spirit is not with them... Paul says in Corinthian that the body that we contain is the temple of God. And the only way this body can attain the spirit of God is when the body is clean. The body should be clean and pure. But if the body is in sin, it's difficult for the holy spirit to enter into it. Because the holy spirit does not dwell in unclean things—to be clean, you must be reborn.' (The Bishop. Sermon 2011)

The Bishop is the charismatic director of a large and impressive church near the centre of Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital city. This white tile-clad beacon, rising above the single-storey residences that line the street, is regularly packed out with church-goers occupying all available space; squashed on window ledges and along staircases, children squirming on laps or perched precariously on top of the first-floor railings. All are silent as the Bishop turns on his microphone, his booming voice carried through great big speakers; they take out their heavily thumbed Bibles and listen intently, underlining key passages and making notes in the margins. The Bishop's bible-based message is typically the culmination of a three to four hour Sunday service; the serious end to an otherwise celebratory occasion with singing, dancing, spoken prayer and enthusiastic donation. The passages underlined are the words of God; the Bishop gives these words earthly resonance by helping congregation members apply them to their own lives: how do you make the body 'clean'; find salvation; live a good and godly life inhabited

by the Holy Spirit? In line with recent work on ethics, this article focuses on the how, rather than the why, of Pentecostal transformation, shifting to attention from ‘what belief ‘is’, to what it ‘does’” (Daswani 2015: 13). Following Haynes call to expand analysis ‘beyond the space of the church’ (Haynes 2012: 123), I focus on what Pentecostal practice does in a particular professional space. I explore moments when bibles and their words are taken out of handbags and briefcases after church, consulted during meetings and lunch breaks, quoted from in heated debates and persuasive discussions. I am interested in the moments of reflection and judgement or, in the words of my friend above, taking ‘your own discretion’, where ambiguity emerges as professional priorities appear to conflict with Pentecostal anxieties. Arguably, there are no professional priorities in Sierra Leone where such tensions are more present than in those engaged in the project of post-colonial and post-conflict heritage making, as heritage professionals attempt to define and articulate pasts and traditions that their church seeks to eradicate. These therefore provide the ethnography that situates my argument.

In a discussion on the relationship between the ethical turn in anthropology and the anthropology of Christianity, Coleman (2015) focuses on the ‘varied edges of ethical practice’, arguing that is it in the ‘borderlands’ of seemingly oppositional ethical orientations that such positions are negotiated and reproduced. In a similar vein, for members of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost in Accra and London, it is ‘precisely through the incommensurability of practices internal to Pentecostalism...that Ghanaian Pentecostals rediscover what type of Christians they are and how they can remain committed’ (Daswani 2015: 28). This article focuses on one such borderland, exploring what Meyer (1999) has called the ‘enchantment’ of Pentecostal modernity where Satan not only recognizes the

reality of indigenous spirit worlds, but reinforces their potency through association with a powerful satanic underworld. It is suggested that this entails a process of 'remembering to forget'; victory over Satan can only be achieved if Satan's existence in everyday cultural life is a lived reality (Meyer 1998, 1999, 2004). I am interested in how this idea operates within a professionalized language of national heritage guardianship as Pentecostal Christians, or Born Again as they prefer to identify themselves in Freetown, negotiate their various roles in promoting and safeguarding the very practices and traditions their church seeks to eradicate.

In the above quotation the Bishop advises his congregation to keep the body 'clean and pure' through rebirth. Only through becoming Born Again and cutting ties with their pasts can they encounter the Spirit and fight the Devil. Rebirth is, however, not simply a matter of rupture. As noted by Christine - a faithful follower of the Bishop - it involves humbleness, an acceptance of imperfection and, as I focus on below, a daily commitment to 'judging for yourself' the path that these lines of rupture should follow. Below I explore how mastering the ability to make effective ethical judgements is central to the work of these Born Again heritage professionals as they negotiate daily risk and anxiety in their roles as guardians and promoters of Sierra Leone's national pasts and traditions. Not only does such mastery enable the temporary neutralisation of potentially dangerous objects, words, images and acts through the power of Jesus. It also helps cultivate and consolidate their own identity as Born Again, demonstrating their competence as moral Christians and the power of their faith in a formidable God.

## **Heritage and door to door extremists**

‘Drawing from her cultural diversity, plurality and history, Sierra Leone has been a multi-religious state, comprising African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity...However this triple religious heritage has also created the potential for crises and conflicts which could be exploited by those who uphold extreme religious viewpoints. The influence of such extreme viewpoints on the religious scene is already evidenced by street corner preachers and door-to-door evangelists.’ (SLNCP 2013: 69).

‘These are customs and traditions embedded in us since way back. And for you to just come and re-orientate us now to forget about those significant things, it is bad. How can you decipher positivism from negativism? What are you using to measure the positiveness or negativeness of that thing? What yard stick?...Let the Christians concentrate on their own church matters, let them concentrate on preaching on the essence of God being the supreme being and then let them leave customs and traditions to do their own thing, and do it positively.’ (Director of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. Interview 2014)

In April 2014 Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs finally launched the nation’s first cultural policy (SLNCP) after over a decade of delays and setbacks. Initially conceived with support and input from a series of UNESCO-led workshops in the 1980s, the document draws heavily on a ‘culture for development’ discourse. It sets out a proposal for how ‘rediscovering’,

‘reviving’, ‘promoting’ and ‘preserving’ a national culture for Sierra Leone can foster a more locally sensitive and ethically aware form of ‘poverty reduction and national development’. In line with UNESCO’s cultural mandate in the early 1990s, the document promotes both a relativistic view of culture that supports plurality, and a universalist view of ethics through shared human rights. The inherent utopian contradictions concerning universal ethics and cultural determination are deeply integrated into the official discourse of the Ministry as it competes for influence and funding with more prominent governmental bodies (Basu & Zetterstrom-Sharp 2015:56-82, Zetterstrom-Sharp 2012). An important part of this is setting the Ministry up as the gatekeeper of Sierra Leone’s ‘multiculturalism’, cultural ‘plurality’ and ‘diversity’: terms that have particular resonance given the nation’s recent civil war, and that have since anchored its official national narratives. In tension with this vision however, are cultural practices that do not easily align with a narrative of universal ethics such as female circumcision, under age marriage and, as quoted above, those evangelists with ‘extreme religious viewpoints’.

The second passage quoted above is taken from an interview I conducted with the Director of Culture at the Ministry in 2014 where he expanded upon the threat of Christianity’s Pentecostal extremities. His concern was not the devotion and commitment of the expanding Born Again community to their church. Nor particularly the way many of these churches encourage their congregation to ‘forget’ those ‘customs and traditions’ that his Ministry seeks to promote. Rather it was the point at which these positions converge; where Born Again Christians sought to bring ‘matters of the church’ into the public domain of the Ministry. The

‘viewpoints’ themselves were less of a concern than the ‘door-to-door’ method of making them known.

It is both the way in which such ‘viewpoints’ are reached and maintained, and the ways in which they are spread, that have contributed to recent work on Pentecostal ethics as a fertile borderland (Coleman 2015). It has been argued that the success of Pentecostal Christianity’s commitment to disseminating a particular world view has pushed the faith to the borders of what might be considered acceptable or interesting as a site of anthropological enquiry. It has also been argued that the Pentecostal certainties that are ‘meant for export’ are cultivated at moments where they meet uncertainties; where they are challenged by other world views (Coleman 2015: 284). Addressing the first kind of borderland, Harding (1991), and others (Cannell 2005 and 2006, Robbins 2003), have engaged with the idea of Christianity as anthropology’s ‘repressed’ and ‘repugnant cultural Other’ (Cannell 2006, Harding 1991). Christians become ‘matter out of place’, ‘*anti-* and not simply *nonmodern*; powerful, in possession of their own voice; and thus to be kept away from the conceptual and political space occupied by vulnerable ethnic minorities or the colonized’ (Coleman 2015: 276). As is widely observed, this problematic rests on anthropology’s foundational entanglements with imperialism and Protestant evangelism: this includes its disciplinary categorisations of personhood and alterity, and its defence of continuity and self-determination. Christianity, it is argued, has proved to be both the most ‘tediously familiar’ and ‘threatening’ of world religions due to its ontological and spatial proximity to both anthropology and anthropologists (Cannell 2006). Sharing the concerns of Sierra Leone’s Director of Culture, it threatens because it has been so successful, instituting widespread change across the world as a result of outward



looking evangelical activity that continues at great pace through the Born Again movement.

Emerging at this borderland is a debate over continuity: to what extent can Pentecostalism be understood as an adoption of new ways of thinking and behaving over the continuation of existing forms? Sierra Leone's 'triple religious heritage' is deeply engrained in the nation's national narrative which celebrates the significant cultural plurality that makes up this small former British colony seeking to re-establish its global identity (Zetterstrom-Sharp 2015). It should be noted here that this narrative might also be understood as a position coded in particular by Christianity given its emphasis upon human rights and self-determination; a discourse shown to have emerged within a Protestant intellectual theology (Witte & Alexander 2010). However, within the SLNCP, Christianity emerges as an embedded belief system comparable to both Islam and 'African traditional religion' as a legitimately historical and 'Sierra Leonean' phenomenon. The Born Again movement on the other hand is marked as something different; arguably a reflection of the way that Born Again Christians mark themselves as fundamentally different from their former Christian, or otherwise, selves. The negotiation of the dualities of Pauline conversion - when converts 'make a complete break with the past' through spiritual rebirth (Meyer 1998) - has received a lot of attention, in particular regarding the apparent contradictions that emerge as converts put this break into practice (Daswani 2015, Engelke 2010). Pentecostal rupture concerns the central belief that the body is the location of an ongoing battle between God and Satan fought through spirit possession. A successful believer counters Satanic possession by severing the channels activated by (sometimes unidentified) un-godly acts committed in the past, such as

initiation into societies who use non-Christian spiritual powers, seeking non-Christian spiritual guidance, engaging in extra marital sex or falling prey to ungodly emotions such as jealousy. Aside from the narrative of personal transformation, a convert must also encourage possession by the Holy Spirit through what Daswani (2016) terms 'virtuous action', or the ongoing commitment to godly practice. Where contradictions emerge, however, is within the borderlines of what is 'virtuous' and what is not; as the Director of Culture observed, 'with what yard-stick' is godly action measured?

Although the rhetoric of rupture emerges from the concrete duality of God and the Devil, or good and evil, it has been argued that this borderland is flexible and partial, constructed on an individual and momentary basis. Meyer (1999) and Engelke (2010), for example, demonstrate how Pentecostal institutions in Ghana and Zimbabwe construct a Christian past which gives their respective churches legitimacy and longevity, enabling church leaders to engage with national histories in a meaningful and productive way as they disengage with non-Christian pasts. The recent debate over the destruction of statues mounted in the Parliament House of Papua New Guinea (PNG) by the House Speaker is testament to the very different ways the national pasts of a Christian nation may be imagined and acted upon (Bialecki & Daswani 2015). Carved figures that were themselves commissioned as 'invented tradition' to reflect a politicised and Christianised message of 'unity in diversity' were destroyed on the basis that the presence of non-Christian iconography in a governmental building had the effect of inviting Satan into government affairs. The resulting debate positioned the President of PNG and the curator of the national museum, both Christians themselves, against the House Speaker with Church representatives emotionally

engaged on both sides (*ibid*). Both sides made morally charged claims over the extent to which the destruction amounted to a truly Christian act, and the effects of such an act on the future of PNG as a progressive Christian nation. Arguably a public debate over what constitutes a virtuous Christian nationhood at such a high level is unlikely in a context like Sierra Leone, not least because politicians rarely identify publically with any religion. However, future-orientated debates over what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘bad’ heritage are well rehearsed and not entirely divorced from Christian codes of practice given their location within a broader framework of universal ethics.

The PNG case emerged as a debate over the relationship between a pre-Christian past and a national future, with both sides making multiple claims over the avenues of moral continuity and discontinuity that can and should connect them. In a similar vein, national heritage making in Sierra Leone rests on a negotiation of Sierra Leone’s non-Christian traditions and a selection of those elements that are compatible with broader outward facing aspirations of a modern, globalised nation (ca. Meyer 2015: 252-288). The practice of female genital cutting (FGC) is probably the most-high profile debate in this context. The current President, Ernest Bai Koroma, has been reluctant to enact contentious legislation permanently banning the practice on girls under 18 despite openly condemning it in parliament. This debate has in the press often been posited as one influenced by religion with critics likely to draw on a Christian language of the sanctity of the body and will of the individual (for example Awoko 2016). The defence of FGC is often portrayed as an Islamic position, highlighting a connection between forms of West African Islam and their incorporation of indigenous cosmology and practice. Of course, in practice these positions are far less polarised and stable,

and this is also acknowledged in the press. As I have argued elsewhere, a great deal of ambiguity emerges as the relevance and value of Sierra Leone's more problematic heritage is negotiated, including FGC as an important part of female initiation into adulthood (Basu & Zetterstrom-Sharp 2015, Zetterstrom-Sharp 2012: 176-186).

Returning to the Papuan figures, it should also be recognised that this was more than a tussle over virtuous national representation, but a violence enacted due to the apparent belief that not only were the figures immoral, but they were dangerous. During Sierra Leone's recent and horrifying Ebola outbreak FGC took on a new danger as it emerged that the practice had played a role in spreading this deadly virus, resulting in a temporary ban that ended after the official Ebola-free declaration in November 2015. As with the Papuan figures, however, heritage professionals must navigate a much broader danger associated with the widely recognized and very tangible nature of Sierra Leone's powerful spirit world. Not least its practical application by Sierra Leone Army soldiers, local militias, paramount chiefs and politicians alike during the war (Richards 2009; Richards 1993; Peters 2011), and the deep scars left in the local perception of initiation societies and practitioners as a result (Ferme 2001; Ferme and Hoffman 2004). The SLNCP attempts this navigation through an overriding ambiguity that refers to the value of 'traditional knowledge', 'traditional cultural institutions', 'traditional healthcare' and 'traditional beliefs and value systems', with little specificity with regards to what each of these categories is made up of. At a Ministerial level there is a drive to articulate and promote 'positive' Sierra Leonean traditions. In practice this emerges as staged dance performances and organised masquerades in designated public spaces such as the national stadium.

Artist commissions featuring drums, wild animals, anti-conflict messages and busy market women are also popular, as is the wearing of local fabrics and beads, particularly if in the national colours of Sierra Leone: green, white, and blue. These models leave potentially dangerous or politically difficult cultural practices unspoken and to one side, occasionally resurfacing, unwelcomed, as uninvited guests to cultural performances or unexpected illnesses caused by malevolent spirits.

Meyer's recent reflection on the relationship between Christianity, post-colonialism and heritage in Ghana explores a characteristically similar process of negotiation as heritage elites react against the negative portrayal of Ghanaian traditional life in the Pentecostal-dominated film industry. Rather they seek a process of heritage invention and selection that promotes a positive image of Ghana that is at ease with the outward facing project of modernisation (Meyer 2015: 252-288). Meyer highlights a duality, whereby those Pentecostal Christians who continue to experience Ghanaian heritage as 'harmful' tend see no value in it, meanwhile those who champion a 'positive' national heritage narrative often observe it as relatively 'harmless' (2015: 259). In what follows I argue that for these Born Again heritage professionals in Freetown rather, it is precisely because they experience the environment they work in as harmful that they are able to render it (momentarily) harmless. This working environment means that employees encounter risk everyday as they come into contact with people, actions and things that they believe may conceal Satanic forces. I suggest that the careful negotiation of that risk through professional and ethical decision making is central to their roles; as I will discuss, only through such action are they able to ensure God's institutional and personal protection.

Daswani convincingly argues that it is moments of ethical practice such as this – when decisions are made and acted upon on the risky borderlines of what is acceptable (or safe) – that Pentecostal Christians ‘rediscover what type of Christians they are and how they can remain committed’ (2015: 27). Coleman’s emphasis upon ‘the fertility of borders’ highlights how ‘ethical practice can become productive precisely through the chronic assertion and deployment of edges’ (2015: 277). Making decisions about how to act and behave when encountering risk is thus about more than creating and reinforcing edges, or simply deciding what is right and what is wrong. It is also about demonstrating and, as Coleman argues (2016: 281), testing, the ability of converts to make the right decisions and the power of God’s guidance in doing so. In this sense, borderlands can be understood as productive spaces that may be sought out rather than avoided. They may be spaces where Pentecostal Christians cultivate and reinforce their own faith but also, arguably, God’s faith in their own identity as morally competent Christians.

This discussion of ethical practice is important because what follows is an exploration of the decisions that Born Again heritage professionals make as they reflect on their own professional commitments to articulating, promoting and safeguarding a past that their church seeks to transform. It is also important to the decisions I have made as an anthropologist with regards to protecting these professionals from potential criticism in a professional space where, as outlined above, Born Again Christians are also regarded as a threat to this past. This threat, articulated by both the SLNCP and the professional concerns of those who are in charge of implementing it, emerges at the very same borderland that my

informants negotiate in their roles. This concerns the moment where a worldview that says Satan's presence on earth is enabled by the continuation of particular traditions lies in tension with the ways in which these traditions re-emerge as a valuable national heritage. In what follows I argue that for these Born Again professionals it is because of their faith, rather than despite it, that they are successful in their roles, countering broader political assumptions that these two positions are irreconcilable. I also argue that this is a productive space, self-cultivating and reinforcing a powerful Born Again identity.

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Sierra Leone between 2010 and 2014 exploring the tensions that emerged as a powerful global discourse of 'culture for development' framed high level re-articulations of a national heritage. This multi-sited project followed these tensions through work by international and local NGO's, policy documents and meetings at the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, work led by the British Council, UNESCO World Heritage applications, a British-led capacity building programme at the National Museum, the recently opened Peace and Conflict Museum, and the development and teaching of the school curriculum. 'Heritage professionals' is thus applied with a broad brush incorporating anyone who's job concerns the articulation, public dissemination or safeguarding of Sierra Leone's past and its many cultural traditions. Although not the focus of this wider research, Born Again codes of practice were woven through many of these sites indicating the immense popularity of Pentecostal doctrine, in particular within this economic milieu of Freetown's literate middle classes. I follow these threads below, grounding them in sermons delivered at one of Freetown's more prominent Pentecostal mega-churches. I have chosen to retain a level of ambiguity and anonymity with regards

to the identity of the individuals that informed this article, and the spaces and times in which our interesting discussions took place.

### **Two-Faced Devil**

Freetown's Born Again community is extensive and yet disparate. Conforming to broader characterisations of Pentecostalism, a focus on individual interpretation of the gospel has resulted in a series of independently run churches with huge variation in the behaviours and experiences manifest in services. There is a great deal of competition within this nebulous landscape and Born Again Christians are not only engaged in the outward facing evangelisation of the non-or-wrong-Christian, but also in encouraging ready converts to jump ship and join new congregations. Encouraging the Holy Spirit is not only a matter of re-birth, but a chronic commitment to godly practice. Who has the right and experience to interpret the Bible and successfully determine what such godly practice looks like is a matter of debate, and so decisions regarding what church to sign up to are not taken lightly. The majority of Born Again that I encountered through fieldwork chose large and well established churches whose success in receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghost was evident through the sheer amount of wealth that supported them.

One such Church had recently completed the construction of a brand new church building in Freetown. An appropriate stage for spiritual warfare, this imposing spire rises high above the single storey residences and small businesses that line the network of streets surrounding it. The main entrance is accessed through a two storey car park, obliging congregation members to wind their way through and admire the fruits of Gods work – Land Rovers, Mercedes, and BMW SUVs –



upon entering and exiting the building. The building itself is tiled inside and out in Sierra Leone's national colours – green, white and blue – a popular colour choice for pastors leading the service, announcing that the battle-outcomes have important national, as well as personal, consequences. Perhaps most impressive is the apparently limitless supply of generator-powered electricity, running numerous lights and large speakers throughout the long seven to eight hour services, and sometimes well into the night. A rare occurrence in a capital city that sees only a few hours of electricity supplied by the National Grid a day, perhaps indicating what could be achieved for Sierra Leone's infrastructure if only God's battle against evil became a national cause (for a comparative discussion of the nationalisation of salvation in Zambia see Haynes 2012: 129-131).

Like the similar mega-churches in Nigeria, Ghana or Latin America (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001; Gifford 2004; Marshall-Fratani 2001), this Church's battle between good and evil is articulated as a global concern, mediated publically through images, films, posters, records, and banners, yet fought in the body through ideas of individual spiritual versus satanic possession. The Church shares a focus on the experience of the Holy Ghost through the practice of spiritual gifts, recognising that God's power, as with Satan's, is this-worldly. Whilst Satan seeks bodily possession through enticing people into forms of behaviour that result in misfortune, God's presence is felt through possession by the Holy Spirit, or spirit baptism. This Church's engagement with such baptism is two-fold; services are designed to incite 'good' practices that encourage the presence of the Holy Ghost whilst detecting and discouraging 'evil' practices that enable possession by the Devil.

This work is primarily achieved through weekly Sunday services, bolstered by week long revivals (reviving dwindling faith and strengthening the presence of the Holy Spirit) and deliverance ceremonies (delivering diabolic forces from the body and weakening Satan's power). Standard services follow a formula of praise and worship, collection ('envelopes'), ministration, and message. Praise (joyous singing and dancing) and worship (spoken prayer) is led by one of many pastors and focuses on encouraging the Spirit to manifest itself first in the Church and second in the bodies of those present. Congregation members are both led in prayer and encouraged to pray privately during moments of silence, followed by the very public act of collection. Loud joyful music is played as congregation members dance their way to a large font at the front of the heavily lit pulpit to deposit their donations in envelopes, after which the collection is named. The procession is led by the exuberant and energetic Director of the church, who bears the title of Bishop, and his stylish wife. Envelopes is an important part of encouraging the spirit as a public articulation of good practice, encompassing commitment to the Church, personal charity, and a claim to asceticism: people give generously. It is also a chance to 'bluff', demonstrating Gods favour by strutting your stuff in your Sunday Best with starched two-piece suits, elaborate head gear and shiny new handbags.

Ministration is a Bible based sermon lead by the Bishop that centres on a key message, often associated with the detection of Satan and his demons through the recognition of devilish practices, or the triumph of God over Satan through the observance of godly practice. Congregation members take notes, underlining key passages in the Bible and jotting down godly instruction in notebooks for revision at a later date. A popular theme is the deviousness of Satan and his ability to trick

and deceive, such as was the focus of a sermon titled 'From Shadow to Reality' delivered one hot Sunday afternoon. In a loud and commanding voice, the Bishop began:

'We are all born in darkness, but through our faith Jesus shines the light. One would think that when you have found Papa God, you have eternal light, but of course for some, darkness returns because they lose faith, they forget who they are. But His love is so strong that he will *show us the dawn* again.'

'Showing us the dawn' concerned in this case revealing the 'two faced' nature of the Devil:

'People all over the world have two faces: a good face and a devilish bad face. They look nice on the one hand and do disturbing things on the other. The Devil has many faces and uses his faces to trick and to lie. Watch yourself, your sons, your husbands, your daughters, the people you surround yourself with. Watch carefully and with Gods glory you will reveal it [Satan] in them.'

He continued to list 'two-faced behaviour', giving examples. A young man goes to church on a Sunday and listens to Christian music with his family; on Monday he goes out clubbing, listening to 'Jabba' and smoking pot. A woman is drawn to a man because of his fine suit and gold watch, but when his money dries up, she leaves. A child is taken by his parents to church in the morning where he learns to praise God; in the afternoon he is taken to be initiated into a hunting society

where he learns to praise the Devil. A Christian couple marry and want a child. Many years pass without success and one day the wife suddenly falls pregnant, but when the child reaches twenty-one, he unexpectedly dies; she had given up on waiting for Jesus and had visited a 'witch-doctor' instead.

The Bishop's sermon had been attended by some friends, Paul and Christine, and was discussed the following morning. Paul and Christine work for a well-connected and public facing organisation which I will refer to as the 'Cultural Centre' from now on. Given the Cultural Centre's role in safeguarding and building public awareness of Sierra Leone's cultural heritage, contact with practitioners of non-Christian spiritual powers, such as those involved in making and performing masquerade, cannot be avoided. Paul and Christine's roles also involve work with objects used directly to channel such forces, such as divination equipment, masks, or bundles of medicine. As such, their profession puts them at considerable risk given their proximity to channels used by the Devil to activate his presence on earth. Jesus therefore plays a very active role in providing personal and institutional protection; Bibles are carried in to work and consulted during breaks and prayers are cast before work starts, rooms are entered, and meetings are begun. The Word of God is however also a source of amusement. An argument had ensued that Monday morning after the elderly security guard was found napping on a bench in the shade when Christine came to work. She had chided him (somewhat affectionately), saying that the Devil had taken him hostage. His uniform (a tattered dark brown short-sleeve suit) said 'security' on it: 'He looks like security on the one hand, but on the other he thinks he is asleep at home in his compound! Two-faced!'. .

The sermon was returned to later on a more serious note as Paul explained the difference between ‘juju masks’ and ‘entertainment masks’, and why it was that the Devil could be detected behind both. Sierra Leone’s rich masquerading traditions encompass masked beings (widely known as *devils*, derivative of earlier Christian missionary activity) that are experienced as powerful and dangerous, such as the Matoma or the hunting society devils, alongside those that have a more informal function such as the widespread Gongoli or largely Freetown based Jollie and Ode-lay. Neither category is fixed - indeed attempts to regulate and popularize the more threatening devils as heritage entertainment have a long history through colonial durbars and cultural festivals - however they govern expectations and behaviours of spectators, and precautions taken by attendants. By referring to ‘juju’, Paul uses a common British and French colonial term to describe non-Christian religious practice that employs objects as vectors for spiritual, and in this case Satanic, forces. Applied in this context, Paul considers ‘juju masks’ to be spiritually active, able to cause harm or make mischief . Paul noted how although ‘not all masks have juju’, Born Again believers remain cautious because they ‘represent something that is not human’:

‘The Devil likes dark things and dark places: he likes to hide. All masks have a side you can see, and a side you cannot. Like the Bishop said, they are two faced. You cannot see the whole thing. Even the Gongoli, when they are worn, you do not know [who is behind it].’

Explaining how it is that he is able to work with masks, despite their association with the Devil, Paul continued:

‘Before I became Born Again [my uncle], who was already Born Again, told me to pray everyday I came to work. I prayed. Prayer is like taking a medicinal pill. Everyday you encounter danger, and everyday you must protect yourself. Everyday, when I enter the [office], I cover myself in the blood of Jesus. When you cover yourself all things must bow. When the Devil sees the blood of Jesus he will not see red, he will see fire and he will scatter. He cannot penetrate it. So when people come, I can touch these things like they are furnitures [sic]. I say to people, you can just touch it like it is a costume, nothing more.

The relationship between belief and practice and the affordance of protection for staff was further clarified during a discussion with Paul a few weeks later. I had recently returned from a visit to a friend, John’s, village in the North. I was recounting a story I had heard about John’s uncle whose blood line connected him to the village chief. John’s maternal grandfather was widely known to have been shot with a witch-gun in his old age, rendering him blind. The family also had strong ties with the local Poro society, a term used across Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea to refer to the primary initiation society for young men marking the transition into adulthood. The two oldest boys in the family had completed initiation with titles that indicated their high standing in the society, or ‘graduating with honours’ John put it. John’s youngest brother, David, was a devout and energetic Pentecostal Christian and the story about their uncle arose during a heated debate over David’s claim that the family should stop ‘meddling with juju’. During the war, their uncle was shot with a bullet as they fled their village when it was overtaken by Revolutionary United Front fighters. Although the bullet pierced his t-shirt, it did not pierce his flesh; a feat made possible because

he was wearing a protective vest underneath it. A family relative had asked David why God had not been able to stop their village from being destroyed, whilst this single vest had saved their uncle's life.

Returning to my conversation with Paul at the Cultural Centre, I asked whether he believed this story to be true. Could a magic shirt really save a human life? His answer was that he could not believe that the shirt was effective, because he believed in Jesus. This did not mean, however, that the shirt was not effective on John's uncle:

Johanna: what about that man who got up and walked after he was shot, was it a trick?

Paul: Look at it like this. If I wore that shirt it would not work like that. It would sit like any ordinary shirt. Like this (points to his button-up cotton work shirt). If someone shot me now, I would pray that I did not die. The same if I wore that shirt. That man that wore that shirt, he will suffer-o. Maybe he did not die, but it will not end well. I believe in Jesus, that man believes in juju.

Paul's comment highlights his understanding that the power of this shirt lay not in its inherent material properties, but in the embodied practice of belief that surrounded its use (for a similar discussion see Meyer 2015: 225-227, for embodied 'technologies of dress' in a non-Pentecostal context see Richards 2009).

For Paul, prayer has the ability to neutralise objects that have been, or may be,

used to channel demonic forces. It thus offers protection, not only for himself, but also others who might encounter the kinds of things and practices his institution makes publically accessible. It would be tempting interpret Paul's assurance that prayer is like 'taking a medicinal pill' as prayer being akin to a benevolent cure: a kind of incantation or spell that counteracts malevolent forces using the same kind of 'magic'. It is however important to situate this within the context of daily 'godly practice' foregrounded the Bishop without which the 'blood of Jesus' would have no effect. Christine clarified this as she highlighted the importance of scripture to the Church during a comparison of what she called the 'false churches' and the 'true Church of Jesus Christ' in the treatment of illness:

'The majority of the Pentecostal churches in Sierra Leone, they have the short-cut way of doing things. Say if you are sick, and then you go to a medical doctor and the medical doctor treats you, but you did not see any improvement in your health. Then you go down to tradition. Tradition will say "oh among your family somebody is there that is bewitching you and you are not getting well. The sickness is not an ordinary sickness." And then tradition will say "we have a series of juju we will use on your skin, where the place is sick, and then that automatically will heal you." And then, when tradition does not help, you decide "so let me go to the Pentecostal Church." You find yourself in a Church that almost is similar to tradition. When you go there, the Church will say "OK, one of your relatives has bewitched you" - the same thing from the juju man, it is the same thing that the pastor is saying again. And so as a result of that, they say you need to go through three days' worship and bathing, and then you apply oil, you have to lick the salt, you have to use this water, there is a small pot that they will give to



you. You have to holler the blood of Jesus. This is the same charm, the same tradition, you will find. It is short-cut and it is misused. It will not work.’

She continued, outlining why her Church provided a more effective solution to dealing with illness through its opposition to ‘tradition’:

‘My pastor tells me to turn to Jesus. Only God has the power to get rid of Lucifer the Devil...at the mention of Christ’s name what happens? He will panic! He will demolish! He will not come! ...the only thing you need is to be fervent. You need to be fervent in prayer, you need to be fervent in reading scripture, you need to have the spirit of discernment: that is to distinguish between good and evil ways of doing things.’

Christine’s critique of Sierra Leone’s ‘false churches’ suggests that the ‘short-cut way of doing things’, in this case the application of substances by an associated pastor (or indeed a ‘medical doctor’ or traditional healer), would be unsuccessful in providing a long-term cure for a sickness bought on by the Devil. Rather she considered the power of Jesus to lie in the adherence to a broader set of practices and behaviours, defined as prayer, Bible study, and, again drawing on the Bishop’s sermon, doing things in the everyday in a ‘good’ or ‘godly’ manner. Paul’s insistence that prayer is like ‘taking a medicinal pill’ may as such be understood as referring to its effectiveness in the provision of protection, rather than the ease with which it is administered. It is not enough to call on the blood of Jesus; this must be done within a broader regime of practice for it to be successful.

### **Addressing the Spirit of Discernment**

Like the Bishop's sermon, Christine's list of godly practice concerned acts that may be situated within the public sphere of the church, or the private sphere of the home. In the following section I explore how 'the spirit of discernment' is also central to the subtler negotiations that occur as staff at the Cultural Centre attempt to transform what has the potential to be a demonic space, into what they call a 'safe house'. The public-facing nature of the Cultural Centre means that its employees are approached as informed professionals who are in a position to educate people about Sierra Leone's history and traditions. They are also invited as representatives of both their institution, and Sierra Leone's heritage sector more broadly, to speak at public events or other public platforms, such as the radio. For Born Again staff, this can be problematic.

A few years ago Adama was approached to feature in a short documentary about heritage in Sierra Leone. As a woman associated with the Cultural Centre, her particular contribution would be to speak about female initiation societies. Adama grew up as a Methodist in a rural village to the north-west of Freetown, moving to the capital city in her early teens. Like the majority of women in Sierra Leone, initiation into Bundu - one of the societies that marks and creates the transition into adulthood for women - was considered an important event in her life by her family. This took place in Freetown where she was removed as a child from the family home for a period of seclusion, training and learning, and returned as an adult with a new name and in possession of new knowledge. When she joined her new church and became Born Again, a focus of her conversion was cleansing the body of demonic forces Adama claims were put inside her during this period of seclusion. Like many conversion stories, this is described as an emotionally and physically intensive experience that caused her to weep with joy as she was

released from Satanic bondages that had hitherto caused her pain and unhappiness. This experience of release was not only about the physical removal of spiritual demons, but also about the knowledge they had imparted. As she states, when she became reborn she 'forgot everything'.

Appearing on a documentary as an authority on Bundu, therefore, was not straightforward. Her fears included the effect this would have on her reputation as a moral person within the Church; being seen to know 'too much' might cause congregation members to question the extent to which she had indeed 'forgotten' her experience. Such a judgement was more than a cause for embarrassment, but a potentially dangerous position that would see her behaving in a contradictory way, claiming on the one hand to denounce this part of her life and on the other, talking openly about it. If such 'two faced behaviour' was not judged as a sign that she had direct dealings with the devil, it would nonetheless put her at greater risk of devilish attack since it may weaken the presence of the Holy Ghost in her life. Adama agreed to be interviewed, but her short contribution steers clear of the initiation period focusing on the appearance of the societies main masquerader, in this case the Soweï, at the beginning and end of the period of seclusion. It is perhaps unsurprising that the other two and more prominent contributors are both men.

On other occasions, where Born Again staff were asked to perform the role of a knowledgeable representative, they arrived at solutions that enabled them to completely step away from such associations. Not so long ago Paul was approached by one of Freetown's 'hunting societies' who wanted to establish a professional connection with the Centre. It is briefly worth noting that hunting

societies in this contemporary urban context are often formal male associations that are largely focused on the making and performance of masquerade. They take their name from traditionally rural hunting associations that were historically responsible for hunting game, but also for the provision of protection from human and animal dangers. Historical narratives surrounding such associations across the Mano River region (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea) highlight their command of weaponry, secret knowledge and protective substances related to both hunting and warfare (Ferme & Hoffman 2004). However more recently this translated in an urban context into involvement in secretive political dealings, often branding such associations with political thuggery and intimidation. Both rural and urban hunting militias played a prominent role in Sierra Leone's civil war officially recognised by the government as the Civil Defence Force but also known by the Mende term *kamajor*. Today, Freetown's hunting societies retain a reputation for a propensity for politically motivated violence and a command of powerful substances, however they have become far more aligned with Freetown's Ode-lay, Ojeh and Jollie associations that share roots in Yoruba masquerade from south-eastern Nigeria (Nunley 1987). Hunting society masquerades joins these other Freetown based societies for the popular Easter Monday parade through the centre of town, but they may all also be invited to perform at private celebrations and anniversaries by patrons as well as government organised events such as independence day celebrations. Hunting societies are recognised as being both more powerful and less predictable than the Ode-lay, Ojeh and Jollie. As a (non-Pentecostal) friend clarified, whilst you might invite an Ode-lay devil into your church to celebrate your wedding, you are more likely to invite a hunting devil to a political rally.

The approach to the Cultural Centre by one such hunting society was partially politically motivated, and may be understood as a form of political patronage resulting from involvement in the institution of a member of Freetown's Mayoral council. This political association had already resulted in encounters with other hunting societies during Easter Monday parades where the office compound was used by devils and their attendants as a place to cool down. Paul and his Born Again colleagues stay well clear of such visits, closing the doors to their offices and, as he commented, 'act like they are not there'. This particular approach was, however, less easy to ignore since the society had offered one of their elaborate headdresses as a gift to the Centre and sought to publicise the event over the TV and radio, and to issue a press release noting the mutual support between the two institutions. Although Paul was happy to accept the gift quietly, he was concerned for the spiritual welfare of the Cultural Centre due to the increasingly public nature of the event and his own public identity as Born Again.

He explained his predicament. Were he to refuse to endorse the connection, or to try to limit its public appeal, he feared that the society might seek retaliation by sending 'boys' round to vandalize the office compound or intimidate staff, or that they might use their magic to cause misfortune or illness within the institution. Acceptance on the grounds proposed by the society was however also problematic, amounting to a public act of alliance with individuals both he and his Church knew to be dealing with devilish powers. Although this may lessen the likelihood of malice aimed directly at the Centre by the society, the association might open the institution up to wider devilish attacks by behaving in a manner that might be interpreted as being 'two-faced'; publically declaring commitment to the Church on the one hand, and 'moving with' societies who commune with

Satan on the other. Such action would weaken the presence of the Holy Ghost as a protective entity, particularly important given the offer of the headdress and the importance of managing its residual power through prayer.

Concerned, Paul sought guidance from the Bishop. Although the Bishop's negative position with regards to masquerade devils is well known, in this case he was able to offer practical advice, noting 'if you are in water, you have to swim like a fish'. Paul's professional commitments mean he cannot avoid encountering people who 'use juju', but neither could he refuse to accept this formal association since the Centre positions itself as supportive of masquerade in its capacity as an ambassador for Sierra Leone's cultural heritage. The Bishop's suggestion was that Paul should seek the presence of a more senior political figure, perhaps associated with the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs or the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, but not directly with the Centre, to accept the gift on their behalf. Whilst the ceremony take place the Bishop advised Paul to remain at the back of the room and to separate himself from the event, so as not to give the impression that the hand-over was occurring 'in his house', but rather that he was a spectator. This solution enabled the Centre to formally endorse the collaboration and avoid confrontation with the society by honouring their request for a public event. Crucially it also enabled the Centre to ensure that it had the spiritual capacity to control the headdress and to protect itself. By retaining an association with and deployment of 'godly' practice, as opposed to aligning with people openly engaged in 'evil' practice, Paul was able to continue to encourage the Holy Spirit to have a presence at the institution; a presence considered more powerful than that of the society.

These two examples concern moments where staff at the Centre negotiate positions that appear irreconcilable. As professionals working in the heritage sector their roles necessarily involve acts that publically declare knowledge of and association with practices and practitioners their church openly condemns. Whilst dangerous objects and connections may be controlled through prayer, the obligation to behave as persons who share a deeper enthusiasm for and knowledge of the practices that activate those objects may in turn weaken the effectiveness of those prayers. Meyer has recently explored how the mimetic performance of particular embodied practices, in this case actors and set designers animating Satanic roles and spaces Pentecostal films, is considered a risky business (2015: 237-251). She explores how such risk is managed through prayer and the careful curation of spaces that are self-consciously not quite the 'real thing'. A similar process seems to be at play here. I suggest performative acts of knowledge and association are understood as channels through which the devil can take effect, despite personal spiritual and emotional disengagement. I argue such behaviour is dangerous because it involves acting in a way that is counter to the person people perceive you to be; a form of behaviour that is widely understood to be associated with Satan's 'two faced' nature.

Staff at the Cultural Centre mitigate this risk through both careful practice and effective decision making when encountering the borderland that separates the good from the bad. One might question why they commit to their profession given its inherent risks, or why they chose a profession that lies in such clear tension with their faith. I suspect the answer to this lies in this very tension. So successful are they in navigating this ethical borderland that not only are they able to protect themselves, but their control over potentially dangerous Satanic connections is so

comprehensive that they can protect the public to. This is clear indication of their own status as virtuous moral persons, but perhaps more importantly, it is also testimony to the power of Jesus Christ to provide protection for those who believe in the most adverse of circumstances.

### **Conclusion**

Contrary to expectation, staff at the Cultural Centre take a great deal of pride in their roles as heritage professionals and remain open about their professional responsibilities and their faith. The compound in which their offices are located is a common meeting place for members of their Church, congregating after work for a cold drink and a snack before heading to evening deliverance ceremonies or revivals. Advertisements and leaflets for such events find a place on office walls and in desk draws, waiting to be distributed to visitors. This is despite the fact that not only does the Cultural Centre promote traditions and practices that appear contrary to the Bishops Bible-based advice on detecting and fighting the Devil, but it is also known to contain objects that the Devil might use to fight back. The idea that this presents some kind of contradiction is clearly neither a concern for Born Again staff, nor their Born Again friends and family who happily visit the Centre and use its facilities. Indeed, even the Bishop is known to have paid them a visit indicating the extent to which these Born Again professionals are regarded as virtuous citizens of God.

I suggest that a confidence in the ability of staff to take effective measures to both conjure the Holy Spirit and control Satanic risks is central to this. Such measures depend not only on a commitment to daily prayer and Bible study, but also the ability to navigate potentially dangerous encounters with objects, people and



spirits through ethical decision making and morally effective action. As explored earlier, this navigation of an ethically charged terrain is far more than a Pentecostal position. It is one that reflects broader policy level concerns over the ability to manipulate Sierra Leone's awkward heritage to match broader governmental aspirations for global recognition as a modern and liberal nation. The difference, however, is that whilst this emerges at policy level as a rather ambiguous rhetoric that retains an intellectual distance from the practices it seeks to regulate, Born again staff at the Cultural Centre battle (quite literally) with them directly. It is perhaps the commitment to and proximity of this battle that concerns policy makers so; a fear that a successful war with Satan will be far more damaging to the continuity of Sierra Leone's cultural specificity than any wider social change.

In this article I argue that despite a Church based rhetoric to the contrary, Born Again professionals I encountered that work directly with heritage do so with a commitment to public dissemination, education, and access. Their roles concern the vital task of managing and neutralising Satanic connections so that the objects, performances and practices that their institution values can be seen and touched (as 'furnitures') in a safe place. Whilst this may be understood as a professional position that is irreconcilable with their identity as Born Again, I argue that being a successful heritage practitioner also amounts to being a successful Christian. It is only through their faith that they are able to do the jobs they do, providing personal and public protection from dangerous Satanic connections. Their evident success in this not only demonstrates their commitment to godly practice and their ongoing connection with the Holy Spirit, but it may also be read as a miraculous feat and palpable confirmation of the power of the Spirit.

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#### **Notes on contributor**

Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp is a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, and Curator of Anthropology at the Horniman Museum and Gardens. Her Ph.D research explored the politics of heritage and future making in Sierra Leone, and

current research focuses on the memory and materiality of the end of the British Empire in Africa.

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Downing Street

Cambridge, CB2 3DZ

Email: [jz241@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jz241@cam.ac.uk)