

## Love and Violence in Sierra Leone

In the decades following the civil war that took place in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002, new laws were passed to rebuild the state and to prevent rape, teenage pregnancy, and domestic violence. In this ethnography, Luisa T. Schneider explores the intricate semantic, empirical, and socio-legal dynamics of love and violence in contemporary Sierra Leone, challenging the oversimplification of these phenomena. Schneider underscores the limitations of imposing singular interpretations on love and violence, advocating for a nuanced, phenomenological approach that reveals how state and institutional attempts to regulate violence and loving relationships without considering local lived experience and meaning-making can yield negative consequences. By analysing how love and violence are historically constituted, experienced, and (re)produced across personal, social, legal, and political levels, this book critiques the construction of violence within gendered sexual relationships by development agencies, lawmakers, and politicians, urging them to engage with local knowledge and experience.

Luisa T. Schneider is a sociocultural anthropologist specialising in intimacy, violence, and law. Schneider is Assistant Professor at VU Amsterdam, a published academic and public author, and advisor to policy-makers and practitioners. She has conducted ethnographic research that emphasises the importance of local knowledge for over ten years.

# THE INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN LIBRARY

## General Editors

LESLIE BANK, *Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa*

HARRI ENGLUND, *University of Cambridge*

DEBORAH JAMES, *London School of Economics and Political Science*

ADELINE MASQUELIER, *Tulane University, Louisiana*

HELENE NEVEU-KRINGELBACH, *University College London*

DAVID PRATTEN, *University of Oxford*

*Managing Editor*

STEPHANIE KITCHEN, *International African Institute, London*

---

The International African Library is a major monograph series from the International African Institute. Theoretically informed ethnographies, and studies of social relations ‘on the ground’ which are sensitive to local cultural forms, have long been central to the Institute’s publications programme. The IAL maintains this strength and extends it into new areas of contemporary concern, both practical and intellectual. It includes works focussed on the linkages between local, national, and global levels of society; writings on political economy and power; studies at the interface of the sociocultural and the environmental; analyses of the roles of religion, cosmology, and ritual in social organisation; and historical studies, especially those of a social, cultural, or interdisciplinary character.

*For a list of titles published in the series, please see the end of the book.*

# Love and Violence in Sierra Leone

*Mediating Intimacy after Conflict*

---

Luisa T. Schneider

*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*





CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of  
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009533034](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009533034)

DOI: [10.1017/9781009532990](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009532990)

© Luisa T. Schneider 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the  
provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the  
Creative Commons version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction  
of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge  
University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at [doi.org/10.1017/9781009532990](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009532990)  
under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 which  
permits re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-  
commercial purposes providing appropriate credit to the original work is given.  
You may not distribute derivative works without permission. To view a copy of  
this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI [10.1017/9781009532990](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009532990).

First published 2025

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Schneider, Luisa T. (Luisa Theresia), 1991– author.

Title: Love and violence in Sierra Leone : mediating intimacy after conflict /  
Luisa T. Schneider.

Description: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2024. |  
Series: The international African library | Includes bibliographical references  
and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024014457 (print) | LCCN 2024014458 (ebook) |  
ISBN 9781009533034 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009533003 (paperback) |  
ISBN 9781009532990 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Intimate partner violence—Sierra Leone. | Sexual assault—Law  
and legislation—Sierra Leone. | Sierra Leone—Social conditions—1961–

Classification: LCC HV6626.23.S44 S45 2024 (print) | LCC HV6626.23.S44  
(ebook) | DDC 362.82/9209664—dc23/eng/20240520

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024014457>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024014458>

ISBN 978-1-009-53303-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence  
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this  
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will  
remain, accurate or appropriate.