SPECIAL ISSUE: Guinea-Bissau Today

Conclusion: Guinea-Bissau Yesterday. . . and Tomorrow

Eric Gable

Introduction

I had the pleasure of commenting on the articles in this issue when they were first presented as papers at the 2006 annual meeting of the African Studies Association, and the remarks that follow remain true to the character of those comments while acknowledging that the original papers have been reworked and updated. These provocative articles, coupled with my experiences doing ethnographic research in Guinea-Bissau—first among Manjaco in the village-cluster of Bassarel more than twenty years ago, and more recently (and briefly) among immigrant Manjaco in Lisbon—have led me to reflect upon anthropology's relationship to recent history, and to what anthropologists can contribute to an understanding of Guinea-Bissau: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Anthropology has a peculiar relationship to events, especially events that affect whole nations or regions. Anthropologists wish to be current, and we want to illuminate the big picture. And yet we have to acknowledge that there are inherent constraints in our work:

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the investigations we engage in are usually time consuming, our reports are therefore always belated, and our conclusions are the product of an intimate engagement with relatively few people who are, moreover, often situated on the periphery or at the margins of the state. Thus, even when the articles in this issue were first presented, "today" was already history because their focus was on the period after the war of 1998–99, which began as an attempt by the military to oust President Vieira and ended up as a protracted conflict (largely restricted to the capital, Bissau) that destroyed important infrastructure, caused NGOs to cease operations throughout the country, and led to the mass exodus of at least a quarter-million people from the capital city to seek refuge as "guests" in rural villages (see Vigh 2006).

Just as anthropology has a peculiar relationship to time that makes it hard for us to be current in the journalistic sense, so too are we rarely among the elite "insiders" when momentous events occur. Our interlocutors are usually rural or, if they are urban, they are poor or otherwise disenfranchised. Thus, of the authors represented in this issue, Joanna Davidson (119–41) and Marina Temudo (47–67) have lived with and listened closely and with remarkable acuity to Diola and Balanta farmers near the northern and southern borders of Guinea-Bissau, paying close attention to conflicts between youth and elders and frictions between *autochthones* and *allogènes* (see Geshiere & Nyamnjoh 2000)—between locals and outsiders; Lorenzo Bordonaro (69–92) and Henrik Vigh (143–64) have spent much productive time in the company of young men clinging to scant hope in the Bijagos "praça" of Bubaque and at the edges of the "praça" in the capital of Bissau; Michelle Johnson (93–117) has paid sympathetic attention to Mandinga men and women living, with increasing self-consciousness about the problem of identity, as Africans and as Muslims in Lisbon. Our collective sample of the inhabitants of Guinea-Bissau is small, if arguably representative of the majority of the nation's inhabitants. Yet we (and this is also true for much of Africanist anthropology) do much more studying down (peasants and proles) than up (presidents and generals).[1]

The concentration on the political and economic margins is perhaps all the more acute for those of us who study in Guinea-Bissau because it is such an out-of-the-way place even for Africa. A country that was for a short period, at least officially, a colony of Portugal, the poorest and for a time the most politically retrograde of the European empires; and a country that is not quite the poorest in the world but close to the bottom—Guinea-Bissau is a small sliver of West Africa that in some ways is its own little world. Yet perhaps in some senses it is also exemplary of the region. Because Guinea-Bissau was the most marginal of the Portuguese African colonies, it developed little in the way of a colonial anthropological archive. A handful of administrators wrote mostly superficial reports on indigenous societies in the pages of the *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*, or more sporadically, as fairly schematic monographs (e.g., Carriera 1947). Anthropologists working on Guinea-Bissau since independence have not had the benefit of the

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kind of ethnographically detailed library that one associates with French and British colonies. But they do have an extensive historical archive that illuminates especially the little world of the "praças" (or fortified entrepots) of the region, which were among the oldest in the upper Guinea coast. The story this archive tells is of a cosmopolitan zone—a place ripe for theorizing about creolization and hybridity—with a surrounding rural landscape shaped by global forces largely beyond the political control of Europeans. It was a place marked by profound intercultural engagement among local populations exerting their political and economic will—a region of rivers and swampy tidal meanders where there was never a single sovereign. Arguably, then, Guinea-Bissau yesterday is a lot like Guinea-Bissau today.[2]

As the articles in this issue were going to press, Guinea-Bissau's president was gunned down in his house by soldiers avenging the murder earlier that day of the nation's chief of the military, General Tagme Na Waie. Big news in the international press for a nation that rarely gets any international exposure, and an event that calls for an explanation. Is it the beginning of a new era of what amounts to gangster vendettas for an emerging narco-state? The end of an era of patrimonialism of the old revolutionaries, a fading generation of leaders in the independence struggle who learned to love power too much? Or is it (as Lorenzo Bordonaro suggests in the introduction to this issue [35–45]) telling evidence for the irrelevance of the state in Guinea-Bissau?

Whatever the ultimate significance of the two murders, the event was an occasion, yet again, to trot out the clichés about corrupt and violent West Africa and to situate Guinea-Bissau today right in the center of that lurid map. As Lydia Polgreen placed the event in the broader context in a front-page article in the *New York Times* (March 10, 2009): " Mr. Vieira, who was universally known by his nom du guerre, Nino, and General Tagme Na Waie, have dominated each chapter of the country's history, a chronicle of misery so absurd and acute it is almost a composite caricature of the post-colonial African state." Guinea-Bissau, she continues, has been characterized by "attempted coups and brutal repression. In the 1990s there were attempts at democracy, then a civil war and ruin. Successful elections in 2005 brought Mr. Vieira back into power, but a free ballot has not stopped the slide." That "slide" is evidenced in the landscape of the capital, which she describes as "a city almost outside of time, a place where progress halted decades ago" and where "graceful ruins of Portugal's colonial reign... line potholed streets, slowly blackening in the tropical swelter." Ruins scar the architecture of the state: "Weeds sprout from the windows of the Presidential Palace, fed by sunshine and rain that pour into the collapsed roof. The building was damaged in the country's civil war, ... and the country is too poor to fix it." But then Polgreen manages to segue deftly from these close, almost poetical observations of ruined edifices to an observation about the bleakness of the entire nation that might have been paraphrased from an encyclopedia: "The country's tiny economy is based on cashews and fish,

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and two-thirds of its people live in penury. The government is perpetually strapped. Civil servants go months without pay. Teenagers are stuck in grade school because the teachers are so often on strike."

So what can anthropology add to this kind of close, though sometimes formulaic, observation? Often we add very little. Indeed, anthropologists often join with journalists in pointing out that Africa is sliding backwards, not moving forward. Particularly in the wake of (what many anthropologists incessantly characterize as) misguided neoliberal economic policies, the continent today is a place of ever-increasing abjection, just as it once was (so our elders insisted) a miserable place because of capitalism or colonialism. Neoliberalism, in this sense, is Africanist anthropology's new devil, and this critique fits with a more pervasive tendency in our discipline to narrate the passage of time in terms of rupture. Decades ago it was "tradition" on one side of the scorched earth of colonialism, and modernity or the capitalist juggernaut on the other side; or the village with its customs on one side and the city with its crude cosmopolitanisms on the other side. But unlike the journalists who usually blame African leaders and the failed systems of government for Africa's increasing poverty and degradation, anthropologists tend to blame more global forces. Yet the story remained often relentlessly the same: rupture, slide. Guinea-Bissau is a failed state, or at least a very notional one. What more is there to say?

First, there is the question of what we mean by failure. Failed states are also failed nations. Their ostensible citizens do not imagine themselves as a community (to borrow from Benedict Anderson); they do not trust their political leaders. For Guinea-Bissau this failure is well-documented in a recent World Bank study (Barry et al. 2007). One of the papers (Gacitua-Mario et al. 2007) shows, via analysis of surveys, that government in Guinea-Bissau is perceived by its citizenry as ranking among the lowest in Africa in terms of the rule of law and effectiveness. Rural people deeply mistrust the army, their local government officials, political parties, central government, even NGOs and traditional authorities, although the latter two inspire slightly less animus. Both urban and rural people do trust schools (roughly 40%) and health clinics (about 30%). The authors conclude that "most state institutions have been unable to generate or command long-term loyalties" and postulate that this "is partly explained by their lack of capacity to deliver services and benefits" (Gacitua-Mario et. al 2007:25). They also stress that since the 1998 war 76 percent of those surveyed believe that life in Guinea-Bissau has gotten worse.

Guinea-Bissau Yesterday

When I read the survey data I could easily imagine the Manjaco I came to know in the 1980s answering more less in the same way. They would have been just as uncommitted to the state; just as cynically mistrustful of "authority." This suggests an interpretation of Guinea-Bissau today that stresses con-

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tinuity rather than rupture, albeit a continuity that allows for the effects of the passage of time and that encourages us to project backwards the insights we have gained in our analysis of the present. It is an interpretation in which youth—yesterday, today, and tomorrow—figure as crucial protagonists.[3]

Consider Vigh's insights about the motivations of the young marginal men who, in effect, fought against kinsmen and compatriots as they joined their lot with Nino Veira and half of whom were killed as a result. "Bazooka meat," they were called (146) and even called themselves. Vigh argues here and elsewhere (see Vigh 2006) that they were willing to take such a horrible gamble with their lives because their prospects for ever becoming respected social actors—*um homi completto*, a complete man—were nearly impossible. They could find no work, so they would find no wives and they would never have families. Vigh argues that this was a rational appraisal of their prospects, and the gamble they took with their lives, though awful, was also understandable. But he also avers that such a response is deeply entwined with ideas of personhood, especially the personhood of youth, that are a pervasive sociocultural feature of the peoples of this region.

Now consider young men of similar ethnicity and location, but during a precolonial moment a few years before Portuguese could even freely venture beyond the praça's walls, much less claim any local territory. Here is how a soon-to-be-dead Papel looked to a Portuguese lieutenant, Nunes da Ponte in 1908 when the Portuguese had mounted yet another campaign to "castigate" their ostensible subjects in villages near Bissau. As the troops advanced, the Portuguese expended thousands of rounds of ammunition, rarely knowing whether they were killing the enemy, who took ineffective potshots at them or taunted them from behind thick cover. Occasionally though, one or two young warriors would break cover. Ponte, advancing with his men across an open field toward a thick line of trees and bush about a hundred meters distant, describes "a black totally exposed with a sword in his fist making several leaps and somersaults, *escaramuçando*, as they say. You cannot imagine how many shots we fired at him before he collapsed. Finally he fell face first, already dead before he hit the ground. At his feet was another dead man (1909:66).

Such theatrics disgusted the Portuguese; as another officer, Pinheiro Chagas, remarked in his memoir of the same campaign, "I still remember well one who was prancing about (*escaramuçava*) with a curved sword, grimacing and gesturing ridiculously[,]...wearing European clothing" (1910:111). Shooting these warriors became a macabre and and also frustrating exercise because the bodies often disappeared before the Portuguese could reach them. Every warrior had a long cord tied to his belt "with which they were to be pulled to some recess in the forest, the custom of the blacks that always impeded ascertaining how many of them had fallen" (1910:112).

In these officers' accounts, the image of the leaping and grimacing Papel warrior stands for their general frustration, and even a kind of *vergonha*,

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or "shame" (a word used frequently by both Ponte and Chagas), that the Portuguese felt pervaded not only the campaign but also their relations with the natives in the ostensible colony more generally. Invisible in the thick bush, the Papel youth played flutes and whistles as "a signal of scorn" (Ponte 1909:75). At night they yelled insults, calling out to the governor whom they knew by name, or imitating the officers' voices, giving orders like "fire the canon, fire the canon. Cease fire!" (Chagas 1910:82). To the Portuguese, these young antagonists were not only irritating, they were also entirely opaque. What could motivate young men to act so derisively and self-destructively? But reading these fragmentary accounts juxtaposed with Vigh's more intimate engagement with youth in a parallel subject-position suggests some enlightening possibilities. In both cases a seemingly suicidal disregard for the self in an antagonistic struggle with authorities yields the all-important prospect of becoming a "complete man."

Now consider some fairly mundane events that I observed among youth that occurred in the days surrounding Independence Day on September 24, 1987, in a scrubby Manjaco village. Teenage boys in the Culture Development Club, a youth organization whose members ranged from barely adolescent to young, newly married adults, put on several skits in the village schoolhouse, ostensibly to educate "the children," as they called their younger siblings and neighbors, about the "reality" of Guinea-Bissau and how to make it better.

Officially, at least, the skits might have counted as a standard element in a moment of patriotic celebration. "The Club," as this youth organization members called it, had been founded as a patriotic vehicle early in the nation-state's life. Based on the national model of the "young pioneers"—a ubiquitous format in socialist states—and on Catholic youth organizations, it was an unofficial arm of the state devoted explicitly to modernizing and reforming local cultural activities so as to put the ideals of the nation-state into local practice. Yet on this particular day the skits were uniformly critical. The teenagers made searing fun of their elders and of the government. With deft precision, pantomime, and mimicry, they used the lyrics of a patriotic song, transgressively reinterpreted, to thumb their noses at the fantasies of the state.

Watching the performance I was most impressed by how the young actors were able to use minimal props to maximum effect. The village schoolhouse was a structure without walls on a concrete platform with a zinc roof. The main prop was a table—the schoolteacher's desk. A young boy transformed himself into an elder by wearing a long wool coat almost rotten with mold and unraveling up to the pockets. On his head, in fact covering his face, was a stained and cracked hardhat. He walked bent over, using a stick as a cane. At one point in the skit he broke a piece off the cane and bent it, manufacturing an impromptu pipe. The coat, the headgear, the pipe, the bent over shuffle, the cane—all these were perfect parodies of an elder and his odd attempts at dignity. Another boy wore an oversized

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coat without putting his arms in the sleeves—now it was transformed into a "Jula's" or Muslim trader's cloak, but instead of the typical and traditional Jula knit cap he wore the sawed-off top half of a plastic wine jug. In place of merchandise he had scraps of paper, dried fish, and tobacco, which the children (without much coaxing) "bought" and then, in a later skit, handed to a blind beggar—the merchandise now turned back into cash.

Many of the skits entailed portraying elders as buffoons. An ignorant stay-at-home was juxtaposed, via a mimicked telephone conversation across the table that stood at once for the "post office" and the ocean, to his kinsman in "France" demonstrating his newfound sophistication by speaking almost nonsense Manjaco shot through with random French phrases and words. But the skits that captivated me the most were those in which the youth played themselves. A teenage boy, for example, would mimic a singer on the radio. The most talented among them had pitch perfect voices, and they were able not only to recreate the voice of the singers but also the sounds of the instruments: jingly guitars and percussion. One skit offered up the image of a boy dressing for school in the morning. A purse that had been used in a previous skit as an elder's satchel became a "radio" as the boy fiddled with its invisible knobs. Another boy, playing the part of a Congolese musician named Sam Ogwani, began singing a song in French and African (if foreign) lyrics. He wore a blazer, a straw hat tilted over one eye, and a yellow shirt unbuttoned to the waist. As he sang and gyrated as if on stage, the first boy passed by, the purse cum radio cradled against his ear, and did a sort of double take. He stopped, put his radio on the floor, fiddled with the invisible dials, and then the singer began again, this time with the new boy mouthing the words and moving with the first boy as if in a mirror. Then the "radio singer" left the stage while the boy with the radio remained, now dancing and singing the song alone. It was a virtuoso performance of the kind of youthful desire for celebrity that pervades popular music: the air guitar solo in front of the mirror, the hand holding the invisible microphone; it was the perfect mimesis of the pathos of youth in out-of-the-way places, the kind of pathos that both Vigh and Bordonaro capture so well in the essays above.

The two boys appeared together again in another skit. This time the "radio singer" stood without moving and sang a song about a pickpocket in criol and in "gumbé" style by the famous group *Mama Djombo*. The ballad, among the many that made the group unofficial troubadours for the revolution, told the story of a time when young people were forced by poverty to become thieves and of a projected time, after the revolution, when hunger would end and all would work together for the common good. As the young boy sang and made guitar sounds with his voice, various actors walked past him and climbed onto the desk as if it were a bush taxi—a Peugeot pick-up. First a boy in camouflage uniform and oversized boots climbed in. Then he was joined by four others who tugged and pulled and pushed, trying to climb past him. Another, carrying a bag, rushed onto the

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stage and dived into the wiggling mass, his butt stuck straight in the air. Then the boy with the radio from the other skit appeared, cool and slick in mirrored sunglasses. He reached into the melee on the table and pulled out a wallet, a set of keys, and a purse—the radio again!—which he again cradled against his ear, and then he left the stage, gesturing and dancing in sync with the song about the pickpocket. Thus did the reality of the newly independent nation mimic or repeat the realities of the Salazarist colony in the guise of a bush taxi too full of struggling humanity.

That evening I shared a jug of cashew wine with the older members of the Club as they reminisced about their own days as actors and commented on the style of the performances. They talked about the "reality" of Guinea-Bissau, using the Portuguese word. In September 1987 Guinea-Bissau, although characterized by privation and corruption, was not yet in a state of utter collapse. Structural adjustment had not yet taken hold, and the revolution, with its heroes and sacrifices, still inspired hope for the future. But even then, I remembered, the word *reality* was often on the lips of the development workers I met, who seemed to take special pleasure in imagining the worst and almost hoping for it. Young men and women from the Netherlands or Sweden who made forays into the villages on spiffy off-road motor bikes or in fancy four-wheel-drive SUVs enjoyed recounting, with a certain anticipatory glee, rumors of coups in the offing; all had their stories of projects running into the hard "realities" of equipment that no longer worked because of missing or pilfered parts. They liked to joke about the fashion in the capital for taxi drivers to hang IBM typewriter balls from their rearview mirrors as ornaments. These had ended up being sold as trinkets in the market by secretaries and functionaries who couldn't use them and did almost no work—for lack of paper and electricity, but also lack of salaries. It was a country easy to make fun of, or easy to turn into a kind of stereotype, but it was harder to decide whom or what to blame. And of course, without all that poverty and mismanagement, what would be the purpose of development in the first place?

In 1987 the Portuguese (and also French) word for *reality* was also spoken frequently by returned Manjaco emigrants when they complained of life in the village or bragged about the good life in Dakar or Marseilles. The village reality—thatched roofs and people dressed in cast-offs struggling with the earth to make a living—was embarrassing to them. On a larger scale the reality of Guinea-Bissau for them was that they were often targets of recrimination on the part of non-Manjaco officials who harassed them at border crossings out of resentment, not only because of their European manner but also because Manjaco, who for the most part had stayed out of the war for independence, were perfect scapegoats. *Reality* was just then becoming an indigenous term, a word a kid would use when he explained to you why he'd rather leave the country than stay there and go to school.

"Reality" was an economy that ran on, or rather no longer ran on, a worthless currency. The government had recently been forced to reissue the

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greasy, tattered, and taped-together bills that it had withdrawn from circulation, and in the capital you had to have a thick wad of notes just to buy a few tomatoes, an onion, a can of sardines (courtesy of German aide), or a packet of cigarettes—all imported, none locally produced. Stores were nearly empty; you could forget about buying a car battery, much less a generator, and a system of rationing of basic foodstuffs and materials—cooking oil or gasoline, or rice—no longer operated with any consistency. Reality was a broken country that had never quite found its feet after independence and that offered little promise of fulfilling modernizing dreams for rural youth.

"Reality" was perfectly encapsulated in the fantasy of celebrity in which a boy could perfectly mimic a famous singer but remained stuck in the village, and it was perfectly conveyed in that image of the bush taxi filled with scrambling humanity, never quite going anywhere. But reality was also a rural space that provided more than enough of the basics if one worked at it. Manjaco wet-rice fields provided bountiful harvests, mangrove swamps were full of fish, palm groves were fat with oil and wine. You could live well there, but if you were young that would mean that you had to listen to your elders and take them seriously.

It was this "reality" that most concerned my interlocutors, young men about to be or already married who were much more politically engaged than the boys who had put on the skits. Indeed it was the depth of this concern that I missed at the time but now find so obvious, as I recall these experiences in the context of the analyses offered by the articles in this issue. On that Independence Day evening the young men talked primarily about aesthetics. At the time I understood that they were critical of the boys' performances, but I missed the context of the critique. They were trying to explain to me subtle distinctions in the gestures of parody, two of which they named and marked as opposite. The boys were very good at *ukeita*, meaning exaggeration, or "showing off." One of the young men stood up to demonstrate, tilting a straw hat over his eye and strutting around. That's ukeita!—showing that you are better than other people. But the boys' attempts at making fun of elders were misguided. *Utupan*, or "showing *up*" was a kind of self-parody that elders routinely engaged in, entailing exaggerations of bodily decrepitude involving coughing, spitting, scratching, stretching, and the like. An elder would use these gestures to make someone wait, as, for example, when you asked an older man for a favor, especially at night or early in the morning. You would sit outside and overhear him groaning and blowing through his nose to clear the air passages before emerging from his sleeping quarters to greet you. The young men had much fun imitating such an elder. Yet all these characteristics—the hacking cough, the bleary-eyed look, the general grumpiness—had been missed by the boys in the performance. In many ways they had portrayed old age well, but what they had missed were these special signs of elderhood as a source of *power*.

At the time I was well aware of and fascinated by the fact that conflicts between youths and elders were a signal feature of village life. Such

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conflicts required their own politics, as members of the community tried to reconcile opposing interests and to compromise. The young men I was talking with were starting to learn how to negotiate and cajole and compel on a stage that included elders as audiences and actors. They could not engage in parody for their own amusement but instead had to mimic the routines of elders as a form of serious discourse. Two days after the theatrical performance, for example, they had to enter into a discussion with the elders about complaints about food that had been lodged by students from the village who were boarding in the capital. With food there scarce or prohibitively expensive, children had to bring their own from home. Some brought plenty and others had none, and those with none mooched off their peers. Many of the elders, perhaps the majority, were not sympathetic to the plight of the schoolchildren. They did not see the point of education. They also resented their own children's intervention. At times the meeting turned into a shouting match with the young men of the Culture Club trying to act as mediators. One elder, Katotar, took off a worn plastic sandal and held it up in the air. "They say they suffer, but each has better shoes than I do!" Another added just as angrily. "They don't study. They wake up at midday and play their radios!" In the end the Culture Club leaders promised that they would organize harvesting and weeding parties on weekends and holidays in exchange for guarantees of food.

Three days later another more momentous meeting was held, this time on the subject of rumors circulating about a cholera epidemic. The Catholic missionaries in a nearby community had been holding meetings about the outbreak, which they claimed had already killed five people there and dozens across the border in the Casamance, and they had announced that vaccines would be administered as soon as the medicine arrived. Meanwhile, according to the young men in the Culture Club, the government had been trying to squelch the rumors because no medicine was available. Some of the young men belonged to a shadow organization that they called the "biro" (derived, with characteristic humor, from the French for bureaucrat's office), and as the name implies they imagined themselves to be participants in a modern and rational format. They had no official status in the village, however, which continued to be dominated by the elders. The village meetings, for example, were always held at various shrines and involved not just conversation and argument among villagers, but also offerings and sacrifices to the invisible powers. These young men recognized that in order to do anything about the epidemic—and what they could do at best was to remain vigilant, get people to boil water, and not panic—they had to work through the system of shrines and elders. To get what they wanted they had to talk the talk of the elders.

It was this fact that eluded me when I was doing my research twenty years ago. I was much younger then, and much more likely to sympathize with the critics of the state and those who resisted or subverted authority. I also tended to see those young people much more as provocateurs than

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they really were. Likewise, I tended to assume that the state loomed much larger as an authority to be contested than it probably did. Back then, to most Manjaco, the state was more or less irrelevant, just as the Portuguese colony had also been irrelevant for most of its brief history. In the mid and late nineteenth century, when Manjaco youth were migrating north to Senegal and The Gambia to farm peanuts or harvest red rubber for cash, they sometimes called themselves Portuguese when they encountered Europeans. When they got sick, or suffered attacks by Diola, they sometimes asked for aid from Portuguese in the "praça" of Cacheu. When, much later, the Portuguese set up garrisons in the Manjaco region, some Manjaco chafed at the added burden of control—restrictions on travel, for example, rules that required them to sell livestock to feed the troops at such and such a price—but many were pleased by their access to new schools and clinics. When Independence came, Manjaco in Bassarel, at least, "laughed" (or so they told me) when their ruler was deposed by political decree, not because they supported the PAIGC or longed for national independence, but because the ruler and his family had exploited traditions for their own profit while forcing the villagers to suffer. After Independence the new government, to my Manjaco friends, was, like the old colony, at worst an impediment to crossing borders, at best a source of educational opportunities or a passport. The state, as such, was hardly an entity to be opposed or affirmed through patriotic acts or critiques. Likewise the NGOs: Manjaco claimed that most were there, like the Cuban and Chinese doctors, to practice on Africans and then go home once they had learned their skills. AIDS was in the news, so my interlocutors had much fun wondering aloud why the Swedish aid organization happened to be called SIDA—the Portuguese acronym for the disease. What the Manjaco wanted was access to clinics, schools, and passports. They acquired these when they could and they worked with what they had. Much has changed in Guinea-Bissau since 1987, but I am certain that the state remains fairly irrelevant to Manjaco today, while learning to become an elder continues to be a concern for Manjaco youth just as Davidson and Temudo show for Diola and Balanta youth. This is an important, enduring, and even a salutary fact, as it speaks to a certain resilience even under the worst conditions.

Guinea-Bissau Tomorrow

In 1987 my Manjaco friends and informants, like the Diola sketched so artfully by Davidson, always described themselves as hardworking. Even the oldest women in the village where I lived continued to cook and to fish; even the oldest men tapped palms, although they depended on younger men to supply them with most of what they drank by means of the "traditional" ceremonies where offerings of wine were required. Because they also did not want to look "lazy," youth did participate freely, even as they voiced their doubts about the efficacy of the spirits that were the ostensible

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receivers of the offerings. Likewise, young men and women who were away at school in Bissau willingly returned home during the harvest season to painstakingly collect the rice from the fields. Manjaco back then said of themselves with pride that they "never had Sundays," unlike the Portuguese (as described by elders who remembered them from colonial times) who were lazy and always found excuses not to work. Back then, because Manjaco worked hard, they all could always eat. But as Davidson and Temudo demonstrate so convincingly in their work among two equally hardworking ethnic groups (see also Davidson 2007; Temudo 2008), global climate change is making it less likely that farmers in Guinea-Bissau will have that kind of security. This is a very troubling fact, more troubling perhaps than the failure of the state to provide basic services to its citizenry. It is also a fact that makes emigration the most compelling option for the youth of Guinea-Bissau even, tragically, as "involuntary immobility" becomes a more pervasive fact of life.

Nowadays (as in the past) village youth are leaving the homeland to escape parental authority, but they are also leaving, they emphasize, to seek better livelihoods elsewhere. Whether abroad or in Bissau, in fact, they often participate in social clubs and neotraditional organizations that signal their sustained commitment to the kinds of community-focused moral altruism that has always been associated with adulthood and maturity in the villages. I have seen such informal groups at work in the shantytowns of Lisbon. Such ideals also underwrite ethnically oriented Internet sites such as (for Manjaku) *Nalolon* and *Kandeer Manjaku.* These sites and groups also reveal the ways in which village-level generational politics functions as a template for the young people's understanding of politics at the national or international levels. To put it perhaps too crudely, they are at once incredibly cynical about politicians and government (they tend toward a certain glee at reporting every whiff of corruption), but they are at same time idealistically patriotic. They organize ethnically identified youth cooperative groups abroad, they write ethnicity-centered accounts of their activities for Web sites, they identify themselves as Guineans who are proud of Guinea-Bissau's potential and its revolutionary past (see Filho 2002). For such youths, both abroad and in Bissau, paying at least lip service to allegiance to a national imagined community is a sign of their moral maturity—their capacity to act as elders themselves—even as their declarations are limned by an ongoing, although less easy to articulate, antagonism between youth and elders in the rural context.

So it is in the practices of these emigrants and would-be emigrants today (see Bordonaro 2009) that we see some of the crucial patterns that are emerging to affect the shape of Guinea-Bissau tomorrow. Johnson argues (2005) that it is far more likely for young and older Mandinga alike to see themselves as Mandinga or Guinean or African rather than as Muslim, as they confront prejudice among both Portuguese and among other migrant Muslim peoples in Lisbon. Like Manjaco in Portugal, ethnic pride move-

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ments, especially among the youth, often shade into a kind of patriotism, albeit one that is not nationalistic.

Johnson notes in her article in this issue that Mandinga "remain rooted—both in belief and practice—in the village, which they imagine as an ideal place to live and return to after making their fortunes in Europe" (97). This was true, too, for the Manjaco I encountered in Lisbon in 2001, although their sense of origins and the idealization they expressed took a more self-consciously "modernist" form. Like the Bijagos youth Bordonaro describes, Manjaco youth in Lisbon were constantly engaged in a conversation about the relationship between a condition of "backwardness" and one of "development," in many ways echoing the discourse of Cabral and the PAIGC. To my interlocutors Guinea-Bissau was "backward"—more backward, in fact, than the rest of Africa—and its backwardness was a direct result of its colonization by Portugal, they stressed, a "backward" European nation. The Portuguese, according to my interlocutors, continued to exhibit signs of backwardness in their racism and in their laziness—unlike the Manjaco, whose "hard work" made them potentially able to advance. As Maria Joao Carreiro (2007) shows in her extensive investigation of Manjaco immigrant associations in Portugal, such groups make great efforts to send money back to home villages to fund development projects—especially schools and clinics. If it might be argued that Guinea-Bissau emerged as an independent nation out of a political movement that was essentially a kind of militant NGO writ large (see Dhada 1993), and if that nation never quite coalesced as a state (see Forrest 2003), nevertheless what young people of Guinea-Bissau outside of Guinea-Bissau are saying and doing might yet make that fantasy into a reality.

Clearly, then, one important resource for any future imagined community of Guinea-Bissau is the youth, especially the expatriate or urban youth of Bissau, Dakar, and Europe. Youth there have a stake in demonstrating moral maturity, and they are primed to act as agents of moral change. Because of the extent of emigration, it seems obvious that informal migrant associations, especially those spontaneously created by youth, will be the crucial sites for developing conversations about how to make the country a place that works—a place of peace rather than violence. Clearly, however, the largest problem Guinea-Bissau faces is not ethnic conflict or an emerging politics of autochthony, but the country's endemic poverty. When it was a colony, Guinea-Bissau was poorer and less advanced than its French-controlled neighbors, and after the cataclysm of the war for independence it was in worse shape still. Decades of political freedom have not been translated into material advances for the people of Guinea-Bissau. As with other African nations, those who bear the brunt of the burden are the country's youth. They go to school, but have no prospects of using their educations. They try to escape abroad, but travel gets harder and harder. Real aid to such nations will have to address the problem of migration not as a symptom of political disruption but as a rational response to economic need. In

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the near future, at least, global policies that allow for freer migration will do more to ameliorate Guinea-Bissau's problems than any amount of dialogue or aide at the local or national level. Guinea-Bissau, like today and yesterday, will continue to depend on passports.

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Notes

1. For an excellent study on Bissau's urban Papel—the ethnic group from which Vieira came—see Lourenço-Lindell (2002).
2. See Carreira (1983); Brooks (1993); Bowman (1997); Hawthorne (2002); Havik (2004); Forrest (2002).
3. See Argenti (2002); Perry (2009).

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