

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is difficult to acknowledge help in a work that took so long to complete and led me to so many different countries. Let me briefly revisit them. In Guinea, my thanks go primarily to the people who accepted my stay among them in the Baga and Susu villages and in the cities of Kamsar, Boffa and Conakry, as well as to Asekou Sayon Kerra, the preacher the reader will soon meet. The staff at the Ministry of Science and Technology in Conakry were always very supportive. At the University of Conakry, Dr Erhard Voeltz initiated me into the study of Baga language. Dr Marie-Yvonne Curtis was an excellent co-researcher both in Guinea and later in France. Professors Ismael Barry and Aboubacar Touré made very useful comments on a paper I gave in 2001, which provided me with very good ideas as to where to go next. Above all Guineans, Aboubacar Camara – ever since we met in a wedding ceremony in 1993 – has been an extraordinary colleague with whom to conduct fieldwork, learn the language and discuss personal and anthropological issues.

This study emerged after a long gestation in Anthropology, British style. Over the decade of the 1990s I was linked to University College London, at the time undoubtedly the Mecca of West Africanists, and later to the LSE and to Oxford, as well as spending the best part of a year in Paris as an exchange PhD student. Acknowledgements in London are due first and foremost to the Africanist team that every Friday night used to gather around the charisma of Murray Last in the West Africa Seminar – supervisors, mentors, examiners and friends: Philip Burnham, Barrie Sharpe, Richard Fardon, Paul Richards, Barbara Hendrie, Mike Rowlands, Richard Fanthorpe, Nick Argenti, Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc, Kate Longley, Christopher Fyfe, John Peel, James Fairhead, and non-Africanist colleagues such as Josep R. Llobera and Allen Abramson. They all read or heard parts of this book and gave me hints on how to improve it. Charles Jedrej and Richard Fardon examined my PhD thesis in 1999. Together with excellent verbal comments, they both provided lengthy reports raising questions and providing suggestions that were later very helpful to my later field visits and in the preparation of the book. While in Oxford I often discussed aspects of my work with David Parkin, Wendy James and H  l  ne Neveu Kringelbach.

They not only managed to make Oxford feel like a warm city but brought valuable ideas and suggestions to the seminars I gave and the chapters they read. St Anne's College, where I was the Ioma Evans-Pritchard Junior Research Fellow for two years, proved to be a wonderful place to think about the research and prepare future fieldwork. Their financial help towards two months of fieldwork in 2001 is gratefully acknowledged. Among my Oxford colleagues I would like to single out André Celtel, who convinced me that I needed a personal copy-editor before even thinking of sending so much as a chapter to anybody else, and offered his services. I thank St Anne's College for making this hard work worth his time. Little did I know that, in addition to correcting my grammar, André would be such an astute reader of my earliest manuscript, which he very elegantly improved.

David Berliner has been a companion in Guinean studies ever since 1998. Without the long discussions with him in Oxford, Conakry, Lisbon and Brussels, my knowledge of both Guinean issues and anthropology in general would be much more limited and much less interesting. The fact that his fieldwork took place among the Bulongic, a group of Baga farmers I could only visit superficially and whose language is completely impenetrable even to other Baga-speaking groups, has greatly improved my knowledge of the whole region and provided me with very interesting comparative insights.

In Paris, gratitude goes first and foremost to Roger Botte, without whose encouragement and hints I would never have started to work on coastal Guinea. Marie-Paule Ferry spent hours discussing with me our respective linguistic material on Baga Sitem. The late Father de Banville, who in 1996–7 was in charge of the archives of the *Congrégation des Pères du St-Esprit* (Chevilly Larue), was an intelligent partner with whom to discuss the material I was consulting, as was his successor Father Vieira. Other French scholars who have helped me at different stages, giving feedback on papers or draft chapters, include Jean-Loup Amselle, Marie-Christine Cormier-Salem and the knowledgeable historian Michel Brot, who guided me through the rich material at the Archives d'Outre-mer (Aix-en-Provence) and through Guinean colonial history.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Bruce Mouser read the entire manuscript at a truly incredible speed and made very valuable contributions, as did Mike McGovern, whose landmark work on Guinea and perceptive views on recent Guinean history, and on political anthropology in general, have been of the greatest importance to me. Victoria Coiffam offered very timely advice when we coincided in Chevilly Larue in 1995 and in Conakry in 2001.

In Barcelona, Joan Bestard, Josep M. Casasús and Xavier Barnadas were very supportive and critical readers, as were (equally supportive, though less critical) my parents Artur and Irene. I also thank Professor Ferran Iniesta for inviting me to participate in his research project on democratisation in

Africa, thanks to which I could fund two months of fieldwork in 2003, and to CIRIT, who funded my initial fieldwork in 1993–5.

The final manuscript has been written at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon. I am grateful for many comments on the late versions by my colleagues João Pina-Cabral, João Vasconcelos, José Mapril, Ruy Blanes, Susana Viegas and Wilson Trajano Filho. I also thank the Institute of Social Sciences for human and financial support, and for allowing me to conduct fieldwork in Guinea in 2003. And I thank Ezequiel Correia for the preparation of the maps.

Preparing this edition for the International African Library has been a big challenge, and the very prudent and careful advice, criticism and suggestions of the series editor, Professor John Peel, are fully acknowledged. Benjamin F. Soares and Louis Brenner were, as I later learned, the two anonymous readers of the manuscript I first submitted. I could not have hoped for two more helpful readers, who prompted me to great lengths of clarification and improvement in a very demanding and at the same time constructive way. Mike Kirkwood, copy-editor for the International African Institute, has offered excellent help, going well beyond the call of duty in the preparation of the final manuscript. Of course the usual disclaimers apply.

Last, and probably first, it is my pleasure to express my gratitude to Marina P. Temudo, who not only read every single chapter as many times as I wrote it, but on many occasions helped me express my own ideas in sharper ways than initially occurred to me. More importantly, she came to Guinea in 2003 and, as an accomplished ethno-agronomist specialised in the rice-farming communities of Coastal West Africa (mostly those of Guinea-Bissau), she helped me design the last interviews and surveys and corrected misconceptions I had built up over the years. The argument presented in this book would not look very similar to the one the reader is going to read without her input, both during fieldwork and while I was writing up the final version. I hope that by dedicating this work to her I may start to express my gratitude for her presence in this study and in my life.