

Introduction

Creolization has been a widely discussed and controversial concept, both scientifically and popularly, for decades, resulting in numerous different understandings, approaches, and perspectives of the term, evoking at times positive, at times negative connotations through history. Historically, the term was closely associated with the development of colonial societies and exchange networks, and Guinea-Bissau, the venue for this book, was firmly embedded in this unequal colonial encounter and the related travel of traders, slaves, commodities, and ideas and models. Over the last years, Guinea-Bissau has frequently been the subject of media headlines reporting about political instability, corruption, political authoritarianism, coups and coup attempts, and the country's new role as a West African hub in global narco-trafficking, thus often obscuring the country's polymorphic creole entanglements that emerged in the course of globalizing processes since the mid-fifteenth century. Yet, this volume is not merely another study of creole historicity and linguistics that numerous scholars have thoroughly researched. Rather, this book seeks to cast new glances on creolization in Guinea-Bissau, focusing on the interrelatedness of creole identity with other identities and creole identity's significance for postcolonial nation-building "from below," and combining both contemporary and historical perspectives as well as social-anthropological, historical, and political science dimensions. In my study I have sought to explore how creolization processes—and the formation of creole identities—have been conducive to the national integration of postcolonial societies characterized by ethnic and religious heterogeneity. To pursue this path I have opted for a more encompassing socio-anthropological approach toward creolization—hereinafter referred to as "cultural creolization"—because a purely linguistic approach would fall short of explaining social and political implications of postcolonial nation-building processes. In doing so, this book links up with the only recent, ethnographically grounded monograph on creole culture and identity in Guinea-Bissau,

Wilson Trajano Filho's "Polymorphic Creoledom" (Trajano Filho 1998). More than this, the present book does not consider itself to be solely a country case study but instead intends to make a theoretical contribution to a better understanding of processes of cultural creolization in general and the relationship between ethnic and national identity formation and development in particular.

The Setting

Guinea-Bissau provides an illustrative case study of creole culture and identity and their relevance for analyses of postcolonial nation-building, facilitated by the country's geographic small size: spread over an area of almost 14,000 square miles (slightly more than 36,000 square kilometers) and populated by an estimated 1.5 million inhabitants, Guinea-Bissau is one of the smallest West African countries. This smallness, however, contrasts with a high degree of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity: for instance, censuses enumerate between thirty-two (1996) and thirteen (2009) "indigenous" ethnic groups, the diverging numbers speaking volumes about the controversial character of identity and alterity in the country (Instituto Nacional de Estatística e Censos 1996: vol. 1, table 3.5; Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2009). In terms of religion, apart from Christianity and Islam, local religious beliefs are widespread throughout the country. This high degree of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity led many of the country's citizens and external observers alike to express doubts about Guinea-Bissau's national unity. They argue that, in fact, this diversity precludes the development of national unity or, at least, a profound degree of intergroup integration.

Guinea-Bissau's varied and changing history is closely related to creole culture and identity. Situated between Senegal to its north and the Republic of Guinea to its east, Guinea-Bissau is marked by riverine lowlands along its coastal areas, which Portuguese navigators first entered in the mid-fifteenth century. Subsequently, Europeans identified the coast as suitable for establishing a handful of small commercial settlements for trade between Europeans, Cape Verdeans, and Africans. Due to intermarriages between all these communities, there emerged creole Kriston (in the local creole lingua franca, from Portuguese *cristão*, literally meaning "Christian") communities that developed their own identity and distinct cultural representations. Continuous migrations of Cape Verdeans, themselves creoles because of their mixed origins, to colonial Guinea-Bissau lasted until the late colonial period. Since the early twentieth century, creoles have dominated the nationalist movements in the Portuguese col-

ony: starting with the “Guinean League” in 1911, creoles were strongly represented in numerous (illegal) political movements founded especially since the end of World War II. After a war for national liberation, Guinea-Bissau gained its independence in 1974, and along with it emerged a left-wing autocratic political system. The regime’s state ideology, based on a strong appeal to national unity, proved to be a powerful unifier, since it had been shaped by the charismatic founding father—and long-term leader of the victorious independence movement and enduring governing party, African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC)—Amílcar Cabral, himself a creole of Cape Verdean origins. The first successful coup plotted in 1980—interpreted by some observers as directed against the politically, culturally, and economically influential Cape Verdean minority—marked the beginning of political instability in Guinea-Bissau, bringing to power former independence fighter João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira, likewise of creole descent. In 1998–99, the country experienced a short but severe, mainly Bissau-centered, civil war, going down as “Military Conflict” in history books, and ever since then it has been faced with serious political, social, and economic challenges. Since this war, political turbulences have intensified, the intervals of coups, coup attempts, and politically motivated assassinations getting shorter, culminating in the assassination of the state president in 2009. Further, cocaine that originates from Latin America has been channeled through Guinea-Bissau and a number of other West African states for about a decade, and this practice is believed to threaten political and social stability even further. Politicians with creole background have continued to exert crucial political influence in Guinea-Bissau, and in the past years—until an April 2012 coup—Carlos Gomes Júnior, the offspring of an old-established Bissau-Guinean creole family, held the office of the prime minister. Despite manifold patterns of interethnic integration observable on the ground, the exploitation and manipulation of ethnicity continue to rank on the agenda of political entrepreneurs. Populist politicians’ agitation has been repeatedly directed against the country’s top-heavy bureaucracy and urbanized elite—also comprising a number of creoles—that has been made responsible for the neglect of the interior and its population.

My first encounter with Guinea-Bissau dates as far back as 2004. At the time I had rudimentary knowledge of the country’s history and some idea of the political constellations on site, but I was not aware at all of issues related to creole culture and identity in past and present. In that year I completed—supported by Germany’s then Capacity Building International (InWent)—a four-month internship with Guinea-Bissau’s Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) that is attached to the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisa e Estudos (National Research and Studies Institute).

I used this time to make local friends, become acquainted with various parts of the country, further improve my Portuguese-language skills, and even pick up some Kriol, Guinea-Bissau's Portuguese-based creole vernacular. These experiences would prove valuable when I began to conceptualize this book in October 2005 with the research group "Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast" at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, based in Halle (Saale), Germany. After perusing the relevant literature on both creole identity in the Bissau-Guinean context and various theories of creolization and ethnicity, I came up with a number of interrelated research questions, which were finally incorporated into a research plan in early 2006. In the meantime, in January and February 2006, I completed a four-week Kriol language course in Lisbon, the language serving as the lingua franca not only in Guinea-Bissau but also in the neighboring Senegalese region of Casamance and, in a varied version, in the Republic of Cape Verde. The fact that I was already able to communicate in Portuguese aided my learning of Kriol. The course was organized by the Lisbon-based nongovernmental organization Centro de Intervenção para o Desenvolvimento Amílcar Cabral (CIDAC).

Methodology

With these preparations in place, fieldwork in Guinea-Bissau started in late March 2006 and continued—with a one-month interruption—until early May 2007. Short-term stays realized in February–March 2013 and in February 2014 contributed to an update and completion of research data. While in the field I employed "classical" qualitative ethnographic fieldwork methods such as participant observation, formal and semi-structured interviews, and informal conversations. In most cases, interviews were conducted in an informal atmosphere. In order to avoid distracting and intimidating my interviewees, I rarely used a recorder. Some interviewees were afraid of negative repercussions from the state authorities. Therefore, I mainly took down notes during the course of the interviews or immediately afterward. Apart from this, I performed participant observation (Girtler 2001; Hauser-Schäublin 2008) by witnessing ceremonial and ritual events—including, apart from funerals and weddings, carnival celebrations and *manjuandadi* associations meetings, among others—and modes of interethnic interaction. In particular, my participant observations and the more informal conversations concerning my research themes proved to be very useful for obtaining insights into people's daily routines. However, I found it relatively more difficult to gain access to upper-class creole inhabitants. By and large, people living in the coun-

tryside were more accessible. I examined creole identity construction and boundary maintenance not only by studying the interactive strategies employed by creoles as well as non-creoles in their everyday life but also by determining the creoles' authoritative "on-stage" identitarian portrayal of themselves. I examined the Bissau-Guineans' attitude toward their nation and state through my informants' historical narratives and contemporary discourses regarding these topics. Patterns of identity performance were explored by focusing on two cultural representations, in particular, that used to be exclusively creole at one point of time but have undergone considerable changes and spread beyond the boundaries of the creole community since Guinea-Bissau's decolonization in the 1970s. One of these cultural representations is the institution of the *manjuandadis*—predominantly female associations that provide for sociability, mutual assistance, and solidarity within the community, mainly by playing music and participating in feasts and other celebrations. The other representation is carnival—a festivity celebrated both in the streets and among groups of family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. In addition to attending these events, I discussed the role played by *manjuandadis* and carnival celebrations in the past with contemporary as well as former participants and enthusiasts.

Collected data were triangulated—i.e. information obtained from different sources and methods was cross-checked in order to make visible multifold viewpoints and standpoints—as part of a comprehensive discourse analysis, taking into account interviewees' and participants' social characteristics. In this respect, I also gathered biographical accounts (Lange 2005) to learn more about the individuals' backgrounds, their attitudes toward certain issues, and their assessment of specific matters. Sources consulted during ethnographic research were subject to sampling: I sampled my potential informants in such a way that my data would present a comprehensive picture of Bissau-Guinean society in general and creole identity in particular. Keeping in mind factors such as social class, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, and rural/urban origins of my informants, I began my research by identifying the descendants of established creole families who might like to give me more information regarding their creole identity. In this process I was supported by a number of local acquaintances who acted as "ice-breakers"—and such "door-openers" were initially indeed essential and extremely helpful for a research starting at zero. Using the snowball effect, I was then able to detect further possibilities of entry while simultaneously using other contacts in my vicinity, including my local circle of friends and acquaintances. I also approached many informants on my own, without any prior recommendation or introduction. In order to avoid "anecdotal" impressions, I paid considerable attention to my informants' expertise, for example as contemporary witnesses of his-

torical occurrences or as testimonies of the inner working of associations, contests, etc. The resulting interview data have been rendered anonymous so that the persons are not identifiable; the anonymized interviewees appear on a list in the appendix, indicating their gender identity, their approximate age, as well as the location and date of the interviews.

The field research was “multi-sited” (Falzon 2009), i.e. not focused on one location only but taking place at various settings: I conducted most of my research in the capital city of Bissau, which is generally regarded as the biggest center of creole culture in Guinea-Bissau. In addition, I did some field research in Geba, which was one of the most important trading posts in the region at one time. However, most of the creole inhabitants have left Geba by now, many having relocated to Bissau and Bafatá, where I also conducted research. Some other field sites that I occasionally visited included the former trading posts of Cacheu, Farim, and Bolama as well as Ziguinchor—located in the southern Senegalese Casamance region—which were once foci of creole culture.

As far as possible, I combined written sources with oral traditions, a procedure that proved difficult for at least two reasons. On the one hand, historical documents, especially on issues like (creole) identity, carnival, or associativism in colonial times, for instance, were scarce. On the other hand, the use of oral traditions to “reconstruct” history poses several problems. As scholars like Jan Vansina (1985: 31) have shown, narrations are often “summaries of events generalized,” suggesting simplifications, stereotyping, and skipping of generations. Apart from this, oral traditions may be grounded in legitimizing, normativizing, or even ideological considerations; therefore, they are “normative data rather than observed data” and do not need to be taken as historically “realistic.” In other words, “statements about situations or trends need not in fact relate to actual events or observations. Often they derive from generalizations made by contemporaries or later generations. Such data testify then to opinions and values held, to mentalities, and that is their value, not as testimony of fact” (Vansina 1985: 31).

Hence, both intentionally and unintentionally oral traditions tend to reinterpret, invent, reconstruct, imagine, reconfigure, or omit past events. Memories and narrations are neither static nor passive; instead, “remembering is action, indeed, creation” (Vansina 1985: 43). This means that oral

traditions are processes. They must continually change to remain alive. . . . A tension always exists between the two realities people can be aware of: the cognitive reality, which predicts, and the physical reality, which then happens. When the discrepancies between them become too great . . . , the two realities have to be readjusted. The readjustment is the point where permanent changes occur. . . . Therefore tradition is a moving continuity. (Vansina 1990: 258)

Triangulation and repeated inquiries may help to discursively trace and understand past occurrences; yet, the result will never be an “objective” reconstruction of the past. Comparisons with written resources may also contribute to this endeavor. However, scholars like Ann Stoler (2009) and Nicholas Dirks (2002) have shown that written and archival resources, particularly in colonial contexts, are also sites of totalizing, fragmented, yet monolithic knowledge production. Both oral traditions and written sources are therefore expressions of a society’s “culture of remembrance” (or, *Erinnerungskultur* in German) that refer to its interaction with the past, thus to the—sometimes contested and challenged—remembrance and re-interpretation of historical events (cf. Cornelißen 2010; cf. Assmann 2002), as part of the “collective memory” (Halbwachs 1980).

Written resources were another component. The archival and literature research for this book was performed at the national libraries of Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and the Gambia, which are situated in Bissau, Praia, and Banjul, respectively. The search encompassed both academic and popular historical and contemporary literature hard to find in Western European libraries, as well as relevant gray literature, census data, and legal texts. In addition, I conducted research at various libraries and documentation centers in Europe and Africa. Apart from this, I managed to refer to a considerable amount of relevant literature by using scientific databases available online.

Partly, the collected ethnographic raw material (observations complemented by interviews, written resources, etc.) was eventually contextualized in what was introduced into social anthropology as “thick description” by Clifford Geertz (1973). This term characterizes “the process of paying attention to contextual detail in observing and interpreting social meaning. . . . A thick description of a social event or action takes into account not only the immediate behaviours in which people are engaged but also the contextual and experiential understandings of those behaviours that render the event or action meaningful” (Dawson 2010: 943). Instead of a “traditional” social and cultural sciences research I chose an approach superficially indebted to grounded theory as proposed by Anselm L. Strauss and Barney Glaser (cf. Strauss 1987). This means that instead of departing from a hypothesis or theoretical framework, I first collected data to finally derive theoretical conclusions, making it possible to react flexibly and rapidly to new insights gained on site.

The general conditions of my field research proved to be difficult. Fears of an upcoming military coup or war were prevalent among Bissau’s inhabitants at the time of my fieldwork—their anxieties were fueled by decades of both colonial and postcolonial authoritarian rule, a generally tense political environment, previous coups and coup attempts and the

Military Conflict, as well as the fatal assassination of a popular former high-ranking marine officer, which caused riots in one of Bissau's neighborhoods in early January 2007. As a result, some interviewees were afraid of frankly expressing their views on certain political or politicized issues pertaining to identitarian matters.

Frequent power and water cuts in the capital, a complete absence of public electricity and tap water in the country's interior regions, including the administrative centers, and the time-consuming public transport in the hinterland—either by *kandongá* (a public transport vehicle, also known as *sept-places* throughout the region), motorbike, *piroga* (a big wooden, power-operated boat), or, more recently, decrepit bus—aggravated both working and living conditions and taught me how these conditions shape the lives, perceptions, thinking, desires, and identities of Bissau-Guineans. I used these experiences to better understand the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts.

Research Questions

Based on my methodological framework, I have attempted in this study to address a set of closely interrelated key research questions, which can be grouped into three clusters.

The first cluster is about the making-up of creole identity in Guinea-Bissau and creole boundary construction and maintenance in relation to other ethnic identities. More specifically, I raised the following questions: Who is ascribed a creole identity, when, how, and by whom? How does creole self-designation and the ascription of creole identity work at the grassroots level? Which terms and concepts are employed when ascribing a person creole identity, and how do creoles identify themselves? To what extent does a plurality of creole identities exist in Guinea-Bissau? Which factors served to facilitate or complicate the formation of creole identities during colonial times? What kind of attempts do the creoles make in order to revive and revitalize their “tradition” and group identity? How are interethnic cohabitation and relations between creoles and non-creoles conceptualized and socially practiced? How do creoles distance themselves from non-creoles? To what extent and using which strategies do they maintain their identitarian boundaries?

The second cluster addresses the role played by creoles, their culture, and identity in processes of postcolonial interethnic and national integration as well as nation-building, as expressed by the following set of questions: How and to what extent has the regional and social expansion of cultural representations that were previously exclusive to the creole minority contributed to Guinea-Bissau's national integration since independence? How

have non-creoles appropriated and transformed these erstwhile purely creole representations? Which traits of these representations have facilitated their appropriation among non-creoles? To what extent does creole identity contradict popular assumptions that conceptualize the African nation as an umbrella covering a number of ethnic groups? How do creoles bridge this dichotomy by connecting their identity with modern concepts of nationhood? To what extent did creoles assume a key role in fostering nationalism and laying the foundation for a postcolonial nationhood?

The final cluster is dedicated to the quality of Bissau-Guinean nationhood—as opposed to statehood—as imagined by the country’s citizens: How do Bissau-Guineans conceptualize their nation? How do they define Bissau-Guinean nationhood with respect to that of the neighboring countries? How do Bissau-Guineans differentiate between nationhood and statehood? Which factors have contributed to national cohesion despite cultural and ethnic diversity since independence?

Theoretical Premises

The book follows a constructivist approach toward collective identities. Accordingly, I regard ethnic identities as socially constructed, situational, flexible, malleable, and multilayered. In contrast to essentialist or primordialist approaches, it is “the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth 1969: 15; original emphasis). This drawing and maintaining of social boundaries defines both membership and the “dichotomization of others as strangers, as members of another ethnic group” (Barth 1969: 15). The concept of “boundary markers” that distinguishes “insiders” from “outsiders” has gained much prominence in recent decades, appearing in studies on ethnicity, nationalism, migration, and diasporas. Research has shown the adaptability and versatility of such markers, thus their social construction. Nonetheless, members of “we-groups” like ethnic groups or nations *believe* that they are bound together by the same or at least similar cultural markers of difference (Elwert 1989: 446; cf. Weber 1978: 1:395). In other words, these commonalities are imagined (Anderson 1999).

Different from this analytical perspective, in everyday life ordinary citizens point to primordial cultural contents (material and immaterial cultural representations such as language, religion, habitus, material culture, etc.) as constituents of group consciousness. Specific ethnic markers are used by groups to construct their identitarian boundaries and generate a sense of ethnic belonging. These ethnic identity markers used from within the group operate in opposition to features of sociocultural distinction imposed by others. Markers from a repertoire of “cultural stuff” can be used deliberately or unconsciously without postulating instrumentality or in-

tentionality but rather suggesting complex negotiation processes between groups and their members.

Nations are socially constructed and imagined in much the same way as ethnic groups (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Gellner 1998; Anderson 1999). However, in contrast to ethnic groups, nations refer to either an existing state or one that is to be formed, thus implying citizenship (Elwert 1989: 446). The reference to a common state apparatus does not mean, however, that a nation and a state are congruent. Identity entrepreneurs often imagine their ethnic groups or nations as having a historically deep-rooted continuity: they use references to the past selectively, historically charging and reifying them (cf. Assmann 2002: 133).

Crucial for the theme of this book is that ethnicity can entail varying degrees of ethnicization or "groupness." This means that ethnicization processes can result in either strongly ethnicized groups or weakly ethnicized categories of identification. In Brubaker's view, groups are "mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action" (Brubaker 2004b: 12). In contrast, ethnic categories can be characterized as a collection of individuals that display to varying degrees "a potential basis for group formation or 'groupness'" (Brubaker 2004a: 39). In other words, "whereas social groups define themselves, their name(s), their nature(s) and their boundary(s), social categories are identified, defined and delineated by others" (Jenkins 1994: 201). Increasing levels of groupness, in turn, can lead to the transformation of ethnic categories into ethnic groups (Brubaker 2004a: 40).

Variations in ethnicity can occur according to situation and context. The multiplicity and situationality of ethnicity are particularly evident in processes of creolization. Transethnic identities are formed due to alliances that embrace various other ethnic identities, thus assuming the aspect of an umbrella identity that encompasses various ethnic identities or their segments. Such multiple identities enable individuals to switch between identities, depending on the specific situation and context (Elwert 2002: 39–40). Over the course of time in ethnicization processes, new transethnic meta-identities can replace, to varying degrees, the original collective identities. Diverse origins of group members, however, can continue to be reflected in certain narratives or customary practices (cf. Knörr 2008: 4).

Outline

Thematically, the scope of this monograph includes a study of the processes of creolization and the evolution of creole identities, the nationwide

expansion of the representations of creole culture, the significance of creoles for nationhood and nation-building, and the current situation of the nation as well as the state in postcolonial Guinea-Bissau.

I will start by discussing, in both historical and contemporary perspectives, how creoles in Guinea-Bissau have contributed in manifold ways to postcolonial nation- and state-building. More precisely, postcolonial African political leaders—and in Guinea-Bissau creoles figured prominently among those who advocated, prepared, and fought for national independence—of many young African states identified the prevailing cultural and ethnic identity as a challenge that threatened to undermine their efforts to successfully build a nation. Following independence, they took efforts to contribute “top-down” to interethnic integration, and this included setting up new national traditions and supporting movements and events that were supposed to bridge cultural and ethnic differences. However, in many African countries ethnicity has been manipulated by political entrepreneurs for reasons of power, and both colonial and postcolonial Guinea-Bissau was no exception. For instance, since about the 1950s, Cape Verdeans—migrants and their descendants originating from the archipelago off the West African coast—were portrayed as scapegoats both by the Portuguese colonial administration and some postcolonial political leaders. Against this background I will proceed to analyze the formative impact of creoles on nation-building in Guinea-Bissau and which factors have “glued” together the Bissau-Guinean nation in the past decades, despite high degrees of cultural, social, ethnic, political, and religious fragmentations. Against this background I will also explore the relationship between the modern concepts of nation and state while analyzing which factors contribute to national cohesion in contemporary Guinea-Bissau.

Chapter 2 will be dedicated to the analysis of creole identity in Guinea-Bissau. In that chapter I will discuss the key theoretical concepts used to explore the issues at stake. Here, I will examine the concept of cultural creolization. Creolization is here understood from an anthropological perspective. As such, creolization is conceived as a process that entails the intergenerational replacement of diverse original identities by a new, shared creole identity. In the course of this process of ethnicization the people concerned also develop an identification with their new home. As creolization encompasses the (re)negotiation of identitarian boundaries, its analysis brings to the fore tensions and diverse perspectives between in- and outgroups, between analytical and inside views. The conceptualization of creolization as introduced in this chapter implies that this process is not limited to colonial settings, nor is “creole” to be considered as something “incomplete” or “false.” Further, “creolization” as it is used within the context of this book targets localized identitarian perspectives—while

globally circulating ideas and models always have an effect on culture and identity in micro-settings. I will explain how creole identity in Guinea-Bissau has evolved historically and discuss the factors that have contributed to its shaping. At this juncture, I will analyze the processes underlying creole self-identification and the ascription of creole identity. In the course of this analysis, I will also examine the terms used to describe these processes and the way in which creoles construct their identitarian boundaries. Subsequently, I will proceed to explicate the three different varieties of creole identity that can be found in contemporary Guinea-Bissau.

Chapter 3 will analyze the postcolonial spread of certain formerly creole cultural representations that have contributed to national integration from below. The examples derived from Guinea-Bissau have to be seen in the larger framework of similar processes observable in many parts of the world. In a number of nation-states, cultural representations that used to stem from particular groups have been incorporated by other groups in a process that can be called “transethnicization” or “cultural pidginization.” This transfer process is sometimes simplified as one-way “homogenization.” However, the integration entails not only the translation, reshaping, and adoption of circulating cultural and identitarian models into “local” repertoires but also the repercussion and resilience of such adopted models or parts of them. Hence in the course of pidginization, homogenization comes along with heterogenization. In contrast to creolization, pidginization does not include the complete substitution of original identities. In a nation-state, transethnic cultural and identitarian features—occasionally initiated and fostered by the state—can thus contribute to interethnic and even national integration, transforming formerly ethnic representations into traditions cultivated across ethnic lines. Due to the heterogenous cultural and ethnic ancestry of creoles, their cultural representations appear to be especially suitable for adoption by other groups. By contributing to an interethnic integration from below, pidginization may consequently serve to counter both popular and academic allegations that most African countries cannot develop “real” nations, given the high degree of prevailing cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. In what follows, I describe from a bottom-up angle how cultural representations previously exclusive to Guinea-Bissau’s creole culture have been used for postcolonial interethnic, national integration. In this regard I will discuss the formation, transformation, and postcolonial expansion of three such cultural features—the creole language Kriol, *manjuandadi* associations, and carnival festivities—in terms of their significance for nationwide interethnic integration after independence. I will thus explain how the creole project has turned into a national project.