

Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (Historical Dictionaries of Africa)

By Peter Karibe Mendy, Richard A. Lobban Jr.

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Guinea-Bissau is a small country in West Africa, and yet it managed to wrest its independence from Portugal back in 1973, at the cost of a long and bitter struggle against seemingly implacable odds. This was a time to be proud of, and there was also a moment about two decades ago, when it looked like a trendsetter for democracy. Since then things have gone seriously wrong, with a collapsing infrastructure, a dilapidated economy and a political stage prone to military coups d'etats. This fourth edition of *Historical Dictionary of Guinea-Bissau* tells the long and sometimes unpleasant story.

However, like all the country historical dictionaries, it tells it several times and in several ways. First, the chronology traces the history of what became Guinea-Bissau, and this over a period of centuries and not just decades. Then the introduction recounts that history again, providing more insight and understanding, and conveys a good idea of how things are going now. The details follow in the dictionary section with entries on important persons, places, institutions, and events among other things. And the bibliography points to further reading.

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Editorial Review

Review
This volume is another updated edition in the African Historical Dictionaries series. Like other entries in the series, the dictionary proper is preceded by a historical chronology, a list of acronyms and abbreviations, and a general introduction, and in this case is followed by several appendixes, including a list of Portuguese governors, lists of heads of state and prime ministers, several reprints of primary documents, and a modicum of cultural information. A few maps of varying quality are scattered throughout. The bibliography is substantial. . . .Overall, this volume does a good job of relating the long and oftentimes difficult history of this African country that includes a collapsing infrastructure, a dilapidated economy, and military coups d'etat. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

About the Author
Peter Karibe Mendy is now the lead author, having already participated in earlier editions as well, and he is an excellent choice. Of Bissau-Guinean origins, he knows the country and the main languages, and was the director of the leading social science research institute there. He is presently professor of history and African studies at Rhode Island College.

Richard A. Lobban, Jr., who is professor emeritus of anthropology and director of the Program of African and Afro-American Studies at Rhode Island College, authored or co-authored the previous editions. He already visited the liberated zones of Guinea-Bissau back in 1973, and has returned since, all the while closely following events in a country he has written and lectured on extensively.

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