

UFAHAMU

VOLUME III, NUMBER 3, WINTER 1973

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U F A H A M U
AFRICAN ACTIVIST ASSOCIATION
AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024

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Single issue	\$2
Overseas (Air Mail)	
(a) Africa	\$6 per volume
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Journal of the AFRICAN ACTIVIST ASSOCIATION, U.C.L.A.

SOME PROVERBS FROM GUINEA-BISSAU

The three proverbs below were sent to us recently by Basil Davidson. He writes: "Amilcar Cabral wrote them down for me while we had some spare moments in one of the forest camps of the PAIGC last December. I've added a note as to the references in which these proverbs are understood and used today. The language is *Crioulo* (the Creole of Guinea-Bissau), a sort of 'Africanised Portuguese':"

Món pa más que grandi è ka na tapa ceú

No fist is big enough to hide the sky

(Said of anyone who shouts and storms and threatens, as the Portuguese colonialists have always done.)

E ka n'lidura di lagarto qui na tudjibu canoa passa

It's not the dirty looks of the crocodile that will stop your canoe from crossing the river

(Cf. the English proverb: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." In Guinea-Bissau, of course, they use it about Portuguese threats.)

Djongotodo da ta pui alguem na ragás

A man already on his knees can't take anyone on his lap.

(Said of Portuguese propaganda, during the last year or so, that speaks of Portuguese "offers" to "help the Africans to a better life": A particularly good example of the strongly satirical tone of these village proverbs.)