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at literary creation,, errors of this type are bound to occur in a work of this nature.

However, the author succeeds in creating a credible world and a living civilization oblivious of the imminent de-segregating intrusion of an alien imperial culture, a civilization of the Savannah in which the material is unequivocally subordinated to the spiritual needs of the society and its individual members.

A somewhat preachy but readable book, Tidiane Dem's Masseni, will inevitably take a place in the "romans des mouers" genre with works like Nazi Boni's Crepuscle des temps anciens, as a significant Ivorian contribution to the ever growing corpus of African literature.

- RAYMOND NNADOZIE OKAFOR

THE STATUS OF YORUBA RELIGION IN BRAZIL

- PIERRE FATUNBI VERGER

Early travellers passing through Bahia were struck by the number of blacks milling about in the streets of that city. One of them, Avé-Lallemant, wrote in 1859 that he had the impression of setting foot in an African capital, the seat of a powerful black potentate, where a minority of pure-white aliens went completely unnoticed (1).

Although there may have been an element of exaggeration in this account, the massive presence of blacks at Bahia cannot be gainsaid. Up to this day they have always constituted the majority of the population.

Most of them are Yoruba descendants. In some of my earlier studies (2), I have tried to analyse the reasons which explain this pre-ponderance of the Yorubas particularly in Bahia, in contradistinction to Brazil as a whole, whose black and coloured population tends to be mainly of Bantu extraction. This state of affairs is accounted for by cogent economic and commercial factors which it would take us too long to analyse in detail. Suffice it to say that the existence of tobacco plantations in Bahia which cannot be found elsewhere in Brazil was not unconnected with the situation.

Yoruba culture or, to be more precise, Yoruba religion, was transplanted to Brazil in the distant past under the most distressing circumstances one can imagine, namely by people reduced to servitude, torn away from their country by brute force, and harbouring but little hope ever to see it again.

Despite this devastating initial handicap, Yoruba cultural values have not only persisted to the present, but are growing from strength to strength and have served as the starting-point of a religious movement which is spreading more and more in Brazil and elsewhere in the New World, not excepting the United States of America.

How could people arriving in a distant land naked and in utter deprivation, without freedom of limb or action, forced to conform to a way of life not their own, to practise a religion alien to them, to speak a language unknown to them, resist such pressure, and become part and parcel of the social structures in a new environment without, however, losing their personality, their culture, and their religion?

This study is an attempt to elucidate the concatenation of circumstances which made such an extraordinary phenomenon possible, and the background against which it took place.

In this context several factors have to be taken into account, viz:

the character of Yoruba religion,

the new habitat to which it found itself transplanted,

the mutual influences evolving between the two worlds thus juxtaposed,

the progressive fusion resulting from the encounter.

The character of Yoruba beliefs differs from that of other African nations. They are not merely restricted to ancestor worship within the family as among the Bantu. Orisa worship - the worship of natural forces and phenomena - is not narrowly localized but covers the entire Yoruba country and even those areas where Yoruba influence made itself felt. As a result, people

originating from places at great distance from each other would, when carried off into slavery beyond the Atlantic, be more likely to meet other persons dedicated to a common Orisa than those who had merely practised the worship of their own ancestors, which is by definition confined to small groups and open only to members of one's own family.

The religion of the Orisa with its wider geographical coverage is thus less dependent on tightly knit, narrowly localized social structures. Its adherents were in a position to reorganize their worship on Brazilian soil in the same way as they would have done in any part of Africa far away from their place of birth.

During the 19th century there were sometimes up to a thousand slaves on one of the vast sugar-cane plantations in Brazil's North-East. Roger Bastide (3) has remarked that "it was obvious that under these circumstances, African ethnic groups were able to regroup and renew their bonds of solidarity."

We know from travellers' accounts that among the slaves there were the sons of kings and also religious leaders; they were respected and obeyed by the others. One can therefore imagine that small groups were formed and leaders emerged from among what to the whites appeared as a shapeless mass. These groups managed to preserve a part of their cultural heritage. By virtue of the prestige they enjoyed, these leaders were in a position to impose cultural features of their country of origin on their fellow slaves belonging to other ethnic groups."

The inter-tribal wars of the 19th century yielded entire segments of the population of the Yoruba-speaking areas, including their religious leaders, to the slave trade.

All these factors contributed to the survival of Yoruba civilisation.

On Catholic feast days, the slaves were allowed to dance and enjoy themselves in their own way to the accompaniment of drums. The whites thought they were dancing in honour of the Virgin Mary and the Saints. But in actual fact the Virgin Mary and the Saints were merely a camouflage. The songs and dances, the real meaning of which escaped the masters, were the ritual dances brought from Africa and addressed to their gods. "The music of the drums abolished distances, brought back the native land for a fleeting moment, and allowed the slaves to pass through a brief spell of exaltation - frenetic and yet controlled - which immersed the individual in the same collective consciousness".

There were also those slaves who worked in town. Each family only kept a few slaves there, but they all added up to the impressive crowd that struck Ave-Lallemant and other 19th century travellers.

In town the slaves were divided into house slaves and street slaves. The former were domestic servants constantly in contact with their masters and undergoing their influence. They were expected to understand and speak Portuguese and thus gradually forgot their mother tongue. They had to adapt themselves to a European life-style which alienated them from their ancestral African ways. We shall however see further on that they themselves did not fail to influence their masters in return.

The street slaves or escravos de ganho earned money for their masters either as street-porters or street-hawkers. They enjoyed a precarious form of independence and were able to communicate with their fellow workers of the same ethnic background in their common tongue. The street-porters would assemble by "nations" of origin in cantos situated at the corner of two adjoining streets where they waited for customers.

Their activities brought them in contact with house slaves of the same ethnic background. As they were also employed in loading and unloading the slave-ships plying the African route, they always were well informed about recent events in the old country and would pass them on to their fellow captives. Thus links with their native land were maintained, which facilitated the return of some of them who had succeeded in purchasing their freedom. In fact, there existed a law which allowed a slave to go free if he could present to his master the equivalent of his purchase price.

The "ganho" slaves, i.e. those commissioned to earn money on behalf of their masters, managed to achieve the desired objective with comparative ease, since all they had to hand over to their masters was a fixed daily lump-sum. They could keep the remainder for themselves and had even organized juntas, or mutual aid societies, to obtain manumission. When they had saved half of the required sum, they were entitled to take out a loan making up the balance of their total value, which would then enable them to purchase their liberty. The amount borrowed had to be repaid with interest later, but since the captives had now become free and were able to dispose of their earnings in their entirety, they could easily settle this debt.

Nago-Yoruba was the most common language spoken among the ganho blacks in Bahia, be they slaves or freedmen. A part of the town of Bahia was even called Nagotedo. Inscriptions in that language could be read on certain shops in the popular neighbourhoods. A butcher in the Baixa dos Sapateiros (Cobbler's Lane), for example, had the motto "Kosi Oba kan afi Olorun" boldly written all over the front of his shop. A Catholic missionary stationed on the West Coast of Africa, when passing through Bahia in 1899, did not hesitate to preach his sermon in the cathedral in Nago.

All slaves had been converted to the Catholic faith right on their arrival in Brazil. The domestic servants would accompany their masters to church for Sunday mass with pomp and pageantry, the footmen dressed in beautiful garb, the chamber-maids and nurses covered in showy jewelry for the greater glory and ostentation of opulence of their masters, but one cannot be too sure whether these conversions were always very genuine.

Many of the manumitted blacks were members of Catholic religious fraternities, the meetings of which were organised along ethnic lines. The "Bantus", "Congos" and "Angolas" belonged to that of Our Lady of the Rosary at Pelourinho, the Dahomeans had founded the brotherhood of Our Lord of Wants and Redemption at the Corpo Santo Chapel down-town(*), while the Nago-Yoruba women would go to the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Good End at the little church of Barroquinha uptown(*) in the heart of the city. The black Creoles, African descendants born in Brazil, formed the brotherhood of the Good Lord Jesus of the Martyrs and assembled to worship São Benedito, i.e. Saint Benedict the Moor, who although generally assumed to be of a fairly light complexion is of a very deep hue according to Bahian tradition. Despite this distinguishing mark, his worship was never as popular among the African blacks as among the black Creoles; which prompted one author, João da Silva Campos (4) to write that nobody is a prophet in his own country.

* The terms "uptown" and "downtown" as applied to Bahia should be taken in their literal meaning, since the difference in ground level between the two is considerable. The two sections are today connected by a giant lift for pedestrians. (Translator's note).

Black African worship was mostly directed to Saint Barbara, Saint George, Saints Cosmas and Damian, Saint Jerome, Saint Anthony, Saint Lazarus, Saint Rochus, Saint Anne, Our Lady of Candlemas, and above all Our Lord of the Good End (O Senhor de Bomfim). The true reason for this devotion to the Saints at that time was beyond the comprehension of the majority of white Bahians; they did not know that to the Nago-Yoruba these names of Catholic Saints represented those of their principal Orisa, by a phenomenon of syncretism, and that they stood for Oya, Osósi, the Ibeji, Sàngó, Ògún, Ọmọ́lú, Obaluaye, Nana Buruku, Yemoja, Ọṣun and Obatala respectively.

The African cults had been clandestinely reorganized during the 19th century. Little is known about the subject before that period. It was in such an ostensibly Catholic setting as the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Good End that the first terreiro de Candomblé, as Bahians call the place where the ceremonies in honour of the Yoruba Orisa are enacted, was organised. Three women, whose African names are still known - Iya Adeta, Iya Akala and Iyanasso Oyo - created the first Nago-Yoruba cult house cheek by jowl with the church of the Barroquinha, the seat of their Catholic fraternity.¹ From this place the most prestigious candomblés of Bahia have originated. Their names are "Casa Branca do Engenho Velho", "Alto do Gantois" and "Cruz Santa de São Gonçalo do Retiro", or in Yoruba "Ilé Iyanasso", "Ilé Yamasse" and "Axé Opo Afonja".

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, slaves from the region of the Bight of Benin kept arriving. There were some peak years during which nearly a hundred sailing vessels made the crossing between Bahia and that part of Africa. The ships carried away the prisoners taken by the kings of Dahomey in their wars against their Nago-Yoruba neighbours, and these reciprocated in kind by shipping off the people they had captured from their aggressors.

They were embarked in Whydah and Lagos respectively. Among those arriving in this way were the Mahi, who brought to Bahia the cult of Sakpata, called Azoani in Brazil, of Nana Buruku, and Dan-Osumare; the Mundubi (Hweda and Hula) brought Hevioso (Sogbo and Bade). The vodun of the royal family of Abomey arrived in turn at Saint Louis of Maranhão, where they were no doubt established by Na Agontimè, king Ghezo's mother, who had been sold into slavery by Adandozan while he wielded power at the beginning of the 19th century.

Many prisoners taken in the wars waged against the kingdoms of Ketu and Savé likewise arrived. They brought with them the worship of Ọṣṣi and Ọmọlú. The inter-tribal wars of the Yorubas resulted in entire contingents of the various "nations" being sent to Brazil. They were embarked at Lagos (then called Onim), Badagry, Porto Novo (the real Porto Novo by the seaside at the place of present-day Sèmè). They brought almost all their gods along with them. The Yorubas from Ọyọ came with Şàngó, the god of thunder, who was their fourth king; the Egbas of Abeokuta brought Yemọja, the deity of the river Ogun, who in Bahia became the goddess of the sea. The Ijesa came with Ọṣun, who in Brazil became the divinity of fresh water, while the Ekitis brought Ọgún, the god of iron, of blacksmiths and warriors. Ife's contribution was Obatala, the divinity of creation, that of Ifon was Osalufon, and from Ejigbo came Osaguiyan, the two names used for the Obatala cult in Brazil. A considerable part of the Vodun from Dahomey and the Orisa from present-day Nigeria thus discreetly crossed the Atlantic to take root in the Americas.

Hence the Africa which came to Brazil was that of the 18th and 19th centuries. We shall return to this point later.

However, if it is true that the slaves were Europeanized through the contact with their masters, it is equally true that the same Portuguese masters in

return underwent a process of Africanization through the contact with their slaves.

Donald Pierson (5) clearly holds this view when he writes that "assimilation and acculturation are not phenomena that lead to modifications affecting only one of the races in contact, while the other remains unaltered. In Brazil the prevailing circumstances favoured the acquisition of certain African cultural traits by the whites. Especially during the period of slavery, one rarely could find a white child that had not been reared by a black nurse who suckled it, lulled it to sleep in her arms or in a hammock, and taught it its first words in clumsy Portuguese. When a child learned to speak, it was undoubtedly more often with its nurse or chambermaid than with its parents".

Gilberto Freyre (6) adds that the members of certain noble families living in isolated rural areas, where the slave lived in the house like one of the family, can be identified by their manner of speaking and by defects in pronunciation acquired from the black women who reared them; he gives as examples the names of the Wanderleys at Serinhaem and Rio Formoso.

"Bahia was going African", writes Luiz Vianna Filho (7), "Everywhere one came across the black man with his culture, his folkways, and his subconscious mind. Quite unintentionally he would transmit them to the new society into which he was forcibly being integrated. In return, Brazilian society, without realizing it, assimilated what it had been taught by the Negro slave. As a highly organized body embracing Portuguese norms it remained unaware of this contagion. It would not even admit to itself that his kind of influence stemming from creatures of such low standing and of such an outlandish and distant origin was in the realm of possibility. All the same, African influence made itself felt slowly,

imperceptibly, and all the more efficaciously as it lacked the character of a concerted and deliberate effort, which would no doubt have called forth strong opposition."

Roger Bastide notes that on the large estates and in the sugar-mills the wives and daughters of the owners hardly ever left the lordly mansion but lived surrounded by a multitude of African and Creole servants; they engaged together in sewing and embroidery work, singing airs from Portugal and songs from Africa, chatting about Portuguese and African superstitions and thus blending notions, proverbs and sayings that contained some of the wisdom of both cultures. The boys would roam the fields together with the black youngsters who served as their whipping-boys but also as playmates and school-mates. They adopted African reactions and patterns of behaviour. Later on they would undergo their sexual initiation with coloured girls working in the big house or in the field, thus infusing elements of sexual attraction and comprehension into their relations with what one has chosen to call persons of different races.

Koster stated (8) about 1809 that the sugar-mill owners were acquiring habits and customs deriving from their slaves. He added that when the Africans were frolicking in their spare time, black Creoles and mulattoes would join them, and all would dance in the same fashion, which led him to the conclusion that these dances were as representative of Brazil as they were of Africa.

Grant, who visited Bahia around 1800, observed (9) that "the most frequent entertainment engaged in by guests at private parties were dances of African origin. The onlookers seemed to be delighted with these choreographic demonstrations and cheered on the dancers with hearty applause." He added that people from all walks of life indulged in this "national" dance, thus calling Brazilian what was essentially African.

Around 1900, African dancing had invaded the social activities of European descendants to such an extent that virtuous white citizens felt impelled to publish indignant letters of protest in the papers during the Carnival season, calling upon the authorities to ban the traditional samba, which they found blatantly immoral and incompatible with "our standard of civilization" (10).

Everybody knows of course that this exercise in puritanism was doomed to failure. The Brazilian carnival has nine lives; it has retained its African dances and refused to go back to the more Portuguese custom of the "Entrudo", which meant that people would pour buckets of water over each other's head and smear the next fellow with flour.

There are many African words in the Portuguese language as spoken by the Brazilian people. These expressions have become familiar in all strata of society and give the language a unique character. Such Africanisms which adorn the Portuguese language of Brazil constitute the majority of the so-called Brazilianisms.

Our examples drawn from dancing and speech show a pronounced tendency in Brazilian society to call Brazilian what in actual fact is African.

This attitude still has further implications insofar as it recognizes religious manifestations of African origin as genuinely Brazilian. Among them is the Bahian candomblé, which foreign travellers would be more inclined to consider as an African survival having persisted in the midst of Brazilian civilization.

In Bahia I have heard discussions between Africans and Africanists on the one hand, and sociologists and linguists on the other, who seemed totally unable to agree with each other. Representatives of the first group saw conclusive evidence of the survival of African values, while among the second group it was held that these manifestations just proved the ability of Brazilian culture to accept and integrate into its cultural heritage the African contribution on an equal footing with those of the Portuguese and the Indian aborigines.

Brazilians take pride in their national features, determined by vigorous cross-breeding and anti-racism. At any rate this is the view stoutly defended by government representatives at international meetings. Consequently Brazilians will refuse to accept the existence of cultural or racial minorities on their national soil. Everybody is a Brazilian, whatever his colour or origin.

"The fact that the Brazilians in their great majority are of mixed ancestry both biologically and culturally speaking, prevents them from identifying themselves with any of the peoples and cultural groups that make up Brazil. They are not concerned with cataloguing what has survived from among the cultures having come from outside but with the question to what extent they have lost their character due to the necessity of participating in the new product which results from the synthesis of each single culture with other influences" (10).

This concern with accepting all contributions without any distinction, be they European, Amerindian, or African, is certainly worthy of praise. If however it is legitimate for the Portuguese to point out that certain peculiarities of their way of life have found lasting recognition in Brazil, then let's grant the same right to the Africans, above all the Yorubas, who have an equally legitimate interest in drawing up an inventory of the values they themselves have contributed to Brazilian civilisation.

The recognition and status accorded the Yoruba Orisa is in fact such that numerous buildings in Bahia, even among the most modern and luxurious ones in residential areas, bear their names.

Quite recently a real-estate agency successfully staked on the popularity and the confidence the names of the Orisa will inspire among the upper class of citizens, the only people able to afford to live in luxurious apartments. This agency has already constructed 23 buildings with up to 30 storeys which are placed under the patronage of Yoruba gods and goddesses.

The distinguishing features of each one these divinities are sufficiently well known among the various classes of society for them to be used for advertisements by the page in daily newspapers. Thus some years ago the same agency announced the construction of a building in the main avenue of Bahia which was to bear the name of Osagiyan.

Starting with a Yoruba salutation to this Orisa, "Epe Baba!!!", the advertisement went on to extol his virtues together with the advantages of the "Osagiyan Building", with the obvious intention of inducing a rich clientèle to purchase apartments.

The advertisement continued like this:

"Osala is the greatest Orisa.

The 'Osagiyan Building' is one of the highest on 7th Avenue.

Osagiyan is dressed in white, and marble is his symbol.

The 'Osagiyan Building' is made of marble.

By virtue of his colour and his symbol, Osagiyan is the Afro-Brazilian god of peace and love.

The 'Osagiyan Building' features calm and luxury."

The social environment in which African religion in Brazil was integrated differed greatly from the original setting across the Atlantic. The gods were reinterpreted in terms of this difference. Bastide observed (20) that "Orisa Oko, whose worship is wide-spread in Yorubaland, hardly exists in Brazil. This is due to the fact that the slaves working in the fields took no interest in celebrating any fertility rites for these fields since the harvest did not belong to them."

In like manner (13) Ògún, who in Africa is the god of the blacksmiths and of all those using iron - farmers, hunters, and warriors - has taken on a somewhat different

complexion in Brazil, although in a general way his aspect as the god of iron has been preserved by an assortment of 7, 14, or 21 iron instruments representing a farmer's hoe, the tongs and hammer of the blacksmith, a knife, an arrow, a lance and so on, which taken together represent agriculture, smithery, hunting and war. Nevertheless various functions of this god have fallen into abeyance in Brazil and only his warlike activities have been retained. He is no longer evoked as the protector of farming, no doubt for the same reasons as those for Orisa Oko. As regards his function as the divinity of hunting, it has been taken over by Oṣoṣi in the candomblés of Bahia. The latter god, who is highly popular in Brazil, has almost disappeared in Africa.

The outstanding role played by African religions in giving African descendants in Brazil an acceptable social status cannot be overemphasized. In this context I have to quote Bastide once again (14):

"Racial prejudices cannot develop where a racial democracy functions as harmoniously as in Bahia.

How could a black man protest against the whites if he sees them kneeling down before the black Iyalorisa to request their blessing, and attending the dances of the Orisa with all respect due to them.

African religion does away with any hierarchy which is not based on some measure of familiarity with the sacred. In the candomblés, the racial situation is the reverse of what obtains in ordinary life. Here it is the dark-skinned person who lords it over the fair-skinned.

The mystical trance identifies the little waitress, the cook or bricklayer with the kings of the skies, the storm or the sea and dispels any feelings of inferiority together with the resentments against daily humiliations."

The movement which has grown up in Brazil around the worship of the Orisa takes on an ever increasing importance. The ceremonies performed in their honour

in Bahia have remained very pure and faithful to their original form particularly in the great terreiros originating from Ketu, which have been mentioned above.

In other cities of Brazil similar religious movements based on the same African cultural values have emerged. They have met with a success unparalleled in history. The most outstanding of them is the Umbanda cult, which has grown out of the Macumba cult in Rio de Janeiro.

The Umbanda religion, founded around 1930 at Niteroi in the State of Rio de Janeiro, is considered as a revaluation of the Macumba through spiritism. According to the definition of Artur Ramos (15), who witnessed its rise, it is an Afro-Indo-Catholico-Spirito-Occultist compromise. In this syncretic religion, the gods of the Yorubas are to be found side by side with those of the Amerindians, with Catholic Saints, Hindu, Arab, Chinese, Eskimo, and the Gaulish spirits, sirens and water-sprites. They use the most variegated collection of symbols: Solomon's star, the swastika, the eye and compass of the Free Masons and the Christian cross.

It is a moralizing religion. Roger Bastide (16) informs us that "Ṣàngó, who in Africa hurls the thunder at the culprits, is represented in Umbanda religion with the balance of Justice in his hands. Yemṣja here has become the great purifier of earthly passions; hence she is evoked at the beginning of a session for 'shedding the load' of all impurities brought in by the bodies of the participants in the assembly hall. Ibeji, the Yoruba twins, restore to the hearts of the distressed the purity of childhood as yet free from sin."

"The existence of these groups in which all races intermingle and the half-caste rules supreme, makes for a certain homogeneity of feelings and ideas, attitudes and patterns of behaviour brought about by a synthesis in which the individual consciousness is submerged (17). It is impossible to analyse these composite affective entities with a view to separating the contributions made by the various peoples, without destroying their collective reality."

We are here faced with the same problem as mentioned before, the sheer impossibility of identifying the component parts of this new religion.

In spite of its hybrid character, or because of it, it has met with an overwhelming reception. "Thirty years after it was initiated (18), it had nearly thirty thousand cult shrines in Brazil. Eight years later they reached the one hundred thousand mark. The city of Rio de Janeiro alone counts thirty-two thousand registered places of worship, apart from an unknown number of individual adherents who are not officially enrolled.

The number of cult centres keeps growing incessantly, above all in Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Goiás. Umbanda is also spreading in other Latin American countries like Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Mexico and has now reached the Southern part of the United States of America. It has millions of followers who field candidates at municipal elections and run journals, newspapers and radio programmes. There is even an 'Umbanda Pictures Corporation' in California".

A fact worth mentioning is the prestige the candomblé of Bahia enjoys among the followers of the gigantic Umbanda movement. The sessions at the Umbanda cult centres always begin with a salutation to the "povo da Bahia" - the people of Bahia - where the most purely African candomblés are to be found.

Paradoxically, while the popularity of the Yoruba Orisa is ever growing in Brazil, their worship seems to be gradually falling into oblivion in their country of origin.

The revaluation of Orisa worship in the former is evidenced by beautiful public ceremonies which take place in the various terreiros de candomblé of Bahia.

It also becomes apparent during the big traditional festivals, such as the washing of the church of the Lord of the Good End, which to the candomblé people is a ceremony in honour of Obatalá, the Yoruba divinity in charge of the creation of human life. This festival attracts hundreds of thousands of people and its status in the social and political life of the country is such that the State Governor and the Mayor always make it a point to mix with the crowd, undoubtedly not only as an act of devotion but also to curry favour with popular opinion.

The offering made to Yemoja on the sea shore at Rio Vermelho on the 2nd of February of each year attracts a crowd at least as numerous.

We should also mention those festivals with a strong imprint of religious syncretism during which enormous crowds assemble all along the Brazilian coastline on the night of 31st December to make offerings to the Yemoja of the Umbanda sect in her quality as the godhead of purity.

One is now prompted to probe into the underlying causes of that revaluation and enthusiasm in Brazil, compared with the relative lack of interest or even stark indifference in Africa.

This has doubtless something to do with the fact that we are dealing with two different kinds of Africa, for the cultural and religious contribution of Africa to Brazil occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was the Africa before the Jihad, the holy war of the Muslims against the world of the "infidels" devoted to their Orisa; it was the Africa of the days before the arrival of the Christian missionaries, who fought a war of spiritual extermination against the paganism of Orisa worship; an Africa as it existed before the so-called civilizing mission of the colonial powers with its prejudices in favour of European ways of life.

The slave-trade had brought a part of the African intelligentsia of that period to Brazil: the babalorisa and iyalorisa, who established their cults on Brazilian soil just as they used to do in Africa itself in the native towns, and the babalawo who would memorize thousands of Ifá stories, the totality of which constitutes an oral encyclopedia of Yoruba knowledge and wisdom. It is the legacy of this Africa of centuries gone by with its aspects of an unadulterated Yoruba religion and culture which has been preserved, at least in part, in Brazil.

The present situation on both sides of the Atlantic can thus be summed up as follows: on the one hand, there is a hybrid Brazilian civilisation open to all influences, among them, clearly in the ascendant, that of African religions, but not involving an alienation from Western values; on the other hand, we find the present African civilization, having undergone a process of cultural cross-breeding through the impact of the West and of Islam, but whose traditional religious life finds itself in the throes of alienation and thrust into the background.

The dialogue between the heirs of the old African intelligentsia shipped off into slavery in Brazil and the representatives of the present-day African intelligentsia is becoming increasingly difficult. Their confrontation throws into relief a growing tendency among Brazilians to embrace ancient African values, and conversely a process of Euro-Americanization having already made considerable inroads into Africa, which far from bringing the two groups closer together causes them to drift further and further apart.

However, the point of no return in the neglect of traditional religions does not yet seem to have been reached, to judge by the following example. During the last century, a Nago-Yoruba returned to Dahomey. He arrived from Bahia with a Portuguese name and had embraced the Islamic faith while in Brazil. He had numerous descendants, partly Muslims and partly Catholics. One of his great-grandsons became Minister of Public Works in Dahomey and later Chairman of the Water and Electricity Board. In this latter capacity

he was invited three years ago to visit electric power stations, dams and other installations in Brazil which were of professional interest to him.

He rounded up his journey with a visit to Bahia since he had heard that this was the place in the New World where African religions had been best preserved. By a stroke of good luck he arrived there the day a Şàngó festival was being celebrated in one of the main terreiros of Bahia. Our friend, the Chairman of the Water and Electricity Board, conducted himself in a way befitting a true Şàngó worshipper by saluting the god of thunder in front of his altar with the appropriate oriki, offering orógbó he had brought from Africa and participating in an entirely natural manner in this Şàngó festival, together with his "cousins" from Bahia (19).

His perfect poise on this occasion was due to the fact that he had not only done research on his family's origin at Oyó but also returned to the faith of his ancestors by getting initiated into the Şàngó cult.

Another hopeful sign is the initiative taken by the University of Ife in re-establishing links with the African descendants in Brazil by teaching Yoruba at the University of Bahia and organising visits, like that of a distinguished scholar and Ifá specialist, well-known in the international academic community (20).

FOOTNOTES

1. Avé-Lallemant, Robert. Viagem pelo Norte do Brasil no ano 1859, Rio de Janeiro 1961 p.46.
2. Verger, Pierre. Flux et reflux de la traite des esclaves entre le Golfe de Bénin et Bahia de todos os Santos, Paris 1968, p.28.
3. Bastide, Roger. As Religiões Africanas no Brasil, S. Paulo 1971, p.71.
4. Campos, João da Silva. Processões tradicionais da Bahia, Bahia 1941, p.83.
5. Pierson, Donald. Brancos e Pretos na Bahia, S. Paulo 1971, p.168.
6. Freyre, Gilberto. Casa Grande e Senzala, Rio 1936, p.101.
7. Vianna filho, Luiz. O Negro na Bahia, Rio 1946, p.107.
8. Koster, Henry. Travels in Brazil (1809 to 1815), Philadelphia 1817, p.200.
9. Grant, Andrew. History of Brazil, London 1809, p.323.
10. Rodrigues, Nina. Os Africanos no Brasil, S. Paulo 1932, p.236.
11. Oliveira, Waldir Freitas. Brasileiros negros e negros africanos, in Cultura, Rio de Janeiro 1976, p.83.
12. Bastide. op.cit., p.341.
13. Bastide. op.cit., p.351.
14. Bastide. op.cit., p.325.

15. Ramos, Artur. O Negro Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro 1934, p.175.
16. Bastide. op.cit., p.452.
17. Bastide. op.cit., p.459.
18. Salles, Mauro. Personal letter of 29th May, 1976.
19. Oriki: Yoruba praise-name or praise-song; orogbo: bitter cola-nut (Translator's note).
20. Yoruba was first introduced at the University of Bahia by E. L. Lasebikan in the early 'Fifties and revived under Olabiyi Yai in 1975-76. Professor 'Wande Abimbola, author of Ifa; an Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus, visited Bahia August 1976 (Translator's Note).

Translated from Portuguese
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