

Dear Paula,
03/13/00

I have enjoyed very much your last letter (4) 03/09/00.

When will you be going to South Africa, again?

I have a funny story about South Africa, concerning myself. I'll let you know ahead (Do you know the Scheherazade strategy?).

South Africa is your new site, and what is the researched subject? Will you keep interest on Benin case? (As I told before, I don't know how is the academic work.) There will never be an "Art, Innovation, and Politics, in Nineteenth and Twentieth-century Benin?"

Your new site is in Mandela's Land. I have thought that one day maybe they rename Johannesburg as Mandela City, something like Washington, after George, and in Brazil Rondônia State, after the first Indian descendant to reach the rank of Army Marshal, Rondon was his name, because of his gigantic work on consolidating Brazilian borders on South American Amazon Region, which involve among others, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia

In spite of your change of working site, I want tell you that I have with me a very thin book (64 pages using large types), which uses two of your books, and one from Dan Ben-Amos, as suggestion for further reading. The book is *Edo - The Beni People of the Benin Kingdom*, "by Chukwuma Azounye. He does not conflict with you, on the issue of Protestant Missions in Benin, and language. In fact, his book is so compact (may I say that way) that we have the right to guess on certain issues he rises, but does not conclude. So, he says: "*An attempt by the British to force a meeting with the Oba during a period of his ritual seclusion in 1897 led to the massacre by the Beni of the entire British mission in Benin City.*" (Pg. 20). On page 18, the author says that the "*Oba Erediauwa I was trained as a lawyer at Oxford University. His major task has been to preserve the traditional feature and role of the Benin monarchy while opening it up to the modern world.*" I have the impression that was Erediauwa I the obá that has replaced Ovonramwen. Maybe we have here, a narrow gape between an oba that was maybe unable to speak English and his follower that goes to Oxford University. The puzzle goes on.

The question of cavalry it seems we both agree fully: it is quite sure that Benin had obas owners of horses, maybe good Arabic ones, from Syria or Mesopotamia, or bread of those Arabic horses, already in Northern parts of Africa. It seems that small horse (like donkeys) were used for small cargo transportation. But is quite sure that tsetse has made very hard the probability that Benin may have cavalry as the Northern people from Oyo and even the Hausa nations.

I know an oral story that reveals that the King Gezo of Dahomey was able to form his own cavalry, defeating Oyo. Gezo has stopped paying fees to the Oyo, being it his great achievement. And Dahomey it is inside the tsetse belt.

It seems we have still an open question concerning the ability of certain Beni people, maybe the oba and other high rank officers, for speaking more than Edo language. As for Ovonramwen, since he lived from 1987 up to 1914 in Calabar, probably he learned some Efik language.

Paula: I am shifting my work from Benin herself, to Calabar. So I have ordered this weekend, both to the bookshop you have suggested and to the Amazon, for the following two books: 1) Oku, Ekei Essien: THE KINGS & CHIEFS OF OLD CALABAR (1785-1925); Photos. An excellent treatment of this important subject. Mrs. Oku is a Traditional Chief in Calabar and an expert in its legends. Nigeria Africa Calabar Customs Traditions Missionary Waddell Naair Latham Women Authors USD20.00
2) "Old Calabar, 1600-1891; The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society," A. J. H. Latham; Hardcover; @ \$97.00
Special order.

Are there pending matters among us?

Personal regards,

José Luiz.