

To

Prof. Paula Ben-Amos:

Please find enclosed a letter for you.

Thank You.

José Luiz P. da Costa, Brazil.

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Dear Professor Paula:

Since you called me by “Senor” I may assume that you know something of Portuguese or Spanish, or it was a complimentary form, knowing that our language in Brazil is Portuguese. Very nice of you. So, in reading my letters, please don’t forget that I’m thinking in Portuguese, and writing in English. And that is all different concerning the reading: many years of reading different languages sets a person in a better position, between to write and to read. So, if the verbs and constructions will be somehow funny in my letters, be sure that I will understand very well yours.

Your book, “*Art Innovation, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Benin*”, is superb. I’m not a reviewer so the much I can see is that you lead us, the reader, easy and firmly across the ancient history of a Kingdom with her obas, uzamas, ezomos, iyases, chiefs -- and give us a handy list of the obas from Ehengbuda to Akengbuda, and teach us how they were, through the art they left behind. You make ease to understand the Civil War and different behave of various obas and chiefs. As well their relation with the spiritual world.

When you refer to Father Monteleone, and the cloths "made in five or, at the most, six months" on pg. 41, using Ryder, you touch in a subject that has connection with Brazil. In the book "*A enxada e a lança*", (The Hoe and the Spear), the Brazilian writer Alberto da Costa e Silva depicts a panel of Africa, before the Portuguese's arrival (he starts his book on Africa's prehistory), and refers (pg. 526) to *Pano da Costa* (Cloth from the Coast - *Ijebu*), largely exported from Benin to Brazil on the first half of Eighteenth Century. It seems, later on, when the slave traffic has ended, and commerce between Bahia (Brazil) and West Coast was very strong, industrialized *Pano da Costa*, produced in Brazil has turned itself into a largely disputed merchandise all over the Coast, including in Benin.

And moreover, in your book you teach us how to see and comprehend the bronzes, plaques, heads, in metal, ivory, clay and wood. Is all absolutely perfect. If one want to have a spotless ideas, in 177 pages, about the Kingdom of Benin, in your book one will find it. So, I indeed have enjoyed your book.

As cooperation, if it is of any value, and I insist is nothing to lower a book like yours, may I say: 1 - on pg. 43, quoting Bradbury, on the second line, it is "many fiefs", and I guess it may be chiefs. 2. - Maybe readers of your book, having it as first source of information about Benin, would like to know the full name of Bacon, that in Index pg. 170, is referred as "Bacon, Commander R. H. 16, 115." At the pg. 16 it is Commander Bacon; and at the pg. 115 it is: Bacon 1897:90). And on pg. 105, last line, we know about a Sir Ralph Moor, as "leader of the Expedition." You for sure will decide if it must be considered or not.

I guess, for a first letter that's enough, not to take much of your time. On the next one, I will introduce the story I've referred on my first e-mail.

Best Regards,

José Luiz