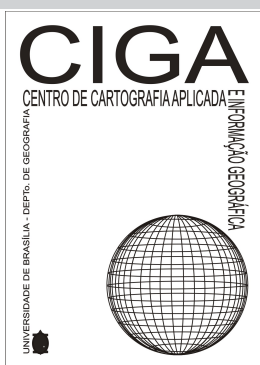


Artigo

revista



T - T - T

Revista Eletrônica:
Tempo - Técnica - Território,
V.3, N.2 (2012), 15:34
ISSN: 2177-4366

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26512/ciga.v3i2.15445>

MY WAY TO THE HEAD OF BAMBARÁ

Renato Barbieri

p. 15-34

Como citar este artigo:

BARBIERI, R. MY WAY TO THE HEAD OF BAMBARÁ. Eletronic Magazine: Time - Technical - Territory, v.3, n.2 (2012), p. 15:34 ISSN: 2177-4366.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26512/ciga.v3i2.15445>

available in: <http://inseer.ibict.br/ciga/index.php/ciga/article/viewFile/152/116>

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons

Atribuição-NãoComercial 4.0 Internacional.

MY WAY TO THE HEAD OF BAMBARÁ

Renato Barbieri,
filmmaker

Director and Producer of Gaya Movies
renato@videografia.com.br

ABSTRACT: A personal testimony and experienced of filmmaker Renato Barbieri in their relationship with the African continent, from the first connections in adolescence, through their film production and research trips. They are stories that go beyond intellectual knowledge and reach the field in the affective and aesthetic affinities and contrasts between Brazil and Africa. The growing interest in the subject of 'ancestry' led him to develop a project of fiction and, thereafter, a research trip to Mali and Burkina-Faso, led by the Malian actor Sotigui Kouyaté. On this trip, the filmmaker had a revelatory meeting with the Head of the Bambara, in the city of Segou, Mali.

Keywords: Brazil-Africa, Mali, Bambara, African origin, ancestry.

RESUMO: Um testemunho pessoal e vivencial do cineasta Renato Barbieri em sua relação com o continente africano, desde as primeiras conexões, na adolescência, passando por suas produções cinematográficas e viagens de pesquisa. São relatos que extrapolam o conhecimento intelectual e atingem o campo afetivo e estético nas afinidades e contrastes do Brasil com a África. O interesse crescente pelo tema da 'ancestralidade' o levou a desenvolver um projeto de ficção e, a partir daí, uma viagem de pesquisa ao Mali e Burkina-Faso, guiado pelo ator maliense Sotigui Kouyaté. Nessa viagem, o cineasta teve um encontro revelador com o Chefe dos Bambará, na cidade de Segou, no Mali.

Palavras-chave: Brasil-África, Mali, Bambará, origem africana, ancestralidade.

First Connections

The theme of 'ancestry' seems to me one of the richest philosophical content in the tradition of African thought. Concern about 'ancestry' has led me to reflect on the connection between Brazil and Africa, as well as my personal connection with the African continent.

My first connection with Africa was when I was about 11 years, the passage of the years 1960 to 70, while living in Araraquara, in the interior of Sao Paulo. My late father, Nelson Barbieri, architect-engineer and music lover, was a traveled man and one of his stints in Germany brought home a Zenith Trans-Oceanic radio, which had several bands shortwave, medium and long. I can say that my curiosity about the world begins here, in order to operate this powerful equipment and 'browse' the radio waves from different countries and prefixes. In fact, the sense of 'surfing' the Internet has indeed like its predecessor the radio technology.

There were several nights when I closed in the 'playroom' (or 'studies') of my house, opened the metal cover panel of the Zenith radio (with a cap in the counter-world map slices in time zones), turned it up, turned out the lights and went around in search of radio frequencies in the world: Japan, China, Russia, Cuba, Ecuador, India, France, England, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Morrocos, among many other countries. Discover music, news programs, advertisements, idioms, phrases, and vignettes of numerous prefixes were a great adventure for me, as if the robust Zenith of my father with his luminous panel, was a kind of "flying electronic carpet", I could travel for unknown 'places'. In this fantastic trip, which touched me most deeply was the soul of Morocco via radio: the music, the sound, language, Koranic chants, the mystery ... all that I awoke to another world and fascinating at the same time, and contrasts with my cultural context of Araraquara. Because of this, I would say that my first connection with Africa was aesthetic nature and occurred through the Zenith of my father.

One or two years have passed since the beginning of this experience, and here my father comes home with a great new feature: five airline tickets to Morocco and Senegal! The expedition to Africa would participate in family my parents (Nelson and Mary Ruth), my older brothers (Nelson Son and Chita) and I (the fourth son of a litter of five). This news was shocking: of a sudden I would have a direct contact with the

country whose sound I had learned to admire (target distance). For friends araraquarenses this trip sounded like something exotic, then as now, international travel are usually targeted to Argentina, the United States and some European countries, and almost never to Africa. For in February 1973 followed by the wings into the Lufthansa "mysterious continent." We traveled by car by several Moroccan cities and places: Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, El Jadida, the mountains of the Atlas mountains, Marrakech ... Such was my fascination with my older brother said that I "wanted to dive into the image of the landscape."

In Marrakech we stayed in the elegant hotel La Mamounia, and on the bedside table in our room had a nice radio, all in dark wood. When you scroll through the frequencies of the recognized dial, with emotion, many of the radios that were used to tune into cozy nights in Araraquara, through the old Zenith, affective objects that I keep today.

My father has hired a guide, Mr. Abdullah, a man excited by his country. Although my father did not speak a word of French, Arabic, much less, I soon realized, surprised the great harmony that existed between the two, because they kept talking, I do not know in what language. But one fact was revealing: in the streets had street children, social fact common today, but nothing obvious to me in Brazil at the time when the rural exodus of the country had not yet been consolidated. And I soon realized that the boys asked Moroccans exchanged only for tourists, because the Moroccans did not give a damn about them. The curious thing is that the boys never asked for my father exchanged, it was just the 'owner of the box' of our group. He was surprised when I realized that my father were twins Abdullah and the guide, as if they were relatives, and the boys took my father as a Moroccan. This for me was a great discovery, but follow watching ... At the end of this leg of the trip, my father and Abdullah parted like old friends, or perhaps without knowing it, relatives not seen for a long time. Three decades later I went to Tunisia and more than once asked if I was Moroccan. It explains: the Barbieri of my lineage came from the province of Reggio Calabria, southern Italy, the region occupied by the Moors for a long period.

Then we move to Senegal. To my amazement, on the first night in Dakar, in the dark hotel room, we were all surprised by the mysterious and compelling song of the Koran, evoked by the powerful voice of the muezzin that the top of the minaret of

the Great Mosque of Dakar, urged Muslims to prayer. The density of that 'music' touched me deeply with the force of a revelation of beauty, the essence of the sacred. My connection with Islam is not enough to overcome the field of aesthetics and I am always touched by their sounds, design and architectural forms, especially those of African origin. After that, as a filmmaker, filmed or simply visited mosques in Mozambique, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Tunisia, and these emotions are always renewed. The vision I have of Islam from the countries that met in Africa is compelling because it contains, by my experience, tolerance for difference, curiosity, universal respect, devotion serene softness, strange as it may seem, something quite different from intolerance and violence we associate with fundamentalism. It is likely that the widespread religious syncretism that grow in Brazil has its origin in African cultures.

Africas Roots

Twelve years after the trip to Morocco and Senegal, for a series of coincidences and opportunities - since I studied engineering and psychology - decided to become a filmmaker. And so, in 1987, there was a first opportunity to do a project about African Diaspora and Brazil, when the Ford Foundation launched a competition commemorating the centenary of the abolition. I started my research for a project titled "Africas Roots" and then went behind a 'map of the Diaspora', considered as basic as that, through this map, students and young Afro-Brazilian descendants of any age can have access to some 'track 'on their ancestry. If, for example, a rapper from Ceilândia, whose parents came from Rio Grande do Sul, had an interest in knowing which belonged to their ethnicity 5TMgrandfather before it was torn Africa to disembark at the port of Rio Grande, the 'map of the diaspora' he might have indications that their ancestry could be located in a vast region of Southern Africa and probably their ancestor may have been loaded at the port of Luanda, Angola, or the port of Mozambique Island in the Indian Ocean. Clues are often vague and imprecise, but that may eventually feed deep desires to know the very African. Therefore it is

necessary to provide options for knowledge about their own family saga that go beyond the "breaking" of slavery.

The origin of Brazilians Afro- descent in Brazil is not slavery, as it can lead one to believe the official story (and inertial).

The cycle of slavery sparked a drastic cut and deep into a story that was lived there in Africa. The mentality of slavery did not end with the abolition, and she acted and acts repeatedly to erase the 'previous history' through various mechanisms of prohibition, persuasion or inducement to oblivion, as the prohibition of language, change the names, the persecution of gods or, as is currently practiced in the creation of exclusive models of beauty and systematic criticism and opposition to quotas in universities, simply denying affirmative, without, however, propose alternatives consequential repair history. For all that, every Brazilian has the right to know Africa. Only an intense connection between Brazil and Africa can revive this ancient memory, and from there, generating a new 'vision of self,' view of the other ', view of ourselves as Brazilians, or a new understanding of who we are, where we came from and where we go.

But I lived in Sao Paulo when I was in my research behind the 'map of the diaspora, "and resorted to the neighborhood library and found nothing. Then resorted to USP libraries and found that no such map in Portuguese. I ended up finding a 'general statement of the Diaspora', from Africa to the Americas, in a French book. Thereafter, in 1987, I realized how huge it was misinformation about the African origins of Brazilian culture. It was decided to undertake efforts to make a film on the theme of the historical and cultural ties between Brazil and Africa. Today, when I have the honor and opportunity to participate in this Colloquium "Geopolitics & Cartography of Diaspora Africa - America - Brazil," I feel fulfilled and satisfied here to witness the launch of the "Educational Map: The Geopolitics of Diaspora Africa - America - Brazil. Centuries XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, "by Prof. Dr. Raphael dos Anjos (UNB). MEC - Ministry of Education - has the moral and civic obligation to make every school in that country - public and private - have in their libraries at least one copy of this map essential to our history.

My project "Africa's Roots" was not included in that notice, probably because he was not mature enough, but that encouragement was definitely present in me. Five years later the fate put me face to face with the teacher and historian Victor Leonardi (UNB), and together, we made the documentary film "Black Atlantic - the Route of the Orisha." I had been a time in Africa as a filmmaker to film the documentary "Mozambique", in co-authored with filmmaker Fabiano Maciel ("Life is a Breath"). Although he knew Portugal was in Mozambique found that the rich diversity of dialects of our language. This journey to Mozambique was very rich and gave me a knowledge of how to do a production on African soil, which was extremely useful in time to raise production to filming in Benin, the African lease "On Route Orishas."

In the Route of the Orishas

I had many key learnings with this film in my filmography. First, the sensitivity and I relied on experience and sensibility of large staff. Victor Leonardi, rather than employee, is co-author of the work. The synergy that we find to work together is quite complementary. Shared visions and deep humanistic feelings as well as associate knowledge and narrative strategy to tell stories. Victor and I accounted for 20 projects undertaken to date, while he was ahead of research and we both signed together the scripts. For "In Route" had the grace to have the special advice of Ambassador Alberto da Costa e Silva, author of a vast bibliography about Africa and Africanist considered the largest in Brazil. It was he who dictated to me by phone the 'map of the diaspora' that is present in the computer graphics "On Route". Alberto da Costa e Silva is the most passionate person I've ever met in Africa, for no other reason he wrote the book "The Addiction of Africa and other vices." It is at least curious to know that Africa generates such passions, both the fascination and aversion, as we often observe in the media. Another major contributor to the "On Route", especially for the filming in Benin, was the Professor. Dr. Milton Guran (UFF), a scholar specialized in acute, the 'descendants of Brazilians' or 'African returnees' living in coastal cities of Benin, cities such as Porto Novo, Uidá and Cotonou. The phenomenon of "returnees" is repeated in Eletronic Magazine: Time - Technical - Territory, V.3, N.1 (2012), 15:34 ISSN: 2177-4366

other countries of the west coast of Africa, like Nigeria, Ghana and Togo. Milton Guran familiar with the communities of "Brazilian returnees" and its direct cooperation in Benin was decisive for the success of the project.

The film also had the participation on more than special Mother Stella Oxossi, the house Ilê Àse Opo Afonjá, of El Salvador, Mother Deni, the House of Mines, St. Louis, and historians Karl Emanuel of Cotonou, and John Joseph kings, El Salvador.

The film, once completed, 'traveled' Brazil and the world, participated in dozens and dozens of festivals and national and international exhibitions and won nine awards in Brazil, including the "Silver Daisy", awarded by CNBB, and "Pierre Verger: Excellence" awarded by the ABA - Brazilian Association of Anthropology. The idea was from the beginning, to establish a 'bridge' of historical and cultural ties between the two sides of the Atlantic. Shun, anyway, 'worship' the objects of torture and violence committed by the slave against the Africans and their descendants in Brazil. In our view, this is not what people are asking, because this story of humiliation they already know well. The more knowledge that we need to know is: "after all, Africa is this where we came from." Was this Africa that is in the media, which is only war, famine and AIDs? But reducing Africa under this view is simplistic and negative the same as slavery continue the strategy of 'creating worthlessness' and 'keep forgetting'. "Apart from 'breaking' of slavery and disasters as a result of the arbitrariness of the Berlin Conference of 1885, which slashed the second African ambitions and conveniences of the European powers, beyond it all (and yet) exists and resists an African ancient, strong, wise, dense, deep and lively! Is essential for us Brazilians discover and strengthen ties with the African living that brings us to our ancestry.

The film's main characters are Father Cunha Menezes Ferreira¹, of House Fanti-Ashanti, São Luís do Maranhão, Avimandjé-non² of Uidá, and Adjahô Houmasse³ of Abomey, Benin both. 'Adjahô' is not a name but the title of high priest of the cult in Abomey voduns, historic city and former capital of Dahomé in Benin today. In the film, Father Euclid and Avimandjé-non establish a

¹ PICTURE - 1

² PICTURE - 2

³ PICTURE - 3

"dialogue" and exchanging messages through video and song is very touching and the high point of the documentary and refers to the idea of ancestry. Adjahô thrilled watched this exchange of messages through video and described the encounter as "the story of two children who were separated, and never to be seen. Each of them had children and then another and another child. But one day the opportunity was given to his descendants to meet. This meeting would be something inexplicable, his joy will be invaluable and we could not even describe it. Is it something extraordinary. "This speech is sensitive to the trauma of separation between "those who left" and "those left behind" and Adjahô was wise and generous to realize and give the message exchange between Father Euclides and Avimandjé-non an extraordinary symbolic dimension, which is the the meeting between Brazilian and African bound by ancestral ties. It does not matter if this meeting would necessarily be of a genetic nature, but beyond this size, this meeting may have many other motivations: intellectual, artistic, scientific, religious, philosophical, emotional, aesthetic, cultural, economic etc.. The important thing is that this exchange is increasingly frequent and fruitful. The testimony of Adjahô says a lot about the idea of the direction of Brazilian ancestry, african descent or not, discover its links with Africa. When we shot in January 1998, he was sick and the elderly. After we learned that he had died six months later. His testimony is a legacy.

Overcoming the "breaking"

Overcoming the 'breaking' of slavery into the "before" is a possibility to release the burden of stigma and symbolic history of slavery. I do not mean that we should forget about slavery, in fact I do not know if this is possible, but the idea is to make an invitation to go beyond, the "before".

The slaver is not the beginning of history, as before it is "nothing", a primitive life without history. The ideology of domination that exist into the conception "out there writing history" it brought a knowledge of peoples without written are people without history. In fact slavery was the end of a history in Africa. "Before" and "after" s on the scene in which African men and women were forcibly uprooted from their families. Since that scene is that slavery begins. Before reaching the ship, many of

these Africans made long journeys by land, imprisoned for libambos. On arrival at the 'port' boarding, had to endure days in barracks, prisons. Neither give to imagine the emotional and nutritional conditions that these Africans were subjected. They were not slaves! They were enslaved Africans. Slave was not and never has been a profession, a talent nor an inclination. It is true that were arbitrarily condemned to slavery, but no one chose to be a slave. So it is unfair and demeaning to refer to the millions of Africans who are victims of slave mentality, as "slaves." They were, yes, forced into slavery. Refer to these men and women as "slaves" is to transform the word 'enslave' in noun 'slave', which involves making a concession unaware that the "action" turns into "something." This even occurred (and occurs!) Deliberately in the head of the slave who, through mechanisms of acculturation of the dominant hegemonic ideas it has become common sense, but we can not let the concept of the brutal slave mentality remains in us and become into something universal. Nowadays some people bother to change ways of saying things, claiming to be a 'crap' from the 'politically correct'. But this is not a mere semantics question, because we know that the word expresses, often covertly, concepts or pre-powerful concepts, which are almost always at the service of domination and belittle others. We should not be too lazy to 'reimagine' or 're-diagramming' our thoughts, especially those inherited from the cruel slavery times, gone on the calendar, but present in the mentality of slavery and for its evocation in the enunciation of the word. Nowadays some people bother to change ways of saying things, claiming to be a 'crap' from the 'politically correct'. But this is not a mere question of semantics, because we know that the word expresses, often covertly, concepts or pre-powerful concepts, which are almost always at the service of domination and belittle others. We should not be too lazy to 'repaginate' or 're-diagramming' our thoughts, especially those inherited from the cruel slavery times, gone on the calendar, but present in the mentality of slavery and for its evocation in the enunciation of the word.

The 'Scanner of Looking'

One of the great lessons that had happened during filming in the city of Benin Ketu. After interviewing the King of Ketu, we decided to film the former Royal Palace, which has some walls with figures in high relief, an important cultural

and artistic heritage of the city. Ketu is on the border with Nigeria, and when we drove to the old palace, our local guide warned us that a week before a TV crew from France, who was filming the Palace, had been beaten by a group of Nigerians. The thing was ugly, it surrounded the French team, physically assaulted them, seized their equipment and hurled to the ground hard. The French team left 'race' of the site. I was aware with this information, but I did not worry because the aggression was not characterized as theft and also could not believe that Nigerians freely assaulting a team of Brazilians.

We arrived on the scene and started filming the collection of the palace. A few minutes later our guide warned us that the group of Nigerians was coming toward us. In fact, I saw a group of about thirty men walking down the street shape of land in our direction. He was a leader, a man of medium height, he walked ahead of the group, with a keen eye, sharp, and was followed by others in a sort of 'triangular formation', with the leader occupying the apex. No doubt it was a combat operation. Were at a distance of about two hundred meters and quickly approached. As a precaution, I asked my staff who spent filming the back side of the palace and kept me in the street, in the 'firing line' of the Nigerian group. I was really confident that there was no reason to be beaten because we were on a cultural mission to establish historical ties of friendship between Brazil and Africa. I stood in a posture attentive but relaxed. It was when I discovered that African in general has a 'body reading' and more, a 'reading of the look' that the other makes him realize that I was amazed.

The leader, observing my posture and my eye was reducing its step. The position was determined to fight winning "walk" contours , so that when it came to me, was totally harmless and extend our hands to a friendly greeting. In two seconds he asked, "Where are you from?" What had changed radically since the 'combat formation' to 'friendly' state, became effusive party, because a single magic word "Brazil" . It is something remarkable and deserves further consideration the 'capital of charisma' that Brazil has with certain people, especially among Africans. This force is a magnetic potential that we are still catching on. Soon after came my team to join the party, which almost turned into an African carnival: exchange of gifts, effusive hugs, jumping, laughing, animated conversations (can not remember in what language), the fact is that there was no barrier there between us, Brazilians and Nigerians.

On the question of "looking of scanner" seems to me that the African has learned to observe how the European settlers looked at him with: contempt, suspicion ... scared: "Who is this 'other' I do not understand?". The European cultural codes and, by extension, Americans are too contrasting with the African culture: the belief system, social structure, family, lifestyle habits, body posture, art, etc., everything is very strange between these poles ends. Of course it is not to prioritize these values in a scheme of superiority. They are different! But the West has become dominant in the world and crystallized a rule of civility' that is absolutely one-sided and devoid of otherness, in short, a vision of the field strength measured by the warlike. But Africa is ancient, its culture has the force of unconscious dimension and it also scares. This created a code view' that Africans learned to 'read'. We Brazilians have been educated by other cultural codes in relation to other people, and it makes a big difference when it comes to relate to the 'other'. We develop in Brazil, despite the view from the dominant code, a look of respect and curiosity about Africa, and that changes everything the way we see the 'other' and therefore in relation which results from: x trial curiosity, respect x contempt, friendship x domination, and so walk the differences in the way of relating. In summary, for a good observer, just half position.

The Other as Mirror

As I said earlier, the idea of ancestry is one of the most expensive philosophical concepts to Africans. For us, Brazilians, who have a history of the country very recently, the idea of ancestry seems so far away, mystical, ethereal, almost unreachable. Just check out that most of us barely know the full name of our grandparents, what about our 5TMgrandfathers? But the desire to overcome the "breaking" of slavery necessarily leads to reflection on the subject of ancestry. Thus was born an argument of a fiction film, I'm still working on the construction of the script, which allowed me to gain significant support of Ibermedia Program (agreement on cooperation and promotion of multilateral cinematography of Latin America, Caribbean and Iberian Peninsula), I allowed to do field research in Mali and Burkina Faso. But because the Mali and Burkina? Brazil came to the people of almost all black Africa. But I found these trips that the perspective is very different from slavery in Brazil and

Africa. In Brazil, african descent are united by the same trauma of the diaspora, all victims of slavery. In Africa, it is different and the subject is delicate: we find both the descendants "of those who left" and "those who stayed" (families torn apart), as we also find the descendants of the accomplices of the slave traders, who made 'a "part of the business" on the ground. The experiences that we had to touch it "slavery" in Africa there have always generated a certain malaise. Benin Historian Karl Emanuel explained with clarity and ease this thorny issue, the documentary "The Route of the Orisha." I do not mean to be an insurmountable barrier, but, as we shall see below, the testimony of the Chief of Bambara, when it comes to the subject of slavery, "their mouths are still closed." It is likely that the Brazilians in their pursuit of African ancestry, Africans themselves can help to look at the problem with a more comprehensive approach, which does not imply, of course, in any arrogant attitude on our part. It is not easy and, like the trauma of slavery will be felt here in Brazil for at least another century, would not be different in Africa.

Who has guided me for the trip to Mali and Burkina Faso was the award-winning Malian actor Sotigui Kouyate⁴, known to be part of the company's international theater of Peter Brook and for taking part in his film "The Mahabharata". Sotigui I had invited to participate in the project of fiction with the theme of ancestry and what goes in Brazil and Mali. That's when he suggested to do together, a research trip in place, and with the support of the Ibermidia, we went to Burkina and Mali in August 2006.

The first thing that seduced me to Mali was a 'picture-hook': the Mosque of Djenne⁵. The African aesthetic of Islam always seducing me, and different approaches, somehow guiding me. After we go through several cities in Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou as the capital of 600 000 inhabitants (this is Ouagadougou), Bobo-Dioulasso, an important commercial center (this is Bobôdioulassô) or Tiebele, a city where women paint their homes paints with clay and the result is amazing, beautiful, creative and original, we crossed the border with Mali and reached the capital Bamako, a great and beautiful city of 1.8 million of inhabitants is bisected by the River Niger. In Bamako, I met places, people and

⁴ PICTURE - 4

⁵ PICTURE - 5

important professionals for my project. To advance my research, I needed to meet Djenné. But Sotigui was in demand in Bamako, both by his extended family, for professional commitments, and showed no interest in going with me to Djenné. So we set up a group to go to Djenné, and in turn would pass through the city of Segou (Segú), also on the banks of the River Niger, for Sotigui considered as a good opportunity for me to meet the Head of the Bambara.⁶

Me and my guides went to the historic Djenné in van, one of the oldest cities in West Africa, which was very rich, it was a convergence point in the height of the trans-Saharan trade. The Mosque of Djenné is considered the largest brick building in the world and imposing its form is quite different from our architectural references. After this unforgettable visit, we drove to Segou and the next day we went to the village of Sekoró (historic district which is located the palace of the Chief of Bambara). That meeting with the Chief of Bambara attended the translator Andrea Caruso Saturnino, the filmmaker Salif Traoré and the spokesman of the Chief of Bambara. I was fortunate to record audio in the dialogue between myself and the Chief, spoken dialogue in Portuguese and Bambara, with the intermediate French. I consider this dialogue as very revealing, as transcribed excerpts below.

Dialogue with the Chief of the Bambara

First I introduce myself, give the Chief a Sotigui letter and also an envelope with some notes - an African tradition of bringing a gift when you schedule a real audience, as was our case. I explain about my research to make a film about the ancestry of Brazilian Afro-descent. I ask if the Chief knows some history occurred in this region of Mali, who had been enslaved and brought to Brazil.

Head of Bambara: - My own father died at 106 years old. And he was very well versed in history and taught me much about the Bambara kingdom. My father taught me not to abandon the tradition of Bambara. And I follow it closely.

Then the Chief made me a report of the complete lineage of all the

⁶ PICTURE - 6

kings Bambara, since the first king in 1712 until the 13th, which, as I understand it, would have been his father.

Head of Bambara: - It is difficult to know who is a relative or descendant of those who left for Brazil. At that time there was the ritual of circumcision. After circumcision a boy could have the right to grow a beard and also have a wife. And those who left were those who had undergone this initiation. Today is a people's identity card of Bambara, like a passport to travel to Bambara. The first identity are traces of scarification, traces of balaf. There were three strokes on one side and three on the other. Each sign identifies which ethnicity you belong. The second ID is in the palm of your hand. I can tell from the signs of the hand to his ancestry. Nowadays we do not do the traces on the face, but through the lines of the hand we can identify which family a person belongs. It is a particular reading. There is a reading that anyone can do. But through the lines of the hand I know who you are, what family you come from. This gives a clue to his script. For that before a person could come here in Africa looking at its origins balaf, but 100 years ago no longer do that anymore. It has a third reading I can do that is a reading of the hair. And that reading a person shaves his head completely, and after 15 days when the hair starts to grow, I do a reading on which family the person comes.

Salif Traoré (pointing to head): - This man is a library. We see him sitting, it seems a humble man ... but he is a real library. Even without paper, it is essential to a man. He only wears the traditional way, with cotton. He will never dress like we're dressed. When I came do my movie in this village was because it preserves certain things, no have big houses or big buildings. The Chief authorizes the construction of modern houses, houses that we see surrounding the village. But here in the heart of this village it preserves the tradition, so that there is always a dash of history.

Head of Bambara: - I can not tell the entire Mali, but the history of the Bambara kingdom of Ségou and I'm soaked. Slavery closed many doors. It was worse than a humiliation, as was an extermination. Those who left were the workers, who had been initiated. They were our strength, our workforce. They were taken and back were the old and the family's children. The parents were too old to go to

the field. Their mothers could not work and they died of nostalgia, because they no longer had any news of their children. The departed left behind their wives, these wives, after noting the departure of his men were forced to remarry, to belong to a new family and forget their partners. Because they could not bring your past to another family. And those who left, as you said, were forced to forget their own names. And they themselves could not write its history. If only they had written their story, we could find some clue. As they were sentenced to not write their history, today we are in that situation.

Renato Barbieri: - This requires a huge effort from both parties, who are in Africa and who is in Brazil, to restore these links.

Head of Bambara: - I find it difficult to talk anything about that story, because this is a story that belonged to my grandfather. And my grandfather said nothing to him because, even in thought, the whole thing was a disgrace and a humiliation. So for me it is very difficult to talk about it because they had not finished living and to overcome this humiliation of slavery, when whites arrived here and began work with the forced colonization. So the mouths are still closed. Even for us who went to school to learn the history, we were instructed not to talk about it. The One who was left the work force that fed his family and his village. And when he left his father did not know what else to do. And this story we do not want to talk again. This story is very delicate. And even those who were behind the wall, watching his son go, they could not do anything. Nobody could leave the village to go there to retrieve his son. Because there was a myth about the white man. Because even if they were not there, they had armed men stronger so that they could pick up new slaves, and that gun was the symbol of power. On the one hand some with knives and bows and arrows, and came across others with rifles. Then they looked over the wall those who had been arrested and leave once they had disappeared on the horizon they made a huge effort over themselves to forget everything they had seen. And nothing could be done to find them again, to review them, because even they, were loose in the forest, they would have no means never to return. Some of them even came to another port, they died on the boat and were thrown into the sea. So we no longer knew who had come and who had not arrived. Now they

had come, they do not know where they came because they were no longer any reference. What makes this story gets a little harder.

Renato Barbieri: - It is very important what I'm hearing now, because I'm listening to the African side. I know, by history, by reports, by books and also by oral tradition, the Brazilian part of that trauma. And I am convinced that we need to do is listen to Africans and it is also necessary that Africans listen to the Brazilians, because there will come a great affinity, because these stories are the two phases of the same story. It is then we'll understand that we are talking the same thing. For each one keep a part of this alliance. And when we succeed in restoring the alliance, it will awaken a strength and a joy unspeakable.

Renato Barbieri: I am enriched by this meeting and I thank to Bambara's Head to receive me, I thank to Sotigui to offer me the opportunity of know him and I hope come back soon. I'll take this information for Brazil, these perceptions and these feelings that I'm picking here. And may God keep my ways open to it. And I ask permission to hit the road.

Head of Bambara: - I'm sitting here on the tradition of Bambara knowing. Everything I learned was to keep it. So I am nothing more than a guardian of this knowledge and I put myself in the service of people like you who come here looking for me. The job you are preparing is a pride for all the people connected with slavery, because it's very courageous what you're trying to do. On both sides were imposed humiliations and, on the other hand, these people who left as slaves, left because they had accomplices. If you have the courage to come do this work, I'll be behind you, because the star that inspires you is not ordinary and she brings us close enough. And that his work is very bold. Here you are with the family, and here in this family and this kingdom you will never have a no. Especially do not leave here and forget this meeting. Save it as a memory, because it will be very important one day. I'm very happy and give you the way out.

Conclusion

My meeting with the Head of the Bambara⁷ was rich and intense and had moments of great and profound emotion. We saw there as a whole additional links represented by the numerous historical and cultural ties between the two sides of the Atlantic and now is backed by affectionate respect. There are many paths that lead to Africa. Faithfully believe that Brazil will rediscover in direct contact with Africa, because their gates are open to us. Africa recognizes that Brazil is made of his blood. I consider it essential that the Brazilian nation establish a 'bridge' strategic partnership with Africa, with public policies that sponsor planned trips research and cultural exchanges with artists, filmmakers, teachers, scientists, religious, public managers, farmers, students etc., with projects support by programs in Africa, fostering a broad exchange of knowledge of 'other' that also us. This would be a real contact between Brazil and African ancestry. Moreover, as Brazil needs of Africa, Africa also needs Brazil. Brazil is a young and strong nation and much of his greatness was fostered and built by African blood. As the Chief of Bambara says, "those who left were the workers, who had been initiated. They were our workforce. They were taken and back were the old and the family's children. "The African force came to build Brazil, a rich country that, for recognition and gratitude, should look to Africa with a sympathetic look and constructive, never exploitative. Amen! Axe!

© Renato Barbieri, 2012.

⁷ PICTURE - 7



PICTURE -1: Pai-Euclides Menezes Ferreira



PICTURE -2: Avimandjé-Non



PICTURE - 3: Adjahô Houmasse



PICTURE - 4: Sotigui Kouyaté



PICTURE - 5: Mosque de Djenné



PICTURE - 6: Head of Bambará



PICTURE - 7: Head of Bambará and Renato Barbier