

# Arts and Africa

**BBC** AFRICAN SERVICE, LONDON

BBC COPYRIGHT CONTROL ARTS AND AFRICA First b'cast 26.9.86  
666G

## ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

Hello, this is Alex Tetteh-Lartey with "Arts and Africa".  
A mystery voice begins today's programme. The puzzle is not  
whose voice but where.

## KIMBUNDU ACTUALITY

### ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

The language is Kimbundu - at least a form of Kimbundu - but the  
community who use this language live not in Angola where it comes  
from, not in Africa at all, but in Brazil. I'd heard of Yoruba  
speaking people who'd been enslaved and shipped from Nigeria off to  
South America (there was a splendidly authentic troupe of  
Yoruba dancers from Brazil at Festac in 1977) but Gerhard Kubik  
has been telling me how much more there is to the story of African  
cultures transplanted to that continent.

Dr Kubik's an ethnologist and musicologist from the University of  
Vienna in Austria. He paid "Arts and Africa" a visit last year to  
share his enthusiasm for the Zairean guitarist, Mwendé Jean Bosco.  
This time he's been telling me about the research he's been doing  
since 1974 on the remnants of African culture to be found in Brazil.  
Of course, Brazil's coastline directly faces Africa's across the  
Atlantic, and for centuries Brazil and Angola served the same  
colonial master, Portugal. So I wanted to know which were the  
African cultures Gerhard Kubik believed have survived in this part  
of the New World.

### DR GERHARD KUBIK

We are talking about several African cultures. It's very complicated.  
People were deported from many different parts of Africa, to Brazil,  
by force, over a period of 3 to 4 centuries. But there are  
certainly three areas which we can distinguish from which most of  
the people came who ended up in Brazil. Firstly, the so called  
slave coast, comprising parts of Nigeria and adjacent territories.  
A second area is the Angola Congo region from which many people were  
deported. And the third area of less importance is South East Africa.  
Especially during the 19th century, many people were deported from  
the Zambezi valley, from Lake Malawi.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

So that when we talk of cultures we are talking about regional cultures rather than particular tribal or nationalistic cultures.

DR GERHARD KUBIK

I think we are talking about regional cultures. Although these regional cultures are composed of ethnic elements and it may well be, (and I think it can be proved that in these regional cultures), that certain ethnic elements at last got a dominance. We worked in the coastal area of Bahia which is an area where Yoruba culture has survived to a great extent, but mixed with elements from the Angola-Congo region. Then we worked in the south of Brazil in the state of Sao Paulo, covering pretty well the whole area of urban and rural communities of African descendants in the state of Sao Paulo, which is a culture area where Angolan and Congo cultures have dominated the picture. And then as to the relatively inaccessible areas, we worked in the state of Minas Gerais - you can guess the name 'Minas' means mines, and the state of Minas Gerais is where a lot of mining was done and slave workers were used for that. It is a tropical area with high mountains, and there we worked in so-called 'forma kilembush' - runaway settlements of slaves - which do exist to a certain extent - I mean the settlement patterns do exist until today. The runaway slaves at the end of the 19th century preferred not to stay in large villages which would be easy to attack, but scattered all over the mountains, establishing a network of communications, so that when expeditions for the punishment of the runaway slaves wanted to penetrate the area they found only empty houses. In that particular area there are still some remnants of African languages, for example Bantu. These contain elements of Umbundu, Kimbundu and Kikongo - three languages spoken in Northern Angola.

ACTUALITY OF LANGUAGES

This is not the only case. Remnants of Bantu languages are also found in southern Brazil, for example in the community of Kafundo, Beira de Kafundo not very far away from a big city in southern Brazil, the city of Sororoca. There we also worked. That community did not emerge from a Kilombo runaway settlement, but it was a settlement created by the estate holders, and the people existed in relative isolation and kept parts of their language. The vocabulary which survives is not very large - it's not more than 300 to 400 words which the people today remember, but they are using these words in playful conversations and also for the purpose of expressing themselves when visitors - undesirable visitors or undesired visitors - come and they don't want them to understand.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

Now a lot of emphasis is placed on the Yoruba element as far as the West African region is concerned.

DR GERHARD KUBIK

The Yoruba population was concentrated in Bahia and it is there in the Afro-Brazilian cults, generally known as Kandombe where you get the most dense Yoruba element. Not only in the survival of the Yoruba terminology for the Yoruba deities such as Shango, Oshun and many other Yoruba deities, but also specifically in music. The cult music has a distinctive Yoruba style, for example playing on the bell.....

ACTUALITY/BELL RHYTHM/GERHARD KUBIK

..... and so it goes on. We have a very good recording to demonstrate this.

YORUBA MUSIC

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

Are there other aspects - that is other than religious ceremonies - in which you could detect African cultures?

DR GERHARD KUBIK

We have to look at the broad expression of cultures in Brazil and this includes not only religious manifestations but also for example body movement. Body movement is a feature which is at an early age encultured by children, and in different cultures certain preferences in the body movement patterns are found. This can be in the field of work movement for example during certain work processes, but also in dance. With regard to work processes we have made video films and a number of other recordings showing certain patterns which occur in a community I've already mentioned, in Southern Brazil in the community of Kafundo, a village of about 75 people, when winnowing - rice winnowing - takes place. You can distinguish even by ear without looking at the movement, you can assess that there are certain patterns and these patterns are African rhythms from the Bantu language zone.

ACTUALITY - RICE WINNOWING

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

The Brazilians are world famous for their sense of fun especially in the entertainment field. Did you notice any African influences here as well?

DR GERHARD KUBIK

Well this is a, one could say, eighty per cent African culture, especially in that kind of dance music which has been known all over the world now as the samba. Even the word samba comes from Africa. There have been several theories about the origin of the word samba used for Brazilian urban music. In the past certain Brazilian scientists used to relate samba to the word in Kimbundu called semba which used to designate a certain body movement with two people, man and woman, bouncing together with their bellies. In Brazil they also call this Umbigada. But we have found other sources which

could explain the term samba in Brazilian music, including one which is a verb kusamba in Eastern Angolan languages, used to express a sort of jumping movement by certain animals. For example in Luchasi, a language in Eastern Angola you could say .....

ACTUALITY/LUCHASI/GERHARD KUBIK

..... "The antelope jump up and down when rain comes". So in this word "kusamba" could have been used one day in Brazil as imperative. For example, some person did not dance well and another one shouted at him "samba" - "You do that movement, you do that movement", you see, and that could have been that start of the term associated with the dance music. Samba music, as played in the streets of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro and many other cities, is a culture which is perhaps around seventy to eighty per cent determined by Angolan rhythm patterns. For example,

ACTUALITY/RHYTHM PATTERNS/GERHARD KUBIK

You will discover that in recordings which we made in Bahia in 1975.

MUSIC - SAMBA DANCE IN BAHIA

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

Now are these people aware of their origins? Do they exactly know which part of Africa they come from?

DR GERHARD KUBIK

In Brazil there is a general awareness of certain African origins but what has prevailed even among scientists is a sort of panorama view of Africa, because of a lack of knowledge. People don't remember where exactly their ancestors came from and so our research team which comprises two African members and one Brazilian member has tried somehow to remedy this situation and this has resulted so far in two books which are available. One is called "Angolan Traits in Black Music, Games and Dances of Brazil" which came out in Lisbon and another one "Extensions of African Cultures in Brazil".

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

My guest has been Dr Gerhard Kubik from whom I also learnt that in another part of South America, in Venezuela, there are Ghanaian settlements - but that's another story. The music of the Afro/Brazilian samba completes today's programme. I'll be back with more Arts and Africa next week. Until we meet again, this is Alex Tetteh-Lartey saying goodbye.

ACTUALITY - AFRO/BRAZILIAN SAMBA