

THE OBSERVANCE OF ALL SOULS' DAY IN THE GUINEA-BISSAU REGION:
A CHRISTIAN HOLY DAY, AN AFRICAN HARVEST FESTIVAL,
AN AFRICAN NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION, OR ALL OF THE ABOVE(?)*

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"[A] desecration of our religion."¹

I

On the eve of All Saints' Day on November 1, 1898, a Portuguese army officer, Henrique Augusto Dias de Carvalho, observed a colorful and noisy crowd of people wending through the streets of Bolama beginning the celebration of *dia dos finados* (All Souls' Day), which day of supplication for the faithful departed is observed by Christians on November 2.

The indigenous Christians generally from long-standing custom and according to local practices customarily pay homage to the dead on the second day of November, beginning this commemoration on the eve of All Saints' Day after midnight.

They come out of their dwellings and gather at the door of the local church whence they proceed with little lights walking in procession through all the streets singing the Ave-Maria mixed with African songs.

Men and women with fantastic costumes, as if it were carnival, and swigging aguardente and palm wine wander about for three entire nights in this manner until after daybreak; then they disperse, everyone returning to their dwellings, to come out again at night, and spending all day on the 2nd in singing and dancing. The groups combine this with alcoholic drinks and engage in lewd behavior, which debauchery attains its peak during the night of the 2nd until dawn, when after several hours of rest, the finale of the commemoration takes place, which consists of feasting and more drinking, inside or in the open air at a place some distance from the settlement, afterwards singing once again Ave-Marias for the souls of all the departed.²

Dias de Carvalho relates that he was disgusted by the carnival-like atmosphere which seemed to him to desecrate "our religion," causing him to remonstrate to a watching priest that such irreverent and scandalous goings-on should not be permitted. The priest, Cónego Serpa Pinto, demurred, replying that he lacked authority to interfere in such matters, that the observance of All Souls' Day by a procession was an old custom in Guinea, that such proceedings in no way challenged colonial authority, and that he was wary of interfering with such observances lest he create discord among members of the Christian community. Dias de Carvalho does not record what rejoinder, if any, he made to these sensible remarks, only adding that Portuguese authorities deferred taking action against such processions until 1904, ending "such absurdities" on Bolama. The individual who persuaded the Administrador of Bolama to prohibit the customary celebration was Cónego Serpa Pinto.³

Conego Serpa Pinto characterized the celebration of All Souls' Day as a "longstanding custom," causing one to wonder when and in what circumstances this particular Christian holy day began to be celebrated in the Guinea-Bissau region. Such are intriguing questions, for there was only sporadic missionary activity in the area prior to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Until then, Cacheu, Bissau, and other Portuguese garisons frequently lacked chaplains for months or years at a time, and the few priests sent to Guinea seldom concerned themselves with missionizing neighboring African societies. Moreover, the Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Luso-African traders, officers, and soliders who lived in Guinea were generally reputed to be neglectful of their religious obligations, even scandalously so. Few attended mass, observed holy days of obligation, or consecrated Christian marriages. What then made the celebration of All Souls' Day so significant for residents of the trading communities in Guinea, especially for the "indigenous Christians?"

A tentative answer is that European observance of All Souls' Day on November 2 and All Saints' Day on November 1 "fortuitously" coincided with the time African societies celebrated harvest time and the beginning of the new year, thereby predisposing Africans to espouse a European festival at a similar time of year. More speculatively, and on a deeper level of analysis, Portuguese and Africans shared a similar heritage of "pagan" beliefs that antedate the spread of Christianity to either Europe or West Africa, which shared heritage encouraged mutual accommodation, acceptance, and syncretism of religious beliefs and practices.

The discussion following explores a point of view diametrically opposite that of Dias de Carvalho and nineteenth-century Europeans generally: that is, instead of contrasting and denigrating what Africans do differently than Europeans and disparaging them for their inadequacies in imitating European "civilized" models, this paper focuses on similarities and compatibilities among African and Portuguese religious beliefs and practices. What is adduced is, inevitably, exploratory and tentative given the paucity of scholarly investigation of these matters, but su-

gestive nonetheless of the possibilities of new lines of inquiry.⁴

II

The 'Pagan' Heritage of Medieval Portugal

In recent papers, I have posited the appropriateness of a conceptual framework that treated Old World Neolithic Religions as a single continuum.⁵

Dias de Carvalho would have been appalled to learn how "our religion" was practiced by Portuguese in medieval times, continuing in some areas down to the present century. The Catholic Church engaged in a long struggle to eradicate or co-opt "pagan" beliefs and practices surviving from pre-Christian times. In particular, it proved extremely difficult to suppress pagan festivals linked to the change of seasons and the cycle of agricultural patterns followed by cultivators. Much syncretism with Christian beliefs occurred as a consequence. Church authorities' adoption of All Saints' and All Souls' days as Christian holy days of obligation are striking examples of Europeans' tenacious adherence to pre-Christian beliefs.

All Saints' and All Souls' days derive from ancient beliefs associated with a pagan festival of death following harvest time and the onset of winter. Church authorities found such beliefs impossible to extirpate, and in the ninth century November 1 was officially established on the Church calendar as a day of obligation honoring all saints, known and unknown. Divorced of its religious significance, "Halloween" (All Hallows) continued to be celebrated on October 31 as an outlet for youthful exuberance, pranks, and merry-making of all sorts.⁶

In the eleventh century the Church established November 2 as All Souls' Day, a day of supplication for souls in Purgatory. Souls of the faithful which at death have not been cleansed from venial sins, or atoned for past transgressions, can be helped to attain heaven by prayer and the sacrifice of the mass.⁷ It is noteworthy that the Church accorded special privileges to Christians in the Iberian peninsula, testifying to the tenacity of old beliefs among Portuguese and Spanish. In 1748 Pope Benedict XIV granted a special dispensation to Portuguese and Spanish priests to celebrate three requiem masses for the repose of departed souls on All Souls' Day, conferring special indulgences on souls in purgatory, a dispensation not accorded to Christians in other countries until 1915.⁸

In like manner, the feast of Christmas supplanted another pagan festival marking the winter solstice (December 22) and the rebirth of the sun. And the Easter festival of death and resurrection replaced the pagan festival celebrating the return of spring and the renewal of nature.⁹ Moss and Cappannari characterize the early missionary bishops as "good applied anthropologists

table for the soul's refreshment.¹³

The pagan festival of death in the fall linked to a second festival in May marking the return of spring and the renewal of nature survived in parts of Portugal until the present century, with people in some districts visiting church graveyards on May Day as well as All Souls' Day.¹⁴ With respect to Portuguese observance of All Souls' Day, Rodney Gallop remarks,

Two features of the *dia dos finados* reflect its pagan origin. One is the *magusto* or open-air feast of wine and chestnuts...probably consumed originally on the graves and undoubtedly connected with funeral offerings. The other is wassailing by bands of children. Round Coimbra these sing *loas* (hymns). At Belas and Obidos they ask for *pão por Deus* (bread for God), a forgotten echo of a traditional charitable distribution, provision for which was made in certain fifteenth-century leases. At Cintra there is a tradition that nothing that a child asks on this day may be refused. The Carollers are rewarded either with a *magusto* or with *bolas de festa*, special cakes of sugar, cinnamon and sweet herbs.¹⁵

It may be noted that open-air feasting and caroling were salient features of the All Souls' Day observance at Cacheu described by Dias de Carvalho.

Gallop compiled a wealth of information concerning pagan beliefs and practices that survived in Portugal down to the twentieth century. These include "a belief that certain malign influences have special power at Halloween and Christmas. It is not witches, *mouras* or werewolves however, who are abroad on these two nights. Their place is taken by the souls of the dead, *alminhas a penar*."¹⁶

Gallop added:

In Portugal, at the present day [1930s], the *alminhas* appear to be not so much feared as welcomed. Crumbs are scattered for them on the hearth, or the table is left spread after the *consoada* [Christmas banquet in the small hours of Christmas Day], in order that they may share in its plenty. If they are seen, it is only in the form of little flickering lights. But in the Minho, they come only if no prayers are offered for their peace, and in these prayers it is easy to discern the intention of warding them off. In most primitive communities, the dead are feared little less than witches. Numerous as they are in many countries, the customs in which fear and avoidance are tempered by affection and combined with a ritual aiming at ensuring the return of the dead to their ancestral homes on one day in the year are the exception rather than the rule.

In so far as they are feared, therefore, the souls of the departed may be equated with the malign beings in whom popular superstition has incarnated pagan nature cults.

It is possible that this parallel may prove to be even closer. In the Portuguese calendar the cult of the dead is reflected in other customs which I have not yet described. During Lent, groups of men and women go round the villages late at night and chant the Dies Irae or dirges calling upon all good Christians to awake and pray for the souls of the dead. This is called *augmentar* or *encomendar as almas*. Round Miranda do Douro the song begins:

Acordai, pecadores, acordai,	Awake sinners, awake and
não dormais mais;	sleep no longer;
Olhai que estão ardendo em	Remember the souls of your
chamas as almas dos	fathers who burn in
vossos pais	flames
Que vos deixaram os bens e	Who left their property to
vos deles não vos lem-	you who remember them
brais.	no more. ¹⁷

Gallop discussed three examples of "ancient and primitive conceptions" concerning the dead which are found in Portugal and elsewhere: "that a corpse is ceremonially unclean and this uncleanness extends not only to the dead man's belongings but also to members of his family; that the dead envy and persecute the living; and that the presence of death endangers the lives of those around."¹⁸ Gallop also remarked:

In all ages, a relation has been thought to exist between the dead and the buried seed from which presently the crops will spring. The fact that both disappear beneath the earth would alone suffice to account for this notion, which is reflected in the myths of Ancient Greece and Rome and in the Greek festival of the Anthesteria...

In Portugal the dead are associated with seed, flour or bread in several of the customs mentioned in this chapter; in the crumbs they eat at Christmas, in their intrusion on the maize stripping and in the fact that in some districts the *augmentar as almas* is practiced on the threshing floor. In the *terras de Barroso* it is customary, if one drops a crust on the floor, to exclaim: *Para as alminhas* (for the souls).

If, therefore, the dead may be regarded as the guardians of the buried seed and their cult be interpreted as an agricultural fertility cult, the distinction between them appears to dissolve into thin air. No longer does it seem to matter whether the wassailers are to be conceived as harbingers of luck or as the wild-hunt of the dead, since in either event the

prosperity of the crops is their aim. If not identical in outward form witches and ghosts are equivalent in so much as both are misty personifications formed in frightened peasant minds by the old rites and their protagonists, divinities once, who have paled to-day into these shadowy creatures of evil.¹⁹

Gallop's conclusion that the dead may be regarded as the "guardians of the buried seed and their cult be interpreted as an agricultural fertility cult" is congruent with West African beliefs that ancestral spirits serve as intermediaries with the spirits of the soil to ensure bountiful harvests, good health, and increase for humans and domestic animals.

Gallop elsewhere expatiated on the beliefs of Portuguese and other Europeans concerning the cult of vegetable fertility.

The most obvious symbol of the spirit of vegetation, and one which survives in our own Maypole, is the tree. When the animistic belief that every tree is the body of a separate spirit leads to the polytheistic conception of a general tree spirit which can take up its abode in any particular tree, a stage is reached in which trees, considered as animate beings, are credited with the power of making fruit and crops prosper, herds multiply and women bring forth easily. When, in turn, anthropomorphism displaces polytheism, the same powers are attributed to tree gods conceived in the likeness of mankind.

Both these stages are reflected in Portuguese folk-usage, derived originally from rites in which the tree spirit was conceived as immanent in the tree, as detached from it and represented in human effigy, and finally as embodied in living men and women.²⁰

One example discussed by Gallop concerns a chapel at Merceana where a herdsman, observing his ox repeatedly fall upon its forelegs before a tree, looked into the branches and saw a vision of the Virgin with the dead Christ in her arms. Rodney comments that the legend derives from an ancient cult of the oak tree and the bull, "emblems respectively of the gods of Thunder and War," and notes that an identical explanation is traditionally given for a similar shrine in Spain.²¹

West Africans likewise identify trees as a favored abode of spirits, the most powerful spirits arrogating the largest trees. Stones, streams, springs, and other bodies of water are also dwelling places of spirits in West Africa, and in Europe. Gallop commented on pilgrimages to shrines that date to pre-Christian times.

Everywhere, traces of a cult of stones and rocks survive in the nomenclature of holy images. Senhoras da Rocha, da Penha, do Penedo, da Serra, da Lapa, and so on, abound. These shrines of Our Lady are usually

situated on some crag or rock, or near some cave or "rocking" stone, which struck the imagination of the ancient Lusitanians and was worshipped or populated with Mouras Encantadas. For example, Na Snra da Saúde at Penha Longa, where a big *romaria* is held in May, stands at the foot of a low spur of the Cintra range, culminating in a sharp pinnacle of rock, and the chapel of the Senhor da Serra at Belas just outside Lisbon is close to the remains of a striking dolmen.

That in other places the worship of Our Lady has superseded the cult paid to the tutelary spirits of springs and wells, is indicated by the fact that at Na Snra da Atalaia in the Ribatejo, Na Snra da Piedade at Goim near Lamego, and many other shrines, a spring of pure water bubbles up under the very altar of the church.²²

"Mouras Encantadas" (enchanted Mooredresses) are believed to be beautiful maidens who may have a snake's tail instead of legs, are guardians of treasures, and possess other marvelous attributes. Mouras require human aid to break their enchantment, and Gallop noted that in many legends describing encounters with humans, they are often portrayed in serpent forms.²³

Near Vermoim in the Minho, runs one such tale, there was once a serpent which struck fear into the hearts of all around. A young man who went forth to slay it fell asleep during his quest. The serpent kissed him while thus he slept, and was transformed into a beautiful maiden whom he married. More usually it is the mortal who must kiss the serpent....²⁴

Europeans and West Africans share an enormous corpus of legends recounting variants of snake/dragon, young man, and maiden relations, usually with one of the three perishing in the encounter.²⁵ Specific to snakes, West Africans believe the python (*Python sebae*) to have remarkable attributes. It is associated with the powerful spirit *Ningiri* which dwells in the earth, in water, and in trees, consumes iron which it transforms into gold, links the sky as the rainbow, and controls rain.²⁶

Just as the python (and the spirits living in trees, rocks, etc.) possess certain powers, so do Christian saints have "spheres of influence": S. Antão is the patron of cattle, S. Dionísio guards against earthquakes, S. Gonçalo is a matchmaker for women, etc., etc. Portuguese peasants attribute saints with human virtues and human frailties. Saint Pedro de Rates, for example, has a reputation for revengefulness. "On his day not a soul would dare work throughout the Minho, for *o santo é vingativo*, and some misfortune would certainly befall them."²⁷ Gallop further remarked:

If the Saints are regarded as human beings it nat-

usually follows that they are treated accordingly. They may be cajoled and their intervention obtained by prayers and penitence, by vows and votive offerings. But if they fail to accomplish what is desired of them they are exposed to menaces and, in the last resort, to punishment. I am informed that it is by no means unusual, even in good families, for recalcitrant Saints to be turned with their faces to the wall like so many naughty children.... Of S. Antonio the matchmaker, an English observer wrote just over a century ago that "if things wear a prosperous aspect his image is honoured with a quantity of tapers; but if the contrary be the case he becomes liable to the grossest possible indignities, and I have even known him plunged into places where his situation must have been anything but pleasant. It is not with lovesick maidens alone that S. Antonio has often to repent of his too extensive reputation; for mariners, who have prayed to him in vain for propitious breezes, at length lose patience and flog his effigy lashed to a mast....

At Nazaré there is a statue of the Virgin which, if a storm arises, is threatened, and, if any disaster occurs, publicly cursed. The women of Povoá de Varzim are popularly reputed to stone the Saints and smash the chapel windows if they allow the fishermen to be drowned at sea.

The luckless St. Anthony figures in what is perhaps the most curious of such stories. "The people of Castelo Branco", wrote Brydone in his *Tour Through Sicily and Malta* [in 1770] "were so enraged at S. Antonio for allowing the Spaniards to plunder their town, contrary, as they affirmed, to his express agreement with them, that they broke many of his statues to pieces; and one that had been more revered than the rest, they took the head off, and clapped on one of St. Francis in its place, whose name the statue ever afterwards retained."

The Constituições of the See of Évora, published in 1534, impose penalties on the practice of carrying images to water in time of drought and threatening them with immersion if they do not bring rain. In some parts of the country this practice still survives, the victims being S. Miguel in the district of Vila Real, S. Antonio in that of Braganza, and Santa Marinha at Segura (Beira Baixa).²⁸

Portuguese would find similar practices in West Africa.

Portuguese and West Africans likewise shared similar beliefs concerning the causes and cures of disease, and in the efficacy of amulets. In past times in Portugal, illness was conceived as caused by a spirit or a soul from another world. In 1932 a woman *vidente* (seer) named Zefa explained her cures as follows:

Disease, she states authoritatively (and Carregueiras [her village] in the main agrees with her), is a spirit. It is the spirit of some deceased member of the patient's family. When a patient consults her, Zefa does not enquire whether he has fever, headache, palpitations or a stomach-ache. She simply asks: 'Whom have you lost?' 'My father', replies the patient. 'Then that's what ails you', is Zefa's dogmatic pronouncement. And she adds: 'I will communicate with his spirit, and you will recover.' This she does, or so both Zefa and the patient maintain. And the patient is cured. At least, Zefa says so, and the patient says so too.²⁹

In the circumstances, Portuguese provided themselves with amulets for protection. Gallop characterized the types as follows:

The objects which constitute these amulets fall into several classes. Among natural substances thus used are many drawn from the animal kingdom such as toads' legs, snakes' or bats' heads, horns, and bones; from the vegetable world, such as rosemary, wild lavender, broom, garlic, four-leaved clover, nuts with three kernels, and olive stones; and from the mineral, such as iron, steel, jet, coral, stone and rock-crystal. The shapes into which these and other substances are worked may also of themselves carry virtue. There is, for example, the horseshoe, the half-moon, the fish, the heart, the pentacle or Solomon's seal, and the "fig".

Yet another class of amulet is formed by objects to which extraneous circumstances have lent a virtue which would not otherwise reside in them. In this class may be numbered "thunderbolts", herbs that have been blessed, pieces of red thread the exact length of a particular Saint's height, rings from dead men's fingers, fragments of winding sheets and, at Vinhais, that sinister object the *mão de finado* or "hand or glory", the dried and pickled right hand of a dead man, which is in great demand with thieves since it is reputed to have the gift of opening locked doors and inflicting on householders by sympathetic magic the deafness and insensibility of its defunct owner.³⁰

A number of other Portuguese beliefs and practices could be mentioned that are similar to those of West Africans, but the foregoing are sufficient to prepare medieval Portuguese mariners (and the readers of this paper) for a voyage along the coast of West Africa. The foregoing examples attest that there were more "pagan" survivals in Portuguese religious beliefs and practices than Dias de Carvalho and Portuguese of the upper classes knew about—or wished to acknowledge. One can only speculate concern-

ing the beliefs of the mostly illiterate or poorly-educated Portuguese mariners, traders, soldiers, and priests who ventured out to West Africa from the mid-fifteenth century, some of whom settled in the Guinea-Bissau region and neighboring Senegambia.

McCall's provocative statement concerning "Old World Neolithic Religions as a single continuum" quoted at the beginning of this section also serves as prologue to the Basil Davidson quotation introducing the section following--that medieval Portuguese encountered few African beliefs "more disconcerting than others they could find at home." Seemingly, Davidson might have stated that Portuguese found few African beliefs significantly *different* than those found at home. So too might West Africans have said concerning Portuguese beliefs.³¹

III

Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Guinea-Bissau Region

[Portuguese] ran into many amazing beliefs and superstitions, but few or none that seemed more disconcerting than others they could find at home. Victorious Congolese armies tended to see signs and ghostly symbols in the sky, yet there was nothing out of the way in that. The Portuguese themselves regularly saw angels, and so of course did other Europeans.³²

Papel, Diola, Biafada, Balanta, and other groups dwelling in the coastal-riverine areas of the Guinea-Bissau region are characterized as acephalous or "domocratic" societies, contrasting with Mandinka and other stratified societies living in the woodlands and savannas of the interior. The latter possess hierarchical social structures comprising ruling elites, free people, "casted" groups such as blacksmiths, and in past times, domestic slaves.

The social and cultural patterns of the acephalous groups in the Guinea-Bissau region were remarkably resistant to external influences, African and European both. Notwithstanding that the coastal-riverine peoples had commercial relations with Mander-speaking groups, including Muslim traders, for centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans in the mid-fifteenth century, and that many Portuguese settled among them, their social and cultural patterns continued largely unchanged down to the present century. Their religious beliefs and practices in particular were little influenced by either Islam or Christianity until the present century. Indeed, Muslim Mandinka and Portuguese and Luso-African Christians alike evinced great respect--oftentimes expressing fear and awe--for the spiritual practices of coastal-riverine groups, and frequently had recourse to their religious specialists for a variety of purposes: for establishing social relations, for ratifying commercial agreements, for mediation with local spirits, and for medical and spiritual healing.

As elsewhere in Africa, the religious beliefs and practices of the peoples of western Africa defined and gave meaning to their lives; they were the warp-and-woof of a person's existence. John S. Mbiti explains:

Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony;...

Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for his community of which he is a part. Chapters of African religions are written everywhere in the life of the community, and in traditional society there are no irreligious people. To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence.³³

The religious beliefs and practices of coastal-riverine societies in the Guinea-Bissau region were similar to those of other societies in western Africa. Beliefs concerning the spirit world and its manifestations incorporate four categories of supernatural phenomena that interact with each other and with human-kind.³⁴

The first is a creator god remote from everyday affairs, is difficult to communicate with, and consequently is considered dissociated from humans' ordinary affairs. The name of the high god differs from society to society, e.g., Diola: *Emitay*; Bijagó: *Nindo*; Badyaranke: *Kodan*; and Susu: *Ouré-Kan*.³⁵ A significant, if indirect, influence of the high god on human affairs may be that its known existence may have predisposed the peoples of western Africa to accept the arguments of Muslim clerics and Christian missionaries concerning the existence of Allah and God.

A second category of supernatural phenomena comprises spirits dwelling in the soil, waters, flora, and fauna. These spirits are generally considered "amoral," with arbitrary powers to protect or injure humans. Their assistance or non-interference in human affairs may be invoked by prayers and offerings, and by the mediating influences of ancestor spirits. Trees are a favored abode of spirits, and the most powerful spirits reside in the tallest trees of an area. It is incumbent on a group founding a new community to establish links with the spirits living there, which ties are afterwards maintained by religious cere-

monies and offerings.

In the Guinea-Bissau region, gods and spirits are known as *irans* (*irão*, *tehina*, *china*, *hatsychyna*, etc.). Africans create statues and other objects as temporary dwelling places for spirits, which serve as the focus of religious ceremonies and place of offerings. These are likewise referred to as *irans*, and are mentioned in European sources as "idols" and "fetishes."³⁶ As was the case for saints' images in Portugal, objects are sometimes verbally abused or knocked about when spirits appear indifferent to petitions for assistance.³⁷

A third category of supernatural phenomena comprises ancestors or the "living dead." At death humans become inhabitants of the spirit world where they may intercede with other spirits on behalf of their descendants and the community at large. Conversely, if displeased with the actions or neglect of their living kin, ancestor spirits may deny them assistance, or inflict harm on them.

Many West African societies believe in reincarnation and regard life and death as a continuum: there must be deaths in order that there may be births; thus the living constitute a "minority" of the members of a society. Coastal-riverine societies of the Guinea-Bissau region are extremely solicitous concerning ancestors. Deceased were interred close to dwellings, in some societies underneath the floors of dwellings, excepting individuals guilty of witchcraft, murder, or other anti-social behavior, in which case their bodies are disposed of in the bush away from a village. Gravesites are marked by posts, strips of cloth, or by other means. Food offerings are periodically placed by graves, where descendants hold family rites and religious ceremonies communicating with spirits at the time of planting and other important periods in the life cycle.³⁸ Medieval Portuguese and other Europeans who held the dead in awe and fear, who communed with ancestors concerning crops and while dining in graveyards on All Souls' Day and May Day, and who dreaded ghosts and other spiritual manifestations, would have found African beliefs and practices concerning the dead compatible with their own.

A fourth category of supernatural phenomena comprises forces and powers immanent in vegetable, animal, and mineral substances. Individuals adept in such matters may encapsulate such forces in the horns of wild or domestic animals, in leather pouches, and in other containers which operate as "power generators" increasing the strength of the substances many-fold. Such amulets or talismans (*grisgris* or *gree-grees* in popular usage) are sought to protect individuals and their possessions from sickness and harm; alternatively, they may possess "offensive" powers to attract and win the affections of another person, or to weaken or kill an adversary or an enemy. In former times, initiation societies combined control of such powers with human organizational abilities directed to specific social purposes: Simo, Poro, and other societies appointed rulers, mediated conflicts between groups, arbitrated judicial processes, and expedited commerce between different societies by means of highly-organized and stratified leadership networks believed to control supernatural powers.³⁹

Medieval European medical practitioners, not to mention "witches" and other specialists in the occult, likewise compounded remedies and distilled potions alleged to possess magical and regenerative powers. European churches and chapels were filled with relics to rival those of any African shrine. Little wonder that Portuguese and their Luso-African descendants wore African talismans, consulted African healers, and participated in African communal religious ceremonies.

IV

Langados, Tangomaos, Luso-Africans, and the Cape Verde Nexus

"I Confessed some Portugals here, which in ten, twentie, thirtie yeeres had never bene Confessed, the Christians there little differing from Ethnikes."⁴⁰

Portuguese and other Europeans who traded along the coast of western Africa from the mid-fifteenth century had to accommodate to African patterns of commerce and social intercourse. African hosts treated them in much the same manner as they did African traders, applying to them "landlord-stranger" reciprocities. African 'landlords' and members of African communities guaranteed the safety and security of strangers' persons and property, assisted them in collecting payments and resolving disputes, and otherwise promoted their interests.

Venturesome Portuguese and Cape Verdeans who settled among African societies to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by landlord-stranger reciprocities came to be termed *langados*, from the Portuguese *se-langar*, which may be translated as "casting one's lot" among Africans. One of the most important privileges accorded resident strangers, African or European, was that of marrying local women, usually women related to rulers or other influential persons in a community so that they might derive additional advantages from kinship affiliation with strangers. Wives were invaluable to *langados*, as interpreters of languages and cultures, and as collaborators in commercial exchanges. African women took advantages of these circumstances for their own benefit no less than that of male relatives, with the consequence that they came to exercise a crucial role as commercial intermediaries and culture-brokers between African societies and visiting European traders, which intermediary role was similarly exploited by their Eur-African children, female and male both.

Of particular significance in the context of this paper, from the end of the fifteenth century, some *langados* came to be termed *tangomaos*, which in Portuguese and Luso-African usage connoted "renegades" or "outcasts," individuals who had forsaken European ways. Tangomaos manifestly found it in their interests to integrate their lives with Africans even more closely than did *langados*, for they wore African dress and protective amulets, underwent circumcision and scarification, participated in African

rituals, and otherwise adapted to African customs. The term *tangomao* seemingly derives from *tangomaas*, the Temni/Sapi name for the priestly lineage which controlled the shrines of an initiation society--probably the Simo society, which controlled the highly remunerative trade in kola harvested in the coastal forest belt of Guinea-Conakry and transported northwards by the Biafada-Sapi and Banyun-Bak commercial networks. Seemingly Portuguese and Luso-Africans were co-opted into Biafada-Sapi trading groups for reasons of mutual advantage, a principal reason being their possession of caravels that could transport larger quantities of kola and other cargo than African dugout craft and make long voyages as far north as the Gambia River and Sine-Saloum estuary.⁴¹

Some Portuguese sources use *tangomao* and *lançado* interchangeably, and it would have been surprising if matters were otherwise. For *lançados* and Luso-Africans, like *tangomaos*, lived immersed in African communities for security of their persons and property, and during (frequent) periods of illness their lives depended on the nursing of their African and Luso-African wives and treatment by African medical practitioners. They were, in brief, physically and psychologically dependent on Africans.

Eur-Africans, or in the context of the Guinea-Bissau region, *Luso*-Africans, represented a new and unprecedented element in West Africa. In social and cultural terms, Luso-Africans were more "African" than "Portuguese," and the short prefix "Luso" serves to communicate the proportionately much smaller "European" heritage vs. "African" heritage of an individual raised by an African or Luso-African mother in an African milieu.

Growing up in African cultures and possessing some knowledge of European ways, more or less depending on circumstances, Luso-Africans possessed unique potential to function as commercial and cultural intermediaries. Nonetheless, their opportunities and range of possibilities must have been largely determined by the status and privileges accorded by their mothers' societies: to what extent they inherited their mothers' social ranking, rights to land use, and other prerogatives. Differences between stratified and acephalous societies must have been significant determinants, but these parameters remain to be adequately studied.

Some Luso-African males and females became traders, like their mothers and fathers. Many likely "disappeared" into African communities, becoming fully enculturated. Likely, too, a number of male Luso-Africans settled in *grumete* communities. Grumetes were auxiliary seamen hired to navigate trading craft, to perform ancillary skilled occupations such as boat-building and repair, and to serve as compradors at trading establishments.⁴² Many Papel and Biafada took employment as grumetes, and there developed grumete communities at all the principal trading settlements of the Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia.

Like grumetes, domestic slaves shared with Portuguese and Luso-Africans the day-to-day activities of the small trading communities, learned *Crioulo*, and adopted Luso-African customs and

practices. Probably domestic slaves acculturated to Luso-African mores even more than grumetes did, inasmuch as they had been wrenched from distant societies and were constrained to adopt the ways of their masters and the communities in which they lived. Domestic slaves were used in a variety of trade-related and household tasks. Men were often procured because they were skilled smiths, woodworkers, or weavers, or were trained in these and other skills. It would appear that many slaves, or their children (the latter not infrequently fathered by their masters), were granted their freedom and were absorbed into the Luso-African and grumete communities. Unfortunately, there is little documentary evidence concerning such matters, and research is made the more difficult from the circumstance that both grumetes and slaves were given, or adopted, Portuguese first names and often acquired their masters' surnames as well.

The Cape Verde archipelago early became linked to West Africa in an economic and social nexus. Traders based in the archipelago carried on an increasing proportion of Portuguese commerce with Senegambia and the Upper Guinea Coast. Two of the largest islands, São Tiago and Fogo, were found to have sufficient rainfall to support plantation agriculture, with the consequence that captives were brought from West Africa to cultivate sugar, cotton, and indigo and herd livestock on these and other islands where mountainous terrain or sparse rainfall precluded the cultivation of export crops.

Cape Verde-born Portuguese and, increasingly, Cape Verde-born Luso-Africans soon became more numerous than peninsula Portuguese as *lançados* living in Senegambia and along the Upper Guinea Coast. Individuals born in the archipelago acquired immunities and resistance to dysenteries, malaria, and other diseases endemic in West Africa. Not less advantageously, they learned *Crioulo*, or "Black Portuguese," the language of the Islands and which with Mandinka served as a commercial *lingua franca* for Senegambia and the Upper Guinea Coast from the sixteenth century onwards. Cape Verdeans likewise acquired invaluable knowledge of West Africa languages, social institutions, and cultural practices from parents and relatives, and from captives brought to the archipelago in an almost uninterrupted flow for use in the Islands and for resale and shipment to the Americas.⁴³

Denounced as interlopers in trading monopolies granted by the kings of Portugal, branded "outlaws" and worse, *lançados* and *tangomaos* wrote little concerning their affairs, but sufficient information was recorded to delineate some of their relationships with their African hosts and trading associates. For example, André Alvares d'Almada, a Cape Verdean-born Luso-African who visited the Cacheu River in 1570, related that Portuguese and Luso-Africans trading there insisted that commercial agreements be annually ratified by religious ceremonies that included the sacrifice of dogs and chickens and bound both parties to fulfillment of obligations on risk of punishment by *trans*, or spirits.⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that such rites were described

as early as Fernandes' compendium of 1506-1510, not revealing however, that Portuguese traders were involved--nor, as Almada relates, *insisted* on participating in them.⁴⁴

The Guinea-Bissau region was the nexus of the Biafada-Sapi, Banyun-Bak, and Mandinka commercial networks which expedited trade between three ecological zones and the coastal-riverine areas of western Africa. From reasons of self-interest, trading groups associated with the Biafada-Sapi and Banyun-Bak commercial networks for several centuries permitted Portuguese and Luso-Africans to participate in their coastwise and overland commerce, with ramifications which remain to be studied. To cite one notable complex of interactions, as a consequence of the Mani invasion of Sierra Leone in the mid-sixteenth century, Portuguese vessels transported several shiploads of Temni and Bulloom refugees to Cacheu in the Guinea-Bissau region. Many of the refugees and their descendants were converted to Christianity. Some of their children were taken to the Cape Verde Islands for education, afterwards to return to Cacheu and to Sierra Leone.⁴⁵

Some of the most informative reports concerning the activities of Portuguese and Luso-African traders along the Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia were written by Fr. Balthasar Barreira, a Jesuit priest who travelled down the coast from Senegal to Sierra Leone in 1605 and lived in Sierra Leone until 1609. Respecting traders' religious practices, Barreira related that

Portuguese roam these parts like sheep without a shepherd, men turned wild whose way of life is more heathen than Christian, men who go many years without sacraments or mass, without hearing the word of God, even without remembering it.

And elsewhere in the same report:

I wish to state here what often occurred to me, that although I had come to these parts with the sole aim of hearing the confessions of the Christians to be found here, my coming and the labours of the journey were put to especially good use, since the confessions covered ten or twenty years, or in quite of number of instances, over thirty years or even a whole life-time spent "*in medio nationis pravae*" ("in the midst of a people of unclean lips," Isaiah 6:5), where no difference can be perceived between the practices of the Christians and those of the heathen.⁴⁶

A spate of missionary endeavors date from Barreira's reconnaissance, but Jesuit involvement in the Guinea-Bissau region was short-lived. They were followed by Portuguese and Spanish Franciscans, but for lack of financial resources missionary enterprise lapsed. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the trading communities were principally served by clergy from the Cape Verde Islands. Cacheu, Bissau, and Ziguinchor seem generally to have had resident priests, but Farim and Geba were

out priests for years at a time, while Luso-African communities in the Gambia, Grande, Nunez, and other rivers received only sporadic visits from priests dispatched on trading vessels from the Cape Verde Islands.⁴⁷

The desultory nature of clerical activities in West Africa contributed to the ongoing syncretism in trading communities and neighboring African societies. There developed in West Africa, most notably in the Guinea-Bissau region and Senegambia, what may be termed a "Luso-African lifestyle" that comprised African and Portuguese elements. These included the use of Crioulo as a *lingua franca*, and for many a "first" language; inter-marriage with Africans and Luso-Africans, but use of Portuguese family and first names along with claims to be "Portuguese" and "white;" use of Portuguese-style clothing, dwellings, and house furnishings; use and dissemination of imported European, American, and Asian plants, trees, and domestic animals (e.g., pigs and citrus trees from Portugal, pineapples and peanuts from South America, and mangos and padi rice from South Asia); a diet and cuisine comprising both African and imported foods, condiments, and cooking styles; and in the religious sphere, participation in, and reliance on, African rites and medical practices. With respect to the last, it mattered little whether priests were available or not: all evidence indicates that few Portuguese, Cape Verdeans, or Guinea-born Luso-Africans attended mass, sanctified their marriages, or received other sacraments. The most notable "Christian" practice was wearing crucifixes, which together with European-style clothing served to identify its wearer to Africans and visiting Europeans as a trader and a "Portuguese."⁴⁸

Of particular relevance to the topic of this paper is the custom of *chôros* (Port: weeping), wakes held to commemorate the deaths of notable persons. *Chôros* include feasting and dancing to musical accompaniments, which elements of open-air feasting and joyous music are similar to Portuguese observances of All Souls' Day and May Day recounted above. That early Christian converts (*cristãos*) continued to participate in *chôros* is revealed in a report concerning a Franciscan missionary who attempted to halt a *chôro* held in Banyun territory neighboring Cacheu in 1664. The priest barely escaped with his life through the intervention of several *cristãos*.⁴⁹ Christian converts likewise continued to commune with their ancestors, including through the intermediation of *balobeiros* (or *valobeiros*) who were consulted concerning important matters such as commercial undertakings.⁵⁰

The foregoing developments are principally associated with the Guinea-Bissau region, which sustained close links with the Cape Verde archipelago. From the 1580s Dutch, French, and English competition in Senegambia and along the Upper Guinea Coast gradually restricted Portuguese and Cape Verdeans to a trading sphere extending from the Casamance to the Grande rivers, with Luso-Africans living in this region carrying on relay trade northwards to the Gambia River and southwards along the coast. The constriction of Cape Verdean trade to focus on the Guinea-Bissau region concomitantly increased and reinforced cul-

Celebration of the New Year and Harvest Time in the Guinea-Bissau Region

All the people of this coast live in profound ignorance. Even the spectacle of the heavens teaches them nothing, other than to keep time by the changes of the moon. They possess no traditional means of recording their thoughts, nor to record their epochs. They do not name the months, and even the first day of each year, which they celebrate, is adjustable according to the desires of the elders with respect to the appearance of the new moon in November. Their week has six days, five of which they labor, and the sixth (called *Fiei*) is spent in drinking, sleeping, wrestling, or dancing to the accompaniment of hand-clapping.⁵⁴

As in "pagan" Europe, many West African religious ceremonies and festivals were linked to the change of seasons, notably the times of year associated with planting and harvesting. Of special interest to this paper, rice is the staple crop for the coastal-riverine societies of the Guinea-Bissau region, and in former times the end of the rice harvest coincided with the celebration of the new year around the first of November.

First mention of West Africans' observance of the new year is found in Valentim Fernandes' compendium dating to 1506-1510 in a section discussing "Serra Lyoa," which in Portuguese usage comprised the coastline of modern-day Guinea-Conakry and Sierra Leone. Fernandes records that Africans count years from November to November, because that is the time of their harvests. Months are determined by the appearance of the new moon.⁵⁵ Similar information concerning the Guinea-Bissau region is recorded in an offhand manner three centuries later by José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, commandant of the praça of Cacheu in 1830/31. In a statement disparaging Africans for lacking a (European) sense of time, Lopes de Lima remarks that even the observance of the new year is changeable, for it is set according to the determination of community leaders around the beginning of November.⁵⁶

What would seem almost certainly a description of a new year's observance is recorded in Pierre Davity's compendium. Discussing the people of Cassa, a Mandinka-ruled state extending between the middle and upper reaches of the Cacheu and Casamance rivers with a population comprising Diola, Balanta, and other coastal-riverine groups, Davity reported:

Les habitants de Cassanga sont idolâtres. Leur principal idole est appelée China à laquelle ils font une procession le 29 Novembre sur la minuit. Un de leurs Prestres ou Magiciens, qu'ils appellent Aracani portant une bannière de soie azurée, ou est peint un

faisseau de serment avec plusieurs ossements de morts: je crois que c'est de ceux qui le sacrifient volontairement à ce Demon, qui leur apparoist en diverses manieres, & ce port bannière à un habit tissu de palmes, ou sont attachées plusieurs testes de petits chiens, guenons & autres bestioles. Quand leur procession est achevée ils posent l'Idole dans le creux d'un arbre & luy font des fufumigations fort odorantes, sacrifiant du miel & font leurs prières & se retirent en leurs habitations.⁵⁷

As related in the previous section, china/irão/iran means "spirit" or "god." *Aracani* may derive from the Susu word for "high god": *Ouré-Kan*. One may suppose that the tree was a large one, likely the chief abode of the community's protective spirits.

Evidently Davity derived his information from several sources; indeed, his account may incorporate details from different ceremonies. However, taking the account at face value, several elements suggest that it describes a new year's observance. It is a nighttime ceremony; such is requisite for obtaining a glimpse of the new moon. It is described as a solemn occasion, with none of the merrymaking or dissipation associated with harvest festivals.

Two factors may explain the discrepancy between Davity's specific date, November 29, and the reports of Fernandes and Lopes de Lima that the new year was observed around the first of November. Besides the discordance between solar- and lunar-based calendars, there is the added variable of a half-dozen days. According to Lopes de Lima, the reason community leaders convened following the appearance of the new moon to set the day of observance of a new year was to coordinate its celebration with the six-day weekly cycle of five days of labor and a leisure day.⁵⁸ Secondly, European Protestants and Catholics reckoned according to different calendars following Pope Gregory XIII's initiative in 1582 when ten days were dropped from the Julian calendar. Protestants long continued to use the Julian calendar.

What is noteworthy in the context of this paper is that Africans living in the Guinea-Bissau region observed a nighttime religious ceremony honoring their deities and their dead at the same time of year as Europeans--whose rites derive from pagan times. The African observance honors both deities and ancestors (the latter being intermediaries with the spirit world), thereby combining in one ceremony the two European festivals of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. This extraordinary coincidence of time and congruence of functions defies probability and suggests that the rites derive from a shared heritage.

Comparing Davity's account with that of Dias de Carvalho's description of the events associated with All Souls' Day festivities at Bolama in 1898, one notes that Davity's account is strikingly similar to Dias de Carvalho's report for the first evening of the observance. Dias de Carvalho related that the first night's activities during the early morning hours of All

Saints' Day commence at the door of the church, whence the indigenous Christians walk in procession through the streets of the community singing the Ave Maria mixed with African songs.

What is also remarkable is a description of the observance of the eve of All Souls' Day on São Tiago Island dating to ca. 1830. Recorded by Jose Joaquim Lopes de Lima, it has fascinating ramifications with respect to the Portugal-Cape Verde archipelago-Guinea nexus:

Another old religious rite [of Portuguese origins] established there, is for families to leave their homes at midnight on the night of November 1 (eve of All Souls' Day) to pray in chorus at the closed doors of churches for the souls of their deceased.⁵⁹

Lopes de Lima reported nothing about the preceding day or the day following. And he records nothing concerning such an observance at Cacheu while he was commandant in 1830/31; whether he was present in Cacheu on November 1-2 is not known.

Although he generalized that the carnival-like celebration goes on for three nights, Dias de Carvalho specified that the "debauchery" is worst the night of the second day--All Souls' Day. After a few hours of rest following the dawn of the third day (November 3), the final proceedings take place, consisting of feasting and drinking indoors or in the open air at a place some distance from the settlement, ending with the singing of Ave Marias for the souls of the departed. One would like to know the place where people congregated the third day: was it the graveyard?

Information is lacking as to when and in what circumstances Luso-Africans, grumetes, and other Africans came to observe All Souls' Day. Three factors would seem relevant: The first is that Luso-Africans and grumetes and their families, plus other Africans living at Cacheu, Bissau, and other trading communities, were inevitably linked to European time-reckoning from their involvement in the Atlantic trading world. Additionally, the presence of priests in these communities would have encouraged the observance of a seven-day week and informed the inhabitants about the annual cycle of church festivals and days of obligation.

Secondly, the significance attached to the celebration of All Saints' and All Souls' days in Portugal must have ensured some observance in Africa, even by men largely incorporated into African communities and otherwise neglectful of Christian holy days. Crews of trading vessels would have reminded them, and latent motivation could have been stimulated and encouraged by the leadership of priests in the trading communities.

A third factor may be that the celebration of All Souls' Day coincided with the opening of the trading season in the Mandinka communities of Farim and Geba at the head of navigation of the Cacheu and Geba rivers. Caravans from the interior visited Farim and Geba only during the dry season from November to March. The pattern was for Portuguese and Luso-African traders to live

Cacheu and Bissau during the rainy season, and sail upriver in November-December with their entourages of grumetes and domestic slaves. Celebration of All Souls' Day must have taken on aspects of a farewell to loved ones and a "new year's" celebration with the community looking forward with anticipation to a successful trading season. One might expect, too, that the leading members of the trading community and the commandants of the praças would contribute generously to the festivities. Dias de Carvalho did not mention how the poorer elements of this community could drink and feast for three days, but African communities received "customary" presents from "their" "strangers" at festival times.⁶⁰

Grumetes (and their families) evidently were prominent among the "indigenous Christians" Dias de Carvalho observed at Bolama, for he prefaced his description of the All Souls' Day observance with slanderous remarks concerning them--remarks, interestingly, quoted from Lopes de Lima:

These *Negroes* only pretend to be Christians by attending Mass, whenever it is celebrated, and mix the sacred words of our Religion with falsities of their paganism. At other times they live unbridled lives given over to drunkenness and debauchery.⁶¹

Lopes de Lima, be it noted, shared with Dias de Carvalho a proprietary view with respect to "our" religion. Both men, however, would have been embarrassed to acknowledge that such assertions concerning grumetes could as appropriately apply to some of the Portuguese and Luso-African members of the community, especially the soldiers. Such was likewise true for French and British settlements in West Africa.⁶²

Turning now to the celebration of harvest time, Fernandes and Lopes de Lima related that West Africans count years from harvest to harvest, from November to November. Such is no longer the case in the Guinea-Bissau region, for rice is harvested from September to February. There have been significant changes in agriculture since Fernandes' time, and especially during the past century and a half. The species of rice indigenous to West Africa is *Oryza glaberrima*. It was first domesticated and grown in West Africa as an "upland" or "dry" rice, which is harvested in the Guinea-Bissau region from mid-September onwards. Cultivation of "wet" or "paddy" varieties of *O. glaberrima* was a late development, perhaps beginning not long prior to the arrival of Europeans in the mid-fifteenth century. "Wet" rice is harvested later than "upland" rice, from November to February after the paddy and swamplands dry following the end of the rainy season in October.⁶³

Inasmuch as "wet" rice, whether a variety of *O. glaberrima* or of *O. sativa*, is harvested later than "upland" rice, from November to February, one consequence was that the celebration of harvest time and the new year around the first of November became an anomaly in the midst of a lengthened harvest season now extending from September to February. This circumstance was com-

pounded from the 1830s by the cultivation of peanuts as a cash crop, first in Senegambia, then in the Guinea-Bissau region. Men harvest peanuts in December and January (while women gather in rice), either harvesting their own fields in the Guinea-Bissau region, or those of African cultivators in Senegambia for whom they work as labor migrants.⁶⁴

Harvest festivals continued, but were delayed until January or February when the rice and peanut crops were in, and labor migrants returned home. Among some cultivators the changed circumstances contributed to longer periods of celebration and greater dissipation than previously was the case, with men, women, and children indulging in drunken splurges fueled by European spirits purchased with cash crop earnings. Meantime, the new year's observance seemingly came to be neglected by many groups, its significance diminished by the change in the harvest period, and its religious meaning undermined by the spread of Islam and Christianity.

If the time of harvesting crops in the Guinea-Bissau region changed, the nature of the celebrations remained much the same. In West Africa and elsewhere in the world, harvest festivals serve to release the emotional and social tensions that accumulate during the preceding months. For cultivators, the unremitting toil of harvesting constitutes an intensification not only of onerous physical demands, but of emotional strain as well. Psychological tensions are engendered by the uncertainties associated with rainfall, crop diseases, and as harvest time approaches, by the depredations of animals and birds.

Appeals to supernatural assistance are universal among cultivators. Likewise widespread are personal strains and rancors occasioned by envy and resentment of others' success; some persons may have paranoid notions that other individuals may profit at their expense. For example, Mark Schloss notes that the Ehing group of Diola living along the lower Casamance River believe that some individuals may offer the souls of other persons to spirits of the land in exchange for a good rice crop. And Schloss perceptively observes that the tedious and demanding labor associated with harvesting rice stalk-by-stalk extending over many weeks makes Diola women very irritable.⁶⁵

Such personal and community tensions find release in harvest festivals and the period of leisure following. In West Africa and Europe both, harvest festivals are characterized as times of revelry, heavy drinking, and relaxation of social mores. In past times, people living in the Guinea-Bissau region principally consumed palm wine, plus a type of mead fermented from honey at times of celebration. Palm wine is only mildly alcoholic, people are habituated to it by frequent use, and its consumption has divine sanction inasmuch as it is considered a necessary medium to maintain contact with spirits.⁶⁶ Mead has a much stronger alcoholic content, and following the arrival of Portuguese and other Europeans, some groups came to consume wine, brandy, and aguardente (sugar cane brandy) in such quantities as to cause debauchery. One supposes that Portuguese and Luso-African traders and the commandants of praças and presidios were principal

contributors of European spirits and much of the food consumed in All Souls' Day celebrations, whether willingly or constrained by "custom" which Africans astutely parlayed to their advantage.

European accounts spanning the centuries particularly remark on heavy drinking, feasting, and dissipation among Diola groups following the harvest. Such celebrations may have been organized then as now by initiation societies. For example, Diola boys and girls living along the left bank of the Casamance River belong to a cultivation society that sacrifices to *hušāg*, the protector of youth. The society sponsors an annual harvest celebration with singing, dancing, drinking, and merry-making. Diola women living in Fogny (between the Casamance and Gambia rivers) who belong to the *ebun* society dedicated to a protective and curative spirit (*boekin*) customarily abandon their husbands following the harvest, and return to their parents' villages where they freely take such lovers as they please.⁶⁷

Information concerning new year's observances are rare in recent anthropological literature. William S. Simmons describes a thanksgiving feast in a Badyaranké community that incorporates Muslim influences along with elements that resemble aspects of Davity's account. The Badyaranké live in southeastern Senegal, just across the Guinea-Bissau frontier. *Kodan* is the name of the high or sky god.

Each year, after the harvests have been collected and the young men have returned from their labors in the north of Senegal, a village communal feast of thanksgiving takes place called the offering (*sada*) of the hundred plates. This feast consists of a redistribution of cooked food from all compounds, held at the village center. The entire population participates, male and female, old and young. The men eat together on their sitting platform, and the women eat apart, seated on the ground. The chief and elders speak to *Kodan*, the genies, and the dead to thank them for the harvest, to ask them to protect the village from fire, and to ensure continued well-being.⁶⁸

Such in spirit at least, may be characteristic of the observance of the new year in Novembers of times past, such as Davity describes.

VI

Concluding Remarks

The title of this paper ends with a question mark; so will these final comments. That West Africans and medieval Portuguese shared similar religious beliefs and practices would seem undeniable. Whether those derive from common neolithic origins is one of the congeries

of unresolved issues concerning ancient social and cultural relationships between West Africa, the Sahara, the Nile valley, North Africa, and the Mediterranean basin, including western Europe. Outstanding issues include the origins and diffusion of agricultural practices, ironworking, art styles and motifs, legends, etc., which issues will preoccupy scholars for years, or decades, to come. For the purpose of this paper it is sufficient to show that whatever the reasons for similar religious beliefs and "parallel" customs and practices among West Africans and Portuguese, such facilitated social and economic relations and predisposed members of both groups to mutual accommodation and cultural syncretism.

Information is lacking as to when and in what circumstances West African beliefs and practices concerning the observance of the new year and harvest-time festivals merged with those of Portuguese concerning All Saints' and All Souls' days, but manifestly these occurred in the Guinea-Bissau region. There is an obvious need for more historical inquiries concerning West African religious beliefs and practices, utilizing both oral traditions and the earliest European sources.

The West Africa-Cape Verde archipelago-Portugal nexus represents a special field for historical and anthropological research. It was on the previously uninhabited Cape Verde archipelago that Portuguese and West Africans shared unique social and cultural interchanges that resulted in a racially mixed population, the Crioulo language, and a wide range of syncretistic beliefs and customs which survived Portuguese efforts to root them out, especially during the two centuries prior to Cabo Verde's independence in 1975. These include African- and Portuguese-derived religious beliefs and social customs mentioned in this paper and many others, including marriage customs, funeral practices, patterns of dress and adornment, folklore, and music styles.

Lastly, one may wonder if the themes discussed in this paper are unique to West Africa and the Cape Verde Islands--what of the relationships involving Portuguese and Africans in Zaire, Angola, and Mozambique, and between other Europeans and Africans? Who will undertake the study of these challenging and fascinating topics?

NOTES

*This paper is dedicated to Gerald W. Hartwig, who fostered cross-cultural understanding and fellowship by word and deed.

1. Henrique Augusto Dias de Carvalho, *Guiné; Apontamentos inéditos* [Lisboa, 1944], 75.
2. Ibid., 74-75. The passage is repeated with different phrasing, 238-39. On page 75, "1898" is erroneously printed as "1878."
3. Ibid., 75. Padre Adriano Reimão de Serpa Pinto served in

Guinea from 1896 to 1908. Henrique Pinto Rema, *História das missões católicas da Guiné* (Braga, 1982), 293, 363. The celebration of All Souls' Day continued to be held in Guinea, including Bolama, in the years following. António Carreira, who observed celebrations at Cacheu, Geba, Bafatá, and other communities from the 1920s, relates that the activities lacked (and perhaps never had) the flagrant behavior described by Dias de Carvalho. Personal communications, September 13 and 24, 1982.

4. Africanists interested in culture contact and syncretism owe an enormous debt to the scholarship of Melville J. Herskovits and his students concerning African societies and Africans living in the Americas. Herskovits in particular stressed the value of historical sources, e.g., *Acculturation; The Study of Culture Contact* (New York, 1938), 15-18, 58-59. Besides individuals cited in notes, I received valuable comments from Paula Ben-Amos, Stanley H. Brandes, William B. Cohen, James Fernandez, Peter B. Goldman, Barbara Hanawalt, Barbara K. Kopytoff, Joseph J. Lauer, Emilio F. Moran, and Darrell Reeck. Debbie Chase typed the paper.
5. Daniel F. McCall, *That Old Time Religion in West Africa* (Boston, 1979), 9. For discussion see Daniel F. McCall, "Mother Earth: The Great Goddess of West Africa" in James J. Preston, ed., *Mother Worship; Theme and Variations* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 304-21.
6. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (13th ed.; London, 1926), 1:709.
7. Ibid. All Souls' Day is celebrated on November 3, if the 2nd falls on a Sunday or is a festival of the first class.
8. *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisbon, 1935-60), 8:486.
9. Rodney Gallop, *Portugal; a Book of Folk-Ways* (Cambridge, 1936), 100.
10. Leonard W. Moss and Stephen C. Cappannari, "In Quest of the Black Virgin" in Preston, *Mother Worship*, 71.
11. Ibid., 68.
12. Ibid., 65.
13. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1:709.
14. Gallop, *Folk-Ways*, 181-82.
15. Ibid., 182.
16. Ibid., 182-83.
17. Ibid., 183. Gallop's footnote reads: "Though even these might be interpreted as the propitiation of beings who are feared rather than as a welcome to those loved." I am indebted to Padre Henrique Pinto Rema for emendations regarding Gallop's quotations in Portuguese.
18. Gallop, *Folk-Ways*, 96.
19. Ibid., 184-85.
20. Ibid., 122.
21. Ibid., 128-30, and see the picture representing Nossa Senhora da Piedade de Marceana on page 129.
22. Ibid., 127-28. Daniel F. McCall comments: "In German areas *brunnen*, or springs, have names and/or legends that indicate

such associations. The Melusine myth in France and contiguous countries has a water connection. Some notes I made some years ago driving around Western Europe... showed that most of these water spirits were feminine.... The *dyads* of Greece and the voluptuously carved tree spirits of Indian art and Slavic folklore tree spirits are also feminine." Personal communication, 2 October 1982.

23. Gallop, *Folk-Ways*, 78. Mouras are visible to humans only on Midsummer's Night.
24. Ibid.
25. Illustrations in Peter Hogarth, *Dragons* (Toronto, 1980) depict a wonderful variety of dragons, snakes, and composite creatures, besides men and maidens.
26. Beatrice Appia, "Les forgerons du Fouta-Djallon," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, 25 (1965), 322, 322nl. *Ningiri* (or *Ninganni*) hatch from the python egg at the center of a clutch of eggs. See also Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion* (London, 1969), 50-53 *et passim*.
27. Gallop, *Folk-Ways*, 131-32.
28. Ibid., 134-35.
29. Ibid., 63.
30. Ibid., 60. I am indebted to António Carreira for emending the quotation: Gallop incorrectly transcribed "mão de finado" as "mão refinada." Carreira remarks that a "mão de finado" or "mão d'anjo" ("angel's hand") carved of wood was used in the Cape Verde Islands to ascertain the amorous inclinations of young people. Personal communication, 24 September 1982.
31. John Thornton reaches similar conclusions in "Early Kongo-Portuguese Relations: A New Interpretation," *HA*, 8 (1981), 186.
32. Basil Davidson, *Black Mother* (London, 1961), 119. Wyatt MacGaffey speculates that the victorious Kongolese armies saw signs and ghostly symbols "not out of ancestral habit but specifically from recent Portuguese influence, or from a desire to impress Portuguese correspondents." Personal communication, 12 August 1982.
33. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), 2-3.
34. See Parrinder, *West African Religion*, 11ff. for discussion of the "fourfold" classification. Parrinder's information and analyses derive principally from the Ghana-Nigeria area and are congruent with findings in the sources cited following. For a "two-tiered" arrangement of unobservables" see an informative analysis of Christian and Muslim influence see Robin Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa*, 41 (1971) 85-108; and subsequent discussion in 43 (1973) and 45 (1975).
35. Peter Allen Mark, "Economic and Religious Change among the Diola of Boulouf (Casamance), 1890-1940; Trade, Cash Cropping, and Islam in Southwestern Senegal" (Ph.D., Yale, 1976), 26; Luigi Scantamburlo, "The Ethnography of the Bijagós People of the Island of Bubaque, Guiné-Bissau" (

(Wayne State, 1978), 80; William S. Simmons, *Eyes of the Night; Witchcraft among a Senegalese People* (Berkeley, 1971), 53; and Andre Arcin, *Histoire de la Guinée française* (Paris, 1911), 48; and see all, *passim*, for aspects of the discussion following.

36. Luigi Scantamburlo, *Gramática e dicionário da língua crioula da Guiné-Bissau* (Bologna, 1981), 172; and P.E.H. Hair, "An Ethnolinguistic Inventory of the Upper Guinea Coast Before 1700," *African Language Review*, 6 (1967), 45. For terms and usages among African groups in the Guinea-Bissau region, António Carreira, "Símbolos, ritualistas, e ritualismos animofeiticistas na Guiné Portuguesa," *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*, 16 (1961), 505-39.
37. André Donelha, *Descrição da Serra Leoa e dos rios de Guiné do Cabo Verde* (1625), Portuguese text, introduction, notes, and appendices by Avelino Teixeira da Mota, notes and English translation by P.E.H. Hair (Lisboa, 1977), 112-13, related that the Mani invaders of Sierra Leone whipped "idols" when things went badly. H. Hecquard, "Rapport sur un voyage dans la Cazamance," *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, 8 (1852), 413, noted that when Diola living on Carabane Island at the mouth of the Casamance River prayed for rain without success, they first threatened their "fetishes" and then dragged them through their fields until rainfall commenced. And Alexandre Lasnet *et al*, *Une Mission au Sénégal* (Paris, 1900), 160-61, recorded that the "fetish" of Carabane was insulted and publicly beaten for having failed to protect the community from a fire. K.L. Little was informed that Mendi flogged *nomoli* "because they may be sleeping." Cited in John H. Atherton and Milan Kalous, "Nomoli," *JAH*, 11 (1970), 314. Atherton and Kalous present much valuable information concerning the association of stones and ancestral spirits.
38. See especially António Carreira, *Vida Social dos Manjacos* (Bissau, 1947), 90-92, and photographs of "forquillas da alma" facing pages 64 and 80, and the general discussion in A. Teixeira da Mota, *Guiné Portuguesa* (2 vols.: Lisbon, 1954), 1, 245-50.
39. See J.A. MacCulloch, "Secret Societies (Introductory)," and N.W. Thomas, "Secret Societies (African)" in James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (13 vols.: New York, 1955-58), 11:287-303. The python was a totem of the Simo Society, which controlled kola trade and exercised wide powers along parts of the Upper Guinea Coast.
40. Fr. Balthasar Barreira, Sierra Leone, 1605, quoted in S. Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (London, 1624, reprt. 1950), IX, 262.
41. For derivation of "tangomao," Hair, "Ethnolinguistic Inventory," 49, 54; and for discussion of sources concerning both lançados and tangomaos see António Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e extinção de uma sociedade escravocrata* (1460-1878) (Lisboa, 1972), 47-62. For kola trade along

- the Upper Guinea Coast and the Portuguese and Luso-African "cover-up" for reasons of self-interest see Brooks, "Kola Trade and State-Building; Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia, 15th-17th Centuries" (Boston University African Studies Center, Working Paper No. 38 [1980]).
42. The foregoing is a restatement of material in my "Perspectives on Luso-African Commerce and Settlement in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau Region, 16th-19th Centuries," Boston University African Studies Center, Working Paper No. 24 (1980), 1-13. See also Brooks, "Historical Perspectives on the Guinea-Bissau Region, Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries," submitted to the *festschrift* honoring Avelino Teixeira da Mota, to be published by the Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical.
 43. André Álvares d'Almada, "Tratado breve dos rios de Guiné do Cabo Verde" in Padre António Brásio, ed., *Monumenta Missionaria Africana; Africa Occidental (1570-1600)* (2d ser., Lisbon, 1964), 3:312.
 44. Valentim Fernandes, *Description de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels)*, ed. Th. Monod, A. Teixeira da Mota, and R. Mauny (Bissau, 1951), 70-73. Many aspects of Fernandes' account are elucidated by information in Marc Ronald Schloss, "The Hatchet's Blood: Spirits and Society Among the Eling of Senegal" (Ph.D., Virginia, 1979). See especially pages 1, 5-6, and 181-89.
 45. P.E.H. Hair, "Hamlet in an Afro-Portuguese Setting: New Perspectives on Sierra Leone in 1607," *HA*, 5 (1978), 36-37.
 46. P.E.H. Hair, "Early Sources on Sierra Leone: (5) Barreira (letter of 23.2.1606)," *Africana Research Bulletin*, 5/4 (1975), 88, 91. (Compare the translation at the beginning of the section.) Ironically, the only lançados singled out for their religiosity during this period were "New Christians" accused of reverting to Jewish practices. A. Teixeira da Mota, *Some Aspects of Portuguese Colonisation and Sea Trade in West Africa in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (Bloomington, 1978), 8.
 47. For missionary activities see Rema, *Missões Católicas*, passim. Rema's invaluable compendium records little information concerning lay Christians.
 48. Brooks, "Luso-African Commerce and Settlement," 9-10.
 49. Rema, *Missões Católicas*, 150, cited from the manuscript of Fr. Francisco de Santiago, *Chronica da Província de Nossa Senhora da Soledade* (ms. da Provincia Portuguesa da Ordem Franciscana), of which one volume was published in 1762. For a discussion of chôros, which last for days, sometimes for weeks, see Carreira, "Símbolos," 533-36. The persistence of similar African funeral customs in the United States is remarked on by John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1972), 37: "Not only did Southern slaves decorate graves like the African ancestors; they also retained the practice of celebrating the journey of the deceased to his 'home' by dancing, singing, and drinking. According to the traveler Henry Knight, in the Southwest, 'When a slave dies, the master gives the rest day, of their [slaves] own choosing, to celebrate the funeral. This, perhaps a month after the corpse is interred, is a jovial day with them; they sing and dance and drink the dead to his new home, which some believe to be in old Guinea.'" Note illustrations on pages 36 and 37; carved wooden grave markers in the cemetery on page 37 exhibit similarities to the "forquillas da alma" of the Guinea-Bissau region (see note 38). African survivals in the Amerindian respecting ancestors and funerals are discussed in Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston, 1958), 63, 71, 197ff. For a stimulating comparative study of culture contact see George M. Foster, *Culture and Conquest: America's Spanish Heritage* (Chicago, 1960). With respect to religious syncretism, Foster observes (15, 165-66) that the Catholic Church emphasized Iberian practices it preferred; discouraged those it did not like, e.g., pagan survivals; and accepted syncretisms with indigenous beliefs where it had no choice. Regarding All Saints' and All Souls' days, which celebration was encouraged, see *ibid.*, 150-51, 198, 201-03.
 50. António J. Dias, "Crenças e costumes dos indígenas da Ilha de Bissau no século xviii," *Portugal em Africa*, 2d. ser., 2/9 (May-June, 1945), 161-62. Padre Dias presents extracts with commentaries from unpublished parts of Fr. Francisco de Santiago's manuscript cited in the previous footnote. Extracts in 2/10 (July-August, 1945), 226-27, describe proceedings at chôros. Rulers were interred with cloth, iron, gold, and other valuable possessions, as well as selected captives. A horse was buried alive near the grave. For balobeiros see Carreira, "Símbolos," 514-15, 521-22.
 51. Brooks, "Luso-African Commerce and Settlement," 3-4, 13-19.
 52. *Ibid.*, 13-19; and Rema, *Missões Católicas*, 291-93.
 53. Brooks, "Guinea-Bissau Region;" and Brooks, "A Nhara of the Guinea-Bissau Region: Mãe Aurélia Correia" in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, ed. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, (Madison, 1983).
 54. José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, *Ensaio sobre a statistica das possessões portuguesas* (6 vols.: Lisbon, 1844), 1/1:120.
 55. Fernandes, *Description*, 100-01.
 56. José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, *Ensaio sobre a statistica das possessões portuguesas na Africa occidental e oriental, na Asia occidental, na China, e na Oceania* (6 vols.: Lisbon, 1844), 1/1:120.
 57. Pierre Davity, *Description générale de l'Afrique, seconde partie du monde* (3d. ed., Paris, 1660), 410. I am indebted to Adam Jones for the quotation, which was afterwards incorporated into the works of Dapper and Barbot. Jones comments that Davity drew on Pierre du Jarric, *Histoire des choses les plus mémorables...* (Bordeaux, 1608-14), which was based on Guerreiro, *Padres da Companhia de Jesus* (1603ff.). Personal communication, 18 October 1982. It is noteworthy that both Álvares d'Almada in Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria*

- Africana*, 3:296-97, completed in 1594, and Guerreiro, *Padre da Companhia de Jesus*, 1:404, supply some of the information in Davity's passage, but neither provides a time of year or a specific date; such evidently derives from a first hand account. One awaits a textual study of these sources such as G. Thilmans has provided for Senegal: "Le Sénégal dans l'oeuvre d'Olfried Dapper," BIFAN, 33 (1971), 508-63.
58. Lopes de Lima, *Ensaïos*, 1/1:120. The sixth day was market day in the Guinea-Bissau region, mentioned in Fernandes, *Côte Occidentale d'Afrique*, 68-69. Among Diola the six-day week continues. A year comprises four seasons, with the harvest period extending from mid-October to the end of December; no special new year's celebration is currently held. Louis-Vincent Thomas and David Sapir, "Le Diola et le temps," BIFAN, 29 (1967), 345, 381-83.
 59. Lopes de Lima, *Ensaïos*, 1/1:108.
 60. Only rarely did commandants of the praças of Cacheu and Bissau acknowledge such payments in official dispatches, encouraging the erroneous notion that their "fortresses" compelled awe and respect from Africans. In fact Portuguese praças and presidios (detached garrisons) existed on the sufferance of Africans who desired commercial relations and who possessed a variety of effective sanctions as 'land-lords' to maintain their ascendancy over the trading communities and the impotent garrisons. See Brooks, "Mãe Aurélia Correia."
 61. Lopes de Lima, *Ensaïos*, 1/1:126.
 62. See Brooks, "The Signares of Saint-Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth Century Senegal" in *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, ed. Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay (Stanford, 1976), 30-31, 42-43.
 63. Joseph J. Lauer, "Rice in the History of the Lower Gambia-Geba Area" (M.A., Wisconsin, 1969), 11, 15.
 64. Brooks, "Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-1870," *JAH*, 16 (1975), 29-54. For the skilled and savvy cultivating practices of Diola women see Olga F. Linares, "From Tidal Swamp to Inland Valley: On the Social Organization of Wet Rice Cultivation among the Diola of Senegal," *Africa*, 51 (1981), 565.
 65. Schloss, "Hatchet's Blood," 23; Lauer, "Rice," 11. Men prepare the fields, but cultivation and harvesting is done by women. The cycle of Diola rice agriculture is recounted in Francis G. Snyder, *Capitalism and Legal Change; An African Transformation* (New York, 1981), 87-92.
 66. Schloss, "Hatchet's Blood," 20. Schloss, 27, notes that spirits at shrines are always offered libations of palm wine to initiate access to their spiritual powers. Religious beliefs among Diola groups are elucidated in Jean Girard, *Genèse du pouvoir charismatique en basse Casamance* (Dakar, 1969).
 67. Louis-Vincent Thomas, *Les Diola* (Dakar, 1959), 548.
 68. Simmons, *Eyes of the Night*, 53.