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pp. 54f, 58

[...]

Lorenzo Turner [fn. 4] was the other man in the University College [Ìbàdàn] who exercised perhaps the most positive and critical influence on Ulli then. Through the extramural classes, he sustained and enlarged his social contacts with many Yorùbá people at virtually all levels. Lorenzo Turner gave spiritual depth to this by introducing him to the culture. Almost fifty years later, Ulli could still write (1993, 20) of him as follows: “It was Lorenzo Turner who first opened my eyes to the marvels of Yorùbá culture, to its complexities and compelling beauty.”

Lorenzo Turner was an elderly African-American who had studied surviving African languages in the Gulla[h] islands off the coast of Florida [sic; sc. South Carolina and Georgia], where lived small communities of slave descendants who still retain(ed) a large vocabulary — mainly Yorùbá [sic] — of African languages. Turner had collected these linguistic evidences and many stories from several old women. He had then gone to Cuba to collect more Yorùbá stories and folklore too. Now, he was in Nigeria on sabbatical from Chicago University for the academic year of 1951-52, to collect still more. He also wanted to compare materials from both worlds, as well as to play back the materials from the African Diaspora to Yorùbá students in Nigeria to see what the two societies still had in common and/or how far they had grown apart. He attached himself to Ulli and played the recordings in his classes. It was a delight to both each time they found that, in spite of the great intervening distances of time and space, the young students, whose knowledge of Yorùbá folklore and even language had begun to decline, understood the materials fairly well.

Lorenzo Turner was an impassioned ethnologist fully committed to what he studied; to him, studying the survival of Yorùbá culture in the New World was more than a matter of academic interest. The only person in the university [of Chicago] then who believed in the existence of something called African culture, he spoke with absolute passion about it, believed and lived it even more passionately. Whenever he spoke about it, he would start shedding tears. He saw the poverty of the Gulla[h] islands women and felt it keenly; but he also saw their spiritual power and the richness of their inner lives. Most of all, he was painfully aware that all were vanishing. And yet that spiritual power and inner life was, he felt, the essence of Africa and the source of her dignity. As he felt that such essence and dignity were still recoverable, he was not just a collector who sought to preserve, but one who also preached and inspired others. Ulli was immensely inspired, to the point where he felt that Lorenzo Turner’s mission, and not the university, was what life was about.

In December 1951, Lorenzo Turner and Ulli went on a trip to Dahomey (now Republic of Benin). Together they did more recordings in the market at Ìlú Àjàṣẹ (Porto Novo), from where they proceeded on to Abomey to see the palace and its marvellous reliefs. From there Turner went on to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to meet Kwame Nkrumah while Ulli cycled to Kétu, then walked to Mẹ̀kọ.

[...]

4. Lorenzo Turner came from the University of Chicago and returned there after his sabbatical. Most unusually, Ulli lost contact with him thereafter.

Beier, U. [1993]. *In a Colonial University*. Ìwàlẹ̀wà Haus, Bayreuth, Germany.