

Interpretative anthropology of cultural religious facts: Example of cultural practice of initiation of children in traditional convents of Southern Benin

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ABSTRACT: The vòdún seems lively and dominant with many rites and initiations that constitute cultural forms of socialization, education and protection of humans. But it must also be recognized that this religious practice, despite its roots, seems to be characterized by a certain violation of the rights of the child during initiations in convents. Conducted on the basis of historical-anthropological, sociological and human rights data, the study offers a journey into the cultural and religious universe vòdún, which takes into account the model of socialization and the conditions of admission without forgetting the initiation practices in the vòdún convents of southern Benin. With the universalization and ideologization of human rights, particularly children's rights, the influence of which is noticeable in the strategic and political orientations of nations throughout the world, an initiation of children in traditional convents respectful of their rights, avoid any criticism and credit this religious practice with a promising future in a multicultural world.

KEYWORDS: vòdún, socialization, education, child protection.

1 INTRODUCTION

Religious practices seem to exist universally and set themselves up as very framed cultural realities, giving and regulating the meaning of life and the relationship of humans to the supernatural. In Benin, each cultural expression of socialization, initiation of men and women is a great moment of reminder of the attachment of humans to the divine and of manifestation of the cultural richness and uniqueness of the communities. Beninese ethnographic and historical accounts dating back several centuries reveal the attachment of the peoples of ancient Dahomey to their ancestors who are at the heart of their religious practices and beliefs.

For these peoples, the dead ancestors and their living descendants constitute two interpenetrating worlds. The dead are not dead, as the poet Birago Diop said. They are regularly called upon by the living when something is wrong or when it is necessary to implore God. While being in the afterlife, they continue to govern life on earth and to ensure respect for habits and customs. That is why, from time to time, we make offerings to them. The dead to whom we remain attached until the moment when we are going to join them in the beyond and in the kingdom of God belong to the vòdún universe, which would be perceived as the set of invisible or supernatural forces and the processes which allow us to communicate and remain in harmony with them.

For Father Michel Dujarier, who lived 33 years in the south of Benin: "The Vòdún is still very much alive in its practices and especially in its deep mentality, and manifests itself in daily life, especially during difficulties, even sometimes in those who, sincerely, have adhered to Christianity or Islam. It is therefore not surprising that religious syncretism is commonplace in countries with a vòdún tradition. Whether one is Christian or Muslim, one is somewhere equally comfortable in a voodoo temple. For Dujarier: "It is the problem of a culture which has a deep vision of life and which remains unconsciously in

competition with a second vision, that of the modern world. However, it always reappears as necessary, the one to which one resorts, during important events. The current destruction of this vision risks being catastrophic, especially if nothing else restructures. »

To ensure their succession, the “vòdún socialization” of the child through initiation is required. It would work, a priori, for the protection of the child by preventing against the various forms of violence, mistreatment, exploitation, ill-treatment, trafficking/smuggling, work to which he could be subjected and traditional practices prejudicial to his child’s well-being in terms of education and health.

According to the results of the analysis of the situation of children, in Benin commendable efforts have been made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with regard to several indicators relating to child protection. Some themes could not be opened up to child protection interventions because of their very high sensitivity and their unauthorized accessibility to a very large segment of child protection actors: this is the case of children in convents whose full enjoyment of rights raises many questions.

The world of convents in Benin is therefore the main subject of this research, which focuses on the living and training conditions of children who follow vòdún. Ethnology is interested in this cultural form of socialization and the way in which it contributes to the violation of the fundamental rights of the child recommended by the main international institutions. From an ethnographic perspective, the emphasis was deliberately placed on the real situations faced by initiated children, that is to say, educated and socialized in the vòdún convents in southern Benin.

Conducted over a period of five years (September 2017 to November 2022), due to the sensitive nature of its object, the study specifically focused on 157 traditional convents identified and visited in the municipalities of Allada, Kpomassè, Toffo, Tori and Zè in the Atlantic department including 72 of the children (372) in initiation during our investigations. The data collected reveals that more than 90% of the heads of convents are male, illiterate, without professional occupation (more than 80%); which feeds the hypothesis of a great dependence on the dowry or initiation fees.

As indicated above, it is the Communes of Tori, Toffo, Allada, Kpomassè and Zè of the department of the Atlantic which have been retained, because of their attachment to the practices and beliefs vòdún without forgetting the initiation of children in view of their socialization. In total, the research involved 35 districts, 95 villages and 157 convents in the department. It describes the conditions of children in vòdún convents and highlights elements of understanding the life of children in convents with a view to proposing approaches to solutions that can be used at the national level.

In Tori, the investigations were carried out in 20 villages of the five districts of Avamè, Azohouè-Aliho, Tori-Gare, Tori-Cada and Tori-Bossito for a total of 50 convents) against 16 villages at the commune level sister of Toffo, notably in the districts of Sey, Kpomey, Coussi, Damey, Colli with 29 convents. In the commune, capital of the department of Allada, the research takes place in the districts of Ahouanonzoun, Attogon, Lissegazoun, Ayou, Avakpa, Agbanou, Lonagonmey and takes into account the 35 villages each housing a convent, that is to say in total 35 convents visited. In the commune of Zè, the study covered 10 districts out of eleven that it has with a total of 20 villages with 17 listed convents. The production on this cultural practice has been widely documented in the literature since independence and which tries to show its depths and its philosophy without forgetting its challenges of development and respect for human dignity.

Several Beninese writers ADANDE Joseph, (Animism in Benin, 2003), Olympe BHELY-QUENUM in (The birth of Abikou, 1998), Jean PLIYA in the history of my country Benin, 1992, by Gaston AGBOTON in (Culture of the Peoples of Benin, 1997) and Laënnec HURBON in (Les Mystères du vaoudou, 1993), Arnaud Zohou, 2021), whose writings have lifted the veil on certain depths of Beninese culture, were mobilized in the realization of this study which will be based on the census of a number of convents in the study area. The vòdún, “religious fact at the confluence of the psychological, the social and the political, is a set of open methods, a flexible and labile structure, whose strength lies precisely in its adaptability to historical and geopolitical data, but also to configurations individual variables, considers Arnaud Zohou, 2021. The vòdún, according to Zohou’s most striking thesis, is perceived as a precious tool for facing contemporary challenges through its multiple philosophical, aesthetic and ethical aspects condensed in the concepts of “movement”, “assembly”, “reinterpretation”, “shaping” and “transformation”. We therefore understand why he finds himself summoned for the education, the socialization of the child in the convents.

The methodology is also based on the conditions of admission, training and care of children and young initiates organized around four (4) main stages: (i) understanding and harmonization of the points of view the orientation workshop on traditional practices held in Allada, (ii) the documentary review on initiation, particularly in southern Benin, (iii) the collection and analysis of field data (iv) finally the triangulation of the results with the results of Benin in terms of child protection in order to deduce the gaps and the most relevant recommendations that can be the subject of a feasibility study.

The recommendations of the Allada workshop have helped to identify the essential orientations of this study and to ensure that all concerns are covered. Then, the documentary review on the initiation in the convents in particular in the south of Benin, was interested in the wake of the fundamental question of the protection of children in Benin on the background of interviews conducted with certain leaders and guardians of the tradition. and a few personalities from the intellectual world of the milieu having succeeded in taking stock of knowledge on the phenomenon of initiation. This phase facilitated the choice of approach, the development of collection tools and sampling. The third step consisted of recruiting interviewers-informants, who were trained in the techniques of collecting statistical data and conducting interviews during visits to the convents located in the geographical areas covered by the study. At this stage, our investigators-informants were recommended to resort to participant observation, which made it possible to collect information on children who could not be had in the presence of traditional religious leaders, notables or parents who sent them to initiation into convents. Indeed, the rules of convent life do not allow the "initiates" to speak in the absence of their "initiators" because of the sacrosanct principle of "secrecy" established as a principle that participant observation will have revealed.

The counting stage, the last stage of our methodology, will have brought together the investigators-informants under our supervision and focused on the profile of the heads of convents and their residents, the admission criteria and the field of intervention, the costs of the training, the living conditions, the post-initiation project of the children and their knowledge of their rights. The data processing team proceeded to triangulate the information on the basis of the documentary review with, as an analysis framework, the rights recognized for children and more specifically the commitments for the achievement of the MDGs in 2015.

2 THE ORIGIN OF VÒDÚN AND THE APPEARANCE OF VÒDÚN CONVENTS IN BENIN

Subject to controversy and controversy, representation of the devil or symbol of fetishism, the vòdún represents for Beninese, an intangible heritage whose foundations and determinants structure community life and beyond existence. Like the other religions of the world, vòdún, in reality, is based on norms and principles of its own and respecting moral laws and the rights of the human person. The designers of this religion structured it around the elements of the cosmos that are sky, earth, water, air, fire, representing the various entities constituting the vòdún.

In our research, in the discussions that we had with the priests and followers of this so controversial religion, it appears that the vòdún is only the representation of God on earth... And this Omnipotent God is baptized MAWULISA. From him derive all the other minor deities: the Legba, the Sàkpàtà, the Hêviôsô or Sôgbô, the Gu, etc. who are a bit like saints, real ladders to access the Omnipotent MAWULISA. And as proof, when we have the chance to attend a vòdún ritual, the vòdún priest or priestess always invokes GOD. In short, vòdún is neither magic nor fetishism. It is rather a religious philosophy that has nothing to do with magic, which is mystical and given its importance in Beninese society, the government has not hesitated to decree a national day of vòdún since the advent of democracy in 1990: January 10 of each year is indeed celebrated in order to promote this culture which dates back to time immemorial and which has played a preponderant role for ages up to the present day in our African societies and more particularly that of Benin.

From the founding myths of vòdún, we note that originally, indeed, heaven and earth were not separated. Then one day, the sky moved away from the earth. Since then, MAWU, the supreme being who has become "the unknowable" for humans, has delegated the management of the universe to his sons, the vòdúns. The latter appear in some way as his ministers in charge of "terrestrial and human relations", each in the field assigned to him. The vòdún Thunder, Hêviôsô, for example, governs the phenomena of celestial, atmospheric origin, and its justice is exerted by the lightning which strikes the traitors, the perjurers, the murderers. Xèbiosso in the Ajà-Tado cultural area is the police god par excellence. Sàkpàtà, is the master of the Earth who nourishes man by giving him corn, millet and other cereals, but punishes him when he is offended by causing the grain he has eaten to appear on his skin, smallpox. This is why it is also called the "King of Pearls", an allusion made to smallpox pustules. Dan ayidohwèdo, the "Rainbow Serpent", the "Breath that envelops the universe" and winds around the Earth to support it, controls all movement, governs the course of the waters and ensures success, fruitfulness and wealth. Gou or Gu, the Master of Metals, is the "deity" of all those who work with iron (blacksmiths, farmers, warriors, hunters, sinners, hairdressers...) and by extension of all "technical" human activity He receives always its share of praise during ceremonies in honor of other "deities", because without the knife which it allows to forge, no sacrifice would be possible.

By ordering the world in this way, the supreme being took care to discourage a possible plot against him. Each vòdún will have its specific language, unknown to the others. Only Legba, his youngest son, who received no "tangible" domain in sharing, will know them all. Master of the Word, of Communication, Legba, associated with Fa, Destiny, will be the universal messenger and will "open" all the ceremonies in the vanguard.

To interpret the world in which he evolves and understand the functioning that governs it, this with the aim of being in perfect symbiosis with nature, the follower of vòdún has recourse to a certain number of tools which have complementary functions., necessary to maintain order.

Particularly well established in southern Benin up to the height of the hills department and in neighboring southern Togo, the cult of vòdún would have come from western Benin with the Àjá-Tado under the reign of King Tégbessou of Abomey in the 18th century.

In Benin, traditional religions occupy a large place. The voodoo, whose followers are called animists, represent 62% of the population. (Pliya, 1993, p. 106). In general, the vòdún gods are very present. Gaston Agboton believes that the entire Beninese population is bathed in this sacred atmosphere, from the old aunts, guardians of tradition and customs, to the highest personalities of the State. This denotes the importance of vòdún in Benin and in the lives of Beninese, from the poorest to the richest, from the smallest to the oldest and from the illiterate to the greatest intellectual. Every Beninese is directly or indirectly linked to a vòdún, whatever the type.

Asked about this, Beninese evoking vòdún, perceive this cultural practice specific to a social group, as the set of divine and natural prescriptions governing the ethnophilosophy of the peoples of Lower and Middle Benin. Mythology and social representations thus overlap in the perception that some Beninese have of this ancestral religion which needs places of initiation, supposed to train, educate followers or religious for the well-being of the community and its preservation.

In Benin, the voodoo convent also called Hounkpamin or Hounhoué is a structure, a framework where the training of followers of the vòdún religion takes place. It is a closed place where the followers of the different vòdúns, divinities or deities are trained. These are secret societies whose members are bound by belief in divinities or deities. It is a kind of temple where future vòdún priests and adepts live and are initiated. The convent is a high place of secrets. Initiates do not have the right to reveal what they have experienced or seen at the convent. They are taught silence, guarding one's mouth (translated from fon hinnoun). Pacts are signed between the initiates and the heads of convents. The convent, a kind of fortress equipped with ramparts, entrance and exit door but also delimitation between the dwellings of the initiates and the non-initiates or already initiated, is inhabited in the context in our study by vòdúnsi who belong according to our ethnographic materials to all social strata. Still called Hounsi, the term vòdúnsi designates a convent intern, the follower of a vòdún or the wife of a vòdún assigned to both sexes. It designates in a way the disciple of a certain divinity or deity, even spiritual entity that one supposes to possess the adept, literally translated: "to dance on his head", in which he would be reincarnated. Before becoming a follower or the vòdúnsi, under the influence of the deity or entity of which he happens to be the disciple, the individual, and in this case, the child must first be initiated into a convent of his vòdún "reincarnator" to follow there for a determined time, an essential training in religious practice, in the rites and rituals of the exercise of his religion.

In total, there is a link between the vòdún convent and the education, socialization and professional training of the child follower or vòdúnsi in the configuration of this religion codified by tradition and maintained by religious dignitaries, who maintain a tradition oral known by all populations. In reality, it is this maintenance of an oral tradition that explains the survival of these places of formation or vòdún convents in the functioning of religious life in southern Benin and gives us the opportunity to identify, in terms of respect for the rights of the human person, their usefulness in terms of "socialization-training" in a context of ideologization of policies for the promotion, defense and protection of the rights of the child.

3 THE VÒDÚN CONVENT: A SACRED INSTITUTION VIOLATING THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN THE NAME OF A RELIGION

Safeguarding children against religious fundamentalism or the effects of a cultural religious belief is an imperative, a moral, legal and developmental responsibility that the leaders of countries must respect for the well-being of children who constitute the future, the belongs to any human society. As a result, the question of education, socialization of the child, must constitute a major aspect of any policy or strategy for the protection of children and should be the priority of any nation.

International human rights law, emphasizing the importance of the right to life, education and security of every child, would oblige the Beninese public authorities to guarantee, enforce and protect these rights embodied in the convention. on the rights of the child to children undergoing initiation in vòdún convents. National phenomenon whose magnitude is revealed in this study, particularly in the Atlantic department.

Indeed, in the five out of eight municipalities covered by this study in the Atlantic department, there is a strong representation of children in vòdún initiation convents, 157 convents according to our investigations, which violate the rights of children. in times of formation during this religious seclusion-retreat constituted by initiation into convents.

Listed in 95 villages, that is to say a ratio of 1.65 convents per village for a coverage rate of 72.9% of the territory of the department, the vòdún convents show the extent and the representativeness of the conclusions of this study in the face of a phenomenon that grips thousands of children deprived of their rights.

From any other point of view, the results from our ethnographic and sociological surveys revealed a greater vulnerability of girls to initiation in all the municipalities, the subject of this study, with a peak at the level of Kpomassè, that is to say 21 girls out of a total of 23 initiated children. Moreover, it is in Kpomassè that the smallest proportion of children in the convent has been recorded. If the predominance of female and aquatic deities may justify the predominance of girls, one is tempted to suspect that the convent placement of little girls in these communes can be considered as a contributing factor to the low level of schooling for girls.

Similarly, 2 out of 10 children in the convents belong to the primary school age group, 6-10 and 7 out of 10 children in the convent are between 11 and 16 years old. This bracket is equivalent to at least the end of primary education and the first cycle of secondary school.

The reading of the age groups of the children in the convent predicts what they are there at the very moment when they must start school, pre-schooling and primary schooling (31.44%); and especially when they should finish primary and at least lower secondary (68.55%). In general, 44% of initiated children identified by research are adolescents.

The information reported clarifies that concerning the level of education of the children. Indeed 20% of children were educated against 21.13%. The 80% of non-literate children were busy learning various profiles (15.46%) and working in the fields (12.89%).

It also shows 46.91% of children who were not occupied at the time of their recruitment in the convents. The remaining 3.61% are mainly engaged in commercial activities and these are mainly girls in the 16 and over bracket. The investigations also showed that girls are more recruited into the convents (66%) than boys, while the convents are mainly managed by men. Similarly, 80% of initiates have never set foot in school.

According to our research, the decision to place children in a convent comes from 90% of the children's parents. The initiators estimate that the duration of the initiation could reach or even exceed three (3) years that is to say half of the cycle of primary education. This period takes into account the whole process until the child is allowed to speak his mother tongue again. We can deduce from this that confinement in a convent as practiced today does not promote the formal education of the child, which amounts to saying that his right to learn to read and write is violated in a sense. The study revealed that initiation is paid for and costs more and more and the amount could reach one million (1,000,000) CFA francs in some localities. We then wonder about the elements of motivation of the parents to privilege the initiation to the convent compared to the primary education made free in Benin.

In terms of health, the study revealed that 88% of initiators accept the admission of residents to modern care and the association, if necessary, with traditional care. 12% are convinced that the exclusive traditional care method is effective. 100% of children acknowledge undergoing ritual scarification during their initiation. But according to the requirements of the heads of convents, health workers can only access these places for preventive and/or curative care when they are initiated. Moreover, 9 children out of 10 declare that they do not sleep in the convent under a mosquito net.

This might be of concern when you know that most convents are located in forests, environments conducive to mosquitoes. The sacred character attached to the initiation rites means that the initiates are bound to secrecy and silence on the content and curriculum of the initiation, as well as on the possible abuses that would be committed on the children.

The study also revealed that in the event of abuse in any form, the insider victim has no recourse. It can be deduced from all the above that the initiation rites as practiced today in the convents constitute an obstacle to education, judicial and health protection, leisure, participation in community life and other children's rights. With regard to the duration of initiation, the analysis of the results reveals that 90% of the initiators of Allada set the duration of the initiation between 12 and 36 months, against 70% in Tori and 36% in Toffo. All Zè initiators opt for a duration of less than 12 months.

As regards the membership of initiates in convents, the same results show that only 5% of children freely join the convent corresponding roughly to the cumulative vòdún proportion of children who came to the convent on the decision of the "future spouse" or by decision of the "head of the convent". This low rate would hide a certain coercion and brutality that force the child to do what he does not want. We can find these same children among the 5% who consider themselves truly "given" to vòdún against their will. Moreover, they do not hide their frustration and this coercion by expressing their dissatisfaction at not having chosen the convent life they know, evoking the poor living conditions, the need for education, the discomfort of the scarifications which "hurt too much" and the absence of playful games, not to mention the unsanitary conditions, the

discomfort of the accommodation and the dissatisfaction with the hygiene conditions. 9 out of 10 children say they do not sleep in the convent under a mosquito net. This might be of concern when you know that most convents are located in forests, environments conducive to mosquitoes. The only way to fight mosquitoes is to smoke them with specific plants.

By evoking the blade as a means used during ceremonies, most children could have confused ritual scarifications with therapeutic and/or protective scarifications. The high rate of non-responses to the question also reveals the esoteric character of the convents. Generally, this is inaccessible information.

As for the risks of sexual abuse in the convents, 96.90 of the children say they have never been victims of sexual abuse on the part of their initiators or any other person involved in their education or training. 3%, mainly girls aged 16 and over, refrained from answering the question. What seems certain is that the rate of non-correspondence between the sex of the initiator and that of the initiate can prove to be a risk factor for slippage, given the conditions in which the rituals take place. But in the event of an occurrence, the insider victim has no recourse. In practice, debates outside the investigation raise a serious suspicion of sexual violence, and even abortion in conditions described as “unorthodox”.

Finally, the analysis of the responses of the initiators on the separation of children by sex and the coincidence of the sex of the initiator with that of the initiate suggests a great risk of suggestions of a sexual nature.

Regarding the punishment/correction options, it should be noted that 85 children surveyed, or 43.81%, believe that in the event of misconduct they will be punished in the following ways: kneeling, cleaning in the convent, chores of all kinds.

28 children, or 14.43%, speak of physical abuse, mainly the lash. 59 children or (30.41%) talk about other forms of punishment such as paying tribute, warning or verbal abuse (verbal reprimands). 22 children, or 11.34%, abstained from answering the question. This silence expresses a certain embarrassment and discomfort that could hide difficult situations for the children, but not so easy to fully reveal, in the presence of the initiators.

Overall, the study was able to identify a few serious violations committed against children during initiation into voodoo convents, namely the recruitment and use of children for religious purposes; mutilation and harm to the physical integrity of children; physical violence; moral and sexual rights against children and the denial of schooling without forgetting the multiple economic, social, cultural and political rights of the child.

4 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW: A RESPONSE TO BENINESE VODOO CONVENTS

Children affected by voodoo convents are entitled to respect for their fundamental rights and to special protection in the Atlantic department and, consequently, in Beninese society as a whole. To do this, the public authorities must initiate political actions included in a detailed document making it possible to affirm that the violations committed against children undergoing initiation into convents constitute serious breaches and violations of applicable international law. Because, the picture relating to the respect of the rights of the child is not the most brilliant in these convents, especially in terms of health and education. Dynamic and coordinated action is needed in the short, medium and long term. This action must be adopted and intend to help child protection actors to put an end to the violations committed against children initiated in convents.

As the protection of children in convents constitutes a legal, moral and societal commitment, it is urgent that the actions of public authorities be resorted to international human rights law, mainly to the various international instruments for the protection of the child that are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its optional protocols of 2000 and 2012, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Covenants on Civil, Political, Economic and Social Cultural Rights of 1966. These actions must also be based on regional human rights instruments, in particular the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1981), the African Charter on Human Rights and Childhood (1990), Convention 182 of the International Labor Organization (1999) and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984).

These tables below will make recommendations and propose an action plan likely to put an end to the abuses and violations, even breaches observed in the voodoo convents of which children are victims. The latter must:

- Take the necessary steps to allow heritage to find its proper place in Beninese educational program;
- Researching popular culture and publishing the results;
- Organize Cultural Centers for literacy, development and understanding of national cultural elements;
- Create medical centers for the development of integrated medicine, an alliance between western medicine and traditional medicine;
- Establish international working relationships with certain international organizations, including UNESCO, to ensure the promotion of voodoo, particularly in its positive aspects

5 INTERPRETIVE ANTHROPOLOGY AND CULTURAL PRACTICES AS MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING BENINESE VODOO CONVENTS

The current persistence of voodoo initiation convents which would seriously violate the rights of thousands of children in the Atlantic department, as well as in Beninese society as a whole, should lead us to see certain cultural practices frozen and becoming imposing on members of society. The voodoo belief and the representations it continues to elicit must be perceived as experiences lived by parents whose mental representations continue to value this tradition. Indeed, beyond any reprobation, we must above all seek to understand the implicit knowledge implemented by the initiation to voodoo which legitimizes their attachment to principles and values at a time when the effects of tradition are strongly contested. With regard to international instruments for the protection of human rights, particularly of children in the world. The history of Benin being linked to the voodoo religion by a certain number of practices, rites and rituals whose survival governs the dominant ethnophilosophy, one cannot criticize or denounce this recourse to voodoo initiation without recourse to interpretative anthropology. of Clifford Geertz suggesting to perceive culture or a cultural element as a historical collective product maintained by the actors of the social body from generation to generation.

From this observation, it will be acceptable to use the anthropology of cultural practices to understand Beninese societies in some of their possible cultural aspects that would violate the rights of children. The solution will be dialogue and interculturality to try to put an end to cultural forms of socialization that would undermine the rights of the child at the level of a country or a continent.

6 CONCLUSION

The census of convents and the study of the conditions of admission, of formation, of the life of children and young initiates constitute a mine of information that needs to be explored further.

However, it is possible to continue the debate on the disturbing scope of the initiation rites that enlist many children of school age.

This study has attempted to describe the extent of a phenomenon in all its complexity, the situation encountered by children in convents of initiation into voodoo with consequences in terms of violations of their fundamental rights.

Although this deserves a more in-depth analysis, it nevertheless underlines the attachment of Beninese to their cultural reality in an era of ideologization and globalization of human rights, showing the impasse in which we find ourselves in apprehending separately religion or cultural belief and protection of childhood through in terms of universalization and particularization of the rights of the human person through cultural differences induced by ethnophilosophy at work in the conceptions of man, particularly of the child and life in society.

However, considering putting an end to this harmful practice of initiation in convents, like these cultural practices violating the rights of the child, would not be in vain, if we are to believe in the dynamics and transformations observed in societies that require a reflective time based on actions aimed at challenging the inviolability of religious traditions, called upon to adapt and fit into the era of new times.

The extrapolation of the data from this study clearly indicates the scope of a perennial and stubborn phenomenon, due to its perpetuation from generation to generation. The new dynamic will want to take into account the rights of the 2% of the population of Beninese children, in particular of these young girls and boys deprived of their right to a name, to go to school, to benefit from adequate care in the event of illness and above all to participate in the social life of their country and in the protection of the State. This practice of initiating the child in a convent, on analysis, does not favor the development of the child, must be revisited and inscribed in a cultural dynamic to guarantee the participation in the national effort of these thousands of children through their preparation for participation in national development.

From this point of view, the knowledge of the determinants, the open-mindedness of some authorities and guardians of the tradition should engage the State and the partners on new avenues of discussion and advocacy. Thus, the opportunity for the creation of more convivial convents and more able to give to the boarders the minimal conditions of blooming while preserving this essential tool of the socio-cultural substratum of our country, is offered to the State which could improve its scores in achieving the MDGs, through credible new alternatives in the fields of cultural and worship initiation, which have a bright future ahead of them in the name of culture and cultural diversity.

Once the specter of serious violations of children's rights has been removed, we can make this religious practice a fundamental element, a relevant model for promoting an education, socialization respectful of values and a ethics participating

in the shaping of beings able to evolve in their environment, to transform it by participating in their capacity as humans in the development of their country.

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