



## *The Boa Morte Festival* *Celebrate the Soul of Africa in the New World*

One of the oldest examples of the phenomenon of syncretism, the blending of Catholicism and Candomblé, (African rites), is the Sisterhood of the Boa Morte in Cachoeira, 66 miles from Salvador.

These two religions have coexisted in the minds and hearts of many black Brazilians since the days when the Portuguese colonists required slaves to be baptized Catholic and to attend weekly Mass on their plantations. The slaves maintained their African traditions in secret ceremonies with ritual dances, trances and disguised their deity as Catholic saints.

The Boa Morte sisterhood was founded in the early 19th century with purely religious intentions to pray for the dead and to provide decent funerals for its members. Therefore, Boa Morte, when translated, means “good death”. The sisterhood, a group of mostly elderly women descended from African slaves, put on their finest ceremonial clothes and jewelry to participate in three days of Masses, parades, public feasts and dancing in honor of the Virgin Mary. In addition of preserving African traditions, the sisterhood intended to free slaves, either by helping them to escape or by earning money to buy their freedom.

The Boa Morte festival takes place in Cachoeira every August and is deeply syncretised with the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It is perhaps the most important festival in the African Heritage calendar in Bahia and is a living document of African culture and passage from the material to the spiritual world.

### **Package includes:**

- Visit of the Sisterhood of the Boa Morte (Good Death) with a torchlight procession through the streets of Cachoeira
- Religious ceremony in the premises of the Sisterhood followed by another street procession, this time the Sisters in solemn black clothes

- Religious ceremony in the Mass followed by procession through the streets of the town with the upright figure of N.S. das Glórias (Assumption). The Sisters are dressed in their full gala clothes of black, white and red. This is the highlight of the celebrations.
- Samba de Roda, a spinning samba only found in the Cachoeira region. This begins late afternoon and continues until early evening.

Dates are confirmed 03 months before the celebrations begin, when the Sisters consult with the orixás for their permission to proceed with the celebrations.

