

Claudio Neri

Interview with Balbino^{1 2}

Lauro de Freitas – Bahia

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In the *terreiro*³ Friday is considered a holiday: wearing black clothes is not allowed and women can't wear trousers. Balbino awaits us sitting on the terrace of the house in which he lives (not in the "house" of his *Orixà*: *Xango*. Last year when I first met him, he was bare chested and wearing a short cloth tied around his waist; whereas today he is wearing a long white outfit and a white head covering. He is also wearing many heavy gold necklaces and a few rings. He is reading a newspaper. I think he's slightly nervous about the interview that is about to take place that Beatriz asked for on my behalf. Beatriz, Mecha and I take a seat. It's a pleasant shaded environment. I calmly await for Balbino to pay attention to us.

Claudio: When we last met, the idea about the *Orixàs* greatly struck me, I tried to shape up these thoughts so that they would correspond to my manner of thinking.

Balbino: This is due to the fact that each person has a different vision.

Claudio: I found it possible to be able to distinguish three different aspects. The first of these ideas is that the *Orixà* is a god, someone or something for which there is belief or veneration. The second idea corresponds to the *Orixà* as an expression of nature. The third and last regards the *Orixà* as an internal force within the person.

¹ The interview was carried out in various languages: Balbino spoke in Portuguese; I spoke in English, sometimes in Spanish (when speaking directly to Balbino who understands this language a little) and Italian (after the arrival of Eliana Miranda). Mecha Lugones spoke in Portuguese and Italian. Beatriz Franco translated from Portuguese to English and vice versa.

² The transcription from the recordings of the interview was carried out by Beatriz Franco. The translation of the text from Portuguese to Italian and vice versa was carried out by Eliana Miranda; from English to Portuguese by Beatriz Franco. The revision of the Portuguese text is by Alex Simues, the English text by Ginevra De Bellis and the Italian version was carried out by myself.

³ Note from the translation: The *terreiro* is a sacred location where the *Candomblè* ceremonies take place. Inside the *terreiro* there are the houses of all or just some of the *Orixàs*. Usually the *terreiro* is a delimited area of land close to the countryside or the forest.

Balbino: The *Orixà* isn't God. God is *Olorum*, which is represented by *Oxala* for us, the people of *Candomblè*. The *Orixà* is nature. Each *Orixà* has its "contacts" with the forces of nature. They access their own elements like air, earth, sea, wind or leaves. The *Orixàs* are the sons of God; because they are the sons of *Oxala*; and *Oxala* represents the whole universe, which is God for the people of *Candomblè*. Today is Friday, everybody dresses in white as a sign of homage and respect to *Oxala* the creator of the *Orixàs*. Each *Orixà* has a particular form of expression. For example, *Iansa* is the goddess of great winds, of the tempest, *Ogum* is the god of journeys, *Oxossi* is the god of the forest, of hunting and abundance, *Xango* is the is the god of justice, of thunder and lightning and also of money, *Oxum* is the goddess of vanity and of betrayal: "Oh I've arrived"! Scented with perfume and covered in jewels. *Yemanjà* is the mother; she conveys joy to the children. *Yemanjà* brings joy to us all. Each *Orixà* has its own particular characteristic sent by God; it's own work and role given from God.

Mecha: Therefore *Candomblè* isn't a polytheist religion, as there is only one God; only one, the father.

Balbino: Only one God exists: *Olorum*⁴.

Mecha: Isn't he an intermediary?

Balbino: *Exu* is the intermediary⁵.

Beatriz: Isn't *Exu* an *Orixà*?

Balbino: *Exu* is an *Orixà* and an intermediary.

Mecha: Are the *Orixàs* intermediaries?

Balbino: *Exu* is the intermediary. The *Orixà* is your saint⁶.

⁴ Note from the translation: It is very difficult for the people who practice *Candomblè* to explain exactly what *Olorum* is. Pierre Verger said that *Olorum* is the Absolute, that *Olorum* gave *Oxala* the responsibility of creating the *Orixàs* who in turn were given the task of upholding all the elements and the actions. In reality, *Olorum* is rarely mentioned or given offerings in *Candomblè*. *Olorum* created *Oxala*, and therefore gave him the responsibility of creating the *Orixàs*.

⁵Note from the translation: *Exu* is the messenger of all the other *Orixàs*, *Exu* is considered to be easily irritated and to have a terrible character. The first homage is paid to *Exu*, offerings consist of "*despacho*" which is wheat grain flour with *dende* oil (palm tree oil).

⁶The *Orixà* is your saint...this is a manner of speaking from the period in which it was necessary to "translate" into Catholic terms a Yoruban thought; it means in a certain way that the *Orixà* is your guardian angel. Even if today it isn't necessary to put into use religious

Mecha: What does *Orixà* actually mean?

Balbino: *Ori* means head. The *Orixà* takes our head⁷.

Claudio: Could it be that one is searching for the *Orixà*, but it's actually the *Orixà* that finds you.

Balbino: Certainly. For example, it's not only the Negroes that possess an *Orixà*, but also white people who seemingly have nothing to do with it. The *Orixà* possesses and takes them. I have Italian friends that are "*fatti di santo*" (initiated), I have a French "saint daughter" and a German "saint daughter" who was initiated for *Oxossi*, also a Japanese woman. From all over the world. If the *Orixà* welcomes you, and has a mission for you to accomplish on earth, then the *Orixà* will take and possess you. This girl was initiated a few days ago, a month and a few days. She belongs to *Ogum*. There were two other people that were initiated with her⁸.

Beatriz: What actually happens when they get initiated?

Balbino: They become *Iyawo*, "saint daughters"; they are always in contact with the *Orixà*. So whatever happens to them, the *Orixà* "takes" them. By "taking" them, this could simply mean protecting them. If by chance the "saint daughter" is sad, the *Orixà* will pass on its strength.

Claudio: Can a man or woman also get into contact with the forces of nature through his *Orixà*? For example with the wind, sea, water or with whichever element the *Orixà* is bound to?

Balbino: Yes.

Claudio: Does one get into contact with these elements with both the mind and the body?

Balbino: (There is a slight breeze) Here is the *Orixà*, nature. Yes. The *Orixà* takes our bodies.

syncretism in order to survive, a certain way of speaking which is linked to syncretism is still used.

⁷Note from the translation: In the Yoruba language, *Ori* means head, mind. The term "Yoruba" is applied to a linguistic group, that other than the language share the same culture and traditions. Subsequently, the term Yoruba was applied to a population and to nations; the Yoruban nation up until today, is spread between Benin, Nigeria and Togo. The Yoruba language is used in the *Candomblè* rituals.

⁸ A young lady moves closer, she lays down and kisses Balbino's hand as a sign of deference.

Claudio: How can you develop that part of yourself that is linked with the *Orixà*? Does this development enable a development of the whole person?

Balbino: Yes! There is a development of both the “qualities” of the *Orixà* and also the person’s “qualities” that are linked with the *Orixà*.

Beatriz: In which manner is the relationship between the person and the *Orixà* developed? For example; I belong to *Yemanjà*, and I’d like to develop a deeper relationship with *Yemanjà*, how can this be done?

Balbino: You must take care of *Yemanjà*, get to know and search for *Yemanjà*. Once you take care of her, giving her offerings, you will be hers; therefore you will have her. You will identify yourself with her.

Claudio: Is it an identification process?⁹

Balbino: Yes.

Claudio: When we last met, you spoke to me about my bond with *Oxossi*. How were you able to notice this link?

Balbino: It’s the *Orixà* that shows me what each person has. I understand this with the use of “shells” and through intuition¹⁰. ♦

Claudio: It was useful for me to know that I had a bonding with *Oxossi*. I like to begin new projects, then once they get underway and my initiative actually becomes successful, rather than developing it further, I’m attracted by something completely different. I’ve always felt slightly guilty about this aspect of myself. Discovering that I am in some way

⁹Claudio uses the term “identification” in a psychoanalytical sense, but Balbino intends this term in a *Candomblè* manner. It is an identification process. If we were to observe the initiated, grouping them up by their *Orixàs*, we would notice that they generally possess similar traits, both regarding their biotype and their psychological characteristics. Verger writes (*Orixàs*, p.34): “We can denominate these tendencies, archetypes of the hidden personality of people. Hidden, because undoubtedly some innate tendencies cannot freely develop in each of us, in case they get into conflict with the manners of conduct that are accepted in the surrounding environment in which people live. Therefore, the more the initiated person identifies himself with the archetype of his *Orixà*, the more he will be able to free himself, as he can accept and live alongside these innate and hidden tendencies.

¹⁰ In the religion of the *Orixàs* there are different levels of initiation and *pai* Balbino amongst the other initiations, is also a *Babalorixà* (father of the *Orixàs*) and also *Babalawo* (father of the secrets, this is due to *Ifà* the divination god). In this case the divination was carried out using shells and observing their layout.

linked to *Oxossi* and that he possesses these characteristics, made me feel somewhat authorized to behave in this manner, which is so natural and spontaneous to me.

Balbino: *Oxossi* is restless. He is one of the strongest *Orixàs*. *Oxossi* was a king, he liked to go hunting, he would meet up with his friends the princes and go to the forest. *Oxossi* would act upon his own initiative; with a driving force to get things done.

Mecha: What actually happens when a person becomes initiated?

Balbino: It's as if a priest were entering a convent; like a novice.

Mecha: Does he go into the *terreiro*?

Balbino: ...to rest, to "*fare il santo*"- (be initiated).

Mecha: Does he come to live here?

Balbino: Only for a little while. Until the day he becomes initiated.

Balbino: She belongs to *Xango*...Here is my "secretary"...¹¹

Eliana: May I?

Balbino: *Ago Iya*...My secretary, a white woman married to an Italian.

Eliana: Is that a compliment or an insult?

Balbino: No, it is a compliment. I'm here chatting with them about the *Orixàs*. It was *Iansa*, Eliana's saint that decided which kind of destiny she would have.

Eliana: Around here, if you're called "white", it's an insult!

Claudio: How was Pierre Verger involved in the *Aganju terreiro*?¹²

¹¹A woman and a man arrive: Eliana, Balbino's "saint daughter" that has the responsibility of *Ago Iya* of the *Aganju terreiro*. Eliana Miranda also has the responsibility of *Iya Agan* (responsible for the cult of the dead) and of *Ayabà Lessen Yansan* (the first person in the "house" of *Yansa*). Eliana Miranda was also the General Secretary of the Pierre Verger Foundation from 1993 till the death of Verger in February 1996.

¹²Note from the translation: *Aganju* is *Xango* when he was young.

Eliana: Pierre Verger was initiated by *Mae Senhora* who also initiated *Pai Balbino*.

Claudio: So in a kind of way, they're like brother and sister?

Eliana: Yes. Verger met Balbino when he was a youngster. Pierre Verger's dream was that *Pai Balbino*...¹³

Claudio: Who initiated *Mae Senhora*?

Balbino: My grandmother Ninha (*Mae Aninha do Afonjà*).¹⁴

Balbino: Tell them your story...(facing Eliana, but then continuing the conversation). The *Orixà* donates a destiny, a path for the people..., not only Negroes, but also Germans, adults and children get initiated.

Eliana: The *Orixà* is also very humane. When one gets to know his own *Orixà*, his personal problems get resolved through the qualities and the particular characteristics of the *Orixà*.

Mecha: Does each *Orixà* have various aspects?

Balbino: Yes. Various qualities and aspects. There are some people who belong to *Ogum* that are very aggressive and argumentative. Those that are the sons of *Exu* are very calm. Each and everyone of us have our own pathway, our own destiny. Some people are dishonest, others aren't, there are those that lie a great deal, whereas others don't lie at all. This is because these people only enhance the negative side of the *Orixà*.

Claudio: Can two *Orixàs* fight among themselves through people? Can the conflict originate between the *Orixàs* and not between people, as for the Greek gods?

¹³Pierre Verger perceived that Balbino had the intellectual and spiritual means to found a new *terreiro*, which would be separate from the initial *Afonjà terreiro*. Balbino was encouraged and supported in this task. When Pierre Verger found out that *pai Balbino* had received the "*Deka*"(the permission to initiate his own *terreiro*) from *mae Senhora del'Afonjà*, he encouraged and supported him in this task. Verger was a "counsellor" in the *Aganju terreiro* for many years. Note the conversation between Pierre Verger and Gilberto Gil that is in this edition of *Funzione Gamma*.

¹⁴Note from the translation: Balbino is actually talking about a ritual family bond since *mae Aninha* (grandmother Ninha) *del'Afonja* was the "saint mother" of *mae Senhora del'Afonjà*, who was the "saint mother" of *pai Balbino*. *Mai Senhora* also initiated Verger, therefore, Verger and Balbino are spiritual "brothers".

Eliana: Yes.

Balbino: There are a great number of people that have many problems, so they're considered mad, they're sent to hospital, and once in hospital the doctor can't seem to understand where the problem is. That person sometimes has a spiritual side that needs to be taken into consideration and healed. Seeing as not many doctors understand the spiritual side to man, they continue to prescribe medicine, and more medicines; many people die as a result of not taking into consideration and healing the spiritual side. Four years ago I held a seminar for forty Italian doctors¹⁵, these doctors were concerned with skin disease that they cured with *ibi* and snails. There was a great deal of cooperation between us. I was helping to cure a young boy's body that was completely covered in wounds by using *dende* oil.

Mecha: Did you manage to cure him with *dende* oil?

Balbino: Yes, I healed the wounds on his body. I was subsequently asked how I managed to cure that kind of disease. My answer was that initially you must carry out a cleansing procedure with herbs, when this eventually dries up you rub on the *dende* oil. That person was healed.

Beatriz: It's a spiritual healing?

Balbino: It's something that regards the spiritual side. For example, Sissi¹⁶ (a lady who lives in the *terreiro*). Sissi would take various expensive medicines for mad people, yet she still wasn't able to sleep. She came to me to be initiated and she was completely cured of her illness. There are people that get terrible headaches, there aren't any drugs that can cure that headache. Therefore the individual should go to a *Candomblè* house, be consulted, then the *Orixà* will order a particular procedure to be carried out for her. Make an offering for her head; it will heal.

Claudio: I would like to pose some questions regarding another topic.

Balbino: Yes.

¹⁵Note from the translation: They were actually French doctors.

¹⁶Sissi is an *Egbomi* of the *terreiro*, a daughter of *Oxalufan*, she was initiated a long time ago, and considered to be one of the most wise. *Ifà* gave her the responsibility of *Ofum Iya Kekere*, therefore she is the first helper of *Iya Kekere* (the small mother of the *terreiro*) that in this case is *mae Rosa*, *pai* Balbino's sister, she is the second most important person of the *terreiro* after *pai* Balbino.

Claudio: Often we limit ourselves at living at only one level of reality....

Balbino: Everyone has their own reality in life. For example, take my case; I was born in a family that entirely belonged to *Candomblè*. However, none of my children have entered into *Candomblè*. After all, they have the right to choose what they want. If on the other hand, the day should come that an *Orixà* should choose one of them, he will be ready to serve his *Orixà*. Therefore when we're born, we carry our destiny, our own pathway. Destiny leads people to the place where they must arrive and stay.

Claudio: I should have been a little clearer. I spoke about "being limited to only one level of reality"; instead what I meant to say was that we're limited to only one or just a few "levels of consciousness".

Mecha: Trance.

Claudio: When we dream, we find ourselves in a certain mental state, when we're simply sleeping without dreaming we're in a different kind of mental state.

Balbino: When we're in trance we're not aware of anything, we can't see anything. Yet there are people that go into trance and they are aware, they can see. They don't have control over the situation, so when they return from the state of trance, they can't remember anything.

Mecha: The mental state that an individual enters during trance isn't the same experience for everybody. Each person lives this experience in a different manner. Some people lose control but all in all remain clear minded, they're aware; and there are those that don't remember anything at all.

Balbino: Yes.

Claudio: Can some dreams show a kind of relationship between a person and an *Orixà*?

Balbino: No. Not dreams. We dream something because our *Orixà* goes away when we sleep. The *Orixàs* reveal what they find in our minds. For example: you switch yourself off completely when you fall asleep, it's in these moments that your *Orixà* isn't beside you. In this case, you'll dream

and see things happen because you will experience a vision through (as an intermediary) your *Orixà*.

Beatriz: The *Orixà* is in another place, yet you can see, is it so?

Balbino: I can see.

Mecha: How interesting!

Beatriz: Even if he's not with you?

Balbino: Yes, even if he's not with you.

Claudio. When somebody is asleep, the *Orixà* sees something, then the person sees through the *Orixà*? Does the person see what the *Orixà* is seeing?

Balbino. Yes.

Claudio: Are there dreams that are of particular importance?

Balbino: Yes there are. There are “dreams of warning”. I once dreamt of *Iansa* and *Egum* that were carrying my mother away. I asked them where they were taking her, *Iansa* answered by saying: “I’m taking her away as she needs to rest. She’s too tired, so I’m taking her away”. When I awoke I said: “My mother will die”. I got up, took a medicine and remained seated here. I could see a great number of people walking around nearby, but I didn’t want to open the door to receive the news, but I knew my mother was dead. Then *Alda di Yansa* knocked on the door and said: “will you let me measure your blood pressure, I asked her the reason for this, and she answered that grandmother had a problem and was being taken to hospital”. “Lies – I answered, my mother is dead”.

Mecha: There are premonitory dreams, dreams that warn us.

Balbino: On another occasion, we were on a “*roca di Candomblè*” doing a “*barco*”¹⁷ of *Iao*. I dreamt that they were setting up some kind of trap for my nephew, that they were out to kill him. In the dream I could see what I had to do in order to defend him so that he would not be killed.

¹⁷The term *barco* is used when a group of people get initiated on the same day. *Barco di Iyawo* is a group of novices. At the entrance of the *Casa Branca Terreiro*, the oldest and most traditional of *terreiros*, there is actually a boat.

Beatriz: Someone was out to kill him?

Balbino: Yes, they would have killed him. I had to light a candle in *Exu*'s house, but I needed to do this in an exact moment to avoid my nephew getting killed. Everything was so clear; I would dream of where I was, what was about to happen, I would even dream the people that would come to tell me that he'd been killed, whilst falling to the ground. He would fall to the ground with his feet placed inside a little cart full of lead. I got up and spoke about my dream saying: "Let's go, let's return home". When I arrived I laid down, and when the first person arrived I told them my dream. After a while another person arrived and I remembered what I had to do, I said: "My God, help". I grasped a candle and as I ran, a little boy ran up to me shouting: "Grandfather, my dear grandfather, hurry, they've killed 'Cabeca'". He was destined to die.... I don't like remembering this, it was so sad ...I got a really high fever, 45°.

Mecha: Does destiny, a person's destiny always come true? Are key circumstances of ones life necessary for a destiny to come true? Sometimes can one die without their own destiny coming true?

Balbino: No. Each destiny is unique. If your destiny is that of progress, of being successful and prosperous, you will accomplish all that has been determined by your destiny. If it is not this way, you could be rich then become poor. You could be poor then become rich, it's all about destiny. You could be happily married, very much loved, then out of the blue something could ruin all of this. The destiny of each of us.

Beatriz: Who determines all of this?

Balbino: Who determines our destiny? *Olorum*.

Claudio: The dreams you recalled before really struck me.

Mecha: What did he say (Claudio)? That he (Balbino) is eating tobacco.¹⁸

Beatriz: Since he was seven years old (in regards to the cigar).

Mecha: What's it for?

Balbino: I like it. It's good! It calms and relaxes...

¹⁸ Mecha's question regards the fact that Balbino took out a cigar and started chewing on it instead of lighting it up (as we all were expecting).

Beatriz: There's need for it...!

Claudio: I think it must be tough for you having foresight through your dreams.

Balbino: We know what's going to happen. It's a warning that the *Orixà* gives us.

Claudio: You need to be both prepared and disciplined.

Beatriz: How do you prepare for this?

Balbino: By preparing the body and the mind.

Claudio: Do you ever tell anybody your dreams?

Balbino: Not all dreams should be told, otherwise they lose their power.

Mecha: It's important to maintain your own space, your own private space.

Balbino: It so happened that once I was in Rio de Janeiro, and I dreamt that I was travelling to Africa. A person said to me: "Would you like to receive 20 Cruzeiros?" I answered: "Well, what should I do with it?" "Take this parcel for me to Africa." So I said: "But how can I take this parcel to Africa?" The person answered: "Oh, you will go." He took an envelope like this, wrote something on it, as if it were a letter and gave it to me. Then he said: "You must give this letter to this particular person, and it will be this person that will take you to Africa." One afternoon, as I was playing with my "*figlio di santo*" (saint son), playing at *taro*, he said to me: "You've had a dream haven't you?" I confirmed and he said: "Well, amongst the papers we can read about a long journey that'll make you famous; and you dreamed this." I answered that all of this had happened the night before. That afternoon the postman arrived with an envelope that contained a ticket Rio/Bahia with some forms to fill out regarding a documentary that was going to be set in Africa. See? There are dreams that come true.

Claudio: Are there other dreams that are purely for pleasure?

Balbino: Nobody dreams for pleasure.

Claudio: But aren't wishes and desires expressed through dreams?

Balbino: Desire is one thing and dream is another. There is absolutely no link between dream and desire. We dream when we go to sleep, our guardian angel shows us things that seem to have nothing to do with anything that we live when we're awake. How many times do we dream of making love to a woman! It's a party!

Mecha: Balbino is discussing something that has been widely studied in psychoanalysis: "If you dream whilst awake, if you daydream you divide yourself". Dreaming is for when you're asleep. It's better not to dream when you're awake.

Balbino: Without doubt. You can't dream whilst being awake. No one dreams whilst awake. It's necessary to sleep.

Claudio: So aren't there different states of consciousness; whilst dreaming, whilst sleeping without dreaming and whilst being awake?

Balbino: No, there's only one.

Claudio: Is it trance?

Balbino: It is different.

Beatriz: Isn't it consciousness?

Balbino: There isn't consciousness when in trance; it's actually the *Orixà* in that moment.

Eliana: When someone returns from a state of trance, they can't remember anything...

Balbino: ...They can't recall anything. They have no idea of what actually happened.

Eliana: No.

Claudio: So it's as if nothing happened?

Balbino: So many people that are ill, with high blood pressure and various other problems, come out of trance and you hear them say: "Oh, what a relief! How wonderful".

Eliana: You're talking about the physical aspect of somebody coming out of trance, the problem whatever it may have been was resolved during trance.

Claudio: So does something occur during trance, of which the individual isn't even aware?

Balbino: The *Orixà* drains out our negative energy and replaces it with positive energy.

Claudio: So that's what happens!

Balbino: The *Orixà* comes to bring joy.

Claudio: Can the actual contact between both the *Orixà* and trance, help a person reach a wider mental state?

Eliana: Oh yes, by following the *Orixàs* one can reach a wider mental state, but this doesn't occur during trance.

Claudio: I didn't mean to say "during the actual moment of trance", I meant to say "through the practice of trance"?

Eliana: No.

Balbino: No.

Claudio: So how does one reach a wider mental state?

Eliana: By managing to maintain a daily contact with the *Orixà*.

Balbino: It's the daily connection between the *Orixà* and myself. I live here only due to the *Orixàs*.

Claudio: Both of you have underlined the importance of maintaining a daily contact with the *Orixà*, hence; trance is an important moment both for the *terreiro* and for the ceremonies.

Eliana: Yes! It's important in order for the *Orixà* to arrive.

Mecha: It's important for the community, not for the single individual.

Balbino: Yes. For all your life, year after year, it's always like this (: the arrival of the *Orixàs*). During the day we go to the *Barracao*¹⁹ to prepare for the celebration so that the *Orixàs* will come, we begin the whole event by making offerings.²⁰

Eliana: That's the most important part.

Balbino: That has been done, so we go to the *Barracao* and we have a great celebration. It's like a mental chain, as if everyone is ready to receive their *Orixà*. There is an atmosphere of great concentration, for the *Orixà* to arrive.

Claudio: There's a change in the community and in each single individual when this happens.

Balbino: For all of those present at the celebration. Everybody that's there feels the strength and the energy of the *Orixàs*.

Beatriz: *Axè*.

Claudio: So the *Orixà* arrives, and brings the energy that enables one to get into contact with a wider experience?

Balbino: Well, it's like when the party host arrives at the party. Once he has arrived he embodies himself in his sons and in his daughters: everyone is happy because he has arrived. He has accepted the sacrifices and the offerings. Therefore we become stronger and more powerful.

Claudio: The *Orixà* enters into the community. Does the community open itself to the contact with this experience?

Balbino: Yes, in order to receive. You must open your heart to then be able to receive the *Orixà*. This is joy!

¹⁹Note from the translation: A *Barracao* is a big building in the middle of the *terreiro* where the ceremonies take place.

²⁰The dates of each celebration in the *terreiro*, Aganju vary from year to year, apart from the most important celebration which is that of *Xango*, this celebration always begins on the 14th July (the same day as the storming of the Bastille, a French national holiday) in honour and remembrance of Pierre Verger.