



João José Correia da Rosa, Jeannot

# Africa, Deities and Perplexity

Jeannot, of the parentage of Dona Maria and Joao was born in Dakar. The parents were from the Peul tribe of Guinea Bissau. The father, Joao, was one of the guerilla leaders besides Amilcar Cabral, fighting against the colonial troops of Portugal for the independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verte.

Before joining the forces in the fight against the colonial masters, Joao relocated the family in Senegal which was considered a safe country for security of the family which was then made up the wife, dona Maria and two daughters, Olga and Eugenia who were all born in Guinea Bissau. Senegal was then ruled by President Leopold Senghor, who was an open adversary to Portuguese colonialism.

The father, Joao, was occasionally visiting the family in Dakar from the war-front and in the process gave birth to João José, Jeannot, and the youngest Odete in Dakar.

The Family got settled in Dakar during the course of the war until the end but in the process João was killed.

Maria was able to organize herself, and gave direction to the children. When I got to know the Rosa Family they were living comfortably in a medium class settlement in the outskirts of Dakar. Olga, the elder, was an executive woman, speaking English, French and Portuguese (and the local vernaculars including

Wolof, Creole, and Mandingo). Eugenia had then completed her university education. She was a star, at the Senegal National Team of Volleyball. And like Olga, Eugenia was using as a differential, her capability of speaking English, French and Portuguese, as well as the local vernaculars. Both Olga and Eugenia moved in the streets of Dakar driving their own brand new French cars. Jeannot was just at the last year of the high school. And the young Odete was in the early years of high school.

Brazil was then arriving to Africa, via Senegal, trying to open a channel of business in that part of the Continent. The organization of a stand at the Trade International Fair of Dakar brought into the Brazilian ‘arriving world’, all the Rosa Family, since all could speak French and Portuguese, and besides, all could speak the Wolof, one of the national languages of Senegal, as well as Creole and Mandingo, of their ancestry.

Just suddenly, but not for more than the three weeks of the Trade Fair, the Rosa Family grew up and *dona Maria* was the “big mother” of a bunch of Brazilians, since every day there was a reason to visit the Rosa Family, the only place known in Dakar where Portuguese was the common language. Not only the Brazilians, but their refugees friends of the war in the ending Portuguese Colonies, passing by Dakar, always dropped in there. In the few days of our stay, was around the Family Rosa, people from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea and Cape Vert Islands.

Honorary member of the Rosa Family was *Tio* [Uncle] Nene. Brother of the diseased João, he was always there, but lived somewhere outside. He was indeed a character. Very much respected by the whole Family as an elderly member, a Patriarch – *Tio* Nene was above all a Marabout, from the syncretism of Islamism, Catholicism and Animism. During our stay we had no time to know what kind of belief was his faith. We never knew whose his deities were. We never knew the rites that he performed and what his intimacy was. We only knew that in Guinea the Marabout used to have a long time influence of ancestral Animism, the power of the

Islam, all mixed with other types of creeds. Strong was the physical power of the sorcery, and the worship to the ancestors.

I recall that once, in a second trip to Dakar – I made several trips afterwards – when I had secured scholarship for Jeannot, there was a big family party, as a farewell to Jeannot, going to study Electronic Engineering in Brazil, Tio Nene conspicuously took my hand and made a short speech, in which he revealed some personal difficulties I had at that time in Brazil. Then, he was speaking as his brother João, the diseased father of Jeannot, saying that what was happening, the trip of Jeannot, was unpayable – and that should I be sure that all things I was worried about home, would be solved. – And it has happened.

Jeannot came to Brazil, and settled in Porto Alegre. He was accepted at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, in the first grade of Electronic Engineering.

Since no money was coming from home, Jeannot started to work at my Legal Office, writing letters and producing advertisement pamphlets, both in French and English, of goods to be marketed in Africa.

At this time, came into his hands a very handy collection of drawings made by Nelson Boeira Friedrich, with images of Youruban deities. It impressed him so much, since he never knew about those West African deities. His Uncle, *Tio Nene*, used to have other deities – however he never spoke to Jeannot, probably because he himself never knew him as well, - about a wide Youruban theory as it was explained in the introductory note to the collection of drawings from Mr. Friedrich – the Youruban Cosmogony.

Because of all that, Jeannot decided to translate it and send to some few friends he had abroad. He was to do it in French, but I asked him to do it in English, so I could send it to some friends in Ghana.

This is, bellow, Gods and Goddesses that made Jeannot – and so many people around the world – got astonished.

**Before the translation of *CANDOMBLÉ*, the record of a sad incident:**

Jeannot concluded indeed his studies in Brazil. In fact, he stayed for some more years than the five of the normal curriculum, because he engaged himself in a superior Mathematics curriculum, and because, as well, he was enjoying very much to be in Brazil. Nevertheless, he eventually returned home, not in Dakar, but in Bissau, with the aim to help his newly independent Country. He was very much proud of it. As it is very well known, the Portuguese left behind them, after centuries of dilapidation, almost nothing in their former colonies. The number of educated people in Bissau was a shame, for Portugal. Returning home, Jeannot was in fact a very important national acquisition. He was a high class young engineer. He became the director of Postal and Telegraph services. Sorrowfully, he died prematurely few years after his arrival in Guinea, his home.

*José Luiz Pereira da Costa, 2007*

# CANDOMBLÉ

*Luiz da Silva Ferreira<sup>1</sup>*

**English version: João José Correia Rosa (Jeannot)**



Will the Candomblé<sup>2</sup> end? Yes, unfortunately. The signals are: the advancement of urbanization over areas that used to be the place of *terreiros* (shrines); as well the ease means of locomotion inside cities leading to distant suburbs, now no more empty plots, yesterday ideal place for shrines; the penetration of the radio waves and television pictures in inland localities,

pushing believers out of the shrines. All, is conveying the *Candomblé* for a change. "*People are no more naive nowadays as they used to be in the past*" – say constantly elderly people.

On the other hand, few are the time spent for an adequate learning process required for the formation of the future true

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<sup>1</sup> **In Portuguese:** Esta Introdução faz parte de uma coleção de quadros de orixás produzidos pelo artista plástico gaúcho Nelson Boeira Friedrich. **No available record on the author** [Luiz da Silva Ferreira](#).

<sup>2</sup> **Candomblé:** The religion of the Yoruba (Nigeria, Dahomey mainly); the religious festival, or the shrine where the festival is held, led by the Babalorixá, worshipping the Orixás.

babalorixá<sup>3</sup>. Expensive is the clothing and ornaments of the *Orixás*<sup>4</sup>. The shrine building became modern and its furnishing and decoration turned into a more sophisticated display. The *Candomblé* became popular, too easy to be manipulated and with scarce seriousness.

The oral tradition making *Orixás* as heroes, slowly implemented along the years, as it used to be, more and more was changed into fast lectures and casual conversations to the future priestesses. Started then to show up people with no compromises with the tradition or the culture, calling themselves as interpreters of centuries of tradition and the dense culture that could not have been learnt in a bit of conversation and in rapid visits to public cult-ceremonies.

What usually is seen are unprepared *saints - fathers and mothers*<sup>5</sup>; the opening of houses without *axe*<sup>6</sup>; people playing *buzios*<sup>7</sup> with lack of expertise, and *making children*<sup>8</sup> with no scruples.

Fortunately there are still some who remain faithful to the African tradition, base of *our* culture. Acting like true obstacles against the rapid destruction of all the various sects stands figures that preserve habits and the same commands they have received from their ancestors in the shrines. Olga of Alaketu<sup>9</sup>, Menininha do Gantois<sup>10</sup>, Agenor Miranda<sup>11</sup>, Stella de Oxóssi<sup>12</sup> are only some of the names of

3 Babalorixá: Also called "Pai-de-Santo", or Father of a Saint, he's the one who leads the *Candomblé*.

4 Orixá: African deity, mainly from the Jeje-Nagô group.

5 Saints - fathers and mothers: The top priest or priestess in the shrine.

6 Axé: Sacred underlying stone for the shrine.

7 Buzios: Very small sea shells thrown onto tables, in order to show the future of the person in face of the Babalorixá.

8 Making children: to introduce novices in the shrines.

9 Olga of Alaketu (1927-2007). Famous *Mother of Saint* in Bahia.

10 Maria Escolástica da Conceição Nazaré - Menininha do Gantois (Little girl of Gantois - nickname she got when child because of her quietness and fragile completion). Born in 1894 she died in 1986. When this essay was produced, she was the most famous Mother of Saint in Bahia.

11 Agenor Miranda Rocha ou Pai Agenor, (Luanda, Angola, 1907 - Rio de Janeiro, 2004). Retired professor of Colégio Dom Pedro, Rio de Janeiro, was all his life a respectable *Candomblé* priest.

these heroes.

Due to this, any attempt to preserve these myths, this ceremony which this culture is worthy, for itself only, deserves as well the applause of all those who are interested in the preservation of our roots. The work of Nelson Boeira Faedrich, with his collection of *Orixás* is an example. Boeira's *Orixás* teamed up with others in the eagerness of documenting myths received by our ancestors. By publishing the beauty of our traditions, in drawing the attention of public authorities to the obligation to preserve the sources of our culture — Jorge Amado<sup>13</sup>, Caribé<sup>14</sup>, Waldeloir Rego<sup>15</sup>, Luís da Câmara Cascudo<sup>16</sup>, Gilberto Freyre<sup>17</sup>, Carlos Galvão Krebs, Zora Seljan<sup>18</sup>, Juana Elbein dos Santos<sup>19</sup>, Manoel Diegues Junior, Deoscoredes M. dos Santos<sup>20</sup>, Antonio Olinto<sup>21</sup>, Mario Cravo<sup>22</sup>, Edison Carneiro<sup>23</sup>, Pierre Verger<sup>24</sup>, Nina Rodrigues<sup>25</sup>, Arthur Ramos<sup>26</sup> — are some of the crusaders who fought for Brazil and for *Candomblé*'s true image.

And if one day, as some people wishes, *Candomblé* turn into a

12 Agenor Miranda, Stella of Oxóssi Famous Father and Mother of Saints.

13 Jorge Amado. (1912-2001)Brazilian writer, depicted Bahia in his many books known all over the world.

14 Hector Julio Páride Bernabó, Carybé (Born in 1911, Lanus, Argentina, died 1997 in Salvador-Bahia)

15 Waldeloir Rego (1930-2001). Author of *Capoeira de Angola*, was an important researcher of the Afro-Brazilian culture in Bahia.

16 Luís da Câmara Cascudo (Born in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte State, in 1898, died in 1986). Historian, folklore researcher, anthropologist, lawyer and journalist.

17 Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987). Brazilian Scholar, author of transcendental works in Brazilian culture, as "The Master and the Slaves/Casa-Grande and Senzala: A Study in Development of Brazilian Civilization".

18 Zora Seljan, became known by her book "Três Mulheres de Xangô", 1958.

19 Juana Elbein dos Santos – Anthropologist and general coordinator at the Sociedade de Estudos da Cultura Negra no Brasil. Book: "Os Nàgò e a Morte Pàde, Àsètà e o Culto Ègun na Bahia".

20 Deoscóredes Maximiliano dos Santos (1917-). Famous Candomblé priest, his family tradition goes back to the pioneer shrines in Bahia and to Africa.

21 Antonio Olyntho Marques da Rocha (1919-). Brazilian writer.

22 Father and son, both Mario Cravo produced sculptures depicting Africa and Bahia.

23 Edison de Souza Carneiro (1912-1972). Lawyer by formation, was an important researcher of Afro-Brazilian life, and produced relevant books out of his researches. In this Project, on Catro Alves' "Slaves' Ship", English version, Carneiro wrote the Introduction.

23 Roger Bastide (1898-1974). French Sociologist, professor at the Sao Paulo University. Bastide has paid special attention to the Afro-Brazilian rites.

24 Pierre Fatumbi Verger (Born Pierre Edouard Leopold Verger,in Paris, France, 1902, died in Brazil 1996). Photographer and ethnologist he recorded Africa and Afro-Brazil in pictures and literary text, as in his book *Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Bahia from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*. From Ibadan University Press – Ibadan, Nigeria.

25 Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906). Legist, psychiatrist and professor of Anthropology. Author of "Os Africanos no Brasil".

different thing altogether, the efforts of unselfish people will be known by the ones who are now studying the African origins. Their work on art or science will be a living fountain of information, transmitted to those who, in future, may become interested in the knowledge of the true and deep roots that generated all of us.

## ***EXÚ or ELEGBARÁ***



*Exú<sup>27</sup> (Elegbará to the Fons) "having as his domain in all the cross-roads; all hidden and dangerous places of this world, it wasn't difficult to find him a simile devil-christian (Edison Carneiro)". "Because of this, he has been misunderstood even by the saint folks, misinformed or less-admonished. In reality, he is the African Mercury, the necessary bridge between men and the supernatural, the interpreter who knows, at the same time, the language of mortals and that is one of the Orixás. As a result, he takes up the job of taking to the Gods the calls of his sons of Brazil." (Roger Bastide<sup>28</sup>)*

His beads are red and black; metals, bronze and mercury — he feeds on the cock and the he-

goat; his day is the first in the week: Monday.

Africans believe he brought the Sun, therefore his festival is held during the summer solstice. Exú is a fire divinity and appears with horns and for this reason was immediately associated to devil; however, those horns he carries are nothing but the representing

26 Arthur Ramos de Araújo Pereira (1903-1949). Psychiatrist, sociologist, ethnologist. Author of "O Negro na Civilização Brasileira".

27 Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

28 Roger Bastide (1898-1974). French Sociologist, professor at the São Paulo University. Bastide has paid special attention to the Afro-Brazilian rites.

symbol of power. He is the divinity of beginnings and openings. He is the one who initiates rituals, who guards the doors. He is the one who's buried in the thresholds of doors, the master of paths and the man of the street. His symbolical guards have seven, fourteen and twenty-one edges, pointing the seven, fourteen and twenty-one paths of his domain. His offerings are delivered on the widest roads or cross-roads since it's here that the paths cross each other. Exú then passes by to receive his offerings.

It's he who connects the various compartments of the Universe, opening doors and connecting walkways. One of his properties, acting as a messenger, is the game named *buzios*, where the words of the *Orixás*, incomprehensible to us, are translated by him, leading the hand of the *babalaô*

All the *Orixás* have their evil spirits, which are like slaves, in variable numbers, according to the divinity to whom they are subjects.

One myth teaches that: at the time of dividing the world among the Gods, Ogun fought against *Exú* for the possession of the knife. Then so being victor granted *Exú* the right to the first sacrifice as compensation.

That is why Ogun and *Exú* always walk together; Ogun opens, with the knife, the paths in the kingdom of *Elegbará* (*Exú*).

In all ceremonies in the *Candomblé*, the first offering belongs to him. The whole thing begins, compulsorily, with the dispatch (*despacho*) to *Exú*. *Despacho* means: send one way. The aim is therefore to send *Exú* as a messenger to the Gods of Africa, so they will ear for the calls of their children in Brazil. Thus, he is served with food and drinks delivered outside the house, showing the obligation of leaving immediately to the Gods. Another objective of the dispatch to *Exú* is to do away disturbances or negative occurrences. The white and yellow cassava flour (*gari*) and a pitch of water are usually the ingredients for *Exú*'s dispatch.

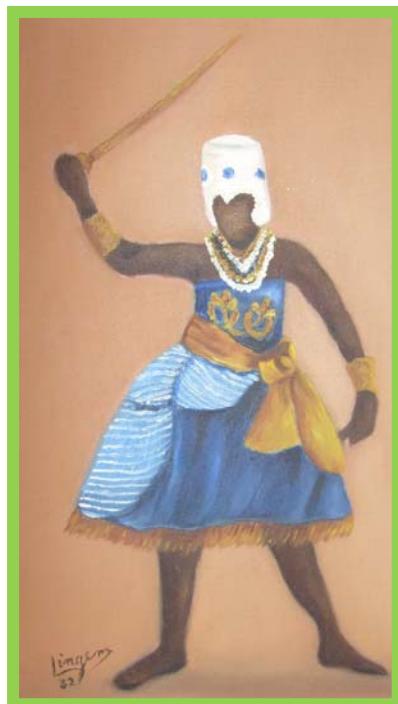
The traditional *Candomblé* take care to conserve the true image of *Elegbará* who is actually defamed. *Exú* is not, as most people think, the God of fertility. "His figure (represented many times among the Yorubanos with disproportionate big sexual organs) indicates his savage character, shameless and wishing to shock good customs."

It is said in the *Candomblés* of Bahia that nothing is done without him, that *Oxalá* is

the greatest but *Exú* is the first, what means him as the Godfather, the messenger and the carrier of our requests to the Orixás and the same way transmits favors from the Gods to we poor humans.

Thus it is *Exú* who reveals the gestures of the Gods well conceived through the talent of Nelson Boeira Faedrich<sup>29</sup>.

## OGUN



*Ogun*<sup>30</sup> is one of the Gods who came out *Yemanja*'s womb, brother of *Exú* and *Oxóssi*. He's considered as the God of wars. The warrior dances with a sword. He carries iron martial equipment and other instruments referring to his hunting activities in Africa, almost completely forgotten today in Brazil: sword, lance, scythe, spade and hoe. He is the protector of farmers, hand craft artists and those who work with metal.

His day is Tuesday. The legends say that he taught men to hunt, showing which trees must be consecrated. *Ogun*'s altar is adorned with these trees. The offered animal for the sacrifices ceremonies is the dog. But rituals with the cock and indispensable palm oil complement are also made.

Up till today dog skulls are seen, although rarely, in ironware shops and in the houses of followers of *Ogun*, indicating the old sacrifices that were offered (Arthur Ramos, *Introduction to Negro Culture*).

The feeding of *Ogun* consists of *feijoada* (dish of beans with dry meat, pork, sausages, etc), the cock, the he-goat, the guinea fowl and roasted yam with palm-oil.

His syncretism is with Saint Anthony, in Bahia, and Saint George in Rio de Janeiro.

He is the God of air, the owner of number 7, the magic number of his kind.

29 Nelson Boeira Faedrich, Brazilian painter (1912-). Creator of a famous collection of paints depicting all the Youruban deities.

30 Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

His characteristic dress is a petit-coat made of unwoven palm tree leaves, called *marivô* by the Youruban, and *azar* by the *Fons*. According to the legends, the presence of these fringes on top of the door or at the entrance of a pathway is enough to scare off bad influences. On the other hand, to pass on the top of a *marivô* of *Ogun* means exposing oneself to the wrath of the God.

In Brazil, *Ogun* comes before all the other Gods in ceremonies, being greeted soon after *Exú*. He always opens the way. During the rituals he receives the first prayers and offerings because the sacrifice will not be possible without the knives forged by him.

He is a prestigious God throughout Brazil and names a great number of *Candomblé* houses and territories.

*Ogun's* preferred color is dark blue in Bahia state, and green, white and red in Rio Grande do Sul state. His main plants are the "Ogun sword" and the California peppertree.

He is known as *Toboco* among the *Marruinos*; in Dahomey (Benin), as *Té*; and, in Angola, as *Roxo Macumbe*. Between the *caboclos* of Bahia, his nicknames are: *Jambane-Ponte*, *Jambaur*" and *Tambancê*. In canticles to his praise he appears as *Ogun Delé* or *Ogun de Lei* and *Ogun Megê*. Some other forms of his name are: *Oruminhã*, *Balogun*, *Obalogun*, *Exú-Bará*, *Subará e Exú-Ogun*. Like *Exú*, he opens the doors and gates. Maybe because of this he is given the title Saint Peter in Cuba, don of doors and keys.

## OXOSSÍ



Also known as *Odé31*, the hunting God. In the *Candomblés* of *caboclo*, his figure bears great importance. His emblem is a bow crossed by an arrow.

He dances with an *irukeré* which is a type of feather broom made out of bulls' tail. Thursday is his day and he eats pork, beef, chicken and guinea fowls. He also likes ground yellow corn cooked with pieces of dry coconut. His syncretism in Bahia is associated with Saint George and his color is light-turquoise blue. The *catinga* (*oblanum pulveruleum*) is his plant. Oxóssi is known in other nations as *Odé*, *Mutalambo*, *Guza* and *Mutaçalambo*. His seat is between the trees outside the sanctuary and he screams like the barking of a dog.

The importance of Oxóssi comes due to two main reasons: the first is the materialistic motive. Since he is the responsible one for abundant hunts and generous harvests; the second is the medicinal reason. All hunters make contact with *Ossaim*, divinity of all liturgical and medicinal leaves. In as much as in *Ketu* where the doorman of Oxóssi is always a *Babalossaim*, specialist in leaves and talismans. Another reason for his importance is that the hunters are the discoverers of better places to futures populations.

Hunters (including Oxóssi) often wear a cap of monkey skin on their heads, the symbol to their activity.

Oxóssi's birth place is *Ikijá*, near *Ijebu Odé*. To all the *Candomblés*, Oxóssi dances imitating the hunting act. He's also known as *Inle* or *Imbualama*, who's a hunter attracted by *Oxum* to her water. *Lagunede*, or simply *Logun*, is a child born from *Oxum* and *Imbualama* has the peculiarity of being a man for six months in the year, and a woman for the remaining six ones.

He lives in the forest for the first half of the year, feeding on hunted beasts and the

second half lives in waters, feeding exclusively on fish.

His temple was constructed in *Iléxá*. The *gege (jeje)* name of Oxóssi is *Aguê*.

Oxóssi is called *Alaketu*, official title of the *Ketu* king. He was brought to Bahia by one of the founders of the first *axé* of the Bahian *Candomblé*, in *Barroquinha*, and is considered the founder of the three houses created for him. Among the symbols of his adornments, there are the horns of a wild bull (replaced by the ordinary bull) to which the name *Ogé* is given. The horn rituals of Oxóssi cult are called *olugboohun* (which means "God listens to me").

The *irukere* of the hunters in Africa is prepared with powders of various leaves and fragments of sacrificed animals. It has the power of controlling all kinds of forest spirits.

## OSSAIM or OSSANHA

He is the divinity of free air, who rules the leaves and their medicinal and magical usage.

He's been Oxóssi's preceptor, the hunter, and roamed through the forest, his exclusive domain, with him. Don of *axé* (strength, power, vitality, foundation, security) existing in leaves and herbs, he does not take chances in areas where man cultivates land and construct houses, avoiding places where man's hand has polluted nature and its dominion. He is the God of woods but not of cultivated plants.

His messenger *Aroni* symbolizes a tiny man who lives in the forest. *Saci Perere* is his Brazilian one alike. Despite a certain number of common characteristics, the two divinities are absolutely different. Ossaim has a defective leg, but not due to corruption or assimilation with the Brazilian *Caipora* (a goblin who brings bad luck); simply because he incurred the wrath of *Xango* and as a result of this fight it costed him a leg. Many other people believe he also lost an arm and an eye.

He the *Babalossaim* (collector of leaves) enters the realm of Ossaim, chewing cola nuts, he returns to each cardinal point and spits the cola in these four directions, as if demarcating the sacred space in which he will give harvested leaves. Ossaim's knife, the

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31 Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

*Obé*, and the calabash are the instruments used for harvesting the leaves. Along with the cut plants one should always leave an offering of some coins and a string of tobacco with honey. The leaves and herbs of *Ossaim* after harvesting are washed, squeezed and pounded with hands and not with a pestle or any other instrument. One must crush them live with the finger.

In the universe of leaves, the realm of *Ossaim*, each God owns his. In this way, even when one harvest leaves for any other God, he or she must take along an offering to *Ossaim* when entering the bushes, pleading for permission to enter his kingdom.

It's said that *Ossaim* received the secrets of herbs and the knowledge of all vegetative virtues. The plants were his and he gave none to no one. One day *Xango* spoke to his wife *Oyá* (*Iansã*), donna of winds, complaining for the exclusiveness of *Ossaim*'s knowledge on herbs and leaves, in prejudice to other Gods who did not know any plants. *Oyá* agitated impetuously her skirts producing a very strong wind (*fefé*), which ended by dispersing all the herbs carefully guarded by *Ossaim* in a calabash. The other Gods grabbed the herbs at once and divided them among themselves. That's why each divinity has her own leaves even though the don of the bushes is *Ossaim*.

*Ossaim*'s iron rods consist of six points with one central shaft that ends with a bird. *Ossaim*, closely followed by his assistant *Aroni* and by *Ajá* (similar to *Aroni*, but a female character) is considered also a medicine God for guarding in her forest the magic cure for all human diseases contained in the virtues of all leaves.

## XANGÔ

In the *Candomblé*, Wednesday is the day of fire celebration, and is dedicated to *Xangô* and *Iansa*.

One myth tells us that *Xangô* used to have some magic which gave him the power of throwing fire from his mouth, but *Iansa* robbed it so she is the owner of that privilege.

*Xangô*'s metal is copper; the banana tree is one of his plants as well as the "leave-of-fire," red opium poppy and marjoram his animals: ram, cock and the turtle. If *Xangô*'s color is a mixture of red and white it is because red belongs to his quality of being the

master of fire. It occurs, however, that after having carried his old father Oxalá, who had his legs broken coming out of prison, the white of *Oxalufá* (Oxalá velho = old Oxalá) is also attributed to *Xangô* in memory of his affectionate gesture.

Red and white make up his band even though the color traditionally used for this God is terracotta and white.

In Bahia, it's said in legends that *Xangô* fell in love with *Oxum*, daughter of Oxalá, who didn't agree with that marriage to the "ray-king." But under the condition he would carry his old father on his back, who couldn't walk to assist the nuptial ceremony, the event was celebrated. So, ever since that alliance, the red (or brorun) of *Xangô* is parried with the white of Oxalá. And from the union of *Oxum* and *Xangô* come forth beneficial rains.

*Xangô*'s number of species is Twelve, and also the number of his ministers; six to the right, six to the left, charged of keeping an eye on this cult. It was the Saint of Axé's mother, *Opô Afonjá*, who instituted the existence of these twelve ministers in her house, like Jorge Amado, Dorival Caymmi<sup>32</sup>, Caribé and many others.

He is the God of justice, the mason and thunder. Following the belief of the Youruban, dying by a ray is defamatory, like the punishment of a God. The axé of *Xangô* are the stones called *pedras de raio* (stones of rays) in forma of wedges - meteorites. His emblem is a small double-axé. It is represented very often by a personage carrying on the head a species of a perforated jar full of fire. There is another ceremony, very common in Bahia's territories, in which a person, possessed by *Xangô*, dances and puts in her mouth an inflamed fuse of cotton wool soaked in palm-oil. It's the wheel of *Xangô*, which is called *akará*. *Xangô*, in general, dances with his double-edged-axé and, in accordance to the rhythm, he makes gestures of one throwing stones from an imaginary sack. His children attribute to him the power of throwing fire from the mouth and nose.

One myth says that *Xangô*, once testing a ray, threw it against his own house, hazing and killing his three wives and children. Despaired, he hit the soil beneath his feet, entering the earth and disappearing with a terrible sound.

People usually say that children of Gods *die of the head* (thirst for justice) or from cardiovascular accidents and cholera which are common among these people.

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32 Dorival Caymmi (1914-). Brazilian composer and singer of Bahia.

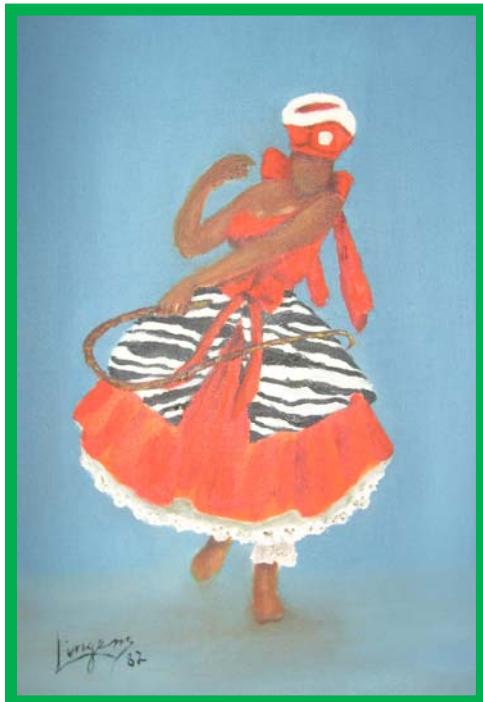
He is mainly associated to Saint Geronime, in Bahia. The *xere* of *Xangô* is a species of a metallic calabash with a tail presenting on the inside some small stones which are shaken on the heads of her daughters to call their incorporation.

His favorite dish is the *amalá* made with *okra*. His ceremony is usually held on the day of Saint Geronime, the 30th of September.

It is also said that *Xangô*, when he was only a boy, suffered a fall so hard that he had to use crutches for many and many years. In the saint-rooms of many *Candomblés*, one can still find the crutches of *Xangô*; you can also observe that his emblem, the double-edged *axé*, has the form of a crutch.

*Xangô* is one of the most prestigious Gods of the *Yoruba* cult and gives names to numerous houses of great foundation in Brazil, like *The Center of Santa Cruz of Axé Opô Afonjá*, in São Gonçalo do Retiro, Salvador City, so well controlled by the competent *Ialorixá* Estela de Oxóssi.

## IANSÃ<sup>33</sup>



*Orixá*<sup>34</sup> or God of winds and river Niger, also called Oyá, *Iansã* is one of Xangô's wives. Restless, sensual and authoritative, she is the only *Orixá* capable of facing and controlling the *eguns* (death spirits), commanding them with her *irexuim* (feather-shock head of copper and tail of a horse).

Her syncretism is with Saint Barbara and red and brown are her colors. She likes goats, guinea fowls, *abará*, *acarajé* and *vatapá*, typical Brazilian dishes. Pumpkins are her main aversion what means that the children of *Iansã* cannot eat them. She dances shaking her arms as if driving away the dead souls, or with the cutlass with war gestures.

Her principal leaves are the red *Opium-poppy*, fire-leaf and the fragrant *betis*. She's the only one *Orixá* whose children can carry mats in the Candomblé houses.

There's a phrase one can hear very often: "*Iansã*'s child sleeps where she wishes". The butterflies are *Iansã*'s.

Donna of charm, of candor, the eloquent, the brilliant and the lover.

Following the *Yorubá* tradition, only kings are allowed to use a cutlass or a saber and the tail of some castellated characteristics of royal dignity, but *Iansã* uses them with the same dignity of the sovereigns.

"Among Xangô's three wives, *Oya* is mentioned as the most faithful. Her name is the same as that, in *Yorubá*, of the river *Niger-Oyá*. There's a legend that says that, when Xangô died, she cried so copiously that her tears formed the River Niger."

Her day is Wednesday, the day of the Gods of fire and her ceremony is realized on the 4th of December, day of Saint Barbara.

33 Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

34 Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

*Iansã of Malé* is one of the seventeen species of *Iansãs* and is the one who controls exclusively the *eguns* death spirits.

One legend says that "Xangô and *Iansã* went together to the land of the *Malés* and there they became aware of the indifference of those who lived there. They continued worshiping their *tecebás* (rosaries of ninety-nine beads) without giving importance to Gods. Then, Xangô, quite angry, liberated some bright light while *Iansã* grabbed a sword and cut the air with it, producing lightening. The "*Malés who were unfamiliar with the ray became frightened and fell down worshiping Xangô*" (René Ribeiro). Up till today all the children cower in front of the rays and storm.

There is a wrong manner of saying Oyá which is *Aloia*, often heard in various Brazilian regions. One evidently treats her like *Iansã*. The *Terreiro* (shrine) of Apolinário Gomes da Mota in Casa Amarela (yellow house), a neighborhood in Recife City, is an example of what is said. Professor Waldemar Valente inquired, in his book *Syncretismo Religioso Afro-Brasileiro*, whether the name of this God corresponded to the name of her house - Santa Bárbara (Saint Barbara); he was answered that the name was *Aloíá*, which is pronounced *Aloiar*. Apolinário da Mota explained that, even though in other *terreiros* the name is *Iansã*, he preferred to use *Aloíá* because it agrees with the African Tradition.

*Iansã*, Oyá, Aloíá and even Aloiar continues to be one of the feminine Orixás of great prestige and brilliance in the houses of the Brazilian cult.

## OBÁ

*Obá* is one of the three wives of *Xangô*, warrior, the Goddess of the river *Obá*, near Ibadan, in Nigeria. Wednesday is her day and her animals are the goat and the guinea fowl. Her color is red.

A myth says that *Xangô* had three wives: *Iansã*, *Oxum* and *Obá*, but *Oxum* was preferred. Because of this, *Obá* lived abandoned. This poor *Orixá* did not know how to win the sympathy of her husband, so she asked *Oxum* how to get *Xangô* to bed with her. *Oxum*, maliciously, told her she had a certain magic hidden in a turban. In order to convince *Obá* it was not a lie, she also said she would have to cut her ear to prepare a dish which would make *Xangô* fall in love with *Obá* forever. Just after tasting it, *Xangô* called *Obá* and asked her about what she had used to prepare such a horrible dish. Then, *Obá* came with her disfigured face, still bleeding and crying. . . The wrath of *Xangô* exploded at once and he expelled his third wife, so she became even uglier.

In the *candomblés* of Bahia where *Obá* is manifest, the left ear is hidden in a cover of leaves or the head is rapped with a colored turban. If, by chance, *Obá* sees a daughter of *Oxum* dancing the amorous embrace of his divinity, she would immediately fall on her, violently, angrily, and it will be necessary that the other members separate them. If that doesn't happen, they will fight with slaps in front of the amused spectators.

*Obá* is associated with Joana of Arc in some places like Saint Martha.

"One must never pronounce the name of *Obá* when crossing the river *Oxum*. Otherwise, she will drown the traveler furiously. On the same hand, one must avoid talking about *Oxum* during a trip on the river *Obá*. Both rivers will throw themselves one against each other at the confluence, colliding furiously, extremely agitated, as a remembrance of the past adventure of the two divinities.

Among the *Youruban*, when a woman sees her newborn baby die, "*cutoff the ear lobe with a part of a shell and throws everything away. People believe that, after this, the next child will live but also a set of twins will come to the world*" (Frobenius).

A psychoanalysis also teaches us that the pavilion of the ear is a masculine element. When Van Gogh amputated his own ear, he was Freudianly rediscovering the

castration myth. "There is no mockery of Oxum against Obá; her power is truly felt. If Obá cannot conquer the love of Xangô it's because she is not purely feminine. It is necessary that she plucks out the virile element; this is the pavilion of the ear. So she will attain completely feminine". She is the main donna of the children of Oxum, Vain, ill-natured, feminine.

The people of *Candomblé* do not know or even comment about this Goddess, so rich in meaning.

## NANÁ BUKURU or NANÃ BUKURE

The oldest of the water-Gods, the mother of all the Gods, also named Anamburucu, "the dear and respected grandma", associated with Saint Anna. Her sign is a small sword and a broom adorned with shells - the *Ibiri*. She is the wife of *Oxalá* and mother of *Oxumaré* and *Omolu*. "Nina Rodrigues did not meet her Bahia; neither 'João do Rio' in Rio de Janeiro. Fernando Ortiz surveying the '*Hampa*' of Cuba did not cite it in the Antilles. One does not know of the mention of her name in the great researchers of the sudanic negroes, A. B. Ellis, Bowen, Foá, Delafosse, Frobenius, between the *Youruban* and the *Dahomeans* (from Dahomey-Benin) running from fringes of the Atlantic to the Congo. She is not even mentioned in the Bantu hagiology " (Luís da Câmara Cascudo, in *Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro*).

Nevertheless, Manuel Quirino speaks of her, identifying her with Saint Anna and in all the "*Candomblés*" we are familiarized with her. In Ketu, as in Angola, there are many daughters of Nana like the case of Cleusa legitimate daughter of D. Maria Escolástica da Conceição Nazaré, the *lalorixá Menininha* of Gantois. She dances as if she were an old tired woman, but with great dignity, sweeping the world with her *ibiri*, tidying the house or lulling a small child to sleep. She eats sheep, chicken, *acaça* (Braz-cake), *axoxó* (Brazilian dish), popcorn and *aberém* (Brazilian cake). She is honored on the day of Saint Anna, the 26th of July, when there is a place in all the *Candomblés*, a feast of the *iabás* (male *Orixás*) with the daughters of the feminine *Orixás* carrying on the head the food of the saint at the sound of the *atabaques* (drums), depositing it in the center of the room, to be distributed to

all those present later on.

*Nana*, like Oxumaré's feast, is held on Tuesday. "Both Gods come from the region which the people of Bahia call Gege Mahi. They are Dahomean divinities, incorporated in the Yoruban pantheon. Tuesday is therefore the day of *nagô* homage to the *gege* country. There are also some who say that Tuesday is consecrated to the intercessorial Gods of the living – Ogun the messenger. *Nana*, the amiable grandmother and the earth, through the means of her long multicolored veil. This is favorable because she can carry to Gods with much speed the prayers of the faithful" (Pierre Verger). The fact of *Nana* and other Gods varies in the days of the week in many *Candomblés*. This is explained by the fact that the African week consists of only four days so the Negros had to adopt our seven-day week resulting in a difficult redistribution.

"Of course this could not be done without confusion here explaining the variations found from city to city" (Roger Bastide). The plants of *Nana* are: Cypress (*cupressis pyramidalis*), which due to its advanced age, is related to the dead, and the manacá ornamental and medicinal shrub belonging to the family "*Brunfelsia hopeana*" which is purifying, anti-luetic and against rheumatism. Apolinário Gomes da Mota, speaking about ibiri, "the broom of *Nana* is formed of all boughs joined by a cloth in which are sown shells"; he also says that the number of shells indicates the nation. "The *nago* must have twelve shells, the *gege*, eight shells, the *congo* sixteen and the *xamba*, twelve shells" (Oneida Alvarenga).

*Nana*'s color is lilac. Her beads are lilac and white.

## OMOLU<sup>35</sup>: OBALUAIÊ AND XAMPANÃ



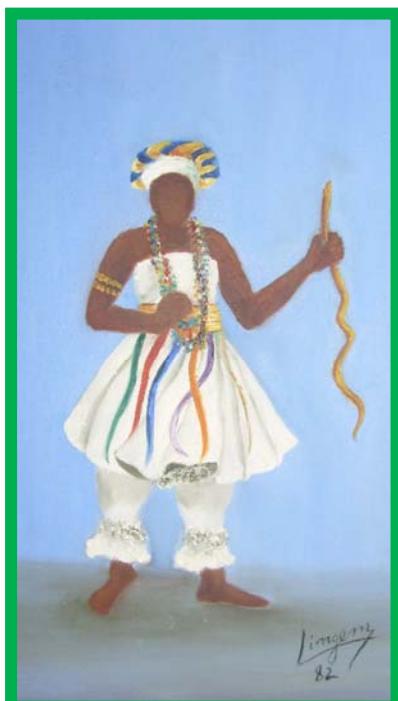
Son of Oxalá and Nana, God of the bladder, and of all kinds of diseases and the doctor of the candomblé. His face is covered by a straw hood, hiding the disfigured physiognomy (he was attached by leprosy). He dances with a sheaf of palm oil tree leaf, decorated with shells, the "the xaxara" Beads: black and white or red and black. His dance symbolizes the physical suffering of man. Monday is his day. Xampanã's name is derived from *shon* (take in small quantities) - *pa* (kill) - *Enia* (a person) or "that one who kills in bits" (Roger Bastide).

Following a myth related by Ellis, Xampanã was a cripple, had a wooden-leg and walked with the help of a walking-stick. One day, when the Gods were in the palace of Obatalá, during a big feast where everyone danced, Xampanã tried to take part in the dances but, due to his deformity, tripped himself and fell. The Gods laughed and teased him. To revenge, Xampanã infected them with small pox, forcing Obatalá to expel him with his sword from the banquet of the Gods. Since then he lives in the desert ways of the country, in his temple, hidden in the bushes, distant from the cities and people. As consequence and up till today, in all Candomblés his *peji* is constructed away from the house of ceremonies. He likes popcorn and *aberé* (roasted corn flour rolled in banana leaves). He also eats pork, he-goat, cock and guinea-fowl. Monday is consecrated to the cult of the divinities of the earth - *Exú* and *Omolu*. The shell bracelets and the "straw-hood of Costa" are the ornaments of this God. His *xarará* is like a broom which sweeps human-beings like debris. This is the image of epidemic which descends on a local, destroying all in her way. Two important leaves of *Omolu*: *Canela de Velha* (*Miconia albicans*) and *casadinho* (*Mikania*). Various names are given to the God of smallpox-*Omolu*: *Omulu*, *Xampanã*, *Duzina*, *Azoani*,

<sup>35</sup> Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

Caviungo, Cajanjá, Quicongo, Gargamela, Obalucê, Saponá, Afomã, Wari-waru, Aiê, Babalu-aiê. Xampanã, the old Omolu, is revered in Saint Lazard Saint's day, while the boy-Obaluaiê (Obá-olu-Aiyê - king of the spirits of the world) is cultivated in the figure of Saint Roque. When the orchestra plays his opanijé - during his dance- "the assistants are obliged to imitate the old-man. If he coughs, they must also cough" (Edison Carneiro). On the festive days in the candomblés one can distinguish, through the straw hoods and by the colors, the Omolus who present themselves: Brown straw, yellow straw, red and white straw and rust-colored straw, are indications of various species of Omolu. A great number of the terreiros of Bahia use the name of this God. It's worth to note that the oldest cult-house of Salvador, "Casa Branca do Engenho Velho" has as its patron-saint, "the big Omolu".

## OXUMARÉ<sup>36</sup>



"This Orixá is natural from the country of Mahi and is charged with transporting water from the earth to the ardent palace of clouds where Xangô resides"(Luís da Câmara Cascudo<sup>37</sup>).

Oxumaré, although not commemorated in the past century, has a great developed cult today, and is one of the saints of great prestige among the Negro Orixás. He has a big number of saint sons and daughters who he invokes and lauds with ardor. Various Candomblés use his name like that of Jacinto, na Mata Escura, in Salvador.

The Gege negroes call him Obessém, or simply Bessém. Those from Angola Invoke him through the Angoro. Commemorated on August 24<sup>th</sup>, day of Saint Barthelmey, Oxumaré has a great number of faithfull till today, who use his name in the locality of Pirajá, Salvador. Oxumaré corresponds to Sobê-Arabe of the Dahomeans and Angoraméa to the Congolese.

<sup>36</sup> Canvas and oil, by Lingem, from DACOSTA's paint collection.

He represents continuity and as a result he is often represented by a serpent biting its own tail and forming a circle.

Oxumaré is responsible for the sustenance of the earth, avoiding her destruction or disintegration. *Brother of Omolu and Son of Mana*, he dances pointing his finger to the sky and to the earth, holding in one of his hands an iron serpent.

His beads are green and red. He eats mutton, cocks, turtles and *aberém*. The rainbow like Oxumaré is an African myth which extends from Senegal to Zaire, as a symbolic representation of the earth's fecundity, of the secret hermit and of infinity (biting its own tail).

Male and female are shown in this rainbow; masculine represented by the red part, and feminine by the blue one.

As don of richness or wealth, he leaves in his path a splendor of his colors, special stones which Africans call *Dan-mi*, or "excrements de *Dan* (Oxumaré)", whose value of weight is in gold. Since the *búzio* (shells) was once African money, his daughter wear colors and bracelets of *buzios* (money), symbolizing Oxumaré don of the richness of the world.

*"The children of Oxumaré usually wear rings and bracelets in the form of a snake. In Bahia, is found a stone of Oxumaré, near the sea, which presents unfractiousness similar to a sink of holly water. The young mothers try to baptize their sons during the encounter of the full concavity of the rain and the sea. A happy sign at this moment is the appearance of a rainbow. Oxumaré is blessing the child which they presented"* (Roger Bastide).

"On the day of the good year, various *Candomblés* organize a big party, under the name of the killing of Oxumaré and which consists of a true imitation of the God, since the children of the *santo* (with a jug on the head) get as near as possible to fetch water like the servant of Xangô" (Luís da Câmara Cascudo).

It is the functional representation of the rainbow that, like the servant of Xangô, carries the waters of the earth to the palace of this *Orixá*.

## YEMANJÁ

The water-mother, or water-nymph, *Dona Maria, Dona Janaína, Princesa do Mar*

(Sea Princess), *sereia*, "Princesa do Aiocá", "Sereia do Mar", *Oloxum*, *Sereia Mucunã*, *Inaê*, and *Dandalunda* are some of her well-known names.

*Nossa Senhora das Candeias*, of Carmo, of *Piedade* are the Virgins which represent as better the *Orixás* in syncretism with the catholic saints. She is symbolized by marine stones and shells. The waters of sea, the waves, the fishes, fishing and the rocks of the sea, all of that belong to *Yemanjá*. She dances with shell-ornaments and the silvery *abebe* (*rorend fire-fan*) which almost always have a series or one star cut out at the center. Another sign of hers is a crescent moon with a five-pointed star on the concave side, mirrors, light-reflections in water. *Iemanjá* has the silvery Color of fish-scales, but is pleased with light colors like water-green, faint-blue and faded-pink.

She eats ducks, pigeons, fowls and *acaça* (*Brazilian cake*), the *olhos[eyes]-de-Santa Luzia* (*croton antiriphiliticum*) of small blue flower. It is said that the *olhos-of-Santa Luzia* belong to Yemanja because their small blue flower is the middle of the greens in the fields is similar to the spots of sea looking at the blue of the skies.

Silvery fishing-nets may be used to decorate the throne of *Iemanjá*. Anyone who lives on the sea depends on her. *Yemanjá*, mother of the *Orixás*, mother of all that was created (nothing can exist without water), her beads are crystal white, with water drops and her daughter use bracelets of white metal.

Her festival is very popular in Bahia and held on 2nd of February, when her followers take her to the sea in a boat request present: it's a festival of the present, that Caymmi sang with so much beauty in one of his creations: — " *In the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February there will be a feast on the sea. I want to be the first to salute Yemanjá...*" The gifts: soap, cologne water, flowers, small mirrors, combs, letters to the *Santa* and prayers are put in a big basket and carried far off into the middle of the ocean, in a true maritime Candomblé and handed over to the *Senhoras das Águas* [*Lady if the Sea*]. If the gifts float, it means they were misreceived. There are special places for such offerings to *Yemanjá*, like Dique, Mon't Serrat, the *Praia of Rio Vermelho* (Red River beach) in Bahia.

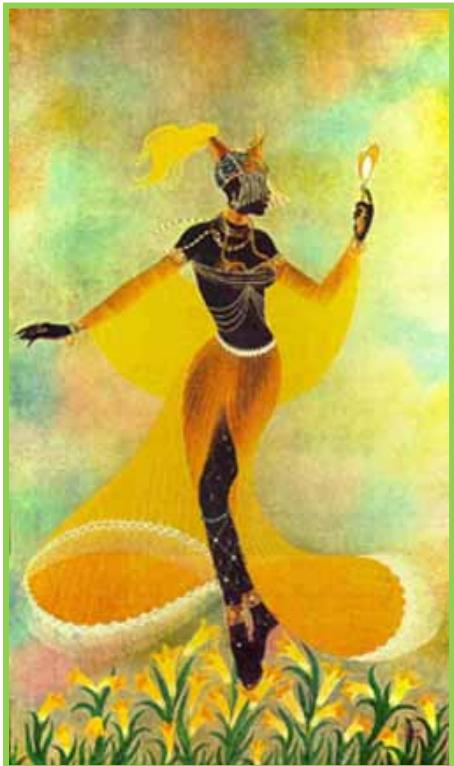
*Yemanjá* symbolizes maternity; her status is presented almost always as a pregnant woman holding with her hands her swollen belly or her voluminous breasts from where gushes the water of the world. Her salutation - *Odô Iyá* - means *Mãe das Águas*

(*Water Maiden*). The representation of the Goddess like a mermaid was conceived in Brazil through a Latinized adaptation of the water-spirit, with flying hair, vain, feminine, attracting her children to the fatal embrace in her whirlpool.

In the *Candomblé-week*, Saturday is the day of waters consecrated to *Yemanjá* (salt waters) and to *Oxum* (sweat waters).

"*Yemanjá*, the mother of all the *Orixás*, she is mother of all that exists on the surface of the earth. She "descends" to play like a true mother in the middle off her children, who venerate, worship and fear her. *Sereia* (mermaid) plays, *Mãe-da-Água* plays, *Janaína* plays and *Danda Lunda* play in the settlements. Maybe it is this *camaradagem* (companionship), along with the fear she puts in the masses of negroes, and the mystery of her impenetrable dominion explain her popularity among the negroes of Bahia" (Zora Seljan, "*Yemanjá e suas Lendas*").

## OXUM<sup>38</sup>



Goddess of fountains, creeks and Goddess of the river *Oxum* in Africa. She's the second wife of *Xangô*. Conceited and vain, she dances with golden bracelets and imitates the act of adorning herself, combing her hair, painting herself (with cosmetics), and hiding her face conceitedly with a round golden fan. All yellow metals belong to *Oxum*, mainly gold and bronze and metals used in manufacturing bracelets (*idés*) and the *abebé*. There is a song which says "*Here comes Oxum all dressed up with gold on the hands and feet...*" very often sang in all of the *terreiros*. Jewels, gold, precious stones are her weakness. A golden line, like the fan, is very much used by *Oxum* in her dances. She is the Goddess of wealth and gold.

Her day is Saturday, the day of the waters. Rivers, lakes, waterfalls and lagoons are the dwelling places of this Goddess. She is a hydro-Goddess. Her fetish is a river-stone, rounded and smooth. Her syncretism is with *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* of the Catholics; very dear to everyone, her feast is held on December, 8<sup>th</sup>. Her animals are the she-goat, the pigeon and the fowl. She likes *omolocum* (bean-cake with onions, dry shrimps and salt) and *odum* (corn-flour with bee-honey and oil). The bees are *Oxum's* (...there's a lack here. Watch the originals). *Oxum Apará* and *Oxum Abalô*; the first one fights, and the second plays the lyre. Her protection extends over the most united parts of the body like the lower stomach. Due to this one of her plants is the *mal-me-quer* (*Wedelia paludosa*), which has therapeutic properties as cicatrization, antiseptical and antihemorragic. *Orepê* and *alfavaquinha* are also plants of *Oxum*. Her number, the sixteen, is also associated with her species. She is known, in *Candomblés* from Dahomean origins, by the name of *Aziri*, also

38 Rotogravure from Nelson Boeira Fiedrich's canvas and oil collection of *Orixas*.

as *Kissimbi* in those with Bantu origins. *Oxum Pandá*, the youngest, is one of the known divinities. There are others like *Labá Omi*, *Oxum Abaé*, *Oxum Aboté*, *Oxum Lone*, *Oxum Abalô*, *Oxum Timi*, *Oxum Oduidã*, *Oxum Missin*, *Oxum Pare*, who lives on the highways with *Ogun* and *Oxum Lobá*, the oldest.

"Oxum is considered the most preeminent of the *iyás* (mothers), a feminine symbol, and the marvelous queen whose cult is well spread throughout Brazil. She originates from *Ijexá*. Her main temple is located in *Oxogbó* and *Oxum*. She is an excellent mother, connected particularly to procreation and, because of this, always associated with families. She is the patroness of pregnancy. The development of the fetus is put under her protection, as well as that of the baby till he can store knowledge and speak.

*Oxum's* color is *poupa* or *pon*, meaning, in *nagô*, red or yellow. *Pon roro* is golden-yellow, the characteristic color of *Oxum*. Yellow is therefore a type of red; light red, which also means to be ripe. Another way of saying red in *nagô* is *Pupa eyin*, literally egg-yolk. There can be no better expression since eggs are not only used for preparing her preferred dishes, but also one of her symbols of excellence in the *iy a agbá* (female ancestors) (Joana Elbein dos Santos, *Os Nagôs e a Morte* — The Nagôs and Death).

## OXALÁ: OXAGUIÃ AND OXALUFA

*Oxalá* - *Oxalufa* ou *Oxaguiã* or *Adjagunã* - the greatest of all Gods, in religions and traditions of great importance among the African cults of Bahia. He presents himself as *Old Oxalufã*, weak, shivery, shaky and supported by his walking stick (*Paxorô*) or as a young man.

*Oxaguia*, upright, tall, and as a warrior wearing a sword and a pestle of white metal with two mouths. He is known as *Oulissa* of the *Geges*, *Cassumbecá* in Angola and *Gangazumba* of the *Camblindas*. The religious syncretism of *Oxalá* is with *Senhor do Bom Fim*. His big feast, in all cult houses, takes the name *As Águas de Oxalá* [*The Waters of Oxala*], reviving an African myth on the trip of *Oxalá* to the throne of his son *Xangô*. In

Africa, he's called *Obatalá, Senhor da Roupa Branca* (Master of the White Robes).

Here, among us, he was called *Orixalá* (*Orixá-nla*, Big *Orixá*) and later took up the syncopated form *Oxalá*. He symbolizes a "fundamental element of the beginning of beginnings" mass of water and mass of air, one of the elements which gave origin to new forms of existence - the beginning and formation of all types of creatures on the Earth (*aiyê*) or in the sky (*Orun*).

The living and death, the two planes of existence are controlled by *axé* of *Orixalá*. The *alá*, a big white cloth is his emblem and under it is the shelter of the living and the death. One of the rites of liturgic circles of *Oxalá* consists of an extent of wide spotless cloth sustained on the heads of the participants who sing walking and dancing in ritual procession. These gestures symbolize the act through which his children put themselves under the protection of the great *Orixá funfun* (white *Orixá*). He is associated with calmness, unity, tranquility and silence.

*Oxalá Velho, Oxalufá*, following a legend, lives in the kingdom of his son *Oxagui* (*Young Oxalá*). For a long time, *Oxalá* did not see his son *Xangô* and missed him. Since he did not want to die without embracing his son, he consulted a *Babalorixá* on his will to take this trip. Advised not to go, he insisted with the *Babalão* who granted his permission to leave in spite of the great dangers revealed. However, he imposed the condition of not refusing the lightest service to anyone who asked him during the journey, with no complains. "*On the way, Oxalufá meets, for three times, Exú, who asked him successively to help him carry on the head a barrel of palm-oil, a loadful of charcoal and another of almond-oil. These three times Exú poured the contents on the old-man who continued rendering his services without complaining. Penetrating the realm of Xangô, he saw a fugitive horse and captured it to return it to its owner. However, the workers charged with retrieving the horse mistook him as being the thief, and they fell on the old man, breaking his arms and legs with blows and finally, threw him into prison. Oxalufá stayed in this prison for seven years. Xangô became very, very sad. The women of his kingdom became sterile and the land no more produced harvests. Consulting a Babalaô, it was revealed to him that these curses were due to the fact that an innocent prisoner was suffering unfairly in a prison of his kingdom. Xangô ordered the prisoners to appear before him. When he realized that*

*his own father was among them, he sent white-clothed slaves, without speaking [a sign of sadness] to bath Oxalufá in a fountain. Later, he offered him a support, Airá, to carry him on his back to the palace of Oxaguía and so he saw his father with arms and legs broken. Oxaguía, who was worried with the absence of his father, manifested his joy with a great banquet.*"(in Roger Bastide, *Le Candomblé de Bahia - Ritê Nagô*).

The water-rituals of Oxalá revive this myth. The possessions of the God are taken from room of the *Santo* and kept out of the *Candomblé*, in a straw hut for seven days. During dawn, on the seventh day, all the children of the *Santo* appear dressed in white, carrying white pots and jars, and they go in complete silence to the nearest fountain, fetch water and wash the stones of Axé (*otás*) of Oxalá which were in the exterior hut. This water fetched from the fountain is used to wash all the possessions of the house as a general purification, giving a real beginning to the liturgic year of the *Candomblé*. Soon after this, a procession is formed, carrying Oxalufá to the interior of the *pej'* and returning him to the palace of his other son Oxaguia. The spectacle of the children of Oxalá possessed by Oxalufá is really beautiful, carried by the *Xangôs* of the house to the interior of the *Candomblé* in this matinal procession of rare beauty. After this, come the songs and dances of joy and merriment to the return of the old father to banquet of his family.

Ivory is the *Oxalá* symbol.

Oxalá is called *Babá* by his children (old father), or grand-pa, etc.

He eats only white food: *acaçã* made of cooked white corn *catassol* (land snail - representative beast). Oxalá is considered a hermaphroditic God. Two halves of a white gourds; one against the other joined by a white rod contains the axé of Oxalá. A figure hanging on the roofs of heaven and another impregnated to the earth, recalling the marriage of *Obatalá* (sky) and *Oduduá* (earth). They meet each other at the horizon, in a conception of the world and her creation.

White rods which joins the two is like a canal; a fecundating phallus.

It does not appear deliberate, the form given by Oscar Niemayer<sup>39</sup> to the buildings of Senate and Representatives' House, in Brasilia, with the staff-building between the two, all very white, as if the gourds of Oxalá were open to show the universe the birth of a new

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<sup>39</sup> Oscar Niemayer (1907-). Architect. Designer of Brasilia, the federal capital of Brazil, and many important buildings in the World,

country for the year 2000.

Many double-mouthed pestles ornament the feast of *Oxalá* since it is with the pestle of *Xangô* that the white corn flour will be ground, base of the banquet of the big entity. The feast occurs seven days after the *água*s (waters) of *Oxalá*. It represents exactly the feast offered by *Oxaguia* to his old father on his returning. It is also known as the new yam festival, recalling the beginning in Africa of water cycles, when the tuber is planted.

Pounded yam balls, pounded in the mortar are also basic dishes of the banquet offered to *Oxaguia*.

There are various names attributed to *Oxalá*: *Lembá*, *Lembarenganga*, *Kassuté*, *Orixá Babá*, *Babá Okê*, *Kassubeká*. His fetish is a ring of lead and shells, equivalent to the African coastal. His sign is a Sheppard stick on which he supports himself - about 1,20 m (4,0 feet) on which is placed a bird with three kinds of discs on which hang bells (*paxorô*). It's kept respectfully together with the altar of *Oxalá*, covered always with an immaculate white cloth.

The animals of *Oxalá* are: white goats and white doves. His ritual scream is a shaky moaning, mixed with coldness and pain.

It doesn't matter if *Oxalufá* or *Oxaguia* is old, trembles and cripples, or is young, upright and a warrior. What is right is that *Oxalá*, in any *nation* or *Candomblé* of Brazil, is the *Greatest Orixá* — The Father.