Atibon Legba, arrives at the gate,  
you are so old!

Papa Legba is in the crossroads,  
don’t you see how old you are, phew!

Atibon arrives on the path,  
you’re so old!

Guarding gates, watching crossroads, and protecting homes, Legba oversees many important aspects of Vodou ceremonies and everyday life. Atibon Legba, the elderly manifestation of Legba, is the first lwa honored with song at ceremonies; this shows his importance to the Vodouists and serves a practical ceremonial purpose. As the keeper of keys and the guardian of gates, Legba can “arrive at the gate” and open it to “[arrive] on the path,” metaphorically opening the path to the ceremony for the other lwa. The “path” he opens for the lwa is the poto mitan, the symbolic center-post around which temple ceremonies occur and lwa enter. Marcelin’s song illustrates Legba’s role: first opening the gate so the ceremony can begin, then in the crossroads entering the human realm, and finally on the pathway into the ceremony towards the Vodouists present.

Atibon Legba’s extreme old age does not negatively affect the way he is viewed by Vodouists; if anything, it adds to their respect for him. The song repeatedly exclaims about Atibon Legba’s age, but then asks him if he “[sees] how old [he is].” This question demonstrates that Atibon Legba’s actions do not match his elderly appearance. Atibon Legba progresses from the gate, to the crossroads, and to the path in the song in rapid progression. He displays incredible power though he appears weak, which creates an awe-inspired respect amongst practitioners and viewers alike.