

A GUIDE TO SERVING THE SEVEN AFRICAN POWERS

For the Individual Voodoo Practitioner

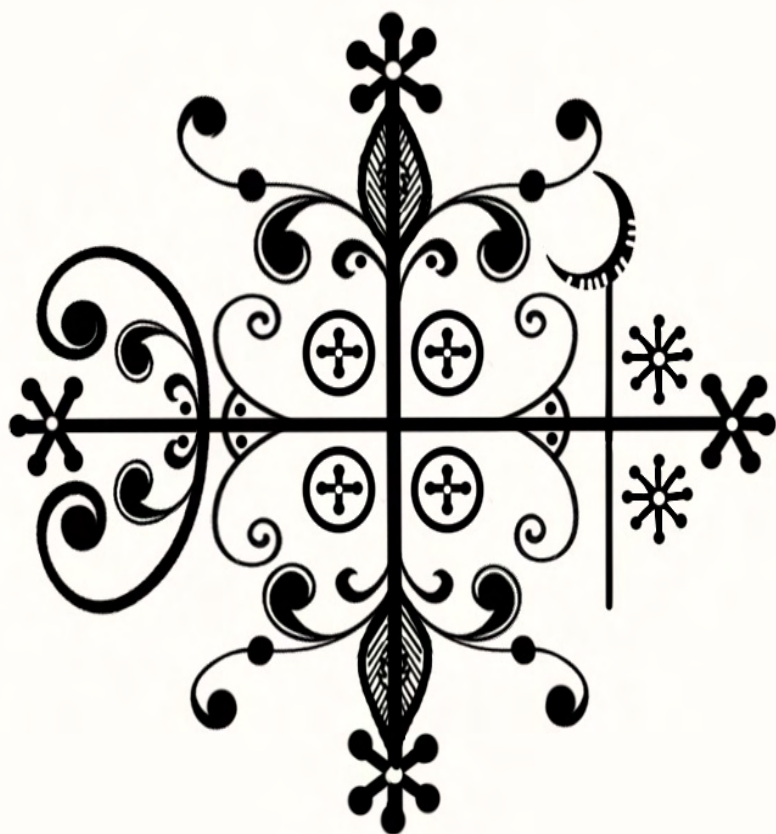
Denise Alvarado



A Guide to Serving the Seven African Powers

For the Individual Voodoo Practitioner

**Written and Illustrated by
Denise Alvarado**



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**May the blessings of the Seven African
Powers be with you always!**

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There have been many people in my life that had an influence in some fashion in the creation of this work. The teachings I received as a small child by family members, as well as experiences with the Mysteries shared with childhood friends on a similar path set the stage for what has become a fascinating spiritual journey of self discovery throughout a lifetime and across cultural divides. First and foremost, however, I must acknowledge my ancestors for their guidance, protection, and unfailing wisdom and support. Without their sacrifices, I would not be.

In addition to my ancestors, I must acknowledge the spirit of our Mother Earth who has nurtured and sustained me and my children and who has provided me with emotional and spiritual comfort in times where none could be found among my human relatives.

I thank my Papa Legba for the incredible opportunities that have been presented to me, particularly in recent years. Papa, you have opened the gates to Spirit when asked, cleared obstacles from my path when needed, and wowed family and friends with your impromptu and unsolicited manifestations and shenanigans. You have helped me to connect to the Divine and Beloved Mysteries long before I knew how to ask, and inspired me to teach others the truths you have lovingly taught me. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

May this work lessen the divide created by religious and spiritual dogma and assist in the inclusion of all in the Sacred Circle.

Denise Alvarado

Introduction

Invariably, this book will spark criticisms by those who are initiated into one of the formal African derived religions who worship the Seven African Powers. To many adherents of these religions, it is believed that a person must be initiated in order to work with the Mysteries. It is said that only when you are initiated will you receive the powers of the Orishas and have aché. Details that describe these initiation ceremonies are forbidden to non-initiates.

My background is in New Orleans Voodoo (also known as Creole Voodoo), which incorporates elements of African Voodoo, Santería, Native American spirituality, European folk magic, Catholicism, hoodoo, and herbalism. There is no formal initiation in New Orleans Voodoo. Thus, I am not initiated into any of the Afro Cuban religions or Haitian Vodou. I have, however, participated in many different indigenous ceremonies, some of which were rites of passage that gave me the privilege to conduct ceremonies for others. In this way, I have been “initiated”. More importantly, I was sought out by the Mysteries as a small child, and was chosen to be on this path of healing and of bringing healing to others, irrespective of their religious affiliation or background.

This book represents my understanding of how to serve the Seven African Powers from the perspective of an individual

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practitioner and as one called to the path by the Mysteries. It is in this spirit that I write this book. I encourage others to connect to the Divine in any way that works for them. I am not interested in any way, shape, or form in the divisiveness born of ego and religious dogma.

In Voodoo and hoodoo, there are no rules that forbid or exclude anyone from making offerings or serving the Divine Mysteries. Anyone can make offerings to their biological Ancestors, as well as to the universal archetypal Ancestors. Anyone can work with the Saints, Angels, and Archangels, who are all an inherent part of the Voodoo pantheon.

The purpose of this book is to provide information on the 7 major deities of the Yoruban pantheon known as the *Seven African Powers* and to provide basic guidelines for the construction of altars for each Loa/Orisha (deity) as I understand them. You will find a formula that is identical to each for creating the altars. It is hoped you will utilize the information provided, as well as your intuition, to personalize your altars so that they have the most meaning for you.

Instructions are provided for petitioning the Ancestors as well as the Loas/Orishas. These instructions are meant to be suggestions only, and you may modify them to suit your personal needs.

The most important concept in Voodoo is reverence to ancestors. Always be sure to remember those who have gone on before you. It is the single most important thing you can do to insure success in your ritualistic endeavors.

CHAPTER 1: The Purpose

The purpose of this book is to provide some basic guidelines for connecting to the Divine Spirits of Voodoo for the individual practitioner. Not everyone is initiated into Voodoo, nor is it necessary to be initiated in order to serve the Loa. In New Orleans, there are probably more individual practitioners than there are those who have been formally initiated into Haitian Vodou or some other Voodoo tradition. There is no formal initiation rite into New Orleans Voodoo.

The guidelines that are provided here are based on my personal understanding and relationship with the Loa and Voodoo that began in my childhood in New Orleans, and may not be the same as someone who practices Haitian Vodou or African Voudon. Remember that there is no one right way to serve the Loa, and anyone who states otherwise, or makes you feel less than because you are not an "initiate", is sadly misinformed and caught up in the politics of religious dogma.

Voodoo FAQs

The pantheon of Divine Voodoo Spirits goes by many names: *Loas*, *Lwas*, *Orishas*, *Mysteries*, and *Spirits*. Which term is used is largely determined by region. In New Orleans, they are referred to as *Spirits* or *Loas*. Since this is where I was born and raised, and where I lived for

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over 35 years, I will use some of the terms interchangeably; however, I tend to favor the term *Loas*.

While there is no written “Voodoo Bible”, there are some basic tenants that are common to many African-derived religions. What follows is a partial list of some of these principles that you can use as guidelines for Right Living as a practitioner of Voodoo.

1. In Voodoo, there is no devil. The devil is a Christian concept and does not belong to the Voodoo religion.
2. Voodooists serve the loa and revere ancestors.
3. Voodoo is a syncretic religion, incorporating aspects of many religions. One never has to give up their religion of origin in order to practice Voodoo, unless they choose to do so.
4. Be careful what you ask for, and be certain that you want it. Requests to the loa cannot be reversed, and the loa will not grant a request that is inherently wrong.
5. There is a single Creator, below which are many deities and spirits which function to guide people in matters of daily living.
6. Serving the Loa is a means of gaining personal power or empowerment with which you can radically change your life.
7. The Seven African Powers derive from the ancient African religion called Ifa.
8. We are all part of the Universe, literally speaking.
9. Your actions have consequences. Your consequences are

determined by the choices you make. Your choices mirror the content of your character.

10. Healing, balance, and wisdom are the goals of Voodoo.
11. You must not harm another person, Mother Earth, or the Universe of which you are a part.
12. Discrimination is unacceptable.
13. You can select your guardian Loa/Orisha, or they may select you.
14. Divination is a means of communicating with and gaining advice and direction from the Divine Spirits.

CHAPTER 2: Who are the Seven African Powers?

The Seven African Powers are the most well-known and celebrated divinities of the Yoruba Pantheon, and are common to all Yoruba faiths, although they are not always considered to be the same spirits. In Santería, Voodoo's sister religion, they are referred to as *Las Sietes Potencias*. In Macumba traditions (Candomble, Umbanda), they are called Orixá; in Vodoun, they are called Lwas (Lwas); in Palo, Nkisi, and in New Orleans Voodoo they are called Loas. In all of these traditions, the Seven African Powers have many aspects (Caminos), which are often quite diverse. Although they are often referred to as gods, goddesses, and deities, in reality they are manifestations of the one Creator and/or revered ancestors.

An Orisha is a spirit which reflects one of the manifestations of *Olodumare* (God) in the Yoruban (Voodoo/Santería) spiritual or religious systems. The Orisha are multi-dimensional beings who represent the forces of nature. The Orisha are vibrant, living entities who take an active part in everyday life. The Orisha faith believes in an ultimate deity, Olorun or Olodumare, who is removed from the day-to-day affairs of human beings on Earth. Instead, followers of the religion appeal to Olodumare through the various Orisha. In addition, ancestors and revered cultural heroes can be enlisted for help with day-to-day

problems. This belief is identical to Voodoo, with the exception of some differences in the names of the spirits. For example, Olodumare is *Bon Dieu*, and instead of Orishas, there are *Loas*.

The Yoruba believe their ancestor Oduduwa fell from the sky and brought with him much of what is now their belief system. Part of this is the belief that daily life depends on proper alignment and knowledge of one's *Ori*. Ori literally means "the head", but in spiritual matters, Ori refers to the inner portion of the soul which determines personal destiny and success. *Aché* is the life-force which runs through all things, living and inanimate. Aché is the power to make things happen. It is an affirmation which is used in greetings and prayers, as well as a concept about spiritual growth. Orisha devotees strive to obtain Aché through *Iwa-Pele* or gentle and good character, and in turn they experience alignment with the Ori, or what others might call inner peace, serenity, or satisfaction with life.

The Seven African Powers include Papa Legba, Obàtálá, Yemayá, Oyá, Oshun, Chàngó, and Ogun. There is some disagreement as to which of the seven deities comprise the Seven African Powers, however. Some practitioners include the Orisha Orunla, while others include Oyá. Orunla is the Keeper of the Table of Ifa, the Yoruban high oracle, and is the patron to the High Priest of the Yoruban clergy. Only a few men ever achieve the status of Babalawo (High Priest), and it is a position open only to men. Oyá, on the other hand, is highly respected and feared for her awesome power. She is helpful for matters in business, especially to women in business, for ancestral connection, and

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for matters regarding severe weather. Therefore, I have chosen to include Oyá here as opposed to Orunla, as she is more practical, accessible, and useful than Orunla to the ordinary person.

The following information is provided as a quick reference to the various characteristics and purposes of each of the Seven African Powers. You may wish to refer to it when constructing your altars.

Characteristics of the Seven African Powers

Papa Legba

Purpose: Removes obstacles, provides opportunities, communication

Colors: red and black

Necklace: 3 red beads alternating with 3 black beads

Numbers: 3

Day of the Week: Monday

Feast Day: June 13

Favorite Place: Crossroads

Favorite Animals: Rooster, dog, possum, mouse

Favorite Objects: Three stones, crooked stick, pipe, keys, doors, small toys

Favorite Foods: Corn, candy, rum, palm oil, coffee

Saints: St. Michael, St. Peter, St. Martine

Planet: Mercury

Altar Placement: Behind front door

Obàtálá

Purpose: Rules the mind, keeps the peace, maintains balance, cure cancer

Colors: White, silver, purple

Necklace: All white beads

Numbers: 8

Day of the Week: Sunday

Feast Day: September 24

Favorite Places: Clouds, Nigeria, earth

Favorite Animals: Owls, doves, elephant, coconut, snails

Favorite Objects: All white substances, silver, and platinum

Favorite Foods: Pears, coconut, black-eyed peas

Saints: Our Lady of Mercy

Planet: Jupiter

Altar Placement: Living room

Oyá

Purpose: Ancestral connection, success in business, change

Colors: Red, purple, orange, brown, all colors except black

Necklace: All colors of the rainbow

Numbers: 9

Day of the Week: Wednesday

Feast Day: February 2

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Favorite Places: River Niger, Amazon, Wind, fire, hurricanes, tornadoes, rainbows, cemeteries

Favorite Animals: Sheep, locust, pigeons, black hens, guinea hens

Favorite Objects: Black horsehair switch, copper, pennies, flowery prints, Gourd rattle, conch shell, shells

Favorite Foods: Red wine, eggplant, grapes, plums, rice with fish, rice with corn, yams, chocolate pudding

Saints: Lady of Candelaria, St. Theresa, St. Catherine

Planets: Dark moon, Uranus

Altar Placement: Library, Study, Office

Yemayá

Purpose: Protector of women, fertility, motherhood

Colors: Blue, white, crystal, silver

Necklace: 7 white beads alternating with 7 blue, then 1 white and 1 blue until 7 of each

Numbers: 7

Day of the Week: Saturday

Feast Day: September 7

Favorite Places: Brazil, Ogun River, Nigeria

Favorite Animals: Shorebirds, cockroaches

Favorite Objects: Gourd rattle, conch shell, shells

Favorite Foods: Corn meal, molasses, watermelon, pineapple, papayas, bananas, pears, grapes

Saints: Lady of Regla, Mary, Star of the Sea

Planets: Full Moon, Neptune

Altar Placement: Living Room

Oshun

Purpose: Love, intimacy, beauty, art, diplomacy, wealth, sex, relationships, marriage, fertility

Colors: Yellow, green, coral

Necklace: All yellow beads or five amber beads alternating with five red beads

Numbers: 5

Day of the Week: Thursday

Feast Day: September 8

Favorite Places: Cuba, Oshun River, Oshogbo, Nigeria, rivers

Favorite Animals: Peacock, quail, vulture, parrot, roosters, pigeons, turtles, duck, canaries, crocodiles

Favorite Objects: gold, bells, fans, mirrors, scallop shells, tortoise shell comb, gold jewelry

Favorite Foods: Honey, cinnamon, oranges, pumpkins, French pastries, melons, almonds, spinach

Saints: Lady of Caridad del Cobre, Mother of Charity

Planets: New crescent moon, Venus

Altar Placement: Kitchen, Bedroom

Chàngó

Purpose: Power, defeat enemies, victory, sensuality

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Colors: Red and white

Necklace: 6 red beads alternating with 6 white beads

Numbers: 6

Day of the Week: Friday

Feast Day: December 4

Favorite Places: Trinidad, sky, trees

Favorite Animals: Rams, turtles, horses, pheasant, roosters, turkeys, lambs, quail, bulls

Favorite Objects: double axe, wood

Favorite Foods: Apples, yams, corn, peppers, dry red table wine

Saints: Santa Barbara, St. Jerome

Planets: Sun, Mars

Altar Placement: Fireplace, business desk

Ogun

Purpose: Employment, protection, prophecy, magic, cure blood diseases

Colors: Green and black

Necklace: 7 green beads alternating with 7 black beads

Numbers: 3 or 4

Days of the Week: Tuesday & Wednesday

Feast Day: June 29

Favorite Places: United States, deep woods

Favorite Animals: Goat, dog, rooster, possum

Favorite Objects: Anything iron, railroad ties, machéte, tools

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Favorite Foods: Roots, nuts, meat, berries, roasted game, white beans, palm oil, 7 soda crackers spread with palm oil

Saints: St. Anthony, St. George, St. Peter

Planets: Pluto, Saturn

Altar Placement: Behind front door

CHAPTER 3: Important Prayers

There are a number of prayers used in the various Voodoo rituals and ceremonies. Below are four common prayers that are useful to know when petitioning the Spirits. Three are Catholic in origin, and one is specifically used for petitioning the 7 African Powers. You will need each of these prayers when petitioning the various Loas. Alternately, you can substitute your own prayers if you are uncomfortable with the Catholic ones.

Prayer to the Seven African Powers

Oh, Seven African Powers, who are so close to our Divine Savior, with great humility I kneel before thee and implore your intercession before the Great Spirit. Hear my petition and grant me peace and prosperity. Please remove all of the obstacles that cause me to stray from the Beauty Way. Oh Olofi, I trust in the words “ask and you shall receive”.
Let it be so! Amen.

(Make your petition).

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
and deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace
The Lord is with thee
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for our sinners
Now and in the hour of our death, Amen.

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,

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suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,

whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and life everlasting.

Amen.

CHAPTER 4: The Ancestral Altar

The ancestral altar should be the first altar to create by anyone who wishes to develop a Voodoo spiritual practice. This can be to honor your biological ancestors, the universal archetypal ancestors, or both. Any and all connection to the spirit world is dependent upon the strength of your ancestral connection.

The following are some guidelines for creating your own ancestral altar. Follow your intuition when creating your altar, and feel free to add to or subtract from the suggestions below.

How to Create an Ancestral Altar

To create an altar you will need:

A table, flat stone, or shelf

White cloth

Photos and mementos of your ancestors

White candle

Glass or crystal bowl of water

Fresh cut flowers

Incense

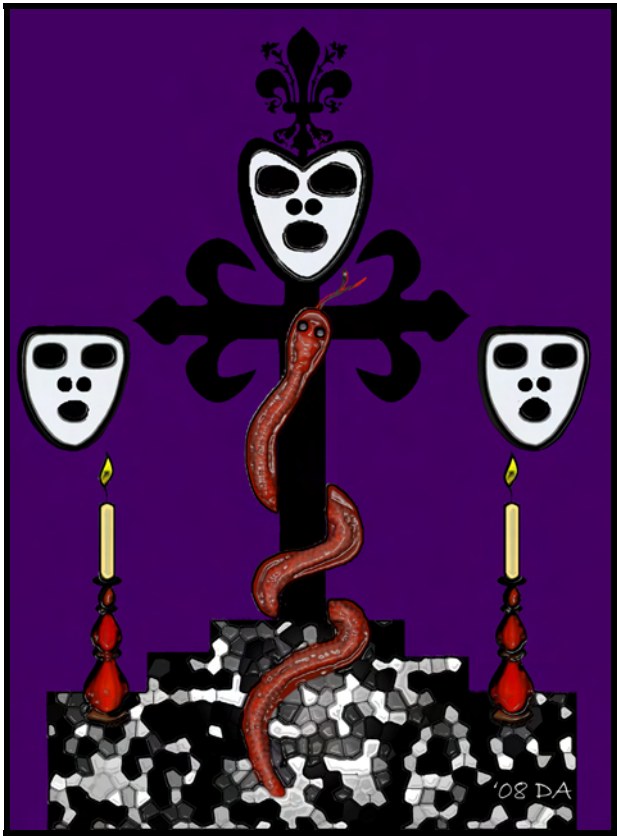
A portion of each meal of the day

A dish with 9 different types of earth, including graveyard dirt

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Directions:

Drape the white cloth over the table or shelf. If using a stone, leave it bare. Place the glass bowl of water in the center of the table and the white candle behind the bowl. Arrange the photos and momentos, flowers, and bowl of earth on the altar in a manner that pleases you. The bowl of food should go in front of the bowl of water.



1. Ritual symbol for Baron Samedi, Guardian of the Dead, by the author.

How to Address the Ancestors

First, light the incense to purify your surroundings. Sprinkle a little fresh water on your altar, on the items on your altar, as well as on the earth to give respect to the Ancestors. Light your candle and begin speaking to your Ancestors. Begin by introducing yourself. Say something like, "Greetings Ancestors, my name is _____, son/daughter of _____ and _____ and I come with a pure heart to honor you with these offerings."

"I honor (say all of your ancestors names out loud). I honor all of those remembered and forgotten, who were associated with my ancestors as friends, companions, and loved ones. I love, honor, and respect all who have gone before me.

To all my relations, all Grandmothers and Grandfathers, all Elders and the Ancient Ones, to all the creatures, plants, and living things of our Mother Earth, I offer my reverence and gratitude.

I thank you for your guidance and protection, seen and unseen.

For all those who suffered so that we may carry on the traditions, for those who died prematurely, in a violent manner, or to anyone in particular need, I offer this special prayer so that you may rest in peace through the intercession of the four archangels and the Seven African Powers" (say the prayer to the Seven African Powers here followed by

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a heartfelt prayer of your own).

You can now talk to your ancestors about your problems and ask them for guidance. When you are finished, offer them the food and drink and thank them for listening. Take a moment and meditate on your life, focusing on your blessings, and abundance. Visualize passing on all that is good to your ancestors who have gone before you and to those yet to come. To conclude, pour water on the ground and say “Achél!” Let the candles burn out if possible.

At any time you can focus on the positive aspects of your loved ones and pour water for them daily or weekly, while saying their names out loud. You can remember them by offering them some of the food you eat every day. A point of clarification: we do not worship our ancestors. We honor and respect them, and ask for their guidance.



Photo: 1 Baron Samedi Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2009.

CHAPTER 5: Papa Legba, Guardian of the Crossroads

Legba has his origins with the Fon people of Dahomey (Benin) Africa and is said to be the guardian and trickster of the crossroads and entrances. He is widely worshipped and is known by several names. In Surinam in Brazil he is known as Exu, in Trinidad and Cuba he is known as Elegua, in Haiti as Legba, and New Orleans he is known as Papa Legba, Papa Labas, or Papa Limba. Papa Legba is one of the most loved and revered loa.

Papa Legba is the youngest son of Mawu and Liza, the creators of the world. Mawu and Liza are portrayed as twins but are one in Spirit. Mawu is the female aspect, and is associated with the East, the night moon, fertility, motherhood and night. Liza is the male aspect, and is associated with the West, the daytime sun, heat, work and strength.

Commonly depicted as an old man sprinkling water or an old man with a crutch, Papa Legba is the master linguist, the trickster, warrior, and the personal messenger of destiny. In Africa he is often depicted with a huge, erect penis. Legba has the power to remove obstacles and to provide opportunities. All ceremonies begin and end with Papa Legba, as it is he who opens the gates to the world of the

Invisibles, much like St. Peter traditionally throws wide the gates to heaven.. There can be no communication with any of the other loas without consulting him first. His gift for linguistics enables him to translate the requests of humans into the languages of the Spirits, the Orishas, and the Loas.

Papa Legba is said to walk with the black sun. He is likened to numerous saints, such as St. Michael the Archangel and St. Peter. Papa Legba is a great healer and master magician whose spells and amulets are said to be impossible to destroy.

Voodoo practitioners place representations of Papa Legba behind the front door of their home in order to clear the path in many ways and to bring his protection and to help accomplish goals.



2. Ritual symbol for Papa Legba by the author.

How to Create an Altar for Papa Legba

Refer to the characteristics of the Seven African Powers in chapter 2 for Papa Legba's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. so that you can personalize your altar. To create a basic altar to Papa Legba, you will need:

A small table or place on the floor

Red and black cloth

An image of Papa Legba (if you have a doll or statue, good, if not use a picture of him or his vèvè or both)

White candle

Three stones

Some of his favorite things

Fresh basil or sage

Palm oil

Directions:

Place the black cloth over the table and the red cloth diagonally across the black cloth. Place the glass bowl in the center of the altar and fill it with water. You can add a splash of rum if you have any on hand. Place the three stones around the bowl.

Take the other objects and arrange them on your altar on a manner that is pleasing to you. Pin a photo of Papa Legba's vèvè or patron saint to the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the

back.

Take your sprig of basil or sage and dip it into the water and splash the items on your altar. Alternate ways to bless your altar would be to anoint it with palm oil, or burn some sage, cedar, frankincense, or sandalwood incense, and smudge it with the smoke.

How to Petition Papa Legba

Petition Papa Legba when you have people in your life who are sabotaging your relationships or efforts to get ahead, if you are facing an inordinate number of obstacles, or if you are trying to accomplish a task or need new opportunities.

Start by saying the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary three times each. If you prefer, you may address the Creator in a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your white candle and invoke Papa Legba:

"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

Pour a little rum or water on the ground in front of your altar. Play some music with a lot of drumming or songs that are about the crossroads. Let the music move you into dance.

When you are tired, sit quietly and meditate on the task you

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wish to accomplish. Acknowledge the barriers that get in your way. Once this is clear ask Legba to exert his influence over the matter at hand. Make your request by simply talking to him as if he were a person in the room with you. This ritual is best done on a Monday, at 3:00 am, on the third day of the week, the third week of the month, or the third month of the year. The number three is his favorite number, so be sure to incorporate it in some fashion in your ritual.

When you are finished, take three pieces of candy to a crossroads. Call to Legba, out loud if you can; if not, call him in your heart. Walk to the middle of the crossroads and toss the candy over your shoulder. Tell Legba he is paid.

In the days and weeks following, pay attention to the stories that come your way through your dreams, other people, books, or the media. Contemplate on the truth inherent in each. In this way, you will gain wisdom from Legba on an ongoing basis in your everyday life. By doing so, you are allowing the doors to open and obstacles to vanish.

To enhance the effectiveness of this ritual, you can take a ritual bath afterwards. Here is how you do that:

Legba Bath

Before taking your ritual bath, take a soap bath. Do not stay in the bath for longer than 30 minutes, and do not use any soap or oil when taking the bath. To make a Legba bath, you will need the following ingredients:

- White candle
- 3 cans of Evaporated milk
- Hand full ...Star Anise
- Hand full...Anise seed
- 1 Pound Salt

Light the candle. Put all of the others items into a warm bath. Soak 15 minutes, turn to the left 3 times, and say “I am clean”. Dress in white. Gather up all the seed stuffs from the bath and the candle and discard at a crossroads. You can take three pieces of candy as well, rub them over your body, and discard at a crossroads. Thank Legba for attending to your requests.

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Photo: 2 Papa Legba Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2009.

CHAPTER 6: Obàtálá, Androgynous Sky King of the White Cloth

***"May your life be as clear as water drawn
quite early in the morning"***

A blessing of Obatala *per* Bolaji E. Idowu
Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief (1962, London)

Obàtálá is the creator God, a symbol of peace and purity, the Father of humankind, and messenger to Olofi, the ruler of the World. His color is white, containing all the colors of the rainbow. He rules the mind and intellect, cosmic equilibrium, male and female. Obàtálá is likened to the patron saint Our Lady of Mercy.

Obàtálá is the supreme deity of the Yoruba pantheon, the great African tradition from which much of New Orleans Voodoo originates. As the Creator god, all of the other Orishas are but aspects of Obàtálá.

Always male and female, Obàtálá rules the head, keeps the peace, and is the highest deity concerned with the daily lives of humans. Her/His color is white, containing all the colors of the rainbow. Obàtálá carries the gifts of benevolence, wisdom, and power. His force of the human mind is reason, and his primary value is ethics.

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While drunk on palm wine, Obàtálá created "defective" (handicapped) individuals, making him the patron deity of such people. People born with congenital defects are called 'eni orisa': literally, "people of Obàtálá". He is the god of the north. He is always dressed in white; hence, the meaning of his name, Obàtálá (King who wears white cloth). His worshippers strive to practice moral correctness as unblemished as his robe.



3. Saint Barbara, Greek Orthodox icon.

How to Create an Altar for Obàtálá

Refer to the characteristics of the Seven African Powers in chapter 2 for Obàtálá's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. so that you can personalize your altar. Note: Do not offer Obàtálá alcohol of any kind as he will not accept it. His children and priests are also forbidden to partake of alcohol.

To create a basic altar you will need:

A small table or shelf

A white and/or purple cloth

An image of Obàtálá

A glass or crystal bowl for water (wash with salt water)

Some fresh rosemary

Holy anointing oil, holy water, or pure olive oil

A stone that you feel drawn to, white or purple preferably

Patchouli incense

Seven cowrie shells or seven shiny dimes

Purple or white mojo bag

White candle

Directions:

Place the purple cloth over the table and the white cloth diagonally across the purple cloth. Place the glass bowl in the center of the altar and fill it with water.

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Take the other objects and arrange them on your altar on a manner that is pleasing to you. Pin the photo of Obàtálá's vevé or patron saint to the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the back. Take your sprig of rosemary and dip it into the Holy water or anointing oil and splash your altar so as to bless it.

How to Petition Obàtálá

Petition Obàtálá to gain peace and clarity of mind and to tap into your greater knowledge and wisdom. You may also petition him to help you maintain sobriety.

Start by saying the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary three times each. If you prefer, you may address the Creator in a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your white candle and invoke Papa Legba:

"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

From the candle flame, light the patchouli incense. Take the stone into your hand and raise it into the air and say:

Obàtálá, King of Peace,
Chief of the White Cloth

Father-Mother of humanity,
Bringer of peace and harmony,
I charge this stone with your positive energy.
Obàtálá, by your power, this stone is charged with peace and with it,
I will find clarity of mind and greater understanding.

Hold the stone over the incense smoke, and say the following:

For peace of mind,
For peace with myself.
For peace of heart,
For peace with my past.
For peace of spirit,
For peace with my present,
For peace at home,
For peace with my future.
For peace with my karma,
For peace at work (or school),
For peace in the family,
For peace with those who love me,
For peace with those who do not love me,
For peace in the world.

Repeat this with each of the seven cowrie shells or shiny dimes.
When you are done, place the stone and the seven shiny dimes and the

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sprig of rosemary in a mojo bag and smudge it in the patchouli incense. Carry the mojo bag with you to have the blessings of Obàtálá with you always.



Photo: 3 Obàtálá Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2007.

CHAPTER 7: Yemayá, Mother of the Seven Seas

Yemayá is the Mother of the Seven Seas, the Santería Orisha of fertility and motherhood. She offers protection to women. She is likened to the patron saints Lady of Regla, and Mary, Star of the Sea.

According to legend, Yemayá originated in Egypt as the Goddess Isis. It is thought by some that the Nubian slaves who returned to different parts of Africa may have brought Isis with them under the new name of Yemayá.

Myth has it that Yemayá gave birth to the 14 Yoruban Goddesses and Gods. When her uterine waters broke, it caused a great flood creating the oceans. The first human man and woman were borne from her womb.

Yemayá is the Creation Goddess, and is often depicted as a mermaid. She is associated with the moon, ocean, and female mysteries. As such, she is the governess of the household and the matters of women including childbirth, conception, childhood safety, love, and healing. Extremely compassionate and merciful, Yemayá rules the dreamtime, oversees the Moon, deep secrets, ancient wisdom, salt water, sea shells, and the collective unconscious.

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Yemayá goes by a number of different names including Queen of Witches, Mother of Fishes, The Constantly Changing Woman, The Ocean Mother, Mother of Dreams and Secrets, Mother of Pearl, Mama Watta (Mother of Waters), and Yemayá-Olokun (powerful dream aspect). In Haiti she is Agwe, Mother of the Sea, and in New Orleans she is La Baleine or La Sirene.

Yemayá's force of the human mind is compassion, and she embodies the principle of nurturance.



4 Yemayá, Mother of the Seven Seas, Denise Alvarado, 2008.

How to Create an Altar for Yemayá

Refer to the characteristics of the Seven African Powers in chapter 2 for Yemayá's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. so that you can personalize your altar. Note: Never offer fish to Yemayá as these are her children.

To create an altar you will need:

A small table or place by the sea

A blue and/or silver cloth

An image of Yemayá (if you have a doll or statue, good, if not use a picture of her or her patron saint)

A glass or crystal bowl for water (wash with salt water)

Some fresh flowers

7 crystals, 7 pearls, 7 cowrie shells

White candle

Directions:

Place the blue cloth over the table and the silver cloth diagonally across the blue cloth. Place the glass bowl in the center of the altar and fill it with water. Add some sea salt to the water. Take the other objects and arrange them on your altar on a manner that is pleasing to you. Pin the photo of Yemayá or her patron saint to the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the back.

How to Petition Yemayá

Yemayá may be petitioned for blessings, compassion, wisdom, creation, riches, inspiration, wealth, love, wishes, grief, acquiring ancient wisdom, protecting the home, and protecting children. She may also be petitioned for issues pertaining to women, such as motherhood, female power, fertility rituals, having children, and sustaining life. Petition Yemayá as Erzulie for beauty, good fortune, and good health. Petition her as Yemoja to cure infertility, as Yemana for rain, as Emanjah for teaching children, as Yemayá Olokun for dream magic and protecting babies in the womb, as Yemayá Ataramagwa for money spells, and as Agwe for affection and blessings.

It is best to petition Yemayá when there is a full moon or crescent moon. As usual, start by saying the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Apostle's Creed three times each or a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your white candle and invoke Papa Legba:

"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

To ask Yemayá for a special wish or blessing, praise the Spirit of the Fishes by repeating the following:

Agbe ni igbe're ki Yemoja Ibikeji odo.

It is the bird that takes good fortune to the Spirit of the Mother of the Fishes, the Goddess of the Sea.

Aluko ni igbe're k'losa, ibikeji odo.

It is the bird Aluko that takes good fortune to the Spirit of the Lagoon, the Assistant to the Goddess of the Sea.

Ogbo odidere i igbe're k'oninwo.

It is the parrot who takes good fortune to the Chief of Iwo.

Omo at'Orun gbe 'gba aje ka'ri w'aiye.

It is children who bring good fortune from Heaven to Earth.

Olugbe-rere ko, Olugbe-rere ko, Olugbe-rere ko,

The Great One who gives good things, the Great One who gives good things, the Great One who gives good things.

Gbe rere ko ni olu-gbe-rere.

Give me Good Things from the Great One who gives Good Things

Ache!

So be it.

Now you may write a letter to her on a piece of parchment paper and throw it into the ocean or sea.

Create a Communication Ritual Bowl or Jar for Yemayá

This ritual is best done during a full moon. Obtain a white and blue bowl, jar, or plate with a lid. Wash it with salt water, and then fill it with water from the sea or ocean. Alternately, fill it with water that you have added sea salt to. Fill the bowl with items that Yemayá loves, such as shells, crystals, pearls, silver jewelry, and a small figurine of a mermaid (no fish). Take the bowl and charge it with the energy of the moon goddess (Yemayá) through the light of the moon. Once this is done, the bowl will serve as a means of communication with Yemayá from this point forward. Use the bowl in place of going to the sea when petitioning Yemayá, if you do not live near the sea or ocean.



Photo: 4 La Sirene Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2009.

CHAPTER 8: Oyá, Mistress of the Marketplace, Ruler of Hurricanes

For protection from the elements, strong winds, and hurricanes, Oyá is the goddess to summon. If you need help in business, Oyá can bring you prosperity in economic affairs. For protection of ancestral spirits, Oyá has you covered.

Oyá is the Goddess of the Niger River, and the orisha of wind, lightning, fertility, fire and magic. She creates hurricanes and tornadoes and carries the spirits of the dead to the underworld. This is why she is closely associated with cemeteries.

Her full name is *Oyá-Yansan*, which means "mother of nine" (for the nine tributaries of the Niger River). She was originally married to Ogun and borrowed his tools, which became part of her arsenal. She was swept away from Ogun by Chàngó, and rode into battle by Chàngó's side, fighting with as much ferocity and cunning as any man.

Oyá is the mother of disguises and wears many masks. She is revolutionary, efficient, strong-willed, and indispensable in emergency situations. Oyá is the goddess of transformation. She is associated with the buffalo, and is known for using charms and magic as one of the "Great Elders of the Night (Witches)".



5. Our Lady of Candelaria, public domain.

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How to Create an Altar for Oyá

Refer to the characteristics of the Seven African Powers in chapter 2 for Oyá's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. so that you can personalize your altar. Note: Do not offer Oyá rams or palm oil as she finds these things repulsive. To create a basic altar you will need:

A small table or place on the floor

An orange cloth and a purple cloth

An image of Oyá (if you have a doll or statue, good, if not use a picture of her or her patron saint)

A glass or crystal bowl for water (wash with salt water)

Some fresh basil or sage

Holy water or palm kernel oil

Nine copper pennies

Purple eggplant

A dark orange ribbon and ribbons in 9 other colors of the rainbow

Red wine

Directions:

Place the orange cloth over the table and the purple cloth diagonally across the orange cloth. Place the nine pennies on the altar. Place the glass bowl in the center of the altar and fill it with water. Take the other objects and arrange them on your altar on a manner that is pleasing to you. Pin a photo of lightening bolts or Oyá's patron saint to

the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the back. Take the holy water or palm kernel oil and anoint the items on your altar in her name.

How to Petition Oyá

Petition Oyá when an important change is needed, if you need to increase your business success, or if you need protection from the weather.

Start by saying the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Apostle's Creed three times each. If you prefer, you may address the Creator in a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your white candle and invoke Papa Legba:

"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

You may then continue by praising the Spirit of the Wind in this fashion:

Ajalaiye, Ajalorun, fun mi ni ire,

The Winds of Earth and Heaven bring me good fortune,

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Iba Yansan,

Praise to the Mother of Nine,

Ajalaiye, Ajalorun, fun mi ni alaaḡia,

The Winds of Earth and Heaven bring me well-being,

Iba Oyá,

Praise to the Spirit of the Wind,

Ajalaiye, Ajalorun, winiwini,

The Winds of Earth and Heaven are wondrous,

Mbe mbe ma Yansan,

May there always be a Mother of Nine,

Aché.

So be it.

Take the eggplant and wash it with red wine. You are going to make a skirt out of the ribbons and dress the eggplant with it. Take the dark orange ribbon and lay it out flat, and attach the 9 colors of the rainbow to the dark orange ribbon. Take the "skirt" you have made and wrap it counterclockwise around the eggplant, as many times as it will go and then tie it. While you are wrapping the eggplant, talk to Oyá about the change that is needed. Let her know how she can help you. When you are done, place it on her altar. If it withers, take it to the woods and leave it there.

Oyá is the goddess of sudden change and transformation. As such, you can expect to see sudden, and possibly unexpected, changes following this ritual. Be sure that you have stated precisely what you need so that the changes will be in the direction you are seeking.

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Photo: 5 Oya Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2009

CHAPTER 9: Oshun, Goddess of Love

In Yoruba mythology, Oshun is an Orisha (spirit goddess) of love, intimacy, beauty, wealth and diplomacy. According to the Yoruba elders, Oshun is the "unseen mother present at every gathering", because Oshun is the Yoruba understanding of the cosmological forces of water, moisture, and attraction. Therefore she is omnipresent and omnipotent. Her power is represented in a Yoruba scripture which reminds us that "no one is an enemy to water" and therefore, everyone has need of and should honor, respect, and revere Oshun.

Oshun is the force of harmony - seen as beauty, felt as love, and experienced as ecstasy. According to the ancients, Oshun was the only female Irunmole (elevated ancestor) amongst the 401 sent from the spirit realm to create the world. As such, she is revered as "YeYe" - the sweet mother of us all. When the male Irunmole attempted to subjugate Oshun due to her femaleness, she removed her divine energy from the project of creating the world and all subsequent efforts at creation were in vain. They begged for her forgiveness and once granted, the creation of the world could continue. However, creation of the world could not happen before Oshun had given birth to a son. According to this legend, her son became Legba, the great conduit of Aché in the Universe and also the eternal trickster.

Oshun is known as the mother of things outside the home, due

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to her business savvy. She is also known as Laketi, she who has ears, because of how quickly and effectively she answers prayers. When she possesses her followers she dances, flirts, and then cries because no one can love her enough, and the world is not as beautiful as she knows it could be.

Oshun is beneficent and generous, and very kind. She does, however, have a horrific temper, though it is difficult to anger her. She is married to Chàngó, god of fire, thunder, and power, and is his favorite wife because of her excellent cooking skills. One of his other wives, Oba, was her rival. They are the goddesses of the Oshun and Oba rivers, which meet in a turbulent place with difficult rapids.

How to Create an Altar for Oshun

Refer to the characteristics of the Seven African Powers in chapter 2 for Oshun's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. so that you can personalize your altar. To create an altar you will need:

A small table or shelf

A gold colored cloth

An image of Oshun (if you have a doll or statue, good, if not use a picture of her or her vévé)

A glass or crystal bowl filled with river water (wash with salt water)

Glass or crystal vase

Incense

Florida water or other perfume

5 peacock feathers

5 cowry shells

5 pieces of amber

Some of Oshun's favorite food

Yellow candle

Directions:

Begin by covering your altar with the gold cloth. Place 5 peacock feathers in a crystal vase and a bowl of river water on the altar. Arrange five cowrie shells on the surface along with five pieces of amber. A single yellow candle can be placed towards the back. You can also make a special jar for her that contains honey, five cinnamon sticks, whole cloves, nutmeg, allspice, and a handful of pumpkin seeds. Pin the photo of Oshun's image to the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the back. Bless your altar by splashing it with perfume, or by smudging it with the smoke from sage, cedar, frankincense, or sandalwood incense.



6. Oshun, Acrylic painting, Denise Alvarado 2008.

How to Petition Oshun

Oshun's force of the human mind is self-esteem and she embodies the principle of connection. Oshun's law is love yourself. Therefore, she is petitioned for matters of the heart and relationships.

Wear all yellow, or all white with yellow accessories for this ritual. Start by saying the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Apostle's Creed three times each. If you prefer, you may address the Creator in a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your yellow candle and invoke Papa Legba:

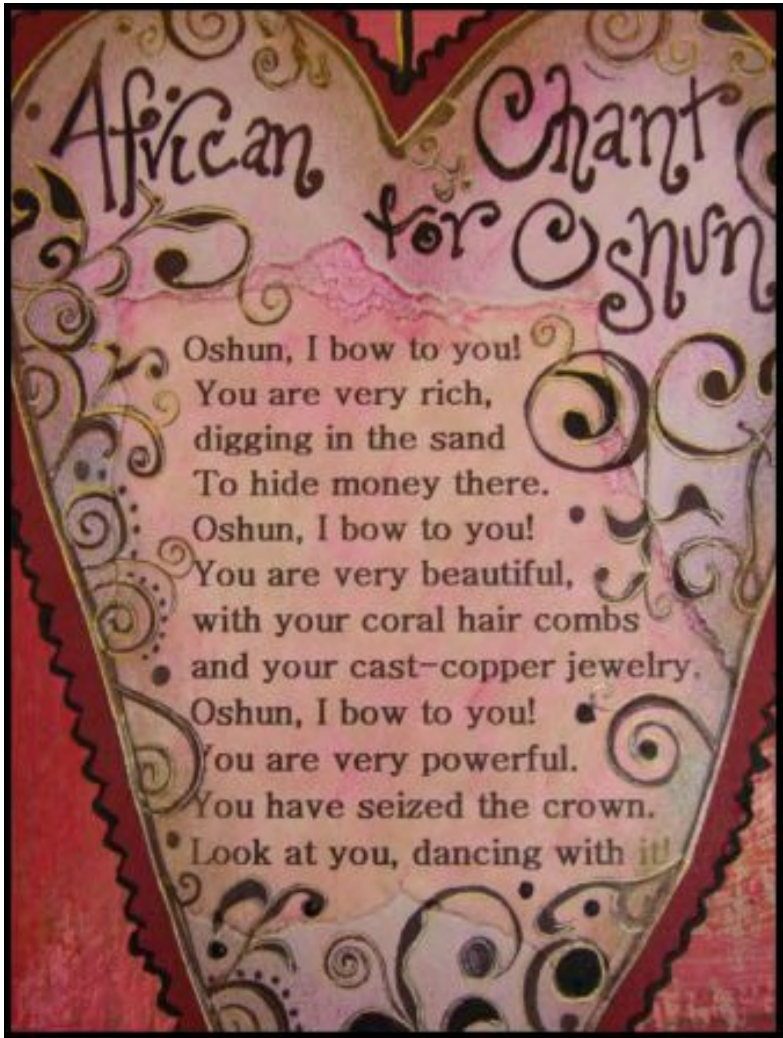
"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

Pour some Florida water or perfume on the ground in front of your altar. Concentrate on the outcome you wish to occur and greet Oshun with the appropriate ritual greeting:

Ori Ye Ye O

Address her with comments about her beauty, and ask her to accept your offerings. Then, you may use the following prayer to Oshun:

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7. African Chant for Oshun, Denise Alvarado, 2008

Any prayers you wish Oshun to answer should be repeated for 5 nights.

Put on some love songs and dance to the music. Once you feel her presence, say to her "Oshun, do you see these beautiful offerings? Do you see me? Please give me (fill in the blanks)".

Then take some time to focus on your desires. Now is the perfect time to do an oracle reading using whatever divination method in which you are familiar. When you are done, take the following ritual bath.

Golden Bath

Before taking your ritual bath, take a soap bath. Do not stay in the bath for longer than 30 minutes, and do not use any soap or oil when taking the bath. To take a Golden bath you will need:

- Chamomile
- Calendula flowers
- Yellow Rose petals
- Yellow food color
- Yellow candle
- Honey

Light the yellow candle. Place the other items in a tub of warm water. Drizzle the honey over your head down to your toes. Soak in

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water for 15 minutes. Turn three times and make a statement about the request you have made to Oshun. Say it as if you already have what you want. For example, if you requested wealth, say "I am Rich". If you requested love, say "I am loved". You can only make one statement. Gather up all the remains from the bath and toss under a tree or bush somewhere or discard in a crossroads the following morning. Sleep in white or yellow sheets.



Photo: 6 Oshun Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado 2009

CHAPTER 10: Ogun, Wild Man of the Woods & Father of Technology

Ogun (Ogoun) is the traditional warrior, similar to the spirit of Ares in Greek mythology. As such, Ogun is mighty, powerful, and triumphal; yet, he exhibits the rage and destructiveness of the warrior whose strength and violence can turn against the community he serves. Ogun gives strength through prophecy and magic. It is Ogun who is said to have planted the idea, led and given power to the slaves for the Haitian Revolution of 1804. He is called now to help people obtain a government more responsive to their needs.

In Yoruba mythology, Ogun is a son of Yemaja (Yemayá) and Orungan. In Santería and Palo Mayombe, he is identified with Saint Peter. In Haitian Vodou, he is associated with St. James the Greater and St. George. In New Orleans Voodoo, he is associated with St. Anthony and St. George. In all his incarnations Ogun is a fiery and martial spirit. He is also linked with blood, and is for this reason often called upon to heal diseases of the blood. In addition, he is often called upon to bring work to the unemployed.

Ogun is a very powerful loa. It is he who presides over fire, iron, hunting, politics and war. He is also considered to be the Father

of technology as we know it today. Ogun is the family provider. He hunts so that his family will not go hungry. He is the patron of smiths and of the unemployed and is usually displayed with a machete or sabre, rum and tobacco. He is one of the husbands of Erzulie, but is also linked to Oshun in a fiery and passionate affair of the heart.



Photo: 7 St. James the Greater Altar Image, Denise Alvarado, 2008.

The Story of Ogun and Oshun

The following story of Ogun and Oshun is based on a West African, Yoruba-based fable of how the beautiful Oshun, who represents love, seduction and sweetness, brought the powerful Ogun, entity of iron, machines and technology, out of hiding to restore order to the world. It is a love story, a Santería/Voodoo love story, if you can believe there is such a thing.

According to legend, Ogun is the traditional warrior, a fiery spirit, similar to the spirit of Ares in Greek mythology. As such, he is mighty and powerful; yet, he can also exhibit rage and destructiveness if disrespected. He is not one to play around with. Ogun played a vital role in the process of creating the world as we know it. Without Ogun's Aché (essence), there would be no evolution.

Ogun brought technology such as iron and steel to Humans to help them improve their society. A fierce and hard-working blacksmith, Ogun withdrew from the creation of the world and retreated into the forest when he saw Humans use technology for war and oppression. When he left the world, creation stopped. Without Ogun, the Orishas and Humans lacked the technology they needed for planting new fields and they could not flourish. Society became stagnant. Despite the best efforts of numerous other Orishas, Ogun would not emerge from the bush.

Finally, Oshun went into the woods with her five scarves and her gourd of honey. She found a clearing in the woods and began a beautiful and sensuous dance, which caught Ogun's attention. With every seductive move, Ogun was drawn closer and closer to Oshun. When he was upon her, she smeared his lips with her honey and continued to dance and lure Ogun out of the forest. Of course, Ogun followed her, and resumed his work. This story is a testament to the awesome beauty, and power of Oshun, who is the only one who can renew the process of creation.

Ogun and Oshun were not married. Oshun was in love with Shangó, but Shangó married Oyá. Ogun was in love with Oyá, but Shangó stole Oyá from Ogun. Ogun and Shangó, though they are said to be brothers, are arch enemies as a result. Ogun and Shangó should never share the same altar. Neither should Oyá and Oshun.

Who needs soap operas when you have the stories of the orishas? Note: Never offer your own blood to Ogun.

How to Create an Altar for Ogun

Refer to the characteristics of the Seven African Powers in chapter 2 for Ogun's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. so that you can personalize your altar. To create an altar to Ogun you will need:

A small table or place on the floor

A black cloth and a green cloth

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An image of Ogun (if you have a doll or statue, good, if not use a picture of him or his vévé)

3 to 4 pieces of iron or tools

A sword or machete (a knife will do in a pinch)

A small bowl of rock salt

A plate of his favorite food

1 green candle

1 white candle

Glass candleholders

A glass or crystal bowl for water (wash with salt water)

4 stones

Earth (dirt)

A picture of St Anthony, St George, or St James the Greater

Some fresh basil or sage

Holy anointing oil, holy water, or pure olive oil

Directions:

Place the black cloth over the table and the green cloth diagonally across the black cloth. Place the 4 stones at the four corners of the table. Place the glass bowl in the center of the altar and fill it with water. You can add a splash of rum if you have any on hand. Take your sprig of basil or sage and dip it into the water and splash the bowl as you bless and name the bowl. You can name the bowl whatever you want, i.e. "bowl of life". Alternate ways to bless your bowl would be to anoint it with holy oil, or burn some sage, cedar, frankincense, or

sandalwood incense and smudge it with the smoke.

Go outside and gather some earth from the ground and place into one of the glass candle holders. Take the white candle and anoint it with the holy oil or water, or olive oil starting from the bottom and moving to the top of the candle. As you anoint the candle, focus all of your thoughts and energy and pray for insight, wisdom, and spiritual awareness. Place the candle into the candle holder with the dirt and place in front of your bowl of water. Repeat with the green candle.

Take the other objects and arrange them on your altar on a manner that is pleasing to you. Pin an image of Ogun's vèvè to the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the back.

How to Petition Ogun

Petition Ogun when you are in need of a job, healing, or protection. Dress in military clothing or wear camouflage, or wear green or white clothes. Wear a green kerchief. Say the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Apostle's Creed three times or address the Creator in a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your white candle and invoke Papa Legba:

"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

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Now you will petition Ogun:

"Papa Ogun! Come here and eat this food! Papa Ogun, Big Nago man, please come and eat this food!"

Now light your green candle. Now tell him what you need, tell him: "Papa Ogun, do you see this altar I have made for you? Do you see this wonderful food and these offerings? Do you see me? Please give me ... (you fill in the blanks here)".

When you are done, go to bed leaving the candles to burn down (make sure they are safe...wouldn't want to start a fire). In the morning, take the food offerings and throw them outside under a tree somewhere. Leave everything else on the altar.

Now it is done. All you have to do is wait and see what happens.

One warning about petitioning Ogun: He loves blood, so if you have a cut or any kind or if you are menstruating, make sure you tell him that your blood is not for him.



Photo: 8 Ogun Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2008

CHAPTER 11: Chàngó, Orisha of Fire, Power, Thunder, & Sensuality

Chàngó (Shango, Xango) is the orisha of lightening, dance, thunder, power, passion, and sensuality. He is the epitome of all things masculine, and the dispenser of vengeance on behalf of the wronged. He has the power to win wars, defeat enemies, and gain power over others. He will ensure victory over all difficulties. Chàngó is believed to have once been a Yoruban king; thus, he must be treated as such.

According to Yoruba and Vodou belief systems, Chàngó hurls bolts of lightning at the people chosen to be his followers, leaving behind imprints of stone axe blade on the Earth's crust. These blades can be seen easily after heavy rains. Worship of Chàngó gives you a great deal of power and self-control. Chàngó altars often contain a carved figure of a woman holding a gift to the god with a double-bladed axe sticking up from her head.



8. St. Barbara.

How to Create an Altar for Chàngó

Refer to the Chart of the Seven African Powers for Chàngó's favorite colors, numbers, things, etc. that he likes. Then you can personalize your altar. Note: Do not offer Chàngó rum or cigars as he will not accept these. To create an altar for Chàngó you will need:

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A small table or place on the floor

A red and/or white cloth

An image of Chàngó (if you have a doll or statue, good, if not use a picture of him, his patron saint, or his vèvè)

A glass or crystal bowl for water (wash with salt water)

Some fresh basil or sage

Holy anointing oil, holy water, or pure olive oil

An offering of apples, yams, corn and dry red wine

Pieces of wood and a double axe

6 red apples that have been refrigerated

6 whole red chilis

Honey

Wooden bowl

Directions:

Place the white cloth over the table and the red cloth diagonally across the white cloth. Place the glass bowl in the center of the altar and fill it with water. You can add a splash of dry red wine if you have any on hand. Place the wood and double axe on the altar. Place some of Chàngó's favorite things on the altar in a manner that is pleasing to you. Pin an altar image of Chàngó to the front of your altar, or frame it and stand it up at the back. Take your sprig of basil or sage and dip it into the water and splash the bowl as you bless and name the bowl. You can name the bowl whatever you want, i.e. "bowl of life". Alternate ways to bless your bowl would be to anoint it with holy oil,

or burn some sage, cedar, frankincense, or sandalwood incense and smudge it with the smoke.

How to Petition Chàngó

Petition Chàngó when justice is needed, to influence court proceedings, to overcome difficulties, and when courage is needed.

Start by saying the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary three times each or address the Creator in a prayer appropriate for you. Then light your white candle and invoke Papa Legba:

"Open the door for me Papa Legba,
Atibon Legba, open the door for me!
Open the gate for me Papa, so I can pass,
When I return, I will thank the loa."

Line the wooden bowl with cotton balls. Take the 6 chilled apples and rub them all over your body explaining to Chàngó the injustices you have suffered. Place the apples, along with 6 whole chilis, into the bowl and pour enough honey in the bowl to cover the peppers and apples. Take the bowl into the forest and leave under a tree as an offering to Chàngó for his help.

How to Serve the Seven African Powers



Photo: 9 Chàngó, God of Fire Thunder, Power, and Sensuality. Voodoo Altar Doll, Denise Alvarado, 2007.

Suppliers

All of the images in this book are available as altar images at the Voodoo Butik. Visit <http://www.zazzle.com/voodooomama> to view the selection of altar posters, greeting cards, and more.

Voodoo altar dolls, altar oils, and more can be found at the vendors below.

Planet Voodoo

501 E 6th St. West Liberty, IA. 52776

1(877) ERZULIE (379-8543)

Hours of operation: 9 AM to 5PM CST Monday through Friday, closed weekends. Orders can be placed online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Email: planetvoodoo@planetvoodoo.com

Order online: www.planetvoodoo.com

Website description: This site is dedicated to the intriguing and ancient phenomenon of Voodoo dolls, poppets, fetishes, hoodoo, and Vodou. Planet Voodoo specializes in authentic, hand crafted Voodoo dolls, spiritual jewelry, and metaphysical books and ebooks.

New Orleans Mystic

P.O. Box 740516

New Orleans, LA 70174

1-504-218-5305

Hours of operation: 10 AM - 3 PM CST Monday through Friday. They are closed weekends.

Seven African Powers

Email: tribble@neworleansmistic.com

Order online: <http://www.neworleansmistic.com/main.htm>

Description: New Orleans Mystic is a mail order spiritual supply that has been serving customers since 1990.

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Fax: 562-453-3348

Email: customerservice@wisdomproducts.net

Hours of operation: 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM (Pacific time) Monday – Friday

Order online: www.wisdomproducts.net

Website description: “You will find a wide variety of quality items to supply your spiritual and new age needs”. English/Spanish.

Creole Voodoo, a unique blend of African, Haitian, Native American, Catholic, spiritualist, and European folk magic traditions, welcomes the uninitiated. Inside this book are complete instructions for creating altars for your ancestors and each of the Seven African Powers, including how to petition each major loa as well as some practical spells. This guide is written for people who are not initiated into any specific Voodoo tradition, but would like to benefit from knowing and practicing some age-old authentic Voodoo rituals. The author, born and raised in the Voodoo rich culture of New Orleans, has written this book from the perspective of Creole Voodoo, for which there are no formal initiation rites. Anyone can learn how to serve the loa, and everyone is invited to experience first hand the power of Voodoo. This book is richly illustrated by the author, who is well-known for her unique conjure art style, and whose art has been celebrated in several books and on National Geographic's Taboo.

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