

Exu

DIVINE TRICKSTER & MASTER MAGICIAN

An informational and instructional guide for invoking the
Divine Transformational Power of Exu



by

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Exu

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Background

Exus are a family of spirit-deities that are worshipped in the Afro-Brazilian tradition commonly called Umbanda. Exu is also known as Eshu; in Cuba he is called Elegua, and in West Africa he is known as Esu. His is the first place among the Orisha of the Yoruba in West Africa and his name literally means “Owners of the Head”. Of all the Orisha, Exu is the highest and the lowest. He is privy to the mysteries of life and death. He rules over the four winds with Oya. He is a great healer and a master magician. He is the lord of chaos and the keeper of the life force/energy (ashe). Prior to every ritual or ceremony an offering should be made to Exu to insure its success. Approach him with love and respect and you will be transformed forever!

Most Exus have some expertise in a particular area. Exu (Ey-shu) is a powerful spirit who functions as Divine Messenger. As such, he is a translator between humans and the natural world - the sacred and the profane. As Divine Messenger, Exu has a very close relationship to the Orisha of divination, Orunmila (Orunla). He is the master of the buzios, a form of divination that uses cowrie shells. At the same time, Exu does not need an oracle to be able to foretell the future. Nothing can be accomplished in the human world or the spirit world without the permission of Exu.

In addition, Exu possesses a dual nature as Divine Trickster and Door Opener. He is equivalent to Legba of the Voodoo tradition and Ellegua of the Santeria tradition in that he can remove obstacles and open the doorway to new opportunities. It is up to you which door is open so when working with this spirit you must be very clear in your intentions.

As Divine Trickster, Exu is not evil, although he is portrayed as such in some of the literature. Most likely this is due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the sacred role of the trickster in non-Christian cosmologies. The trickster archetype in most traditional cultures embodies a sacred role as teacher. The trickster raises awareness of the interrelatedness and interconnectedness between humankind, the natural world, and the spirit world. No person is an island unto themselves; this is a fallacy. Exu humbles us through his trickery regarding this absolute truth. He watches us as we walk through life and when we become too arrogant, he is right there to throw a wrench in the works, trip us up, and bring us back down to earth.

Sometimes Exu is depicted as performing everything in reverse. As such, his worshippers will often ask for the opposite of what they seek. He apparently hates rigid

repetition and looks favorably upon those who can reinterpret reality in fresh and passionate ways.

As Door Opener, Exu is the messenger of the gods. He sees all, is all-knowing. He knows good and evil, and can be equally cruel and generous, but his actions are always justified and never arbitrary. Exu works on the path of the left hand. That is, he is knowledgeable and capable of doing black or white magick. In fact, he is a master magician and healer, and his spells and talismans are so powerful that they are impossible to destroy.

It is commonly said that Exus are the spirits of people whom 'while alive' were considered to be frightening and whose morals transcended 'good' and 'evil'. Most are said to have also been the spirits of people who were very well educated or who possessed a great deal of knowledge in some particular field. Exu Meia-Noite, for example, is said to be the spirit of a great doctor and knows all the secrets to healing.

According to some, Exu is considered the Devil in Santeria and is pictured as horned and red-skinned. His symbol is a pitchfork. His counterpart Pomba Gira is also horned and red-skinned, wearing furs, sequins, and a gold necklace. Because of this imagery and because he controls the essence of every living thing, he is seen as powerful, dangerous, and amoral. He can be invoked to do manipulative magick, but only by those foolhardy enough to try.

Because Exu can move freely among all of the domains of the Orisha, he is considered an interlocutor of the Orisha as opposed to an actual Orisha. He is particularly honored because of this characteristic. He embodies the essence of all of the Orishas. Without Exu, none of the Orishas can manifest their power.

Every living thing has a personal Exu.

Exu has been syncretized in Latin America with a few catholic saints; Eshu Beleke is known as Santo Niño de Atocha or Holy Infant of Prague, and Arere Obi Oke is known as Saint Anthony of Padua. In the Lucumi tradition, the day of St. Anthony, June 13th, is considered a Feast Day for Elegua, and the day of St. Benito, August 24th, is also Eshus' Day; St. Martin of Porres is also associated with Elegua.

How to Serve Exu

Because he is a powerful spirit that should be respected regardless of your personal beliefs, he should be provided a special place in your home where you can place some of these things near him. Traditionally he is placed behind the front door of the home where he can watch over all who enter and exit the home. He is also kept outside the front door in the form of a cement lump with a nail in the center of the head and cowries for eyes and mouth. Here he guards the home and the people in it.

Ileke (Beaded Necklace)

Three red beads alternating with three black beads.

Offerings

All though Exu will consume almost anything, some of his favorite things are: epo (palm oil), oti (rum or gin), smoked fish, obi (coconut), orogbo (bitter kola nut), cigars, yam, oyin (honey), chocolate, and all sorts of candies. He likes to eat hot foods. Pepper Rum is one of his favorites. To make it, empty a bottle of rum and fill it with hot peppers. Put the rum back in (as much as possible). Let it stand for three months. **DO NOT DRINK!**

Colors, Numbers, and Day of the Week

His colors are red and black, sometimes with white, depending on the path. Monday is his day, since it's the first day of the week. His numbers are 3 and 7.

How to Serve Exu Meia-Noite

Exu Meia-Noite is a great doctor who knows all of the secrets to healing. Like all spirits, Exu Meia-Noite has his personal favorite food, items, colors, and animals that you can draw from to make offerings to him and set up his altar.

Exu Meia-Noite likes red and black candles, steak cooked in olive oil, popcorn, rum, cigars and his sacred hour is 12 (either mid-day or mid-night). His numbers are 3 and 21. All of the above ingredients can be offered to him at the gateway to a cemetery. His common sacrifice is a black chicken or rooster.

An invocation for Exu Meia-Noite is as follows:

Deus Meia Noite
 La no Cemiterio
 Catacumba Treme
 E o Defunto Geme
 Deus Meia Noite
 La na Encruzilhada
 Seu Meia Noite

Vamos trabalhar.

Approximate translation:

God of Midnight (Meia-Noite),
 Back in the Cemetery
 The Catacomb Trembles
 And the Deceased Moans
 God of Midnight
 Back in the Crossroads
 It is Midnight
 Let's go to work.

This is another invocation for Exu Meia-Noite:

Deu Meia Noite,
 La na Encruzilhada,
 Salve o povo de Aruanda,
 Pois sem Exu,
 Nao se faz nada.

Approximate translation:

He gave Midnight,
 There she is back on the Crossroads,
 Hail the people of Aruanda,
 Therefore without Exu,
 Nothing becomes.

Exu Meia-Note commands a legion of seven other Exus who can also be summoned via his call. These are:

1. Exu Mirim: works with issues relating to women, children, and marriage.
2. Exu Pimenta: works with issues relating to love.
3. Exu Male: this is the Exu of Magick and witchcraft.
4. Exu das Montanhas: rules over the mountains and the waters.
5. Exu Ganga: works with issues concerning justice, vengeance. He can kill as well as save.
6. Exu Caminaloa: said to be one of the most powerful Exus, can cause madness in a person in less than 24 hours.

7. Exu Quirombo: works with issues concerning women, particularly women who have fallen on to a 'bad path'.



Exu in Different Cultures

The veneration Exu is widespread in the New World, as well as in Africa, and he is worshipped under many different names and attributes:

Exu de Quimbanda: The Exu who is the messenger of the deities in Candomble is not Exu de Quimbanda. Exu de Quimbanda has a few similarities in how he is worshipped, such as in the colours he likes, but he is an entirely different entity, originating among the people of Angola, not the Yoruba of Nigeria. While the Exu de Candomble is an Orisha, the Exu of Quimbanda is like a Lordly or Kingly Spirit, and unlike the Candomble Orishas, he can be "bought" or "controlled" by the Quimbanda practitioner to go and do many sorts of deeds, while the Candomble Exu must only be petitioned. Exu de Quimbanda is a Nkuru, a spirit of the forest, while Exu of Candomble is a universal elemental spirit, the spirit of the crossroads and the divine messenger. The similarities between the two are that they both respond to red and black, they both are fed on the road, and they both are very tricky. Beyond that the similarities cease.

Eleggua: Ellegua is another name used among Lukumi for Eshu.

Legba: In Vodou, Papa Legba is the intermediary between the divine and humanity, while Kalfu is his Petro manifestation. Eshu also resembles the Voudon loa Simbi who is both the god of magic and the intermediate between humanity and Papa Legba.

Lucero: In Palo Mayombe, Lucero (also Nkuyo\Mañunga\Lubaniba) is the deity of balance and guidance through paths.

Esu: In Yorubaland, this is an energy that rose out of the Yangi (sacred red rock) and allows people to communicate with the Irunmole, Orisa, Orunmila, and so on. Is the oldest Esu. Also important in the African diaspora.

Invocations to Exu

There are a number of incantations that can be used for the Exus. Please note that the translations provided are not optimal but are given simply as a means of giving the reader an understanding of the basic idea of the incantations. Translations were obtained from the WorldLingo free online translator:
http://www.worldlingo.com/en/products_services/worldlingo_translator.html.

Original incantations are in Brazilian Portuguese.

Here is an invocation to Exu:

Senhor das sombras, da luz, das auras e da aurora
 senhor que nada peço, imploro!
 Que meus passos
 sejam protegidos
 que meus olhos
 que a tudo assistem
 possam ter a sua
 força e soberania!

Approximate translation:

Gentleman of the shadows, of the light, of the breeze, and the dawn
 I implore!
 That my steps
 are protected,
 That my eyes,

That everything
Can have its
Gallows and sovereignty!

Here is an invocation used for all the Exus:

Unha grande,
Braso forte,
Todos Exus vem,
Trazendo a sorte.

Approximate translation:

Great nail,
Strong ember,
All Exus come,
Bringing the luck.

This is the invocation for Exu Mirim:

O meu senhor das almas,
Nao fasas poco de mim,
Eu so tao pequenino,
Eu e Exu Mirim.
No alto das 7 serras,
Eu botou minha capana
Sarava minha Quimbanda,
Vem chegando seu sete,
Montanha (3 times).

Approximate translation:

Oh my gentleman of the souls,
Not fasas well of me,
I am only so small,
Exu Mirim and I.
In the high one of the 7 mountain ranges,
I Quimbanda my purse
capana Sarava mine,
It comes arriving its seven,
Mountain

The following is the invocation used for Exu Curado (healing):

Em terreiro de Umbanda,
Exu vem Sarava,
Se Preto Veio e Doto,

Eu e Exu Curado.
 Deus Meia Noite,
 Na Encruzilhada,
 Seu Meia Noite vamos trabalhar.
 Todo Mundo quer,
 Mas so a Umbanda e que aguenta,
 Chega, chega no terreiro,
 Chega, chega Exu Pimenta.

Approximate translation:

In the land of Umbanda,
 Exu comes Sarava,
 If Black Lode and I endow,
 I am Cured by Exu.
 God Midnight (Meia Noite),
 In the Crossroads,
 It's midnight, let's go to work.
 All worlds he is willing,
 But only the Umbanda and that coping,
 It arrives; it arrives in the earth,
 It arrives, Exu Pimenta arrives.

The following is the invocation used for all the Exus under the command of Exu Meia-Noite:

Portao de ferro, cadeado de madeira.
 Portao de ferro, cadeado de madeira.
 La no caixao roxo, onde mora seu Joao.
 Caveira.
 O meu senhor das almas,
 De mim nao fasas pouco,
 Eu sou Exu,
 Exu Arranca-Toco.
 O meu Senhor das Almas,
 Nao me diga que nao
 Eu sou Exu,
 Exu pagao.

Approximate translation:

Iron gate, wooden padlock.
 Iron gate, wooden padlock.
 Back in the purple coffin.
 Death.
 My distinguished father of the souls,

Of me not fasas little,
 I am Exu,
 Exu Arranca-Toco.
 My Gentleman of the Souls,
 Let me know what not to do,
 I am Exu,
 Pagan Exu.

Symbol of Exu



In Yorubaland, Esu is an energy that rose out of the Yangi (sacred red rock) and allows people to communicate with the Ironmole, Orisa, Orunmila, and so on. It is the oldest Esu. All Esu live in consecrated sacred rocks.

To create a magnetic talisman to invoke the power of the Divine Messenger, you can use the abstract manifestation of Exu as it is expressed in the Odu Ose 'Tura, which appears as follows:

I IIII II III

This is the symbolic representation of the energy pattern that incarnates Exu. In Ifá Creation Myth, the eternal rock of creation is called Oyigiyigi. This rock separated into four calabashes of creation. These four calabashes interacted with one another to form sixteen sacred principles called Olu Odu or the primal principles of creation. In Ifá the sacred number seventeen represents the sixteen primal Odu plus Ose'Tura which is the seventeenth Odu of Ifá. This Odu has the function of causing the Olu Odu to copulate generating the two hundred and forty Odu that are generated by the first sixteen Odu. This suggests that Exu, in addition to being the Divine Messenger, is also the primal seed of generation.

Ifè is the religious tradition of Yoruba culture. It is the parent religion of all the different spiritual societies, fraternities, and sororities that exist within the culture. The reason that Ifá is considered the source of all the other forms of worship within Yoruba

culture has to do with the role of Exu and Ose 'Tura in relationship to the primal Olu Odu. In essence when an Ifá priest is initiated, they invoke the first sixteen Odu, and then they invoke Ose'Tura. This is a ritual reenactment of the original moment of the Creation of diversity within the Universe. This ritual event gives the initiate a glimpse of the primal event that generated being as we experience in human life. It is the mystical vision of that event that gives the Prophet Orunmila the praise name "Eleri - ipin" which means "Witness to Creation."

House Cleansing with Exu

For this ritual, you will need the following items:

2 coconuts
 Cascarilla
 Ammonia
 Brown paper bag
 Food for Exu

To begin, silently meditate on clearing the negativity away from your home and imagine your home as a glowing light or ember. Make a cross on the coconut with the cascarilla, and offer it to your Exu. Light some incense, give him three of his favorite things, and blow some cigar smoke on Exu. Ask Exu to help you cleanse your home with the aid of the coconut. Starting at the back of your home, sweep towards the front door making sure you sweep every part of your house. While you are performing this ritual sing or speak praises to Exu and ask him for guidance. Put all of the waste into the paper bag. Then, wash the floor with ammonia and water and let dry.

Once the floor is dry, take the coconut and roll it from back to front throughout the whole house. As you do this pray to Exu and ask for guidance as you roll the prepared coconut. When you are finished, put some food for Exu in the bag with the waste, and take it and the coconut outside to a crossroads. Smash the coconut against the curb. If it breaks, all is well. If it does not break, take another coconut, mark it with cascarilla as before, and repeat the rolling again. If the second coconut does not break, you need to consult a spiritual advisor, healer, babalawo, or someone of similar status to find out what else is needed. After the coconut breaks, take the paper bag with the waste and food and leave it at a dumpster for Exu. Finally, smudge yourself with the smoke of herbs, such as sage, cedar, or sweet grass, or incense, or take a spiritual bath with herbs for purification.

To Stop an Enemy

Write the name and addresses of your enemies on a piece of parchment paper. Tie the paper with a piece of red string to an old, rusty razor blade. Cover this with charcoal powder and efun powder and put on top of the Exu's altar. Provide Exu with offerings.

To Drive your Enemy's Attention Away From You

Write the name of the person on a piece of paper. Get a big piece of coal, cover it with palm oil, and wrap the paper around the coal. Leave it on Exu's altar or dispose of it near the gate of a cemetery. Provide Exu with offerings.

To Stop Gossip and Incessant Chatter

Buy a fresh cow's tongue, and slice it open down the middle. Write the name of the person on a piece of paper and fold it nine times. Place the paper and nine grains of black pepper, nine needles, red chili powder, nine pieces of Iroko bark (or any hard wood), nine grains of pimenta-da-costa (pepper from the coast), nine pieces of toasted corn, palm oil, fish powder, ekú powder. Twist the tongue and tie it up with red thread. Leave it on the Exu's altar for 3 nights and then take it to a cemetery and hang it on an old twisted tree on a high branch. Provide Exu with offerings.

Songs for Exu

There are a couple of recordings of this song available: 'Bembe' by Milton Cardona & Eya Aranla Ensemble, and Sacred Rhythms of Cuban Santeria on Smithsonian Folkways (they have a great catalog of sacred world music). It's a great one to sing while you feed him, during cleansings, ceremonies, or any time you feel like praising Exu. It brings very good energy when a group sings it in call and response form.

Akpwon: Ibara ago, moyuba
 or gallo Ibara ago, ago moyuba
 Omo ode, koni kosi
 Ibara ago, ago moyuba
 Elegua Eshu Lona
 chorus: repeat

Translation:

My body gives homage, praise,
 I ask your permission, I salute you
 Young child, there is no other,
 My body gives homage, praise
 I ask your permission, I salute you

Akpwon: Akonko ago, Akonko Elegua
 Laroye masoquio
 chorus: repeat

Akpwon: Akonko ago
 chorus : Laroye
 Akpwon: Akonko ago
 chorus: Eleggua
 Akpwon: Akonko ago
 chorus: Lagguana

Akpwon: Esu oh..., Eleggua a eh...
 Esu oh..., Eleggua a eh...
 Eleggua moforibanle baba oba
 Eleggua ago...
 chorus: repeat

Most of the words above are different paths of Exu. The last couple of lines say: Eleggua I prostrate to salute you, father, king, Eleggua I give you praise...

Disclaimer:

The information provided in this guide is meant to assist the reader in understanding the complex deity known as Exu. It is not meant to endorse the practice of magick in any negative form. Please use your knowledge responsibly!

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