

Voodoo [✱]

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a) What is Voodoo?

Voodoo is the name given to a form of Afro-American magical worship, which initially appeared in the 18th century in the islands of the Caribbean and especially Haiti, amongst the black slaves that were violently transported by slave merchants from Africa to the New World. Despite their compulsory conversion to Christianity, the African slaves with their external Christian cloak, maintained their intensely animist, fetishist, magical religious elements, their ritual dances, along with their original symbolisms. Nowadays, voodoo can also be observed, beyond the Caribbean islands, chiefly in the U.S.A.

b) What do Voodoo worshippers believe in?

Voodoo followers believe in a supreme divinity, the Benign being, in various African gods that are considered inferior divinities, as well as in deified ancestral spirits. These gods and spirits are called "Loa". During the slave trade era, they had correlated the Loa with various Roman Catholic saints, in order to disguise the reality of what they believed. The Loa demand devotion and dedication by their worshippers. The most fearsome and ultimately demonic of the Loa are called "Guede" and they are related to death, sex and black magic.

Every family, or even individual groups of people, form worship groups of one or many Loa, and the compulsory presence of a

priest that is either a “hangan” or a “mambo”, who act as mediators for protection. The Loa make their presence felt among the worshippers, when the spirits literally possess them during the course of a ritual.

c) Characteristics of Voodoo worship

The characteristics of this magical and demonic type of worship are: a) The exceptionally intense, frenzied and ecstatic ritual dance, b) the drawing of blood during a ritual, usually through the sacrificing of an animal. In the past, incidents of human sacrifice were also recorded, c) the presence of a priest or priestess, d) the possession of the followers-worshippers by spirits (Loa) during the state of ecstasy, e) the marked presence of the magic-demonic element.

d) Voodoo and black magic

The marked presence of magical practices and demonic entities in Voodoo worship has, to a great extent, related Voodoo practice in the USA and Europe with the practice of black magic in general. In the USA – and especially in New Orleans – voodoo dolls are especially well-known, because of their use in various occult and magic rituals where they are used as substitutes and replicas of the persons that are targeted to undergo pain, sickness or harm. In this context, Voodoo is understood as an occult practice, and not as the name of a specific group.

[*] This article has been composed from information found in the following:

- 1)** Handbuch Religiöse Gemeinschaften und Weltanschauungen, (Hrsg. H. Reller, H. Krech, M. Kleiminger), 5th edition, 2000.
- 2)** H. Gasper - J. Müller - F. Valentin, Lexikon der Sekten, Sondergruppen und Weltanschauungen, 7th edition, 2001.
- 3)** Kirchen, Sekten, Religionen, (Hrsg. G. Schmid, G. O. Schmid), 7th edition, 2003.

4) A. Fincke - M. Pohlmann, Kompass Sekten und religiöse Weltanschauungen, 2004.

5) Kompaktlexikon Religionen, [Hrsg: Rudiger Hauth], 1998.

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