

The Role Of Religions In The African Diaspora

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Vodou And Witchcraft

Individuals from different cultures created different images of Vodou. Each one of them took on its own characteristic shape over the course of several centuries. Although it has not been codified in writing, it never possessed a national institutional structure. This could be a religion, national church, seminary, a hierarchy, or a character.

Witchcraft, on the other hand, also known as black magic, is the harnessing of malevolent forces with the objective of causing harm to other human beings. Almost all religions include what anthropologists call 'transformative practices,' that is, acts that, when appropriately performed by humans, mobilize supernatural forces that affect human lives. These practices are mainly practiced in countries such as North and South America, Cuba, Haiti, and New Orleans. (National Museum of African American History and Culture, n.d.)

These practices were initially practiced by most people from West Africa. These included Nigeria, the Dahomey of Benin, and the Yoruba and Congo people.

Witchcraft and Vodou had some aspects. Some were African, while others were not. Some of the African elements include:

- Invisible Reality

They believed in invisible superpowers that dwelled in the images they formed. They worshipped them and thought they had hidden powers.

- From Healing to killing

The many faces of witchcraft and Vodou had both cures and killing powers. Mostly, witchcraft has bad intentions that could make people ill, go crazy, or entirely kill them. They were mainly triggered by jealousy and greed for power. There were also some non-African aspects, such as the American rain dance, which is transformative and evident in the Roman Catholic Church.

Their belief is mainly based on the existence of these invisible gods, and they offer sacrifices to appease them every once in a while.

Rastafarian As An African Diasporic Phenomenal

This form of religion can also be described as Judeo-Christian-influenced a religious, and social movement that initially originated in Jamaica in the early 1930s. It was inspired by Haile Selassie 1, Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930. Since then, this has been spread in many countries. The practitioners of this religion identify themselves by smoking weed and having deadlocks. Since its origination in Jamaica, the faith has expanded and spread to many other nations in the New World. The many countries where the faith is now practiced include Europe, Asia, New Zealand, the United States of America, and also some parts of Africa.

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To any Jamaican people, they turned to the Bible and, through the literal translation of the documents, found much correlation to what and still is taking place in the world. The Rastafarians continue to follow the many trends from the Bible by interpreting them, leading to practices that make them unique from other religions.

In the new world, the Rastafarians identify themselves by smoking Ganja, which, according to them, helps open up their minds and view the world from a better point of view while reasoning about the different ways of the New World. Before smoking, they pray to Jah (their God) or Haile Selassie 1. Their central dialect or belief is mainly in their speech. Like they say, "If you want to know what Rasta thinks, listen to them talk." They take their speech seriously and make them sound very powerful and grateful compared to other religions.

Candomble And Carnival

Also known as Macumba, Candomble is the acceptance of the existence of many gods in a culture. Carnival, on the other hand, refers to the season in the Catholic liturgical calendar before Lenten fasts and the prohibition of meat. It includes the slaughtering of animals as a form of sacrifice. The practices have become extensively widespread and are being practiced in many countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Uruguay, and Portugal. The method of Candomble (dance in honor of gods) was practiced initially in Africa by the Yoruba, the Bantus from Congo, and the Fon African societies. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)

The aspects of African religion include the black dances by the Bantu people, dramatization, and the use of instruments. Each god was significant in its way, different in its style, and demanded a different approach from the others. Modern carnival started in the early 1930s. The carnivals reproduce the country's social-political history because they reflect the final consolidation of the

contemporary liturgical agglutinative for those young people who are pushed to the margins of history. The practice of Candomble and carnival in the New World is evident in many churches in the countries where Africans moved after slavery. It is evident in Catholic churches and some Orthodox churches that still practice these practices. The dances are still practiced in Brazil.

Many practitioners of this society base their beliefs on the dances and the attires involved. In African countries, they visit churches yearly and learn about the religion from other followers who have been at it for quite some time. (Conerly et al., 2021)

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