

Caribbean Religions

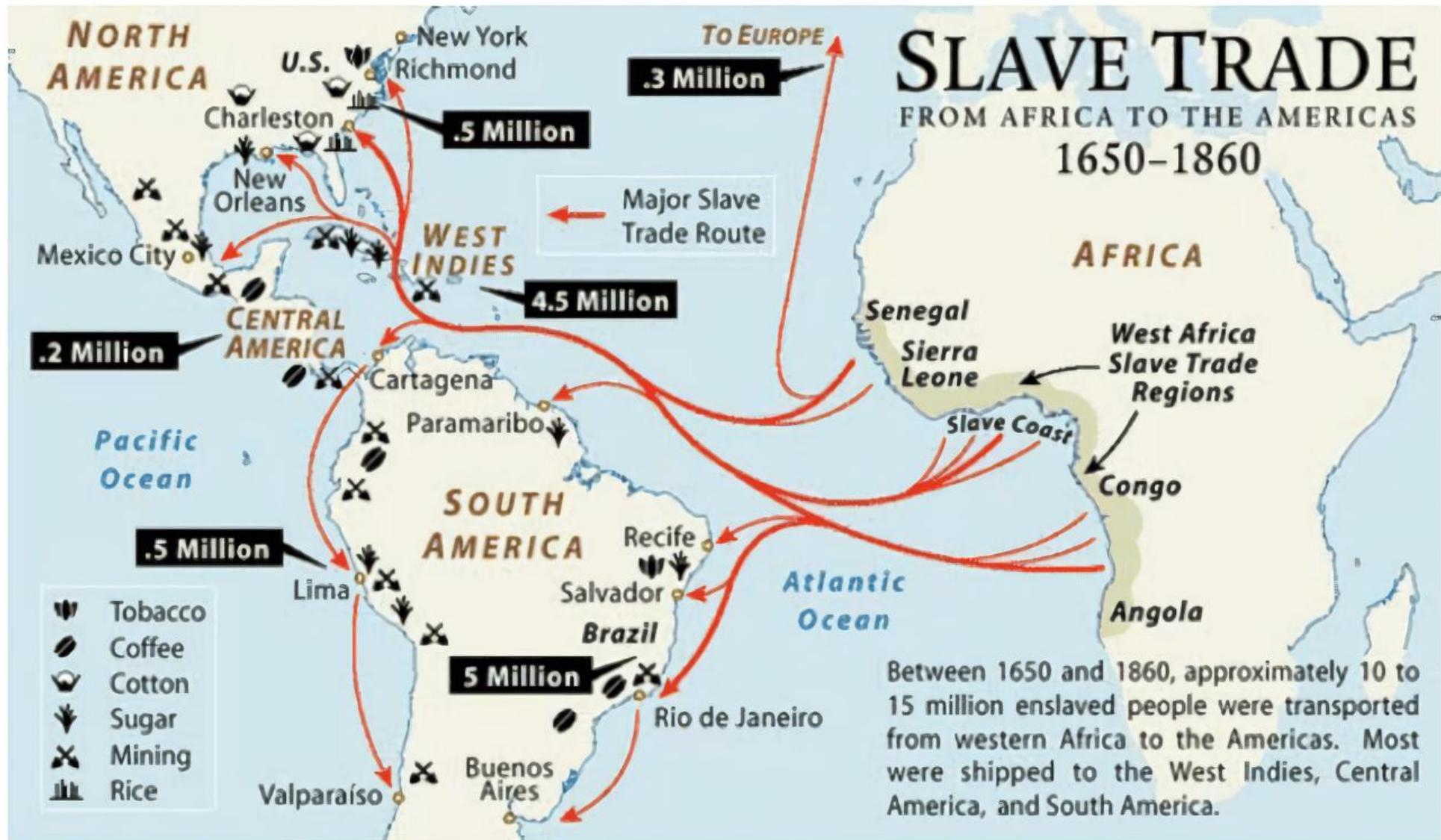
- Mark D. Harris,
- MD, MPH, MBA, MDiv, PhD, ThM, DBA(C)
- MD Harris Institute

The Caribbean



Caribbean Religions – Overview (1)

- Caribbean religions such as Rastafari (1900s), Santeria (1500s), Umbanda, and Voodoo, are a mix of African traditional religions with Catholic influences from Spain, Portugal, and France.
- The slave trade was a major factor in mixing these influences, and consequently these Caribbean religions tend to be about oppressed opposing oppressors.
- Counter-cultural politics, the sanction of revolt, racism, and dealing with slavery are larger themes than eternal salvation, philosophy, and traditional theology.





Slave Trade

**HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF THE MOORS AND THE
GREATEST RACE TRAITORS IN BLACK HISTORY**

Caribbean Religions – Overview (2)

- In Rastafarianism, for example, knowledge comes from group insight, aided by Ganja marijuana.
- God (Jah) is black, the Israelites were black, and whites are inferior to blacks.
- The late Ethiopian Emperor Halle Sellasie (1892-1975) was the savior of blacks and a direct descendent of Israel's King David.
- Ethiopia is heaven on earth and Jamaica is hell.
- There is no afterlife.

Caribbean Religions – Overview (3)

- In Santeria, Olorun is the supreme God but is unapproachable. Spirits called Orishas are His emissaries, ruling over the forces of nature and human lives, but must be sustained by humans offering animal sacrifices.
- Twelve levels of hierarchy, from high priests to commoners, comprise the religion.
- In Umbanda, Ogun is God, but many deities exist. Revelation came to the Red Race of the Tupu lineage in ancient Brazil.
- In Voodoo, priests and priestesses have authority rather than a holy book. They serve as magicians, doctors, confessors, advisors, and story tellers. They perform rites, make potions, and cast spells.

Rastafari History

- Jamaican Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940) provided the ideas and story for Rastafari.
- The movement (Religio-Political Rastafarianism) began when Emperor Haile Selassie (1882-1975) took the throne of Ethiopia in 1930. Selassie was called the Black Messiah.
- The successful Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1935) cast doubt on Selassie's claim.
- Rastafarianism grew more political and less religious in the 1940s-1960s.



Rastafari Racial Beliefs

- Superiority of the Black race
- Hatred of whites (limited exceptions)
- The white race is Babylon, and whites have held blacks down through slavery, poverty, inequality, and trickery.
- Exacting revenge on whites because of the evil perpetrated against blacks
- Opposing and exposing the oppression of blacks in Jamaica
- The need for blacks to return to Africa
- The recognition of Haile Selassie as the messiah and the only legitimate black leader. He lives on in spirit and is directly descended from Solomon (through the Queen of Sheba, 1 Kings 10:1-13)



Emperor
Haile
Selassie of
Ethiopia

Rastafari Beliefs (1)

- Creation – Creator and creation are not separate (monism). Humans and God are one reality (I in I).
- Scripture – the Bible is important, but often incorrect, so personal experience is paramount. Services are called reasoning sessions and augmented with marijuana.
 - Holy Piby (black man's Bible), and Kebra Negast (Ethiopian holy book)
- God – black race, revealed Himself to Moses, and is named Jah. Three avatars of Jah, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, came before Selassie.

Rastafari Beliefs (2) – Moral Code

- No shaving, tattooing, or cutting one's flesh
- Vegetarianism
- Exclusive worship of Rastafari
- Respecting other forms of worship
- Loving all people, especially blacks
- Avoiding vice – hate, jealousy, envy, etc.
- No participating in the pleasures and evils of modern society
- Striving for world brotherhood
- Giving to those in distress
- Following the laws of ancient Ethiopia

Rastafarian Symbols



Rastafari Flag: Features the colors of the Ethiopian flag and the Lion of Judah.

Star of David: Symbolizes the belief that Rastafarians are descendents of the Hebrew.



Marijuana/Ganja: Believed to help believers get closer to Jah.

Dreadlocks: Considered a sacred hairstyle, as well as a form of rebellion against Western standards.



Reggae: A form of music whereby the Rastafarian tenets have been spread.

Rastafari Beliefs (3)

- Mankind – the Chosen People of Israel were black, and modern blacks are their physical and spiritual descendants. White people came from an ancient, inferior civilization
- Salvation – geopolitical salvation by moving to Africa (or Ethiopia)
- Afterlife – Ethiopia is heaven and Jamaica is hell on earth. There is no afterlife or literal heaven or hell.

Rastafari Distinctive Beliefs

- Dietary and consumption practices – Diet is patterned after that of the ancient Hebrews. No pork, “dead flesh”, alcohol, tobacco, or food prepared by any non-Rastafarian. No plates or eating utensils.
- Dreadlocks – tight curls, no combing/brushing, wash with only water, long hair (Num 6:5-6)
 - Cause dread among whites
 - Appear like a lion (Haile Selassie, Lion of Judah)
 - Dreadlocks collect and distribute mental energy so shaking locks releases energy to destroy white power structures
- Reggae music – Bob Marley
- Colors – red (blood of Jamaica martyrs), black (skin color), and green (Jamaican vegetation).



Bob Marley REGGAE

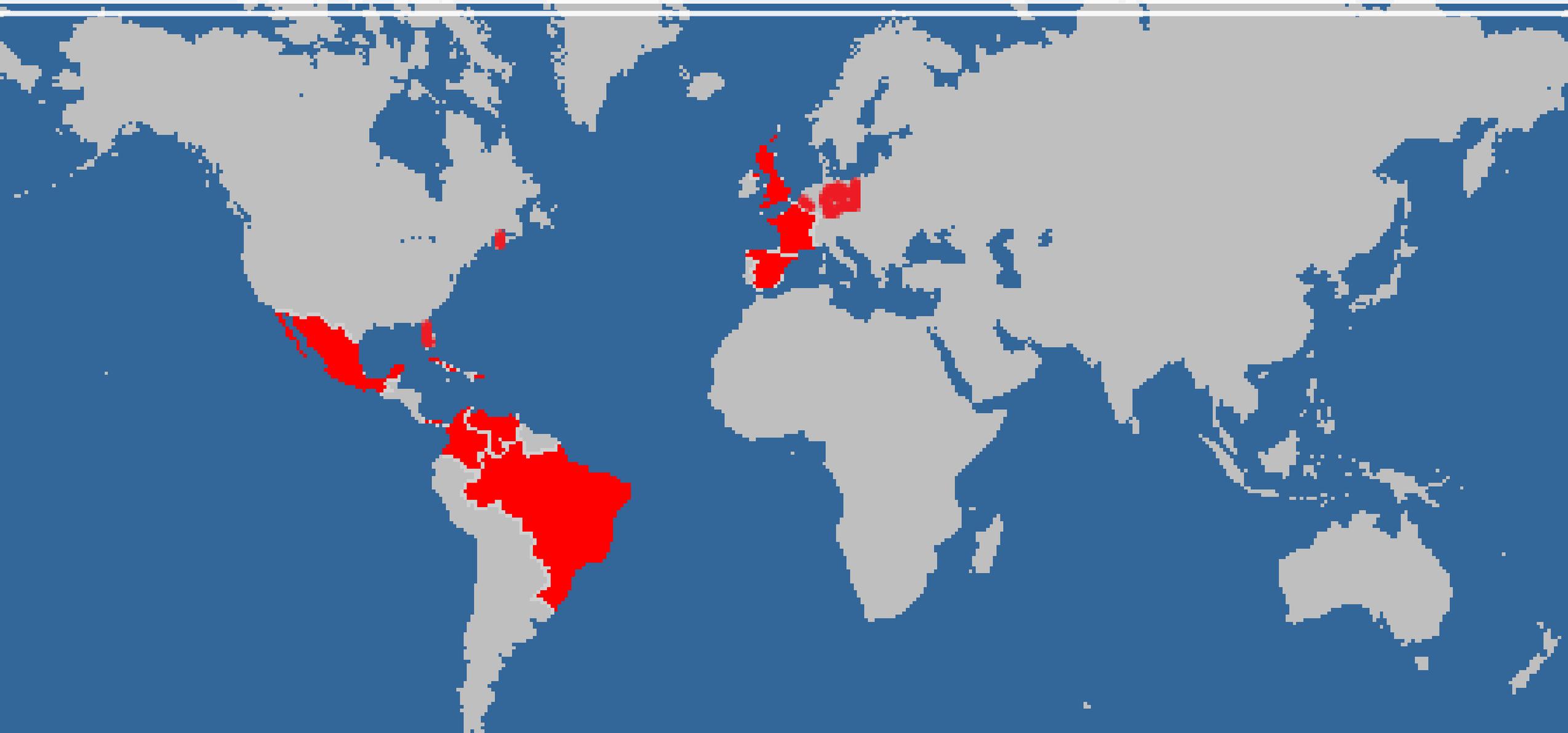


- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 01. Get Up Stand Up | 10. Everything's Gonna ... |
| 02. One Love People Get Ready | 11. Iron Lion Zion |
| 03. Stir it up | 12. Rat Race |
| 04. A lalala long | 13. Get Up Stand Up |
| 05. Stir It Up | 14. One Love |
| 06. Burnin And Lootin | 15. Night Calm |
| 07. Is This Love | 16. Them Belly Full |
| 08. Jamming | 17. Cafe No sugar |
| 09. Could You Be Loved | 18. Small Axe |

Rastafari Today

- Approximately 1 million Rastafarians worldwide, with 3,000 – 5,000 in the US.
- Smaller groups include The Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Ethiopian Nation Congress, the Ethiopian World Federation, and the Nyhabinghi Theocracy Government

Santeria



Santeria History

- African slaves, especially Yoruba and Bantu, in the Caribbean were baptized into Catholicism but retained tribal beliefs and practices. They associated each tribal spirit (orisha) with a Catholic saint.
- Santeria has been secret due to slavery and later public disapproval.
- Santeria has grown in prominence since 1990s

Santeria

A Religion of African Origins.



Santeria Beliefs (1)

- “Santo” means “worship of saints”
- Ashe (“so be it”) – The power that Olorun (god) used to create the universe. All spells and rituals in Santeria are meant to acquire *ashe* from *orishas*.
- Ebo (“sacrifice”) – Sacrifice propitiates orishas so they give ashe to devotees.
- Creation – 5 descending levels of power
 - Olorun – god, source of all ashe.
 - Orisha – saints/spirits
 - Humans – the mediators between physical and spirit world
 - Human ancestors – cannot get ashe except through humans.
 - Everything else – animals, plants, other animate and inanimate things



Ashe Santeria - Orishas

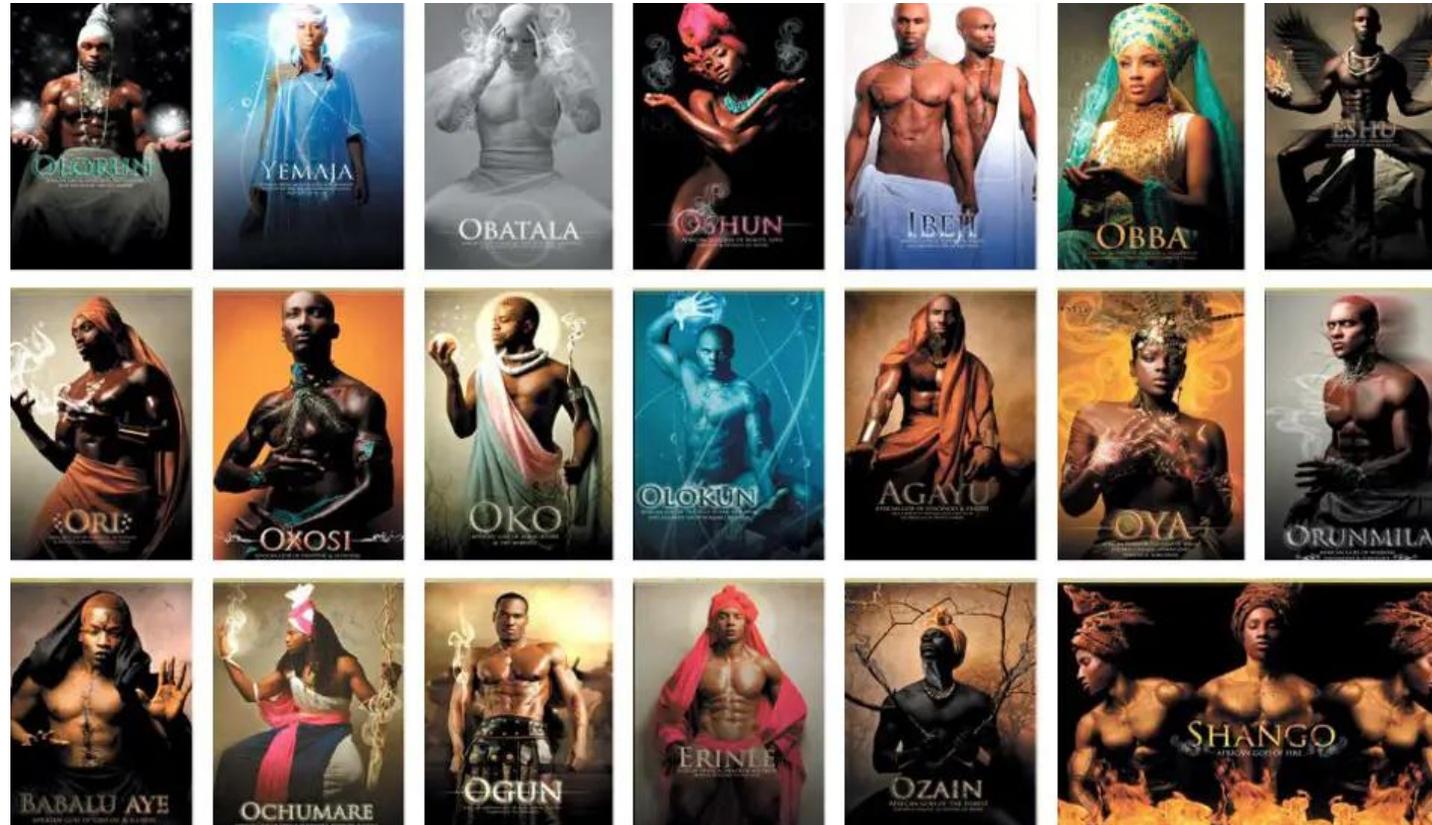
Santeria Beliefs (2) – 12 level hierarchy

- Omokolobas
- Cunaldo/Wanaldo (babalawos) – high priests
- Oluwos – men consecrated to Ifa during an *asiento* ceremony
- Babalawos - men consecrated to Ifa without an *asiento* ceremony
- Santeros – men and women who have received the *Pinaldo* initiation
- Santeros - men and women who have received the *asiento* or *karirocha* initiation
- Aleyos – those who have received the *abo-faca* or *ico-fa* initiation
- Aleyos - those who have received the *los guerreros* initiation
- Aleyos - those who have received the *necklaces* initiation
- Aleyos - those who have not received the *osain amulet*
- Those who believe but have not undergone initiation or received amulets
- Those who do not believe.

Santeria Beliefs (3)

- God (Olorun, aka Olodumare) – remote and unapproachable but active. Devotees do not worship or associate with him.
- Orishas (“breath of life”) – powerful but finite beings that help humans but also must receive sustenance from humans, both food and praise. They are approachable through prayer, ritual offerings (sacrifice), or in a trance
- Man – Unique energy pattern basic to each person’s consciousness and personality. Humans and orishas help each other.
 - Ara Orun – human ancestors who are venerated and entreated for moral guidance

Santeria Orisha (spirits)



Santeria Beliefs (4) – 11 Commandments

- Do not steal
- Do not kill, except in self-defense or for obtaining food
- Do not eat human flesh
- Live in peace with other beings
- Do not covet the property of others
- Do not curse the name of Olorun, aka Olodumare
- Honor your father and mother
- Do not ask for more than can be provided for you. Be content.
- Do not fear death or commit suicide
- Teach Olorun's commandments to your children
- Respect and obey Olorun's laws



Santeria Beliefs (5)

- Salvation - None in a Christian sense
- Afterlife – at death, humans become ancestral spirits and enter the spirit world

Santeria Distinctive Beliefs (1)

- Ceremony of the knife – initiation in which a santero (priest) is given a special knife for major ceremonies. Costs him \$4000.
- Babalu-Aye – initiation in which santeros makes predictions about the initiate's future. Cleansing rituals move problems and illnesses from the initiate to ritual objects. Costs him \$2000
- Botanicas – stores selling charms, herbs, potions, and other Santeria items.
- Agogo – ritual bell that can summon an orisha
- Divination – determine the pleasure or displeasure of an orisha
 - Coconut – All ceremonies and initiations use coconuts.
 - Sea Shell – Each orisha carries his own set of 21 Cowrie shells

Santeria Distinctive Beliefs (2)

- Ritual stones – the spiritual essence of an orisha is carried in groups of stones representing them.
- Palo Mayombe – a darker, more evil version of Santeria.
- Spirits of the dead are the most important
- High God of Light (Ensambi)
- Ceremony – Rayamiento
- Nganga ritual – sticks, bones, and earth placed into a sacred cauldron
- Humans can communicate with spirits and animate objects
- A few similarities with Roman Catholicism

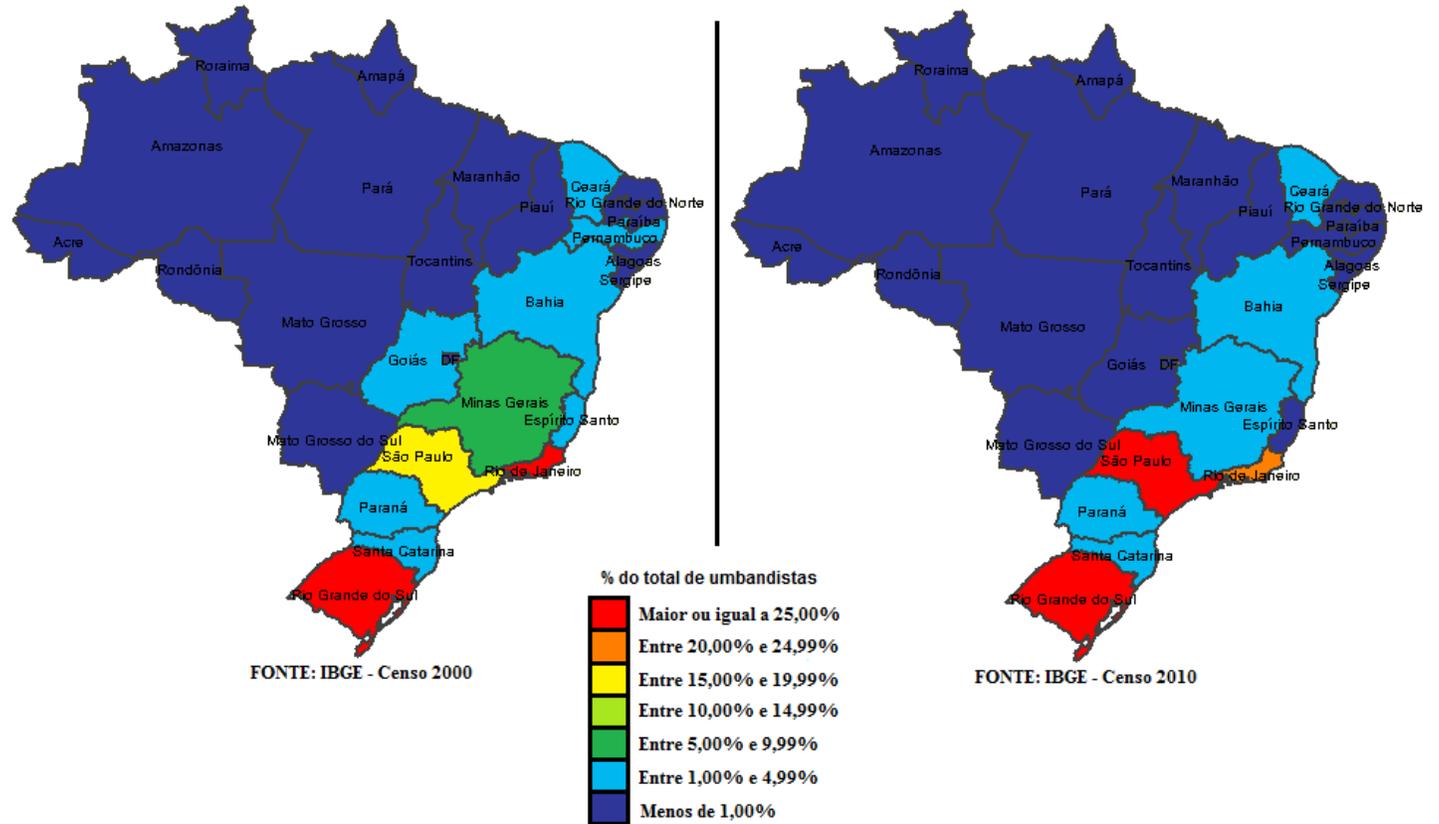
Palo Mayombe



Santeria Today

- Found in Cuba, Haiti, and Hispanic communities in North and South America. Inroads into Europe and Asia.
- Other names
 - Regla de Ocha (the rule of Orisha)
 - Lukumi
 - Condomble Jege-Nago (Brazil)

Umbanda



Umbanda Beliefs (1)

- Creation – Divine laws (Cosmic Proto Synthesis) give rise to generating principles of the universe (religion, philosophy, art, and science).
- Scriptures
 - Doutrina Secreta de Umbanda – WW da Mata e Silva
 - Fundamentos Hermtecos de Umbanda – Rivas Neto
 - Revelation of the Hexagrammatic Cross
 - Spirits of the Cosmic Brotherhood of Umbanda
- God – Ogun, god of war, energy, and metal. Life and death, motion, gravity
 - Numerous spirits organized into lines and phalanges
 - Higher deities - orixa

Umbanda Beliefs (2)

- Man – Spirit beings took human form on earth. The Red Race of the Tupy Lineage in Brazil first embraced Umbanda during Lemuroid times.
- Humans are immortal spirits in perishable bodies, and spiritual developments follows the law of karma.
- Sin – the fundamental conflict in the universe is between spirit and matter.
 - Tupy Manda followed the spirit
 - Tupy Guarany followed the matter
- Salvation – Embrace simplicity, humility, and purity. Eschew selfishness, vanity, and pride.
- Afterlife – all people will eventually gain cosmic awareness



Umbanda Ritual

Umbanda Distinctive Beliefs (1)

- Yantric doctrine – Cosmic codes vibrate to the rhythm and cycles of oxala (divine spirits). People write these codes with chalk called pemba. By writing, worshippers control the forces of nature, call on spirit beings, and get spirits to do their bidding.
- Tantric doctrine – Doctrine of Spiritual Light
- Gira – rituals of Umbanda, including festive gira, development gira, and charity gira.
- Amaci – Macerating herbs in water produces anointing oil
- Fetura de Cabeça – More herbs for Umbanda worshippers.

Umbanda Distinctive Beliefs (2) - Candomble

- First African slaves landed in Brazil in 1549 (from modern Congo, Angola, and Mozambique). Syncretism like Santeria developed.
- Olodumare is the all-powerful god.
- First Candomble Temple was built in Salvador, capital of Bahia, in eastern Brazil
- Temples are under the authority of a black woman who uses divination to contact the orisas.
- Rituals conducted in Yoruba language
- During rites, spirits “enter” worshippers’ bodies



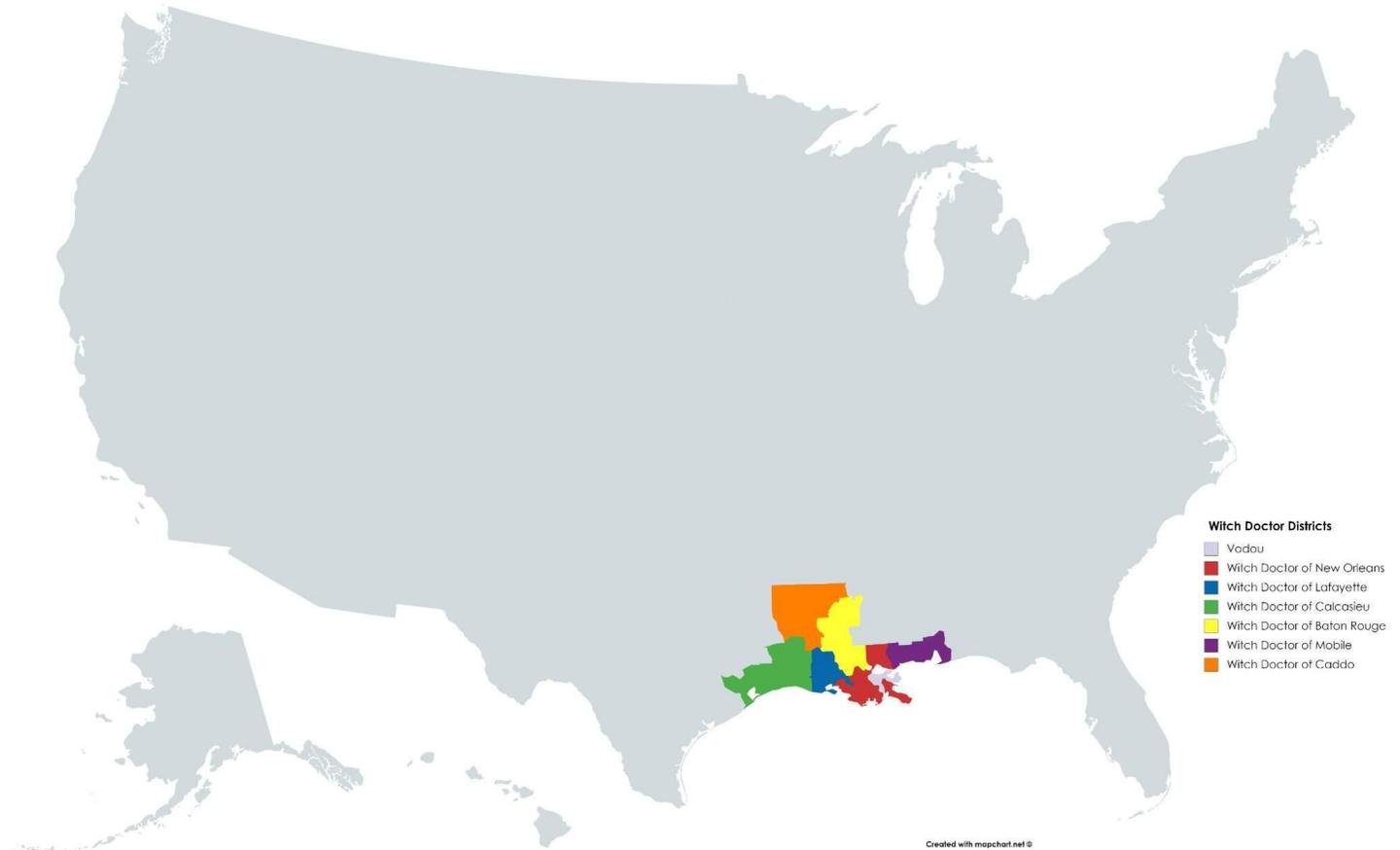
Candomble – Brazilian Umbanda

Umbanda Today

- 70 million adherents and sympathizers, mostly in Brazil
- 19th century - A combination of Nigerian religion, Brazilian spiritism, occultism, eastern religions, and Roman Catholicism
- Established as an organization under the name Alabanda in 1908 by Zelio Fernandino de Moraes.
- WW da Matta e Silva's book Umbanda de Todos Nos made Umbanda famous.
- Private temples
- Umbanda Astral Chain – spiritual beings

Voodoo (Voudoun) History

- A syncretistic mix of West African beliefs carried to the Americas in 1730-1790.
 - Yoruba of Nigeria
 - Fon of Dahomey
 - Kongo of Zaire (DRC) and Angol
- Suppressed by Haitian rulers (1800-1815)
- Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henry Christophe
- Co-opted by the Duvalier regime to convince Haitian that rulers had magical powers.



Voodoo Beliefs (1)

- God – Gran Maitre is the High God and is unapproachable. Voudoun has little dogma and is primarily a set of rituals intended to summon, control, and appease spirits (loa).
- Most voodoo practitioners consider themselves Roman Catholic, attend mass, and do the sacraments.
- Two types
 - Loa Rada – 95%, peaceful and happy and associated with Africa.
 - Loa Petro – 5%, angry and associated with Haiti, black magic, curses, zombies, and sexual orgies.
- Creation – Serpent God Damballah created the waters of the earth, and then the land features. Damballah married the rainbow, Aida-Wedo.

Voodoo Beliefs (2)

- Scripture – No sacred writings. Authority is vested in priests (houngan) and priestesses (mambo). They serve as confessor, physician, magician, counselor, and fortune teller in their communities. They perform initiation rites, cast spells, and concoct potions.
- God - Gran Maitre (Great Master) or Bondye (Good God). He works through spirits (loa) to run the universe.
- Loa
 - Ogou – warrior, stability, order, authority (fire, lightning, phallus)
 - Loco Atisou – wisdom, medicine (sun, ritual waters)
- Voudon adherents believe that Loa do everything; they are not responsible for anything that occurs.



Voodoo Beliefs (3)

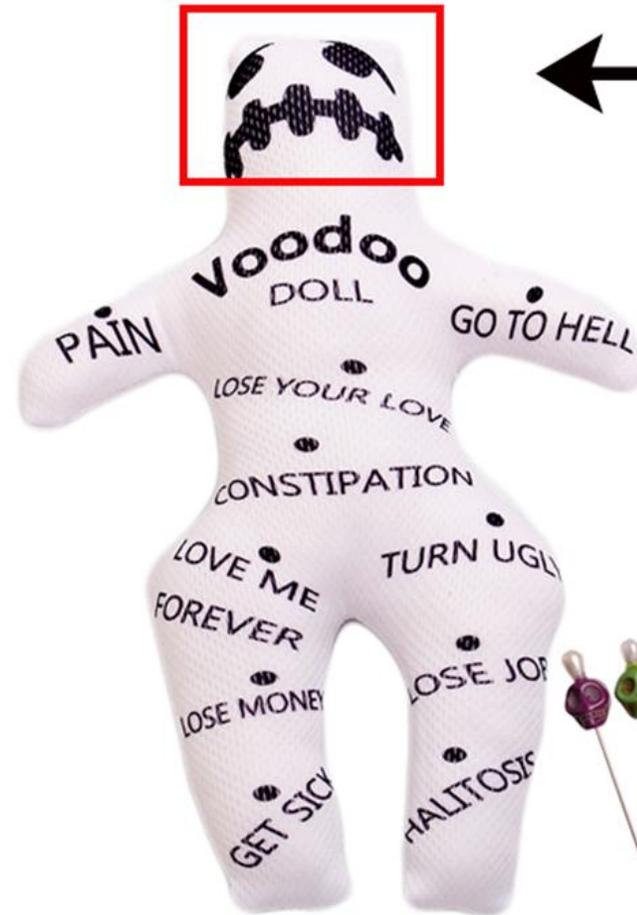
- Man
 - Mortal flesh
 - Spirit of the flesh
 - Star of destiny
 - Soul – big good angel
 - Conscience – little good angel
- At death, the soul and the conscience go to the world of the dead.
- Sin – spiritual fatalism since there is no personal moral responsibility
- Salvation – health and wealth in this world. Rada and Petro ceremonies are in forests and involve dancing, chanting, and trances to summon loa. Animals are sacrificed and the initiate drinks the animal's blood to acquire its loa.
- Afterlife - spirit

Voodoo Beliefs (4) - Afterlife

- At death, the deceased's spiritual aspects (gros-bon-ange and ti-bon-ange) are released.
- The spirit hovers around the body for 9 days, held there by the Nine Nights ritual (cotton in ears and nostrils, tie mouth closed, dance around corpse) performed by a priest.
- After this period, the spirit goes to Ginen, the world of the dead, and becomes a loa.
- If the proper rituals are not done, the spirit can be trapped on earth
- Bokor (black magic) can turn the spirit into a zombie astral
- To keep a bokor from capturing a person's spirit – stake through the heart or decapitation

Voodoo Doll

To harm others or get revenge



DIY: Tape a photo in here

- Pay 18.99 to get a lot pieces (One Voodoo doll and 7 pcs Skull pins)
- A humorous gift and something fun to take your aggressions out on
- Handmade Authentic voodoo doll
- Materials: soft outer fabric, synthetic fiber filler
- This voodoo doll is handsewn
- **You can write on the back with mark pen, the back of the doll is blank**



Voodoo Today

- 80-90% of Haitians practice voodoo to some extent
- Up to 50 million people worldwide include some form of voodoo in their religion
- Voodoo tours in New Orleans and elsewhere





Conclusion

Discussion



References

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- John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Doubleday, Garden City NY, 1969