

Haitians

By Emily Pitek, Human Relations Area Files

Entry tags: Christian Traditions, Catholic, (Afro-)Caribbean religions, Religion

This entry focuses on the people living in the valley of Mirebalais, Haiti, ca. 1935. Albeit reflective of a typical rural, Haitian community, the following information pertains only to the people of Mirebalais and cannot be used to make generalizations about the Haitian population as a whole. More specifically, this entry describes the Vodun (Voodoo) religious group, to which the majority of the people adhere. Despite the importance of Vodun in many aspects of society, Vodun was not officially sanctioned at the time this entry focuses on, and thus the religious group is not considered to be coterminous with the society at large. Vodun consists of African traditions with Catholic influence; key features include the communication with gods through rituals containing dance and spirit possession, which are often led by religious specialists. Important supernatural figures are the Christian God, his son Jesus, saints of the Church, the Holy Ghost, as well as African deities called loa, mysteries, or saints.



Date Range: 1910 CE - 1935 CE

Region: Mirebalais, Haiti

Region tags: Latin America and the Caribbean, Caribbean, Haiti

Town of Mirebalais, Haiti, ca. 1935

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: *Cross-Cultural Codes* 3. *Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.
- Source 2: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.
- Source 3: Tuden, A. & Marshall, C. (Oct., 1972). Political organization: *Cross-cultural codes* 4. *Ethnology*, 11(4), 436-464.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=sv03-001>
- Source 1 Description: Herskovits, M. J. (Melville J. (1937). *Life In A Haitian Valley*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=sv03-000>
- Source 2 Description: Lawless, R., & Abate, T. (2012). *Culture Summary: Haitians*. New Haven: Human Relations Area Files.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: "...vodun derives from a background of African theology and ceremonialism. The second is that the [Haitians] have continuously been subjected to the influence of Catholicism during the centuries that have passed since their introduction into the island" (Herskovits, 1937:141).

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

Notes: "The attitude of the Church toward vodun is one of intransigent hostility" (Herskovits, 1937:289).

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: "...the world view held by the Haitian and the motivations which underlie Haitian life cannot be understood unless both the Catholic and the vodun contributions to them are held in mind" (Herskovits, 1937:286).

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Notes: "The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any vodun hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no such hierarchy exists in this valley" (Herskovits, 1937:145).

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence.

Does the religion have official political support

Answer 'yes' also in cases where the religious and political spheres are not distinguished from one another, but the religious group's activities are tied up with, and supported by, the functioning of the society at large.

– No

Notes: "Today the Church takes full advantage of its status as the only recognized religious organization in Haiti to dictate the official position of government toward vodun. Permission for vodun dances and for services must be obtained from the officer commanding the local detachment of the Garde d'Haiti, and this is not always granted. Penalties for illicit dances and ceremonies are severe, and because gossip is ubiquitous and no man lacks enemies, apprehension is prompt. Thus in the instance of one service, a misunderstanding regarding the permit was sufficient to cause the detention for some hours of the one responsible for the rite" (Herskovits, 1937:289).

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– I don't know

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic information. In addition, "demographic information is at once scarce and unreliable. Haiti has had only four censuses; the latest census results from 2003 came out in 2006. Population was estimated to be 8.4 million and projected to be 10 million in 2010. According to educated estimates, the total population of Haiti in the mid-1990s was about 6.5 million. The total population calculated from the 1971 census was 4,314,628" (Lawlwss and Abate, 2012).

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Estimated population, percentage of sample region: 90

Notes: "The impression gained from reading available works on Haiti is that voduists and Catholics constitute two distinct groups. While this may obtain in some parts of the Republic, it is not true either in Mirebalais or in those other portions of Haiti which came under direct though brief observation in the course of this study...no dichotomy exists in Mirebalais between Catholicism and vodun..." (Herskovits, 1937:286). "The Protestant church in Mirebalais...commands only a very small proportion of the townspeople, and draws even fewer from the surrounding countryside, while the Catholic voduists look upon it with a scorn..." (Herskovits, 1937:287).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "Worship of the loa is directed by priests of the cult. The terms papaloi and mamaloi as designations for male and female priests, almost universally employed by non-Haitian writers, are practically unknown in Mirebalais, where, as in most regions of Haiti, a priest is called a hungan, a priestess a mambu. Besides the hungan (or mambu), and the gangan, a term applied to a hungan of renown, is the bocor, a practitioner of magic, not a member of any vodun priesthood, but a man who

has acquired his power by the purchase of spirits" (Herskovits, 1937:151).

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

Hierarchy need not be formally institutionalized if it is widely recognized and accepted.

– No

Notes: "Though a certain hierarchy seems to exist among the vodun priests in other districts of Haiti, in Mirebalais the organization of the cult is informal to an extreme degree. In the minds of the cult members, various priests in the same region are differentiated according to the types of healing in which they have had the greatest success, and the 'miracles' to their credit, such as a hungan who had achieved a wide reputation for being able to resuscitate dead children" (Herskovits, 1937:152).

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: "One important priest there derives his power from loa that have never been baptized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control them" (Herskovits, 1937:145).

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in the current life:

– No

Notes: "One important priest there derives his power from loa that have never been baptized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control them" (Herskovits, 1937:145).

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– I don't know

Notes: Due to Christian influence, the Bible is present among the Haitians. However, it is unclear if there is a scripture unique to the Haitian voodoo religious beliefs.

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson, 1972, column 6, Large or Impressive Structures, "The most impressive structure (or type of structure) is a temple, church, commemorative monument, or other essentially religious or ceremonial edifice" (Note, identical to SCCS Variable 66).

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Temples:

– Yes

Notes: "Any such important ceremony must be held on the ancestral habitation, and centers in the maison de servitude, the family house of service for the gods. The house itself, to be differentiated from the humfort, or 'temple' of the vodun priest, may be elaborate or simple in accordance with the status of family members in the vodun cult" (Herskovits, 1937:155).

↳ Altars:

– Yes

Notes: (Herskovits, 1937:156, 159, 277).

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: "Beside the church, Ville-Bonheur has three especially sacred spots, St. John, En bas Palmes, and Saut d'Eau – the falls themselves. At St. John is a large campêche tree surrounded by many palms, from beneath which flow streams of water. St. John is said to have appeared here, carrying his scepter as in the chromolithographs, and at that time water began to flow in the sacred springs, and except for one short period has continued ever since as holy water, being used for drinking and bathing, but never for purposes of cooking" (Herskovits, 1937:282).

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Notes: "The third sacred spot is at the falls themselves, where the grandeur and beauty of the scene is such as to induce the religious thrill almost unaided, and where great numbers go in the course of their pilgrimage to Ville-Bonheur. There are two falls, situated at a distance of several miles from the village, one for Damballa and one for Aida Wedo, and it is believed that those who bathe in the sacred streams become possessed. It is said that the palms near by are sacred to the Virgin, but others hold that they are for Damballa. Many visit the falls on the day preceding the fête, but the largest throng hurries there immediately after the principal mass, when the greatest number of possessions and the most violent seizures by the loa occur. The falls, therefore, in association with the purely Catholic rituals carried on at the village church, are seen to hold an important if unofficial place in the complex of rites known in the Haitian Church calendar as the Fête of Saut d'Eau" (Herskovits, 1937:284).

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of pilgrimages.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "Man has been endowed with a soul, and the soul, which has come from God, returns to God for judgment and, if necessary, for punishment at the end of its sojourn on earth" (Herskovits, 1937:142).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "The souls of the dead are held first to go to God in the sky, where they are condemned to purgatory or hell or permitted to remain in paradise..." (Herskovits, 1937:215).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1998, Belief in Reincarnation of Deceased Adults, indicates "none" (Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, 1976; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: See below for specific details regarding the treatment of corpses.



Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cremation.



Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mummification.



Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "After mass has been sung, the priest and mourners walk in procession to the graveyard, where the body is placed in a tomb if one has been prepared for it, or interred underground, awaiting the building of a tomb" (Herskovits, 1937:209).

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– Yes

Notes: "After the prayers have been said and relatives and friends have addressed the dead and 'given him commissions,' such as 'Say good-day to my mother,' 'Ask my father to help us, for the weather has been bad this year for the crops ...' the body is placed in the coffin, which must always be used for burial" (Herskovits, 1937:207).

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that corpses were exposed to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that corpses were fed to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850, Secondary Bone/Body Treatment: Original Scale, indicates that "secondary contact with the body or bones of the deceased does not occur" (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850, Secondary Bone/Body Treatment: Original Scale, indicates that "secondary contact with the body or bones of the deceased does not occur" (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "In the coffin are placed a rosary, a scapulary, soap, a comb, a handkerchief, a pipe (if the dead had been a smoker), and face powder; but no strong drink is included because, were the spirit of the dead person to become drunk, this would be dangerous; and no money, for if so much as a single sou were given the dead, he would return and take the rest of the family wealth. Similarly no food is put in the coffin, for otherwise it is believed that the ghost would be so busy eating he would never find the route to the sky. Pins are carefully excluded, because if the dead were given sharp objects, he would return to prick the family" (Herskovits, 1937:106).

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: Herskovits, 1937:106

↳ Valuable items:

– No

Notes: Herskovits, 1937:106

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: For a full description of burial practices, see Herskovits, 1937:205-209.

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Notes: "After mass has been sung, the priest and mourners walk in procession to the graveyard, where the body is placed in a tomb if one has been prepared for it, or interred underground, awaiting the building of a tomb" (Herskovits, 1937:209).

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "Sharing powers and prerogatives with the loa in the supernatural world are the souls of the dead, the spirits of twins, and, in a specialized sense, magic, all working parts of a universe the ultimate force in which is God, who is sometimes spoken of as its Gran' Maît'" (Herskovits, 1937:199).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 238, Religion: high gods [identical to Ethnographic Atlas column 34], indicates "a high god present, active, and specifically supportive of human morality" (Murdock, 1962-1972; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

Notes: No monarchy is present.

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

Notes: No monarchy is present.

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– Yes

Notes: "Since the world is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of His Church before the rites to placate the loa may begin" (Herskovits, 1936:272).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "...a study of the twin cult as found in that part of West Africa from which so much of Haitian culture came, where a single category of the supernatural world, comprising all ancestors, includes both twins and the dead, as well as all others 'who have passed through the womb of a woman.' As might be expected, the concept is more elaborated in West Africa than in Haiti; but the important point is that in Haiti, though less explicitly formulated, it has persisted" (Herskovits, 1933:200).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: From Africa came "...other deities, termed variously loa, mystères, or saints, and these deities have been inherited through succeeding generations by the descendants of those who brought them to Haiti" (Herskovits, 1927:142).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– Yes

Notes: The loa can be physically felt while possessing an individual (see Herskovits, 1937:143).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "The loa make known their desires by means of possessing their devotees and speaking through them, or by divination, and if these desires are not gratified, they will mildly harass the family of their devotees, until, thoroughly angered, they will seek full vengeance for this neglect" (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ These supernatural beings can reward:

– Yes

Notes: The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial of worship" (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ These supernatural beings can punish:

– Yes

Notes: The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial of worship" (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

"Indirect causal efficacy" refers to not being seen as consciously, directly and actively intervening in the human world, but their overall well being or general attitude has effects on, e.g., quality of harvest, success in war, health, etc.

– Yes

Notes: "The specific function of the African spirits in the Haitian system was given in the following terms by one of their devotees: 'The loa are occupied with men, their task is to cure. They can make a person work better than he otherwise would. When the loa possess people, they give helpful advice. But they cannot do the things that God does. They can protect a garden, but they cannot make a garden grow, for streams, rain, and thunder come from God'" (Herskovits, 1937:142).

– Yes

Notes: "Damballa, an important Rada god whose symbol is the serpent, is said to bring rain because they sing 'Damballa nan l'eau – Damballa in the water'" (Herskovits, 1937:315).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "A loa that helps a man when friendly toward him may, if slighted or vexed, set about to do him harm, or, at best, merely remain passive when danger is to be averted. For the loa, like human beings, are creatures of mood and may take umbrage at some act which had created no displeasure before" (Herskovits, 1937:219).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "A loa that helps a man when friendly toward him may, if slighted or vexed, set about to do him harm, or, at best, merely remain passive when danger is to be averted. For the loa, like human beings, are creatures of mood and may take umbrage at some act which had created no displeasure before" (Herskovits, 1937:219).

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:

– I don't know

Notes: Ethnographic information states that the loa eat and drink offerings, but it is unclear if this is due to hunger. See Herskovits, 1937:318.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: Saints are present and active among the Haitian belief system (see Herskovits, 1937:279-280). Specific characteristics of these beings are not elaborated in sufficient detail to answer further questions.

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: "Sharing powers and prerogatives with the loa in the supernatural world are the souls of the dead, the spirits of twins, and, in a specialized sense, magic, all working parts of a universe the ultimate force in which is God, who is sometimes spoken of as its Gran' Maît'" (Herskovits, 1937:199).

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

Notes: Ethnographic evidence indicates that supernatural monitoring is present, but there is insufficient detail to answer specific questions regarding supernatural monitoring. "When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no 'last prayer,' because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated" (Herskovits, 1937:213).

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:

– Yes

Notes: "When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no 'last prayer,' because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated" (Herskovits, 1937:213).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial of worship" (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to God (Herskovits, 1937:142), the loa mete out supernatural punishment

(Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: In addition to God (Herskovits, 1937:142), the loa mete out supernatural punishment (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to God (Herskovits, 1937:142), the loa mete out supernatural punishment (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more details.

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "The loa make known their desires by means of possessing their devotees and speaking through them, or by divination, and if these desires are not gratified, they will mildly harass the family of their devotees, until, thoroughly angered, they will seek full vengeance for this neglect" (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– Yes

Notes: "When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no 'last prayer,' because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated" (Herskovits, 1937:213).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "Man has been endowed with a soul, and the soul, which has come from God, returns to God for judgment and, if necessary, for punishment at the end of its sojourn on earth" (Herskovits, 1937:142).

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as an inferior life form:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1998, Belief in Reincarnation of Deceased Adults, indicates "none" (Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, 1976; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in an inferior realm:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1998, Belief in Reincarnation of Deceased Adults, indicates "none" (Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, 1976; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more detailed information on supernatural punishments.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial of worship" (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: Death: "When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no 'last prayer,' because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated" (Herskovits, 1937:213).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more details concerning supernatural rewards.

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to God (Herskovits, 1937:142), the loa mete out supernatural rewards (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: In addition to God (Herskovits, 1937:142), the loa mete out supernatural rewards (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to God (Herskovits, 1937:142), the loa mete out supernatural rewards (Herskovits, 1937:154).

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties [rituals, sacrifices, etc.] is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men..." (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "The souls of the dead are held first to go to God in the sky, where they are condemned to purgatory or hell or permitted to remain in paradise..." (Herskovits, 1937:215).

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as a superior life form:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1998, Belief in Reincarnation of Deceased Adults, indicates "none" (Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, 1976; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in a superior realm:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1998, Belief in Reincarnation of Deceased Adults, indicates "none" (Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, 1976; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties [rituals, sacrifices, etc.] is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men..." (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties [rituals, sacrifices, etc.] is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men..." (Herskovits, 1937:153).

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are

equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties [rituals, sacrifices, etc.] is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men..." (Herskovits, 1937:153).

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of an eschatology.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of celibacy.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of castration.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Yes

Notes: "The loa make known their desires by means of possessing their devotees and speaking through them, or by divination, and if these desires are not gratified, they will mildly harass the family of their devotees, until, thoroughly angered, they will seek full vengeance for this neglect. Fortunately, the wants of many of the gods are modest, and they are satisfied if a candle is occasionally lighted, some water 'thrown away' in the place of worship, and they are kept informed of family happenings. But when the loa finally clamor for a sacrifice, the time when it is to be made is deferred until the necessary preparations can be completed, for the attitude of the Haitians toward the gods in such matters, as one explained it, is that 'Mystère c'est 'ti moun, faut les derigé – The loa are like children, and must be told what to do,' and 'If the loa are promised a sacrifice, they must accept the date set by the one who serves them.' But when that date arrives, the ceremony must be held or the loa will cause their worshippers much trouble...For the ceremony, sacrifices not alone of cereals and drinks but also of the blood of animals are provided; at the vodun dance only minor offerings are given. And while both types of ritual are a part of a single functioning religious system, it is at the first where the most important end is achieved, that of obtaining protection from hostile gods and gaining the favor of those who are friendly" (Herskovits, 1937:154-156).

↳ Other:

– Yes [specify]: Buried

Notes: "After the animals have been killed, a long period of quiet ensues while the work of dressing and cooking them takes place, the ceremony beginning anew when this is done...Most of the food given such gods is placed in large pots and buried in the earth with them, but, with characteristic human perversity, if the sacrifices have been for good loa, these are only allowed to have small portions" (Herskovits, 1937:158).

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Yes

Notes: "Simple annual rites are held for the gods in January, each family giving small offerings in its house of worship to its own deities" (Herskovits, 1937:155). It can be assumed that these rituals are required because if not held, the loa will "cause their worshippers much trouble" (ibid., 154).

↳ What is the average interval of time between performances (in hours):

Performances here refers to small-scale rituals.

– I don't know

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– I don't know

Notes: Large-scale rituals take place, such as communal dances (see Herskoviris, 1937:177-184), as well as the annual festival in honor of the Virgin of the Palms (Herskoviris, 1937:282), but it is unclear if participation is required.

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

This question refers to the wider society in which the religious group is located.

– A state

Notes: The Haitian society has three levels of jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community, which is indicative of a state society (Ethnographic Atlas column 33, Murdock, 1967; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence of formal education among the religious group.

Enforcement

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The society to which the Haitian religious group belongs has a police force. According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 10 Police (note, equivalent to SCCS Variable 90), indicates that "police functions are assumed by the military organization."

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The society to which the Haitian religious group belongs has a government judiciary. According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 9 Judiciary (note, equivalent to SCCS Variable 89), indicates that "supreme judicial authority is vested in a functionary or functionaries who are appointed by the supreme executive and/or the supreme deliberative body but are at least relatively independent of the appointing authority."

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Yes

Notes: "...the Haitian Church calendar..." (Herskovits, 1937:284).

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Haitians are primarily agriculturalists with a secondary dependence on animal husbandry. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Pastoralism

– Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

– Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

Notes: The Haitians are primarily agriculturalists with a secondary dependence on animal husbandry. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.