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Hatian Vodou as a Crossroads: Symbolism and the Intersection of Place, Time, and Space

# ABSTRACT

While it is evident that Haitian Vodou is a product of creolization, that is, transculturation in the new world, analysis of the symbolism, syncretism, history, and spirituality of Vodou reveals that the religion functions as an intersection of segments within various planes. Vodou is not only the product of collisions between cultural groups, as it is well established that Vodou traditions are heavily influenced by French Catholicism, but also of timelines and spiritual realms. This research visualizes this compound intersection as a crossroads, emphasizing fluidity, movement, and travel. The image of a crossroad is also embedded within vodou iconography and is worth examining in connection with this argument. This is accomplished through an examination of the prominent use of the cross and the role of the *lwa* Legba. *Lwa* are Vodou spirits and intermediaries between practitioners and the deity Bondye. The syncretism mentioned here refers to the combination and fusion of elements from different cultures within which the ethnic and religious components are emphasized in order to identify the most relevant points of convergence. The history of Haiti provides the lens through which to view this syncretism, as well as the simultaneous evolution and progress of Vodou as a means of survival and resilience. The spiritual aspect is the final intersecting dimension that demonstrates how fluidity through space and time is an integral part of how Vodou practitioners are able to interact with higher beings. The dual concept of *Gine*, a spiritual world, is also discussed as it serves as the home of the *lwa* as well as the role of the African homeland. As an example of creolization, the layered history of Vodou and its interwoven religious elements allow for the description of the religion as a union between regions, periods, and states of being.