



Mysteries and Secrets of Voodoo, Santeria, and Obeah

By Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe

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The secrets of Santeria, Voodoo and Obeah are among the oldest enigmas in the world. Their roots go back to pre-historic Africa - perhaps even beyond that. From the 16th century onwards, the slave trade brought these ancient mysteries to the West, where they blended strangely with traditional Christianity: the ancient African gods became identified with legendary saints. This integration of the two faiths slowly evolved to form the many varieties of Santeria, Obeah and Voudoun that are widely practiced throughout the world today. Their characteristic dancing and drumming seem able to invoke strange states of mind in which almost anything is possible. Even stories of zombies - the walking dead - still persist. Is there a rational explanation for them? Contemporary Voudoun priests, priestesses, magicians and enchanters use rare herbs and spices as well as charms, dolls and talismans to control the natural world in ways that science cannot always explain. Accounts of their inexplicable successes are examined in depth. Most intriguing of all are the claims that are made for their love philtres and aphrodisiacs. What powers do these old religions still possess?

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