TITLE: VOODOO IN HAITI

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Thesis:
Vodou or voodoo, as it is more commonly referred, is an official religion of Haiti (along with Roman Catholic) and came to Haiti from Africa by slaves. Vodou, which literally means “spirit” and its basic tenets, are very important to the globalization of African religion and contributed greatly to sustained identity of Africans and resistance in the African Diaspora during times of slavery.

Core Concepts/Keywords:
Vodou, voodoo, Haiti, tenets of voodoo, voodoo as official religion, African Diaspora, globalization of African religion, slavery

Primary Source:

Citation:

Annotation:
This is a video about voodoo in Haiti. It gives a real life account of life as a person who follows voodoo in Haiti. It is told from the perspective of a priest during an interview. This source is very useful in visualizing the practices of vodouisants. It is also helpful in the pronunciation of many of the voodoo terms. The method used is a documentary style PBS special that is meant to be very informative. The program told of the history, the ways of worship, misconceptions and the way of life of vodouisants. This source is very helpful in giving a true life representation of what the books and the websites tell already to give a clearer understanding of voodoo.

Print Reference Source:

Citation:

Annotation:
This “dictionary” is really a directory. It lists and gives a brief description of all the holidays and celebrations that go on around the world. This source is useful in examining how voodoo is celebrated and gives in sight into the types of values voodoo deems as important. For example, most of the voodoo celebrations are focused on worshiping the spirits. The method this reference source uses is great because looking up one religion/ place/ culture gives a list of the location in the dictionary of all the celebrations and/ or holidays of that religion/ place/ culture. This must be reliable because it is a reference source. This source is helpful in interpreting the source and relevance of the celebrations of voodoo, which at first seems to be kind of random.

Electronic Reference Source:

Citation:

Annotation:
This article in Britannica gives a brief overview of voodoo. This source is very useful in outlining the important categories of the religion. It uses a general information and a lot of the language of voodoo to outline the basic tenets of the voodoo. This is highly recommended as a starting point in research on the topic of voodoo.
Web Sites:

Citation:

Annotation:
This website explains thoroughly the basic properties of the rituals in voodoo. This source is very useful in explaining the purpose of having more than one god in voodoo and it allows visual representation of the ceremonies because it shows photo galleries of voodoo ceremonies. This is a National Geographic website so it is deemed as very reliable because National Geographic is known for its first hand cultural interviews and investigations followed by a factual follow up. This source is a very good source for those in need of a visual representation of voodoo not only in the pictures but in the clearly written article as well.

Citation:

Annotation:
This is a website that gives news from around the world on different religions practiced. The article “Haitian Students Explain Voodoo” summarizes a panel held at Howard University that “set the record straight” in regards to voodoo. It explains the misconceptions of voodoo and where they arose from. This source is useful in addressing some of the misconceptions of voodoo. However, it does not elaborate on these misconceptions. This is because it is summarizing a panel. Because the panel was done by Haitian students they do know the most about voodoo. However, their reliability may be questioned because they may be portraying a bias about the religion and they are not scholars. But this is what the panel was for, to help American Howard students understand voodoo in a non American way because America media portrays voodoo much worst than it truly is. As an opposing viewpoint, this is an excellent source because they have first hand knowledge of voodoo!

Books:

Citation:

Annotation:
This is a book that describes significance of Haitian religions in depth. The main religions in Haiti are Voodoo, Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. However, this book focuses more on the Roman Catholic and voodoo roles in shaping the culture in Haiti. This source is very useful in voodoo research. It dedicates whole sections to describing the origins and development of voodoo in Haiti. Desmangles approach is a survey of many theories that have arisen in relation to voodoo. For example, he explains a few theories on the origins of the negative associations that voodoo has. This source would be strongly recommended for the research on the contribution of other world religions on voodoo. This source is very interesting because it does give an analytical perspective but it does not draw only from the author’s opinion but draws from outside sources and theories as well.

Citation:

Annotation:
This book is an in depth explanation of voodoo. It is useful in providing very detailed information about voodoo in Haiti. It is obvious that Laguerre is an expert in this field of study because he goes into detail of every aspect of voodoo in Haiti. Laguerre is very organized in his presentation. He divides each chapter into sub chapters and includes a conclusion for each chapter. This is the best source for unlocking voodoo in Haiti because it explains a bit of everything.

**Annotation:**
This is a book describing voodoo in Haiti as it relates to the lower class—the peasants. The majority of people who do practice voodoo are of a lower class. Remember that voodoo started from slaves from Africa and when they were freed many did not have money so they were peasants. So this bit of information makes the importance of knowing the peasant perspective of voodoo very obvious. Metraux explains voodoo in depth just like most of the other sources do. However, he adds in something that is lacking from the others—the importance of voodoo in a peasant society in giving them strength to carry on. This source was good because not only does it explain, but it also shows pictures of voodoo practices in a peasant society, making what the author says more real.

**Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles:**

**Citation:**
<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/e-resources/jstor.html>

**Annotation:**
This is a journal article which evaluates the battle between the church and the state in Haiti. In this case, the state is referring to Catholicism and the church is referring to voodooism. Catholicism was the mold that held Haitian politics together. “Politics and Religion in Haiti” is useful to research on voodoo in Haiti because it goes into depth about what Catholics did to suppress voodoo. Nicholls speaks of the Catholic anti-superstitious campaign which was aimed to lure people away from voodoo (which was thought to be superstitious). This source is reliable because it has been published into a peer reviewed journal article. This source gave insight to the Catholic role in politics in Haiti and what it actually did to make voodoo Haitians rebel.

**Citation:**
<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/e-resources/aph.html>

**Annotation:**
This is a journal article that explains the significance of symbolic representation in voodoo or *veve*. Because voodoo is a religion that does not have a written text, it is very important to embrace the visual creative nature in voodoo. This article is useful because it explains how visuals work in voodoo. This article is very reliable because it has been published and peer reviewed by other experts on the topic. This source is not only fundamental in learning how to practice voodoo, it is also extremely interesting.

**Newspaper Article:**

**Citation:**
<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/e-resources/lexisnexis.html>

**Annotation:**
This article tells about the pilgrimage to Souvenance in Haiti. It happens every year in Haiti on Easter. People who practice voodoo in Haiti pilgrimage here to praise the loas and to celebrate independence from French rule. This source is useful in learning what is important in voodoo. It is clear here that being thankful to the loas for their assistance is one of the most important aspects in voodoo. This source is reliable because it comes from the New York Times which is a highly respected newspaper. However, because it is a special report on an event, it may show some bias. This is an excellent short explanation of one of voodoo’s many celebrations.
Additional Sources:

Citation:

Annotation:
This book about secret political societies. This source is useful in voodoo research because it does have a section devoted to Bizango, which was a voodoo secret society in Haiti. It was around during the Haitian revolution. It explains how Haitians used voodoo practices and spirits to help them to fight the political battle of the time. The book’s method is using different experts from each field and compiling a collection of essays written about different secret societies. This book is a good source because it goes in depth about the secret society which helps in understanding voodoo’s role in the Haitian Revolution.

Citation:

Annotation:
This is a book illustration the importance of music in the cultural aspects of voodoo. Even though it is not relevant in the political aspects associated with voodoo, it helps to understand the purpose of the practices in voodoo. This book gives the purpose of musical pieces and art works in Haitian culture as a representative of voodoo. This source is very useful in deepening one’s understanding of Haitian culture as it relates to voodoo.

Citation:

Annotation:
This is an online reference source which gives an overview of voodoo in Haiti. The section on Haitian voodoo beliefs was most useful in learning the tenets of voodoo religion. In the other sources, the tenets were so spread out and there was really no one main section dedicated to it. This general reference gives surface information on the main areas in Haitian voodoo. The reliability of this Wikipedia article is questionable because the information can be changed by anyone. The best way to combat this is to use this as a starting point in the research but be sure to confirm its validity with other authoritative sources. This is an alright source for starting research but it is not recommended to take the information as valid.

Citation:

Annotation:
This is an electronic reference source also giving a general overview of voodoo religion. This article is extremely useful in giving the legacy of voodoo and explaining voodoo as it currently stands today. This source is very reliable because it is edited in an encyclopedia and the bibliography includes a book authored by Alfred Metraux. One of his other books is very useful in research on voodoo in Haiti. This is also a great starter research source.