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Santeria and Satanism

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Most recently, the Santeria cult has come under public scrutiny due to reported events of child abuse and murder that appear to have been the result of Santeria ritual. On May 24, 1987 the Daily News ran a feature article on child abuse entitled "Child's testimony sinks dad." (5-24-87 p.4) The article told the story of a man who was convicted of abusing his five year old daughter. The child's testimony included graphic scenes of robed and masked adults participating in sexual practices with children and each other and the murder of "children," who's existence alive or dead have yet to be ascertained. The child's father is Nigerian, and the allusion to "robes" led the media to conclude that she'd been used in a secret ritual which resembled Santeria ritual. Maury Terry, author of The Ultimate Evil, published by Doubleday, 1987, in a telephone interview, claimed that "As soon as I read the article, I knew they were heavy into Satanism." Mr. Terry's remark appears to be the sentiments of the public in general. In June, 1984, Battle Cry Publications of Chino California printed, under the headline **Satan Worship Rituals On the Increase**, the following:

The immigration of nationals from some Caribbean countries has brought a practice of ritualistic killing of chickens and pigs in the southeastern states. Residents in certain areas frequently

observed mutilated animal carcasses in streams and lagoons.

Unpleasant, yes. Satanism, no. While comparisons can be drawn between Santeria and just about any other cult or religion, we must strongly object to the popular misconception that Sanetero's are worshipers of the Christian devil.

In Rituals and Spells of Santeria, Migene Gonzales-Wippler says:

Santeria is a Spanish word that means the worship of saints. It is the name given to an Afro-Cuban religion which is a mixture of the mythology and the magico-religious practices of the Yorubas of Southwestern Nigeria and some of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Faith.

Essentially, Santeria is an earth-religion of a Nigerian Hunting-gatherer society. When that society was moved, due to the economics of white slavers, the religion incorporated some of the more obvious symbols of Catholocism, namely the saints with whom the Yoruba could neatly compare to their deities, into its ritual practice. This incorporation was a matter of assimilation for survival, since the Catholic slave-traders would not accept a non-Christian theology.

Howard Chambers in An Occult Dictionary for the Millions says that Satanism is:

The worship of the devil. May be a permanent alliance for the purpose of gaining black magic powers, or a temporary alliance for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. In either case, the Satanic forces are said to have won.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines Satanism as:

1. The worship of Satan or powers of evil.
2. A travesty of Christian rites in which Satan is worshipped.
3. diabolical or satanic disposition, behavior, or action.

Given the third definition of the Random House Dictionary, it becomes evident that the word "Satanism" can be broadly interpreted in it's adjectival form.

In order to maintain a belief in Christianity, one must maintain a belief in Christianity. Santeria maintains no belief in Christianity, since it is an entirely separate theological structure based on orishas, or deities. Santeria is polytheistic, each of those gods sustaining a certian amount of power that can be used either for good or evil.

The July, 1981 Journal of Forensic Science contains an article by C.V. Wetli, M.D. and R. Martinez, M.A. entitled "Forensic Sciences Aspects of Santeria, A Religious Cult of African Origin." In it, the authors state that:

A mulatto Cuban man died from multiple gunshot wounds after being chased by another Cuban man. The victim was clad in pants and sport shirt covered with multicolored glitter, which was also found in his shoes. In his possession was a small gold-plated tack hammer and a gold-plated flashlight. Background investigation revealed the victim was a

practitioner of Santeria and would often wear shoes of dissimilar colors and eye glasses with one dark and one clear lens. Three days earlier he had threatened to cut off the head of his eventual assailant and offer it to the saints. This later proved to be the actual motive for the shooting.

Both these instances are, if nothing else "diabolical" but not in any sense can they be considered "Satanic."

The confusion begins because most people, police departments included, are not aware of Palo Mayombe. Palo Mayombe is still another religion, that uses the same symbols as Santeria, but is distinctly different from it, in that it's intent is negative or harmful. Palo Mayombe is to Santeria what Satanism is to Christianity. Santeria therefore, cannot be connected in any way to Satanism.

The original intention of this paper was to draw a coherent parallel between Santeria and Satanism. Finding no obvious, or apparent connection, I've decided to present the facts as I've uncovered them.