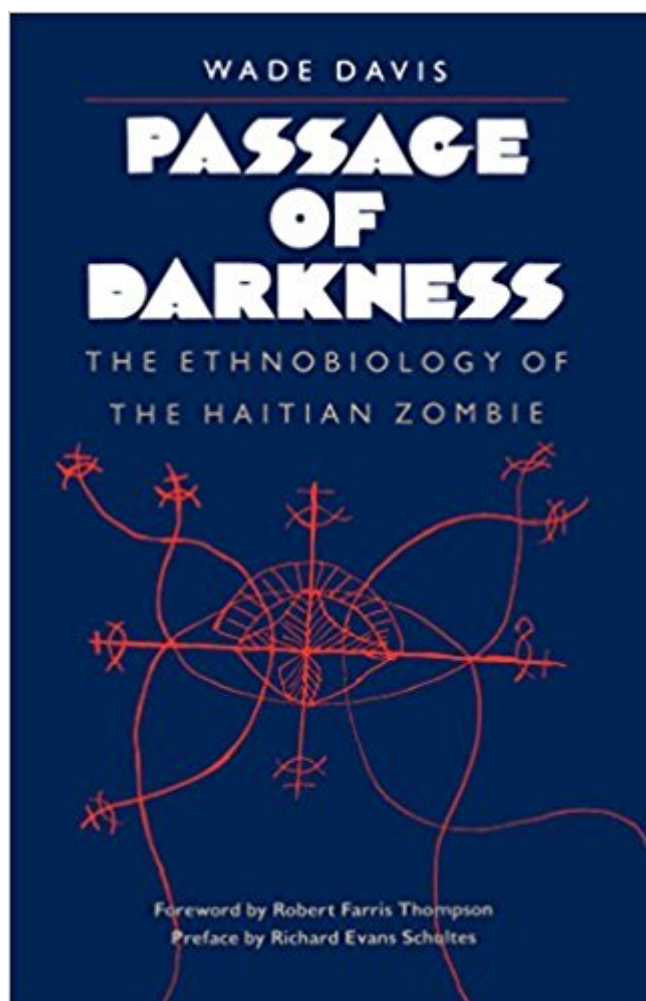


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Passage Of Darkness: The Ethnobiology Of The Haitian Zombie



Synopsis

In 1982, Harvard-trained ethnobotanist Wade Davis traveled into the Haitian countryside to research reports of zombies--the infamous living dead of Haitian folklore. A report by a team of physicians of a verifiable case of zombification led him to try to obtain the poison associated with the process and examine it for potential medical use. Interdisciplinary in nature, this study reveals a network of power relations reaching all levels of Haitian political life. It sheds light on recent Haitian political history, including the meteoric rise under Duvalier of the Tonton Macoute. By explaining zombification as a rational process within the context of traditional Vodoun society, Davis demystifies one of the most exploited of folk beliefs, one that has been used to denigrate an entire people and their religion.

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Customer Reviews

Haitian zombification, a subject that has provoked a great deal of sensational reporting in the popular press and skepticism in anthropological circles, is analyzed in this fascinating work. The author delves into its physiological, social, and psychological impact, the result of two years of on-site study of the structure and function of the Bizango secret societies. He presents an extensive analysis of the chemical composition of various poisons reputed to induce a physiological state that could simulate death. To transform a person so affected into a zombie through antidotes is part of the pharmacopoeia of the Bizango societies. Of interest both to social scientists and the medical profession. Winnie Lambrecht, Brown Univ., Providence, R.I. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

[A] fascinating book."American Scientist"A remarkable journey into the natural and supernatural world of the zombie."Brittonia"Davis manages to demystify the concepts 'voodoo' and 'zombie.'"New York Times Book Review"Davis offers the only firsthand account of the structure and functions of clandestine Bizango societies."Choice"Moves far beyond formula or sensationalism and directly confronts the 'why' of the zombie phenomenon."Western Folklore"~f~" fascinating book."American Scientist"

I really enjoy this book, as a diamond this book has multiple shiny sides, the cultural background of Vodo, and its role in today Haiti's society, the botanics analysis of all different plants species involved and finally, better than anything the crafty details about what takes to engineer a Zombie. It's hard to imagine a way or expanded topics to improve this book, but I could enjoy more info about the magic rituals. I recommend looking for Lydia Cabrera books (Spanish mostly) in magic and plants involved in Vodo near cousin, Santería from Cuba.

ok book, not highly interesting or engaging.

An excellent sequel to *Serpent and the Rainbow* that goes into more detail about the world of the zombies, and a scientific explanation of the zombie phenomenon.

This is a **MUST READ**. You'll thank me later.

Dr. Davis has written an excellent and in depth account of the ethnology, biology, chemistry, and psychology of the Haitian zombie phenomenon. While some of the material is a repeat of what already exists in his book *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, he goes much deeper in describing the cultural and social elements present in Haiti that support the success of the Bokor in creating the zombie. Much more than the mere folk chemistry required to make the poison, the processes of social conditioning, cultural belief, neural biology, and a host of other factors are described as part of an elaborate process of zombification that must have taken centuries, if not millennia for these sorcerers to perfect. Not written in the personal narrative style indicative of *The Serpent and the Rainbow* or *One River, Passage of Darkness* is more of a focused anthropological textbook. The process of zombification is described in scientific detail. A wonderful addition to the literature on Haiti, diaspora studies, psychology, social sciences, botany, chemistry, or those interested in the

zombie phenomenon generally.

Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie by Dr. Wade Davis, 1988. Preface by Dr. Richard Evans Schultes (Harvard). We have all seen the stereo-typical archetypes of the zombie portrayed on TV, in the movies, in video games, etc. But what if zombies are real? Dr. Wade Davis has given us the science of fact behind the mythological tales of the Haitian zombie. Dr. Davis provides evidence beyond reasonable doubt for documented cases of zombies. As a student of the famed Dr. Richard Evans Schultes of Harvard's Botanical Museum, Dr. Davis sets out to uncover the mysterious history, pharmacology, anthropology (ethnobiology) and socio-political motivations behind zombies. As it turns out, the history of creating zombies is a political one. The slaves brought with them from Africa to Haiti their shamanic knowledge of powerful poisons as well as their systems of punishment, law, politics, government and secret societies (Bizango) that formed from the maroons. It is herein revealed that the Vodoun religion of Haiti is as much a political structure as it is a religious one. Part of the magic dealt by bokors and houngans of the Bizango societies of that of law and order, and sometimes punishment is dealt to the guilty in the form of zombification. However, in Haiti, and juxtaposed to foreign concepts of zombies, the people actually fear becoming zombies, not being attacked by them. This is because the pariahs of society, the criminals, repeat thieves, rapists, those who take advantage of others for their own gain, those who don't properly share land with kin according to need and family size, are those who will be targeted for zombification. Zombification is not dealt out on a whim by evil sorcerers. It is only dealt after a public tribunal and hearing in which a member of the group is found guilty. Davis here lays down the foundation of exactly how these zombies are created. A houngan or bokor is appointed executioner by the Bizango society. These are people who have great knowledge of plant irritants and animal poisons such as tetrodotoxin of various puffer fish species (also known as fugu), frogs, etc. The guilty person is then, and often unknowingly slowly poisoned with a mixture of these deadly toxins. Depending on the sentence dealt by Bizango, if the sentence isn't death by poisoning, then it's often zombification. The poison places the victim in a catatonic state where heart rate slows, breath is almost non-existent, and to the best medical experts, the victim eventually appears dead. Due to the warm tropical climate of Haiti, the dead are normally buried within 24 hours. The victim in his catatonic state is buried (while fully conscious) in a coffin where the houngan who "killed" him will dig him up within a few days. He will cart the victim off while dazed to another location where the victim is forced to eat *Datura* for long periods to further confuse, disorientate, and scramble the mind of the victim who will then typically be enslaved - a true zombie. The practice of the Vodoun religion

is here shown as a sound, practical and important part of Haitian society and political self determination. Vodoun is here proven as a practice that has brought these people their well earned freedom and self determination for over 200 years, and will hopefully continue to do so with the present onslaught of colonialist invaders. An important side note here is the fantastic information within this book on the secret societies themselves. This information is certainly important for anthropological examination of the origins of other secret societies. Five stars!

This book describes exactly how to make a zombie. A real one! And yes, they can exist, but they don't eat people and they look just like you and me.. Every person in the country/world should read this book. It also describes exactly how to fake a death that will fool even doctors and hospitals. Based upon real world, on-site, naturalistic research, Wade Davis, a Harvard researcher, has found a very scary recipe that has been used in Haiti for centuries. He wrote this book in 1988 and concludes with the statement, further research must be done to discover all the uses for this. Comparing the effects of this recipe to hypnosis, you will find that both elicit complete obedience to the instructions of the "master". I have written a novel that incorporates one of the possible uses of this very real and very scary research. Davis's book provides a factual basis for some of the action in my book. I only bought his book again, because my copy of his book mysteriously disappeared from my office. Wade Davis now conducts world tours for the National Geographic Society. I wonder if he knows how his research has been used or does he dare to ask?.

Passage of Darkness seems to be the technical book of Wade Davis's findings after the field research was complete. SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW was the more popular version of the same material. For anyone interested in this field, the work bears up under multiple readings. As to why "no followup"... take a look at Wade Davis's collected essays: the man is a polyglot in a marvelous sense. His current projects are absolutely essential, and he documents some cultures that are dying out. He has laid the groundwork for probably a number of Phd theses. Check out :Haiti: Guide to the Periodical Literature in English, 1800-1990 (Bibliographies and Indexes in Latin American and Caribbean Studies) by Frantz Pratt (Compiler) for more source material on Haiti. Wade Davis's Books including this one, PASSAGE OF DARKNESS, provide a great list of material to study a very significant culture.

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