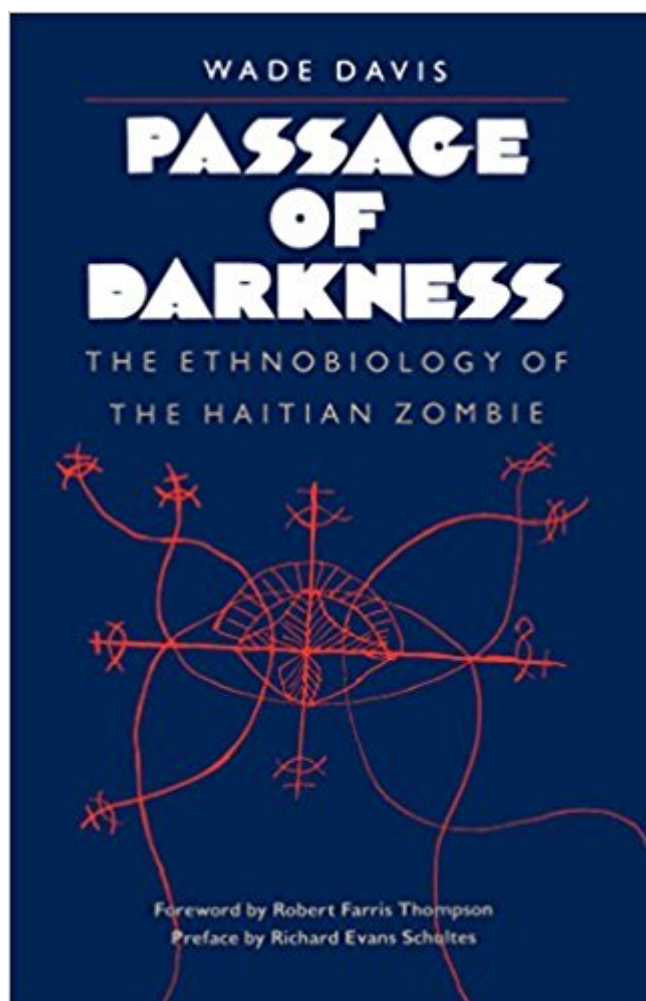


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Passage Of Darkness: The Ethnobiology Of The Haitian Zombie



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie by Dr. Wade Davis, 1988. Preface by Dr. Richard Evens 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 Evens 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.

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