

**MAGIC, SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT
AMONG AFROVENEZUELAN PEASANTS**

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In Venezuela the belief in magic and witchcraft is very common and by no means only a phenomenon characteristic of the rural black population. Similar rites, practices, and beliefs are found both among peasants and urban dwellers all over the country and it must be stressed from the very beginning, that they are not exclusively encountered in areas where the bulk of the population is of African descent, although such practices might be more common there. Nevertheless it is difficult to prove the African origin of particular rites. However, the fact that magic is of outmost importance for many Venezuelans, regardless of their ethnic and social background, it may be attributed to the African heritage in the folk-culture. Roger Bastide (1967, 1970) pointed out that African cultural traits are not carried out today only by the direct descendants of former Negro slaves, but had penetrated the world of their white and mestizo co-citizens. The mestization process in South America and the Caribbean area caused the fusion of different cultures. High-class blacks may have turned completely into Euro-american gentlemen, while low-class Brazilians of European origin may have turned into ardent worshippers of African divinities.

It will become clear from the following discussion that magical practices have the same universal functions all over the world and therefore, the techniques must be analogous.

Africans and their descendants in the New World have always had the reputation that they possess special magical knowledges. This belief was

already widespread during colonial times, when Negro "brujos" were consulted by whites, mestizoes, and blacks alike and were greatly feared for their secret powers. Sorcery and poison were probably the only effective weapons of the slaves against their oppressors. Even today blacks have the same reputation and white Caraqueños may travel a long way to consult a black magician somewhere in the countryside.

Magic is practiced not only by "curiosos" or "iluminados" in the backwoods, but also in the urban milieu by modern spiritists, whose cult-centers proliferate. African rites underwent a process of transculturation under the long-time influence of Iberian traditions. Amerindian traits are found too, for example the use of tobacco smoke in curing and love magic. The Cult of Maria Lionza, which in its structure and function can be compared to the Umbanda in Brazil, has at least one of its roots in Afroamerican traditions, although it must be said, that pure Afroamerican religions, like the Candomblé of Bahia, never survived in Venezuela.

Before studying some folk-beliefs in Venezuela, let us consider briefly the theoretical framework of our investigation.

It is difficult to draw a line between *religion* and *magic*, as defined by Halckel (1958: 41). *Religion* is the belief in supernatural beings or powers, on whom men feel dependant and the ritual relationship between human beings and these powers. On the contrary, *magic* can be defined as a ritual technique or practices, that are believed to work automatically if executed in a proper way. These techniques are practiced by persons who pretend to have certain extraordinary powers to be able to deal with supernatural beings or forces in such a way as to achieve the desired ends. There is no feeling of dependency. The magician must simply believe in the usefulness of his manipulations. He is paid for his services by the client. His knowledge may be used in favour or against society. Thus magic by itself is neutral, neither good nor bad. The magician may be aided by spirits, powers or saints, but the Supreme Being never gets involved in magical practices. This fact is of great importance, when comparing African and Afroamerican magic rites, as they coincide on this point.

As we have said before, the sociological function of magic is basically the same all over the world. It is of great importance in a society, where the oppressed are unable to defend themselves against their oppressors in another way, or where they are unable to cope with basic problems in a more satisfactory manner. As blacks were always oppressed in the Americas, we should not be surprised that magic has always been of great importance to them. Magic gives a man confidence in his social and economic undertakings and is an alternative expression of thwarted human desires. It is therefore obvious that magic practices are found with great frequency in

marginated societies as a defense mechanism, when a breakdown of traditional values occurs for example among detribalized groups and rural immigrants to cities in Africa and South America.

Magic may arise out of a conflicted situation, when there is competition for valued goals, as for example in love magic, when several women compete for the favor of the same man in a polygamic society.

One falls back on magic in order to overcome a bad situation, for lack of another outlet of tensions.

In order to make the following description clear it is important to distinguish between "white" and "black" magic, as well as witchcraft, as it is not correct to use the terms interchangeably, as it often occurs in literature.

"White" magic is practiced in favour of the society or of a group or an individual, in order to achieve positive goals, for example: in order to protect a person, a house or a village against the forces of evil; to assure the fertility of the land; to cure a person from a spell or a real disease. Magicians usually admit that they only practice this type of magic and that they therefore fulfill a service towards society. They blame others to work evil. In practice, however, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between positive and negative magic, as an act that helps one person may cause harm to another.

"Black" magic is usually called *sorcery*. Acts of sorcerers are directed against the society or the individual. A sorcerer casts a spell that would cause damage to an enemy, a house or a village. Sorcery is therefore considered to be secret and individualistic. The sorcerer always works on behalf of his client, who has to assume full responsibility for the crime committed.

In order that the spell be effective, it is necessary to pay the sorcerer without discussion the price for his service. Sorcery works because the sorcerer himself believes in the effectiveness of his techniques, his clients believe that too and the whole group has faith in magic power. If these conditions are not met, the magician's manipulations are in vain. Thus the psychological aspect of magic — black or white — is very important. In some cases poison may be used, but this is usually difficult to prove.

Magic rituals and practices are esoteric in nature and belong to the cultural heritage of a given society, nevertheless there are some basic traits, that are found almost everywhere. Thus the African origin of Venezuelan rites cannot be traced with certainty. It seems that in South America, Indian, European and African magical practices were fused a long time ago. They may have "counter-fertilized" each other, so that new techniques emerged.

Herskovits (1945: 5-24) states that religious and magic beliefs belong to the "core" of any given culture and therefore are least affected by accul-

turation. They were always secret and therefore hidden from the white masters. Thus we may assume that at least some magic traditions found today among Afrovenezuelans are of African origin and were passed on from generation to generation as a secret heritage. Certainly they were adapted to a new situation and a new environment and therefore underwent many changes.

Generally speaking, magic acts are based on several assumptions, namely:

- 1) such as causes like (sympathetic magic, homeopathic magic);
- 2) things that have been connected stay connected, even when they come apart (contact magic);
- 3) pars pro toto.

Therefore universal magic techniques are acts of imitation, of disconnection and connection, manipulations of pictures, of substances and parts of human bodies or of personal property, recitations, incantations, stereotyped formula, prayers and songs.

The magic power may be located in the magician himself, in the techniques used or in a supernatural being of lower order (spirit) that is invoked to assist.

There is a strong belief that magic can be counter-attacked by magic, that each spell can be neutralized by another that is more powerful, that a sorcerer can undo the work of another sorcerer, that every "bojote" (in Venezuela: object that causes evil) can be made ineffective by a "contra" (counter-magic, charm used for protection). It is indeed a question of technique. The sorcerer, who has the greatest skill and experience is the one who will win in the end. These attitudes are typical for Africans and Afroamericans and reflect the African heritage in the New World.

Witchcraft has to be distinguished from magic. It is the complex belief in the existence of individuals, who belong to a secret society of evil-doers. These persons are witches, because they possess an innate spirit, that causes them to perform acts directed against society. The mental climate is such that they themselves may be convinced to be what they are accused to be. Witchcraft beliefs are surprisingly uniform all around the world. Parrinder (1963) made an extensive study of witchcraft in Africa and Europe and found striking analogies. The same characteristics are found also in South America: Witches are accused to turn into animals; to suck the blood or essence of life of innocent children, who must die if they are not properly protected or exorcized; they have secret reunions during the night; they may have peculiar body signs. It is said that when the animal in which the witch turns is hurt, the woman will show the same wound on her body the next morning. When the witch roams around during the night.

her physical body remains in bed, apparently asleep. When the body is turned upside down, the spirit cannot enter her mouth and thus returns. Only women are accused of being witches, while men may be accused of entering a pact with evil forces or the devil. Accusations of witchcraft are frequent in societies where there is an internal conflict, in order to ostracize certain undesirable persons. Upward mobile or exceptionally intelligent or successful persons are forced to remain on the same socio-economic level as their peers, lest they will be accused of being witches or having entered in a pact with Satan. Analogous beliefs are found in Venezuela among blacks, whites and mestizoes alike.

Another belief common in Africa, Europe and America is the "evil eye". It is thought that certain persons possess "strong eyes", that may cause children to fall sick or die only because such a person looked at them. The spell may work even better, when the person makes a remark of admiration referring to the child. Children are protected against the "evil eye" with charms. Many specialists know incantations to recite over the afflicted creature. Again it is difficult to say, where these beliefs really originated.

Today *spiritism* has penetrated magic practices. The teachings of Allain Kardec, the French spiritist that made these practices popular in the past century, were widely read in Venezuela by intellectuals and free thinkers in search of new ideas, at the turn of the century. Later spiritism filtered down to the lower strata of society through the popularization of Kardec's writings. Spiritism is another important root of the Cult of Maria Lionza and other similar spirit cults. The Cult of Maria Lionza is based on Amerindian traditions, however, that originated in pre-colonial times in Central Venezuela, but became popular and turned into a magico-religious mass movement only in the course of the past decades in the urban milieu (Pollak-Eltz, 1972). It absorbed many Afroamerican magic practices on its way. Today the cult is spreading back into the rural milieu, a fact that is of utmost importance for the development of magic practices among Afrovenezuelan peasants. Thus magical practices from various sources fused in the city and turned into an organized movement and then returned in a new syncretistic form to its rural origins.

The spreading and reinforcement of magic and magico-religious beliefs and practices among marginated groups of rural immigrants in the cities is a sociological phenomenon, that can be observed in Africa and South America alike, although it must be said that magic was practiced in the cities ever since these cities were founded. However, the incorporation of the uprooted peasants into a modern achieved and oriented materialistic society and the problems associated with this process, are reasons for the success of new magic and magico-religious (= spirit) cults, that proliferate

in the urban areas. Cult centers in the cities are frequented not only by members of this class, but also by more educated and economically better off citizens, who are also confronted with problems that they are unable to solve in a more satisfactory way and therefore return to traditional methods which cope with them. Paradoxical though it may seem the fact is that: modernization is reinforcing magic practices.

Magic beliefs are almost universal among Venezuelians regardless of skin-color and class. The majority of practitioners of magic, however belong to the lower classes. Many are of African origin.

Some claim to work with the aid of supernatural forces, spirits or saints or some mysterious powers. They usually lack formal training but sometimes claim mediumistic faculties, especially since spirit-cult became popular. They may pretend to communicate with familiar spirits in dreams and visions. Today some of the educated magicians read a great deal of pseudo-scientific literature, such as *The Book of Sorceres*, *The Cross of Caravaca*, *Albertus Magnus*, *The Book of San Cipriano*, etc., that can be bought on every street-corner and they incorporate new methods and ideas in their magic techniques.

Magicians offer their services to all those who come in need of help and in good faith. Fees are usually fixed in advance and cannot be discussed, otherwise the spell would not work. Urban practitioners often have a small office and regular work hours, some offer their service through newspaper advertisements. In the countryside magic has not yet been commercialized. "Iluminados" only work magic as a sideline and assist their clients, when they are asked to help. Fees are small. Some magicians are famous all over the country, others only work for a selected group of clients. It is interesting to note that often magic and politics are entwined. It is my suspicion that a number of politicians use magic and take advantage of folk-superstitions and practitioners of spirit-cults in gaining votes.

Generally speaking, one does not consult a "curioso" who is a relative or a personal friend or lives in the same neighborhood or village. A complete stranger is preferred.

Magic is of great importance to healers (curanderos), as they may reinforce their cures with magic rites. Curanderos are found everywhere in Venezuela. Most of these men and women have a through knowledge of medical herbs, that can be used to cure common illnesses. They are, however, well aware of the fact that many diseases have psycho-somatic causes as well, and thus magical cures may be effective in many cases to reinforce medical treatment. It is not surprising that "curanderos" may often be more successful in treating neurotic symptoms than real doctors. Some curers also perform magic operations. A man in sorts claims to be able to

open the abdomen of a patient by only putting his hand on his client's belly, subsequently tearing out the evil that causes the illness with his fingers. Although when performing such an "operation" he does not even cause scratch into the skin of the patient, the "operated" person usually reports an instant relief of his pains and a sudden improvement of his physical conditions, that may be long-lasting.

The belief in *spirits* is also connected with magic. Spirits are of two types: roaming souls or spirits of nature, who live in rivers, woods, caves and mountains. Many Venezuelan blacks believe that each person possesses two souls, one will go straight to God, right after death, but the other may linger around and haunt houses or molest the living. These spirits can be caught by sorcerers, who then use them as helpers. In order to prevent the spirits to remain on earth and become a public danger they must be properly sent away with magical rites or the house must be protected with charms so that they may not intrude. Spirits may appear to men in order to show them where treasures are hidden. This theme reccurs in time and again in folk-mythology.

Saints may also be used in magical rites or these rites may be addressed to them. Certain saints are believed to cooperate with sorcerers, such as San Marco, San Cipriano and San Antonio. Among the Afrovenezuelan peasants practices of magic are interwoven with folk-catholicism, specially with the cult for the saints, who are replacing in their functions African divinities, whose names have been forgotten a long time ago. *Folk-catholicism* has little to do with the orthodox teachings and rites of the Church.

The structure and function of the folk-religion of Afrovenezuelans remind us of Africa: God Father, the Supreme Being and creator of the universe, stands above the saints, but does not interfere directly in the life of human beings. The saints are supernatural entities, with an ambivalent character and have the same weaknesses as human beings. They may be induced by magic means to assist men to cope with their problems. One has to know their ideosyncracies and their predilections in order to deal with them efficiently and to get from them what one wants. The saints receive gifts when the wish is fulfilled. A contract is made. If the saint does not listen to his devotees prayer, his statue is pricked with needles or is placed outside the house. When the worshipper received what he asked for, he has to pay the saint for his service immediately, otherwise the saint may take revenge. Litographies of saints and printed Catholic prayers are used to make charms. The Holy Cross has a great significance in many magic rites.

Each person has a "saint of his special devotion", usually the saint, whose name he bears. He has to be well treated by the devotee, so that one can be sure of his permanent protection and good will.

The ambivalent and very personal relationship between the worshipper and "his" saint, the use of supernatural powers in magical rites, the business-like deal between men and supernatural beings and the humanization of saints are all features, that are very characteristic of attitudes that Africans show towards their divinities.

These features are also found in Afroamerican syncretistic cults. Therefore we have another prove of the persistence of African traits in Venezuela, although they present themselves here in a new syncretistic and acculturated form.

Some practitioners of magic in Venezuela are specializing in making charms, called "macuto" or "contra" here. Charms are worn to protect against evil in general, to achieve something, to be lucky, etc. They are made of different ingredients: leaves, herbs, roots, dirt, rocks, bones, hair, nail-pairings, pieces of written prayers, blood, candles, cloth, leather, etc. They are always made by the magician on behalf of his client to deal with a specific situation or for a certain purpose. The charm in itself is useless, if not properly dedicated "para cerrar por dentro y por afuera". The client has to be purified, before receiving the talisman. The spell only works after payment is made to the practitioner. In some cases the wearer of the charm has to observe certain rules or taboos, least the amulet will loose its power. From time to time the "macuto" has to be washed in a concoction of herbs in order to regain strength. This feature, as well as the prohibition of arguing about the price to be paid for the object, are traits found often in West Africa. Africans too have to observe taboos when wearing a charm and the dedication of the object is important (Herskovits, 1938, II: 256).

The magicians also prepare *filters*, for example: a certain liquid that is put in a bottle and placed behind the entrance door to protect the house against spells. When a spell is cast the liquid will turn dark. Plants can also be used as filters: like the root of "zabila" (Aloe vera), which dries up when a spell is cast against the owner of the house.

When studying magic and sorcery, one has to weigh carefully the accounts of informants, who tell the most fantastic stories about sorcerers, who can resuscitate the dead, about witches that take part in cruel rites and spirits that haunt houses. Often these accounts are taken at face-value by the informant and his peers but are actually the outcome of nightmares and evil dreams. Most people are reluctant to talk to strangers about magic. In the course of the first interview they usually deny that they themselves believe in "such things" as sorcery, but tell you that others in the village may still do so. Then they may continue to talk about an old aunt, who is considered to be a witch, but today modern educated people would not take these accusations seriously. In subsequent interviews, however,

all of a sudden the informant starts telling the researcher about some of his own experiences with strange phenomena where sorcery and spirits were involved. After a while the anthropologist may receive a full account of all occult happenings in the village. One become suddenly aware of the fact that the majority of the people sincerely believe that they have to fight with magic means against the invisible forces of evil, sent by unknown sorcerers to harm them; that witches fly around at night trying to seize their innocent children; and that spirits seem to be everywhere. These beliefs may also be associated with rivalries amongst neighbours and relatives and tensions that never were brought up to the surface.

Magic and witchcraft are realities, like motor-cars and Television today. Urbanized rural immigrants take these beliefs for granted too. I am often surprised to find a widespread acceptance of witchcraft and sorcery among College students. At least many of them are not quite sure how to handle such matters. Many educated people believe that I study esoterism among Afrovenezuelans solely with a view to standing a profitable center one day.

The following discussion of some magical practices is based on field studies in the Barlovento area of Miranda, State, Venezuela a region situated between 80-150 km from Caracas, where the majority of the peasant population is of African origin. The area was populated already in early colonial times, when cocoa plantations flourished there. Today cocoa is still planted but agriculture is in decline, as the majority of the younger generation is migrating to the cities, mainly to Caracas.

Magic beliefs are universally accepted and in each village there are several experts, consulted only frequently as problems arise. Some specialize in curing certain diseases, others work with spirits and others deal with their clients emotional problems.

Magicians are consulted for many reasons:

- 1) to cure a person from a real or imaginary disease
- 2) to cure a person from a spell cast by a sorcerer or caused by "evil eye"
- 3) to protect a person against a disease, a spell, the "evil eye" or an accident
- 4) to protect personal property from being stolen or destroyed
- 5) to secure the general well-being of an individual or the community
- 6) to assure a good harvest, and to protect the crop to bring fertility to the soil, to "make" rain
- 7) to protect domestic animals
- 8) to make barren women conceive or prevent a woman from having more children

- 9) to help a woman find or keep a mate, to make a man love a woman or a woman love a man, to force the man to return to his wife and children
- 10) to make a man potent
- 11) to become rich, to succeed in business, to win in the lottery
- 12) to find a job, to keep a job
- 13) to chase evil spirits away and release a haunted house from a spell
- 14) to cleanse a person from "pava" (bad luck)
- 15) to get out of prison or not to be caught by the police
- 16) to succeed in one's studies

One can see from this list that most basic needs and human aspirations are covered. People try to satisfy desires that cannot be satisfied by natural means or by the limited material means of the poor. Sorcery is probably also practiced by the same magic experts. The latter serve the community openly. The services include:

- 1) to revenge an injury or a crime committed by a person, who is too powerful to be attacked directly by conventional means
- 2) to get rid of a husband or a concubine one does not like any more
- 3) to punish someone for an offence
- 4) to work evil, cause illness, insanity or death to an enemy

Here personal motives are of importance.

Magic devices protect a person throughout life. Baptism is considered by many Afrovenezuelans as a cleansing ritual that protects the infant against evil spirits, sorcery and witches. The true meaning of baptism is not always understood. The infant has to wear "peonia" seeds around its waist, ankles or arms as a protection against the "evil eye". When the child is afflicted by a fever or another disease attributed to the "evil eye" exorcisms are carried out by an expert in order to undo the spell. They consist of prayers, incantations and ritual baths. When a witch tries to get hold of the child, the magician is consulted again. A bath in a herbal concoction may be prescribed. Salt has to be sprinkled around the infant's bed and charms have to be worn. When someone in the family dies, special rites are performed for the children, so that the spirit of the dead person may not take the infant along on his way to the supernatural world. The danger for children is even greater when the dead person had a bad reputation, as it is said that the soul of a bad man can only slip into heaven behind the soul of an innocent child.

Older children are taken to a "curioso" whenever they are sick.

When folk-medicine does not help, magic methods may be employed for curing. Youngsters who have problems in school try to obtain better grades by wearing charms or by exorcizing copy-books. Girls try to find a mate

when they are still fairly young. They use of magic perfumes sold under colourful names in many "perfumerias". These are supposed to attract men.

Older women use magic methods in order to keep a mate. They may mix liquids or powders in their husband's food. Some measure his feet or body with a consecrated ribbon that is then kept in a secret place.

Many magic beliefs are associated with menstruation, pregnancy and child-birth. Menstrual blood is used in love magic and sorcery and for making protective charms of all kinds. A menstruating woman is considered to be ritually unclean. During pregnancy many precautions have to be taken so that the child and its mother are protected against evil forces, sorcerers and spirits. Charms are worn and taboos have to be observed. Baths in magic herbs are taken with great frequency. After the baby is born the umbilical cord is buried in the yard or is kept by the mother, so that the child may never leave her or forget her.

Women are often accused of using black magic against rivals or envious neighbors. Powder is sprinkled on the enemy's doorsteps or a "bojote" may be hidden near her house in order to cause bad luck. Poison may still be used occasionally.

Men may also use magic, although it is believed that women may frequent magicians and sorcerers more often, as they lack other opportunities to solve their problems. Men may also use charms or special perfumes to attract a girl, to keep their sexual potency and beget many children. In some cases magic rites are performed to get rid of a mate. Men also practice magic in order to succeed in business (powders are sprinkled on the doorsteps of a shop in order to attract costumers), to find a job (wearing charms when presenting the work-application), to get a job kept by someone else, who is thrown off. Magic is also performed in order to be lucky in hunting or fishing. There are special charms used for this purpose. The hunter cleanses himself by taking a herbal bath before leaving for the woods.

When people get older magic may be used in order to keep away illnesses or to assure a longer life. Herbal bathes are taken frequently to achieve these ends.

Magic practices are associated with the death ritual. Cleansing rites are important for all those who participated actively in the funeral ceremonies. After the "novena" is held (prayers are said during nine nights after the funeral), the spirit of the dead person must be chased away and his personal belongings are burnt so that any contact with them is avoided. Bush-knives or other iron objects may be placed in front of the bed, so that spirit of the deceased cannot molest the living relatives. The house is ritually cleansed by a magician if the spirit returns frequently. The cemetery is

rarely visited, never by children and pregnant women, as it is supposed to be the abode of spirits.

Thus the life - cycle is greatly influenced by magic.

Protective magic is frequent among Afrovenezuelans. Charms are worn not only by children against the "evil eye", but also by many adults usually to achieve special purpose. A concoction of seeds is made and mixed with alcohol this is taken daily as a means to protect a person from sorcery and bad luck ("pava"). People grow many different kinds of herbs in their yard. These are used to prepare magic baths or are planted for the purpose of protecting the house against evil forces (mata garrapata, uña de danta, algodón de seda, oreganito, sarrapia, cariaquito morado). Unfortunately the names of these plants often vary from region to region and it is difficult to obtain the scientific name master to make a comparison with African plants. We know that in Cuba and Brazil plants play an important part in syncretistic cults and are associated with the worship of American divinities. From the few samples that I could see and identify scientifically, some of the "ritual" plants in Cuba. These appear the same as those used for magic in Venezuela.

Herbs that grow wild and are used in the folk-medicine and/or in magic rites have to be collected on certain days of the year: on Holy Friday or on the Day of St. John.

A study of "magic plants" would be specially rewarding. We still know little about their use.

Black pepper or salt is used frequently as protective devices, information sprinkling the house, the doorsteps or the window-shelf, so that the "pava" or a spell may be kept out. "Pava" can also be chased away by burning incense or some other substance.

Most people know-how to work "black" magic, although they would not admit it right away. "Lamps" may be prepared: the name of the enemy is written on a piece of paper, which is then burned. The making of dolls is universal and does not have to be described in detail. Sometimes small coins that were consecrated by a sorcerer are placed on a path where one supposes that an enemy may find them. The spell is thus trabsnuted.

Many rites are performed to undo spells. Sorcery may be transmitted from a person to animal. The animal is then slaughtered. This idea is common in Africa too. Spells may also be transfered to objects, which are buried to ensure immunization.

The belief in witchcraft is widespread in the Barlovento area among Afrovenezuelans. Usually old women are accused and are then subject to bad treatment. Precautions are taken by relatives, as it is believed that their children are in danger of being killed by the witch, that may turn into a

vampire and suck their blood. Witches are supposed to harm only their relatives offspring.

Studies in Barlovento furnished detailed accounts of magic practices which often differ from village to village and from practitioner to practitioner. They are always adapted to a specific case. Some practices and beliefs are common everywhere and are part of the daily routine of the peasants (preparations of protective potions, planting of "magic" plants, regular cleansing rites such as baths or the burning of incense).

From this short account we see, how magic, sorcery and witchcraft are still of outmost importance for many people in Venezuela. Although some beliefs and practices can be identified vaguely as "african" or "amerindian", it is difficult to trace their exact origin.

It remains to be seen, if, with the gradual improvement of the economic position and the education of the underprivileged classes, magic will gradually disappear or if it will reappear in a more sophisticated form. This tendency is apparent in the proliferation of new spirit-cult centers in the cities.

Although we cannot trace every magic belief or rite directly to Africa, we can, however, attribute the great interest in magic and its importance specially for Afrovenezuelan peasants, to the persistence of the African heritage in the folk-culture of Venezuela.

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