



Santería Healing: A Journey into the Afro-Cuban World of Divinities, Spirits, and Sorcer (Contemporary Cuba)

Johan Wedel

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"Will be of interest not only to specialists in Afro-Cuban and African Diaspora religions, but also to medical anthropologists and students of anthropology, psychology, and religious studies. This work provides a particularly revealing entry way into the realities of contemporary Cuba."-- George Brandon, Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, City University of New York

Johan Wedel offers a visit inside the world of Santería healing. Drawing upon extensive fieldwork in contemporary Cuba, including interviews with Santería devotees, firsthand observations of divination sessions, and interviews with healed patients supplemented by comments from Santería healers, Wedel demonstrates how Santería healing is carried out and experienced by the participants.

Santería--with roots in Africa and the slave trade and rituals including divination, animal sacrifice, and possession trance--would seem an anachronism in the modern world. Still, Wedel argues, it offers treatment and ideas about illness that are flourishing and even spreading in the face of Western medicine. He shows that Santería healing is best understood as a transformation of the self, allowing the patient to experience the world in a new way. He grounds his analysis of Santería in lively and sometimes frightening narratives in which people reveal in their own words the experience of illness, sorcery, and healing.

Wedel's account will appeal to scholars and others interested in Santería, Cuba, and religious healing. He shows that Santería is not only a challenge to Western medical theory, but also an important contribution to our understanding of illness, suffering, and well-being.

Johan Wedel is instructor in social anthropology at Göteborg University, Sweden.

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