

Did middle class blacks abandon hoodoo?

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Africans who clung to hoodoo as slaves in the United States may have quit the religious practice as they joined the middle class, a Maryland researcher says.

Hoodoo, a mystical tradition of rituals to avoid misfortune and promote healing, had its origins in West Africa.

University of Maryland archaeologist Mark Leone found the first evidence of hoodoo in Annapolis, Md., during a 1990s excavation on the property of Declaration of Independence signer and slave owner Charles Carroll.

Later investigation turned up numerous hoodoo examples dating from 1790 to 1920.

However, digs at the homes of blacks who joined the middle class in the 19th and 20th centuries turned up no evidence of hoodoo ritual objects or bundles.

"That's not to say that middle-class African Americans were giving up their African traditions, but they were finding different ways to express it," Leone told The Washington Post.

Lack of hoodoo evidence may show "the difficult choices facing African Americans who strived for acceptance and advancement, but wanted to remain connected to their traditions," he said.

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