

Summary of Interview with Jean-Claude Noël

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In this interview, Jean-Claude discusses his rise to leadership in Vodou. He explains having dreams in which Bosou sent Brav Gede Nibo, a Lwa, to teach him how to be an *oungan* (priest). These lessons include reading cards, calling on the Lwa for customers, and performing healing and protective remedies and charms. Jean-Claude was called by the Lwa to serve; people in the community know him as one chosen from dreams they were having. He is known as an *oungan makout*, an individual raised within Vodou.

Jean-Claude is open to teaching anyone who comes to him with an interest in Vodou. However, he does not tolerate immoral people because he believes that they will disobey the principles of Vodou and disrupt his temple, creating divisions and discord within the community. Jean-Claude does not undertake initiations; however, he inducts potential Vodouists as members of his Vodou temple. The larger homesteads perform initiations.

There are Christian influences in the ceremonies at Jean-Claude's temple. They pray to God and sing songs that can be found in the Catholic tradition. God is the first addressed in the ceremonies. Jean-Claude believes that no individual can claim ownership of songs and thus anyone can sing any song according to her or his own understanding of the traditions. Jean-Claude and the members of his temple sing and pray to Master Olowoum. Olowoum is another name for God: the same all-seeing and all-knowing grand architect of the universe found in the Christian tradition.

Jean-Claude is focused mainly on protection and healing. He has gained a reputation for preparing powerful protective charms. He also uses an assortment of powders and leaves used for healing and rums used for ritual and worship. He emphasizes morality, tradition, and discipline.

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