Haiti, a Case Study of an Underdeveloped Area.

Roland Wingfield

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/1139

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
This dissertation has been microfilmed exactly as received 66-6459

WINGFIELD, Roland, 1929-
HAITI, A CASE STUDY OF AN UNDER-DEVELOPED AREA.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1966
Sociology, general

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
HAITI, A CASE STUDY OF AN UNDERDEVELOPED AREA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Sociology

by

Roland Wingfield
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1960
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1961
January 1966
KING HENRY CHRISTOPHE'S CITADEL

(Courtesy Delta Air Lines)
DEDICATION

A mon fils Guito

"Nous avons un pays étrange et merveilleux,
Un pays si merveilleusement étrange,
Qu'il ne se résigne pas encore à mourir..."

M. Franck Fouche "Notre Pays"
Message (1946)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was made possible by an Inter-American Cultural Convention grant whereby two American students are hosts of each of the Latin American Republics and two of their nationals study in the United States on an exchange basis. Therefore, the writer owes a debt of gratitude to his hosts, the Haitian people, and to the cultural division of the American Embassy in Port-au-Prince.

A sociologist incurs so many obligations in the field, and in the course of writing, that it is impossible to list all those to whom he is indebted. It would have been difficult to undertake this study without the help and cooperation of hundreds of informants. To single out a few, grateful appreciation goes to Messieurs R. Laroche, S. Pean, E. Piou and C. de Vastey.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to the members of his dissertation committee at Louisiana State University, Professors A. Bertrand, J. Perry, S. Sariola and W. Haag, who helped bring this project to fruition. Special mention should be made of Dr. Walfrid J. Jokinen, Chairman of the Department of Sociology. And above all the writer wishes to acknowledge his considerable intellectual debt to Professor Vernon J. Parenton who has been his mentor in the field of sociology for many years and whose encouragement and interest led him to undertake the present study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| TITLE PAGE ................................................................. | 1 |
| DEDICATION ................................................................... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................... | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES ............................................................ | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................... | viii |
| ABSTRACT ........................................................................ | ix |

## CHAPTER

### I. INTRODUCTION .......................................................... 1
   
   A. Objectives of the study ........................................... 3
   
   B. Plan of the study .................................................. 6
   
   C. Survey of the literature. ........................................ 7
   
   D. Methodology ....................................................... 13
   
   E. Significance of the study ....................................... 26

### II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ................................... 28
   
   A. Struggle for independence ....................................... 32
   
   B. Early days of the Republic ...................................... 35
   
   C. The American occupation ....................................... 43
   
   D. The social revolution of 1946 ................................. 48

### III. THE PEOPLE .......................................................... 58
   
   A. Population characteristics ..................................... 58
   
   B. Racial composition .............................................. 68
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Standard of living</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>THE LAND</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>General description</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Natural resources</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Relation of the people to the land</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>THE SOCIAL CLASS SYSTEM</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Evolution of the Haitian class system</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>The present-day class system</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Class differentiation</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Social mobility</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>THE FAMILY</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Evolution of the Haitian family system</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Marriage and sex patterns</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>The role and status of women</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Children and socialization</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>POLITICS</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Characteristics of the Haitian political system</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>The Duvalier regime</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>The consequences of despotism</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.</td>
<td>RELIGION</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Vodou</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Catholicism</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. CONCLUSION: A SOCIETY IN CRISIS</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Summary</td>
<td>289</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Culture and personality</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The dilemma of underdevelopment</td>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIBLIOGRAPHY</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VITA</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Comparison of Agricultural Exports in Haiti between the Colonial Period and Today</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Percentage of Farm Holdings in Haiti by Size</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Map of the Indian Nations on the Island of Hispaniola cerca 1492.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Important Dates in the History of Haiti.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Map of the Republic of Haiti.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Population Density in Haiti.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Comparison between the Colonial and Contemporary Class Structure of Haiti.</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Comparison between the Two Polar Extremes of the Haitian Class Structure.</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Map of field trips.</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of a society in crisis enmeshed in the vicious circle of socioeconomic stagnation. It seeks to point out the causes and effects of underdevelopment as they pertain to Haiti. Material presented comes from two general sources: field data collected by the author in Haiti and the analysis of documentation already available.

Emphasis is placed on the major social institutions of Haitian society.

The study begins by tracing the history of Haiti from the French colonial period to the emergence of Haiti as the first Negro nation in the beginning of the 19th century. The republic in its first century experienced a series of crises which culminated in the American occupation of 1915-34. The "Social Revolution" of 1946 brought the first signs of a new sense of direction, which was corrupted with the inception of the Duvalier regime in 1957.

A description of the Haitian setting, such as population characteristics, standard of living, geographical aspects, resources and the relation of the people to the land, helps us understand the precarious basis on which Haitian society rests.

The systematic inventory of major social institutions begins with an analysis of the Haitian class system which is characterized by a dichotomy between the "haves" and "have nots" with over 90
percent of the population in the latter group. Color, language, wealth, family organization, political participation, religious behavior, degree of education and life opportunities effectively separate both groups. A process of de-africanization occurs as one moves up from the black peasant mass to the mulatto bourgeoisie.

The family is the basic cell of Haitian society. The family system plays the paradoxical role of countering the disintegration of the society and at the same time preventing its development. On the one hand, family membership is the only badge of social security an individual has, and on the other, the weakness of loyalty beyond the extended family inhibits social participation, community spirit and civic responsibility essential to socioeconomic progress.

The dominance of political interest in Haitian life results from economic underdevelopment. Political power is conceived as a tool to further one's economic status at the expense of the general public. The Duvalier dictatorship is found to be the inevitable end result of a tradition of political patronage further aggravated by the irresponsible leadership of 160 years which has allowed the Haitian social system to disintegrate to the point of no return.

The analysis of Haitian religious institutions deals inevitably with vodou, the importance of which has been magnified out of proportion to its actual role in Haitian society. Likewise, the Catholic Church has failed to instill a religious tradition, thereby decreasing the significance of this institution in Haitian society.

The last chapter summarizes the general trends which are consistent
and recurrent in the Haitian social system, and the relation between social institutions and the Haitian mentality or value system. It concludes that the Haitian economy might probably be the most prone to change and reform. However, other social institutions act as powerful counterforces to maintain the status quo. The difficulty of reorienting the socioeconomic system reflects once again the seemingly hopeless dilemma faced by underdeveloped countries. Haiti is in a state of exhaustion, its future prospects are very dim. The fact that Haitian society has survived through all its crises is a phenomenon difficult to explain, thus making it unwise to predict its imminent collapse.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Haiti is a place of extraordinary natural beauty. The visitor never tires of the brilliant colors of its-tropical vegetation, the dazzling blue sea and sky, the bright sunshine, and the exhilarating vistas of mountains, valleys and sea. The climate is ideal: warm but tempered by mountain and coastal breezes and the temperature remains more or less stationary all year around.

The people of Haiti, with their buoyancy and insouciance, contribute in no small way to the charm of the country. So do their Afro-French culture, quaint customs, and colorful folklore. Whoever has visited Haiti agrees that it is a place one never forgets and that Haiti is unique, different, colorful.

Even though Haiti gives the superficial appearance of a tropical paradise, it does not take long for even a casual visitor to discover the wretched poverty behind a facade of sun, laughter, and song. Picturesqueness often denotes poverty and this is certainly true in the case of Haiti. The reality becomes even more painful when one compares the makeshift appearance of all that is man-made with the grandeur of the natural setting and the historical past.

Haiti was born one hundred and sixty years ago out of the ruins
and ashes of France's most prosperous colony. It won its independence by a general slave revolt against the world's greatest military power of the time. Haiti became the first Negro nation in the world and the first independent republic of Latin America. Despite such an auspicious beginning, Haiti has never been able to achieve political and economic stability. Yet it has managed, nonetheless, to survive as a viable nation, with a sociocultural identity of its own.

No one can deny today that the recurrent crises which have chronically beset Haiti in the century and a half of its turbulent history are becoming more acute. Population pressure, diminishing land returns, dropping standard of living, social inequalities, and an oppressive political atmosphere are threatening the very survival of the nation. How long can Haiti maintain itself on a day-to-day, hand-to-mouth basis? How long can expedient solutions be used as palliatives to fundamental problems which have accumulated for over a century? As far back as the 1860's, observers predicted that it would be only a matter of time before Haiti disintegrated completely.¹

The same predictions were made on the eve of the American occupation in 1915. Today, writers on social, political and economic problems of Latin America consider Haiti as the worst case and imply that it cannot go on much longer and that "something will have to give" shortly. Yet Haiti still survives, defying all predictions to the

contrary. Unlike business firms, social systems do not go bankrupt; they are remarkably resilient. A nation may disintegrate but the process is long, tortuous, and its course is unpredictable.

Haiti is not the only country in the world nor in the hemisphere which is faced with what seems like insoluble socioeconomic problems. These countries are labeled as underdeveloped areas or tiers monde in French, reminding us of the fact that two thirds of mankind lives in underdeveloped areas and represents an uncommitted third "world" between the Western and Eastern bloc. While Haiti is an extreme case, it shares to a surprising degree most of the socioeconomic problems faced by the "less-developed" nations.

A. Objectives of the Study

As stated in its title, the general objective of this dissertation is to present Haitian society as a case-study of an underdeveloped area. What is Haitian society and culture like? What are the causes of socioeconomic stagnation in Haiti? Why does Haiti seem incapable of altering her archaic social institutions, resolving her economic crisis, stabilizing her political situation and altering traditional and unrealistic attitudes? These are some of the questions with which this study is concerned.

First the concept of underdeveloped areas must be defined. Only since World War II have serious and sustained efforts been made to explain why some areas of the world are less developed than others. Economists have made the major contributions in the study
of underdeveloped areas. Since economic questions cannot be divorced from social questions, sociologists and anthropologists have also entered the field. However, most definitions of underdeveloped areas have a strong economic slant. For instance, Alexander defines an underdeveloped area as

one which has (1) a low per capita real income; (2) an unbalanced economy; (3) natural resources that are either largely untapped or are being used by and for the benefit of highly industrialized nations; (4) a tradition-oriented rather than a market oriented economy; (5) small amounts of capital equipment relative to the labor force; (6) the widespread belief among the people of the country that it is "underdeveloped."\(^2\)

Myrdal, while not giving a precise definition of underdeveloped areas, makes a few generalizations contrasting these areas to the more developed countries:

There is a small group of countries which are quite well off and a much larger group of extremely poor countries.

The countries in the former group are on the whole firmly settled in a pattern of continuing economic development, while in the latter group average progress is slower, many countries are in constant danger of not being able to lift themselves out of stagnation or even of losing ground so far as average income levels are concerned;

Therefore, on the whole, in recent decades the economic inequalities between developed and underdeveloped countries have been increasing.\(^3\)

Prebisch points to the defects in the social structure of underdeveloped areas. Traditional social structure


considerably hampers social mobility, that is, the emergence and rise of the dynamic elements in society, men of drive and initiative, capable of taking risks and responsibilities both in technical and economic matters and in the other aspects of community life.

The social structure is largely characterized by a situation of privilege in the distribution of wealth and therefore of income. Privilege weakens or destroys the incentive to economic activity, to the detriment of the efficient utilization of human resources, land and machinery.

This state of privilege in regard to distribution is reflected not in a rapid rate of net capital formation, but in extravagant patterns of consumption in the upper strata of society, over against the unsatisfactory living conditions of the broad masses of the population.  

As illustrated above, underdeveloped areas are generally defined in terms of symptomatic traits. The widely accepted operational definition is: all areas with a per capita real income of less than $500.00 or one fourth of the per capita real income of the most developed nation, are considered as underdeveloped areas.

Of special interest to the sociologist is that underdeveloped societies are going through a process of sociocultural change disrupting rather than improving their social system. Since the desire for economic well-being is one of the fundamental motivations for accepting change, the economic institutions are the most dynamic. However, all social institutions are inextricably linked together and are all involved in the process of social change, but at uneven rates. Traditional familial and class values, for example, often

---

block or at least resist socioeconomic change and the result is conflict instead of development. In order to understand the intricate play of causes and effects which promote and handicap socioeconomic development, it is necessary to view a society holistically. This is the primary reason why this approach was used in this study. The other reasons are the following: while literature on Haiti is abundant, there is still an absence of an up-to-date basic and comprehensive sociological study which could serve as a general reference for students of Haitian society. The only comprehensive sociological study of Haitian society was done twenty-five years ago by Leyburn.

Another reason for the more comprehensive approach is the fact that this study is directed to an American public who for the most part have no more than a rudimentary knowledge of Haiti.

B. Plan of the Study

The study is divided into ten chapters including the first chapter as an introduction.

Chapter II traces the history of Haiti from the Indian aborigines to the present. An effort has been made not to dwell at length on the epics of Haitian history, as colorful as they may be, but to stress the events of sociological pertinence which help us understand contemporary Haitian society.

---

5 See James G. Leyburn, The Haitian People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941). The field work was done in 1938. Translated in Spanish but not in French.
The third chapter discusses the people, their population characteristics and standard of living. Facts are based on whatever statistical data was available.

The fourth chapter describes the land, its geographical aspects, resources and the relation of the people to the land.

The class structure is discussed in Chapter V. A description of each stratum illustrated by case studies is given.

Chapter VI deals with the family system, marriage patterns and socialization process.

In Chapter VII political institutions are analyzed with a special emphasis on the current Duvalier regime.

Chapter VIII is devoted to the religious institutions of Haiti, both its folk religion, Vodou and Catholicism.

The last chapter attempts to interpret the dynamics of Haitian society as a society in crisis.

C. Survey of the Literature

It cannot be said that there is a dearth of material written about Haiti. Few countries of its size and relative importance have been written about so extensively. Haiti herself has produced many writers among whom are a few outstanding ones such as Jacques Roumain, author of the classic social novel Gouverneur de la Rosée (1944), which has received international acclaim and was translated into
several languages. Haitian writers are oriented towards the humanities and have excelled in belles-lettres, history, political critiques, and most of all poetry. Probably more poetry has been published in Haiti than all other publications put together. In the last decade, there has been a noticeable trend towards ethnology, and works of scholarly merit have been produced in folklore and particularly vodou, a field invaded earlier by foreign writers. Very little work of consequence has been produced by native writers on the economic and social realities of Haiti.

Foreign writers, mostly Americans and French, have been primarily interested in travel description, the colorful epics of Haitian history, and more than anything else vodou. Indeed, the subject of vodou has been thoroughly exploited.

Much of the available literature on Haiti contains material of sociological relevance but it is fragmented. One has to sift through hundreds of books. It would be impossible to survey them all, so the more important works classified by topics will be mentioned.

Standing at the top of the list of historical books is Moreau de St. Mery's *Description de la Partie Francaise de l'Isle de Saint Domingue* (1797). This book is the "bible" of Haitian culture. It is a detailed three-volume account of political, economic, and  

---

6English translation: Masters of the Dew. See bibliography for full entry of all titles mentioned in the survey of the literature.
social life in the colonial period prior to the slave revolt of 1791. Very few countries in the hemisphere have such an outstanding primary source of reference at their disposal. A good description of life and customs in the 19th century is found in Aubin's *En Haïti, Planteurs d'Autrefois Negres d'Aujourd'hui* (1910). St. John, a British diplomat to Haiti, while extremely biased in his judgements, made some keen first-hand observations in *Hayti or the Black Republic* (1889). Many writers dealt with the controversial American occupation. However, Bellegarde, in his many writings and especially in his *Pour une Haiti Heureuse* (1927), gives the most eloquent, although emotional, Haitian viewpoint. Balch's *Occupied Haïti* (1927) is somewhat more objective and was instrumental in the withdrawal of the Marines whereas McCrocklin in his recent *Garde d'Haïti* (1956) gives the typical Marine Corps viewpoint. Montague's *Haïti and the United States* (1940) details the historical course of Haitian-American diplomatic relations. Davis, another American, gives a well-organized account of Haitian history from the beginning through the American occupation in *Black Democracy: the Story of Haiti* (1941). The best general history which is detailed without being verbose and notable for the absence of value judgments is Dorsainvil's *Manuel d'Histoire d'Haïti* (1958), used as a textbook in the secondary schools of Haiti.

Books dealing with the Haitian economy are not very numerous and are of recent vintage. The United Nations' *Mission to Haiti* (1949) is a survey of economic activities and potential development in
Haiti. The UNESCO pilot project in community development of one of Haiti's most impoverished regions is documented by Metraux in *Making a Living in the Marbial Valley* (1951). Turnier, a Haitian, gives some interesting information on trade between Haiti and the United States in his *Etats-Unis et le Marché Haitien* (1955). DeYoung devotes his booklet *Man and Land in the Haitian Economy* (1958) to ecological patterns. However, the best contribution to an understanding of the Haitian economy is provided by Moral, a French geographer who taught eight years in Haiti and produced *L'Economie Haitienne* in 1959 and *Le Paysan Haitien* in 1961. This last book is the best book written on Haitian rural life.

No Haitian has written about class structure from a sociological point of view, although a few essays dealing with the problem of class in a historical and political perspective have been published. Leyburn's *The Haitian People* (1941), which is the best sociological study of Haitian society, deals extensively with the class system as he found it in the late thirties. Simpson's article "Haiti's Social Structure," in the *American Sociological Review* (1941), confirms many of Leyburn's views and contributes original observations not only in this paper but in many other articles in social science journals, analyzing the Haitian familial, economic, religious and political institutions. Schaedel's unpublished report "An Essay on the Human Resources of Haiti" (1962) gives a short, well-organized description of social stratification in contemporary Haiti with some numerical estimates.
The Haitian rural family is well described by Bastien in an extensive article "Haitian Rural Family Organization" in Social and Economic Studies (1961) which is a condensation of his earlier book: La Familia Rural Haitiana (1951). Simpson's "Sexual and Familial Institutions in Northern Haiti" in the American Anthropologist (1942) is also enlightening. A valuable field investigation of socialization process in rural Haiti is reported by Underwood in the American Anthropologist (1947).

Factual information about the Haitian educational system is provided by two booklets published by the U.S. Government: Cook, Education in Haiti (1948) and Dale, Education in the Republic of Haiti (1959).

In the realm of ethnology there is much literature available primarily on vodou, folklore and the creole language.

It goes without saying that vodou is the most documented subject in Haiti. One cannot help but be concerned by the many sensational reports published until the late thirties which have contributed much myth and nonsense about vodou in Haiti and have done their share in ridiculing Haiti in the eyes of the world. However, in the last two decades, anthropologists have given a professional treatment to the subject. The best books turned out to be written by Haitian ethnologists. They are Maximilien, Le Vodou Haitien (1945), Marcelin

7 Among the worse offenders are: Black Bagdad (Craig), Cannibal Cousins (Craig), Voodoo Fire in Haiti (Loederer), The Magic Island (Seabrook) and Where Black Rules White (Prichard).
Mythologie Vodou (1950) and Rigaud, La Tradition Voudoo et le Voudoo Haïtien (1953). Two other books written by foreigners deserve mention: Deren's Divine Horsemen, the Living Gods of Haïti (1953), and especially Metraux' Le Vaudou Haïtien (1958).

It is difficult to separate vodou from folklore, but the following books dealing with both are especially noteworthy for their contribution to an understanding of Haïtian folklore: Courlander, Haiti Singing (1939) and The Drum and The Hoe (1960); Honorat, Les Danses Folkloriques Haïtiennes (1955), and Paul, Panorama du Folklore Haïtien (1962). This last book is the most recent and makes original ethnographic contribution on carnival customs.

Interesting data about the creole language can be found in Faine's Philologie Creole (1937) and Le Creole dans l'Univers (1939); Pressoir, Debats sur le Creole et le Folklore (1947) and Fouchard's well known book Les Marrons du Syllabaire (1953). A noteworthy recent study on the French language as spoken in Haïti is Pompilus' La Langue Francaise en Haïti (1961).

Not to be omitted in this survey of the literature are two fundamental works which are primary sources in the sense that they were pioneer studies but have been dépassé since. They are Ainsi Parla l'Oncle (1928), first ethnographic study of Haïti, written by Price-Mars, the dean of Haitian ethnology; and Herskovits' Life in a Haïtian Valley (1937), the first community study done in Haïti by a specialist. Both books have had a salutary effect in setting higher standards of scholarship in reporting on Haïtian social
phenomena.

Mention should also be made of periodicals in the social sciences published in Haiti. Among the best are *Optique*, a literary and cultural review; the *Bulletin du Bureau d'Ethnologie*, an ethnological journal; and the *Revue de la Société Haïtienne d'Histoire, de Geographie et de Geologie*.

Summing up, the author considers the three following books as the most outstanding ones: Moreau de St. Mery's *Description de la Partie Francaise de l'Isle de Saint Domingue* as the primary source book for the past; Leyburn's *The Haitian People*, for the most comprehensive sociological analysis of Haitian society; and Moral's *Le Paysan Haïtien* for an extensive study of contemporary Haitian rural life.

For literature on underdevelopment, the works of Myrdal, Prebisch, Shannon, and Krause were consulted, to mention a few economists and sociologists who have contributed to the field.

D. Methodology

Material presented in this study comes from two general sources: documentation available and field data collected by the author.

Documentation was located in an extensive collection of books, pamphlets, articles and reports. These were consulted in public and private collections in Haiti, New York City, Washington, D.C., and at Louisiana State University. Statistical and demographic data were collected from various governmental sources in Haiti and the United
Nations. The local Haitian newspapers were read daily and any pertinent information was clipped and filed chronologically. Another fruitful source of written data was some twenty five term papers on a wide variety of Haitian social questions written by the author's advanced students at the Universite d'Haiti.

Field data was gathered during three visits to Haiti. Two short reconnaissance trips in 1960 were followed by an extended stay of twenty-two months from August 1961 to June 1963. Field methods used were those of the social anthropologist, namely participant-observation, interviews, the reports of informants and even learning the vernacular Creole language.

A few polls were taken among "captive" groups such as university students; however, attempts to use the questionnaire method more extensively were discontinued for several reasons. First, no adequate representative population sample could be devised for a study which had as its scope a total society whose exact number is unknown. Secondly, should this undertaking have been possible, mass interviewing conducted by strangers, while acceptable in American society, is foreign to the Haitians. They have an aversion to and are suspicious of what they consider an intrusion into their private lives. Third, large scale interviewing in the current political atmosphere of Haiti would be tantamount to subversive activities and would have resulted sooner or later in serious political difficulties. Fourth, a standardized questionnaire would yield little valid information from a population which is 90
per cent illiterate, thereby often inarticulate in expressing their opinions.

However, it is felt that the omission of the questionnaire was largely compensated by the wealth of material obtained in personalized unstructured interviews. This material, obtained indirectly but in as methodical a fashion as was possible, did not lend itself to quantitative treatment. Nevertheless, this data yielded information which, combined or compared with the personal observations of the author and primary written sources, provided substantial grounds for some generalizations.

1. The Participant-Observation Technique

The participant-observation technique, as its name suggests, consists of observing systematically a group while participating in its activities, i.e., having a role in its social structure. The field worker using this method is therefore involved in a dual set of activities: observing and meeting the obligations of the role he has taken.

Methods of observation vary from one field worker to another depending upon the locale and the society which is being studied. Above all, he has to be alert, perceptive, and sensitive, for more often than not, valuable information is acquired from the most unpredictable sources, in the most unlikely circumstances. The field worker's training in the behavioral sciences enables him to look for the pertinent and to organize his observations rapidly.
The main difference between the observations of the philosophical traveler of the 18th and 19th century, as perceptive as he might have been, and the field researcher of today is that the latter is a trained observer organizing and relating his observations systematically. Therefore, his interpretations are generally more objective than those of the traveler, though a knowledge as well as a sensitive awareness of life and people are the stock in trade of both.

As mentioned above, to participate in a social group means to have a role and thereby a status in this group. This is the most important aspect on which hinges the success of the participant-observation method. A certain social flexibility is needed by the participant in order to respond spontaneously to the various and unfamiliar social situations he is confronted with. This ability seems to be a personality trait rather than an acquired skill, though it can be cultivated to some extent. The essential thing is to establish rapport. It is this responsive and spontaneous interaction which allows the investigator, as a guest member of the society he is studying, to have a high degree of social participation both of the formal and the informal type.

The participant-observer may ask many questions, for people usually enjoy talking about themselves and their milieu. At times, his subjects, elated by their role of mentor, will go out of their way to provide additional information and seek out things that they believe might interest him. The insights into a society, its culture and value system secured by this technique cannot be disputed.
One of the major drawbacks of the participant-observation technique is that it is too subjective and does not lend itself easily to controls by others. While coded questionnaires tend to depersonalize and pass over the more subtle and often vital aspects of social attitudes, the reverse is true of the participant-observer. As Margaret Mead said: "The conclusions are also subject to the limitation of the personal equation. They are the judgements of one individual upon a mass of data, many of the most significant aspects of which can, by their very nature be known only to [himself]." To counteract this lack of control, the participant-observer must be aware of his own attitudes, excesses, and biases, i.e., the limitations of his own frame of reference.

Another hazard of the participant-observation method is the possibility of the field worker internalizing the culture under study. In this case, he enjoys his role in the host society to the point that he becomes emotionally identified with it. Again moderation and awareness of oneself are the checks on a rather natural human phenomenon. It is not necessary to "go native" to be a good participant-observer. The latter should have enough wisdom to know how far he can participate without stepping out of the boundaries of his accepted role. Generally, once the field worker is back in his own cultural setting, he will see in retrospect where his judgment

---

has been motivated by effect rather than reason. This writer is the first to admit that certain of his attitudes have been modified by his experiences as a participant-observer in Haiti.

**Participant-observation in Haiti.**

In a setting such as Haiti where the observer is particularly visible by his physical and cultural differences, to be merely an observing by-stander would soon become awkward. The role of the independent field researcher is little understood there, and a person who does nothing else than looking around and asking many questions, taking notes and pictures, is looked upon with suspicion and his activities would probably be fancied as those of a "spy for the State Department!" Or he might be looked down upon as a *vieux blanc* (tropical tramp), a designation reserved for any white foreigner who comes to live in Haiti for no apparent purpose. Haitians had their unfortunate experiences with this latter type which seems to drift upon the shores of every tropical island.

The author was spared this fate by coming to Haiti as a grantee of the Haitian government under the Inter-American Cultural Convention. He was visiting professor of sociology at the Faculté d'Ethnologie, Université d'Haiti, and later also at the Haitian American Institute, a bi-national center. He was technical and artistic adviser to the *Troupe Bacoulou*, Haiti's leading folkloric group. He was the editor of the *Haiti Herald*, a weekly English language newspaper for a period of six months between January and
July 1962. These various activities brought him into daily contact
and gained him entrees into a wide range of often unrelated and
occasionally conflicting groups. No efforts were made by the author
to conceal the fact that he was studying Haitian society, though he
underplayed the fact. Some groups showed more interest in the study
than others, but apparently no one felt threatened, were they stu-
dents, intellectuals, businessmen, officials, artists, the clergy,
the American colony, etc. The author established a home in the
suburb of Petionville and through the intermediary of his servants,
pratiques (dealers), and neighbors participated in the daily round
of home life in Haiti with all its exasperating and pleasant inter-
ludes. The author's eight year old god-child stayed with him and
through him interesting insights were gained into school, play-
groups and other typical activities of the world of children as it
is in Haiti.

In order to keep some kind of systematic order in the collected
data, it was transcribed on cards, and these were classified by
topic in an elaborate cross-reference file. A daily journal and a
field trip diary were kept which proved of great assistance for the
final analysis of material. Upon re-reading his journal, the author
was able to see the evolutionary process of his thoughts and
impressions from the first to the last month spent in Haiti. An
excerpt from the journal might give an idea of a fairly typical day:

Friday March 16, 62:

Got up 6 a.m.; breakfast in the garden; drove downtown to
newspaper office, gave a ride to my neighbor. He told me he was unable to fire his incompetent typist because she is the mistress of a ton ton macoute who came by threatening in the office with a gun on his hip. Dropped by the embassy to check my mail—Newspaper office: newspaper will be late as usual, the printing machine is out of order; the owner went to Miami for a short trip and didn't leave the money for the payroll. The printers are furious, one said: "Haiti a besoin d'une revolu-
tion rouge!" I am caught in the middle but my sympathy is with them. They make $7.00 a week and have families to support.

11 a.m.: finished proof reading and went to the Alliance for Progress press conference. It looks as if they are going to pick up the same old projects which have been mentioned for the last ten years (hydro-electric plant, the jet airport, and the highway to the south). The delegation had no reply when the Haitian journalists asked them WHEN the aid will start? The conference was held at the Ministry of Finance. I took this opportunity to try to trace my check which is late again this month. I now know the whole hierarchy from the Minister down. Fortunately I have a student in one of the departments who always tries to speed my check through. I go through this same routine every month.

2 p.m.: lunch with T. one of the attaché at the embassy. He has a beautiful home with pool so I took a swim. He seems to live in a different world from mine (the world of the "Ugly American") and I find it hard to communicate, when it comes to discussing Haiti. He dropped me off at my office at the Haitian American Institute. Read—

6 p.m.: met my class at the university. Discussed Benedict's Patterns of Culture. I am amazed how some of the students have the nerve to discuss without having read the assignment! Meeting Sociology Club. The students are going on a field trip to the cement plant tomorrow. I won't be able to accompany them because of the newspaper but I have been there already. They will make written reports since there is a controversy among them as to whether this foreign enterprise is exploiting Haiti or not.

9 p.m.: on my way home visited adult literacy class in which I have enrolled one of my househelpers. He com-
plains that he is wasting his time, he is not learning anything, there are too many students, the teacher is often absent and half the time the electricity is out. Home; late supper, listen to the Voice of America and fell asleep on a book.
There was little separation between the author's work (observation and life (participation). As a participant-observer he was technically on call twenty four hours a day.

Field Trips.

The investigation was not restricted to a specific area but embraced the Republic of Haiti as a whole. However, more attention was given to Port-au-Prince and vicinity where all the political, commercial, and educational activities are concentrated. Centralization is so strong that the capital is sometimes referred to facetiously as the "Republic of Port-au-Prince." It is in Port-au-Prince that the power structure lies, where decisions are made and events occur which eventually affect the rest of the country.

Many short field trips were made in the adjacent regions of Port-au-Prince, including the mountain area of Kenscoff, Furcy, Fort Jacques, the plaine du Cul de Sac, south to Leogane, north to Montrouis and points interim.

Thirteen major field trips were undertaken covering most of the republic except the northwest peninsula which was inaccessible (see appendix 1). These trips were taken during the many holidays and long vacations which punctuate the Haitian school calendar. Over fifty per cent of the author's students came from the provinces and many extended invitations to visit their respective region. They accompanied the writer on these trips. Modes of transportation employed varied between car, truck, bus, sailboat, steamboat, bicycle,
on foot, but most often on horseback. The author stayed in the homes of his students or friends, occasionally in a small provincial hotel, sometimes in peasant huts and even in military barracks when no other accommodations were available. The sense of hospitality, the round of visits, the desire of the local inhabitants to be of assistance and to *baille audience* (creole for "bull sessions") were overwhelming. In once instance, a whole family vacated one of the better houses in town, rearranged it with borrowed furniture, built a temporary outdoor shower, so that the "American professor" would be as comfortable as possible. Travel and living conditions on field trips were difficult at times but as a whole, the experience was a most stimulating one in learning about life in the Haitian provinces. Run-down Port-au-Prince always seemed, upon return, like a modern American metropolis in contrast to the 19th century style of life in the back country.

**Reports of Informants and Interviews.**

Besides the personal observations of the writer, information was obtained through the reports of informants and by interviews.

If one considers an informant as anyone who provides information, then hundreds of informants participated in this study. However, to make it meaningful one should differentiate between types of informants. Informants used in this study could be classified as follows: secondary, primary and expert informants.

Secondary informants were people who revealed important
information in a casual or accidental way, or people who contributed only temporarily or to a specific facet of the study. The relationship between the author and these informants remained on the secondary level.

In contrast, primary informants worked regularly and were familiar with the study. They were recruited among the author's students, friends, and servants, and represented roughly the various social strata of Haitian society. They were articulate about their own particular world. They were chosen because of availability and sympathy. It was not only a question of choosing them but their willingness to work with the author. There was much social interaction between the author and his twenty-odd primary informants. About four informants worked for the entire period of the study and actually helped with some of the research. They were subjected to group and depth interviews and were consulted on any new question or hypothesis that might come up. Sometimes they were in disagreement with the author's interpretation and many evenings of stimulating discussions are remembered.

Expert informants were people who were specialists in their respective fields and consented to have "their brains picked!" They included social scientists, historians, economists, agronomists, labor leaders, professors, intellectuals, etc. Generally these people were interviewed more formally and in the specific area of their competence.

In general, interviewing was integrated with observation and
participation, and aimed for a wide scope of information. Therefore only unstructured or open-ended interviews were made and they were reserved for primary and expert informants. An effort was always made to maintain an informal atmosphere during interviewing so as to make the social situation as natural as possible, thereby encouraging spontaneity of response. For this reason, notes were only rarely taken during the interviews. Whenever possible, as soon as the interview was over it was written up roughly. Later interviews were translated, transmitted to cards with sources mentioned and integrated with the rest of the field data.

The question of rewards for information did not present itself, for expert informants and as a rule secondary informants did not realize the role they were playing. When they did, whatever small favor or gift appropriate to the situation was extended.

In the case of primary informants, the question of rewards was more complicated. They were volunteers and worked on a friendship basis. However, friendship patterns in Latin America are quite demanding; one expects much out of a friend and reciprocally one has many obligations. The author tried to fulfill his obligations to the people who were helping him in many ways, such as helping them obtain employment, fellowships, visas, etc. Sometimes it became very involved, and to this day the involvement is not over.

For an excellent article on the subject, see Benjamin D. Paul, "Interview Techniques and Field Relationships" in A. Kroeber, Anthropology Today (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).
Language as a Tool.

Since French is the official language of Haiti and the author speaks it fluently, it was felt at first that there would be no language problem. However, more than 85 per cent of the population do not understand French and use the vernacular creole exclusively. Every Haitian speaks creole and even the elite who use French as their basic language lapse into creole in their intimate interactions. The directness of the language in contrast to the round-about way things are said in French, its expressiveness, warmth and humor make it a very appealing language to everyone.

The author felt that since such a large portion of the population did not speak French and since creole was the language of intimacy, it was important for him to acquire it. Creole is not a lingua franca but rates the qualification of language even though a limited one. While creole has an African grammatical structure, more than 95 per cent of its vocabulary is French derived, making it relatively easy to learn for those who speak French. It took the author six months of concentrated efforts to speak creole fluently and about a year to understand its more colloquial nuances. The acquisition of creole proved valuable in extending the range of social participation. It allowed much greater communication. People did not feel obliged to revert to French when talking in creole for the sake of the author. At other times, the author overheard delicate information from people who took it for granted he did not understand creole.
The knowledge of creole and French made the author independent of the inevitable biases or "editing" of interpreters. The languages also proved to be important tools in winning the confidence and sympathy of the subjects.

E. Significance of the Study

This writer went to Haiti because of his interest in Negro culture. During his two years on the island, he became aware of a much more significant area of investigation than Afro-French cultural survival and acculturation and concentrated on the crucial problem of underdevelopment.

It is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to the understanding of the problems of the underdeveloped areas of the world, particularly Latin America and specifically Haiti. It is hoped that this case-study of Haiti might be of significance to the comparatively new field of the sociology of underdevelopment. Haiti represents a unique constellation of problems, but these problems taken individually are found in other underdeveloped areas leading to the assumption that a constructive and relevant social theory of development might eventually be possible.

It is also hoped that this study will spur students of Haitian society to contribute research of a more specialized nature in order to build a systematic inventory of social phenomena in Haiti.

Finally it is hoped that the casual reader who runs across this study might gain a sympathetic appreciation of a society which in
spite of monumental obstacles has managed to create and maintain a
nation with a cultural identity of its own.

If this dissertation does no more than introduce the reader
to an underdeveloped nation, its society, its culture and its
problems and make him aware of some of the forces at work in such
a society, it will have achieved its central purpose.
Haiti was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his first voyage to the New World in 1492. He called the island "La Isla Española"--later latinized to Hispaniola--and established a temporary settlement near the present city of Cap-Haïtien. The aborigines of the island were the Arawak Indians estimated about one million. They had a simple political organization made up of five nations or caciquats (see figure 1).

Although the initial contact between the local population and the conquistadores was friendly, it soon deteriorated at the expense of the Indians who were exploited, massacred or enslaved. The Indian population dwindled at an alarming rate as they were unable to adjust to conditions of servitude and had no immunity to new diseases brought by the Spaniards. By 1507, there were 60,000 Indians left. If the original estimate is correct, 94 percent of the Indian population was exterminated within 15 years.

The rapid decimation of the Indians made labor scarce in this infant colony and it was suggested to import Negroes from

---

Figure 1. Map of the Indian nations on the island of Hispaniola circa 1492. Dorsainvil, op. cit., p. 8.
Africa. As early as 1503, African slaves were present in Haiti, but more than a century passed before massive slave import became an established practice. Meanwhile the colony declined after its first thirty years of existence. Gold mines were running out and many Spaniards moved on to Cuba, México, and Peru. By 1545, half a century after discovery, the population of the island counted only 11,000 people and continued to decrease.

French association with the island began around 1625. At that time a few French adventurers settled on the island of Tortuga off the northwest coast of Haiti. These were the notorious buccaneers and filibusters living by hunting and piracy. Gradually they occupied the sparsely inhabited western part of the island. By the end of the century they had gained a strong enough foothold for France to claim the colony. By the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, Spain ceded to France the western third of Hispaniola which became known as Saint Domingue.

---

2The suggestion was made by the man who went down in history as the "protector" of the Indians: the Dominican monk Las Casas who lived at one time in Hispaniola. "Thus he became the involuntary accomplice to a crime as revolting as the one against which his righteous and generous nature opposed itself." J. C. Dorsainvil, Manuel d' Histoire d' Haiti. (Port-au-Prince: Henri Deschamps, 1958), p. 23.

3The term buccaneer is derived from the French boucaner: to smoke meat in the open in the manner of the Indians. The term was first applied to the French settlers in Haiti who lived in a sort of symbiosis with the filibusters. The latter were freebooters or pirates who preyed upon ships. In exchange of arms and objects the buccaneers provided food to the filibusters and entered into mutual aid associations with them.
During the 18th century, the colony of Saint Domingue developed rapidly. New immigrants from France organized plantations which produced highly profitable staples such as sugar, cotton, coffee and indigo. Capital investments were made in roads, irrigation, sugar refineries, and secondary industries were established. The acute shortage of labor was met by a rapid increase in the slave traffic. A triangle route linked the Antilles to Europe and Africa. Boats loaded with sugarcane left Saint Domingue for Nantes and Bordeaux in France, loaded there with trinkets to be exchanged on the Guinea Coast, and returned to the island with human cargo. By the second half of the 18th century, Saint Domingue had become the most prosperous French colony and the source of immense revenues. It was also considered the richest colonial possession in the world. It supplied two-thirds of the overseas trade of France. It produced most of the coffee and sugar for Europe. Its combined exports and imports were valued at more than $140 millions, a figure never surpassed since.

The golden era of prosperity for Saint Domingue lasted for a relatively short period from 1730 through 1790. During these 60 years, enormous fortunes were made and lost. The prevailing atmosphere in the colony was that of ostentation, greed and jealousy and all the excesses associated with rapid wealth and the exploitation of the many by the few. An uneasy class structure destined to end

---

4Leyburn, op. cit., p. 15.
in serious conflict resulted. At the top were the high officials and
the important planters known as *grands blancs* who led the particular
brand of creole high life with its luxury, extravagance, stately
mansions and long sojourns in France. They looked down upon the
*petits blancs* or *blancs manants* who were the shop-keepers, the
artisans and other whites of lesser means. In turn both groups drew
a social barrier between themselves and the *gens de couleur* or
*affranchis*. The latter were free people of color, mostly mulattoes,
who had emerged as a distinct class nearly as large as the whites
and who shared many of their privileges. Relations between these
groups were fraught with distrust and hostility and in turn they all
feared the mass of slaves who represented about 90 percent of the
population and on whose labor their precarious prosperity depended.

A. *Struggle for Independence*

It was inevitable that the French revolution of 1789 with its
ideal of liberty and equality should have repercussions in Saint
Domingue. On one side the planter's class, alarmed by the revolu-
tionary Declaration of the Rights of Man and its menace to the
colonial social system, pressed for a special constitution for
Saint Domingue, challenged French colonial authority and threatened
to establish self-government free of metropolitan interference.
Opposing them were the *affranchis*. In spite of their equal rights
as free men guaranteed by the *Code Noir* of 1685, this latter group
were the victims during the 18th century of an increasing number of
discriminatory local statutes aimed at curbing their growing power and wealth and humiliating them socially. In spite of these restrictions, they owned one third of all the land and one fourth of all the slaves. Many gens de couleur with no history of slavery in their families for several generations had a better education and superior style of life than the petits blancs. They wanted full political franchise and an end to humiliating castelike distinctions. The planters were unwilling to compromise and retaliated by acts of intimidation and brutality. Two of the leaders of the affranchis were broken at the wheel. Unrest resulted and belatedly the French National Assembly accorded in 1791 full political rights to the free people of color. However, the latter had realized by then that they would secure the enforcement of their rights only by force.

At this crucial point an unexpected event occurred. Observing the political ferment of the time, the slaves revolted on their own and started a civil war which was to last on and off for 13 years. The insurrection spread like wild fire, with massacres and atrocities in its wake. France's efforts to regain control of the island failed; so did England and Spain's unsuccessful interventions. With no other choice, the French commissioners in Saint Domingue officially abolished slavery in 1793. This act was as unpopular with the affranchis as it was with the white planters. Both groups had vested interests in slavery; the gens de couleur had merely wanted their share in governing the island. However, rigid treatment of the free people of color led to their collaboration with the slaves who were
inclined to be friendly to them.

At this time an extraordinary person, Toussaint Louverture, appeared on the scene. The "first of the blacks," as he was called, was destined to complete the emancipation of the slaves and expel the French from the island. Born a slave and having spent the first 40 years of his life in slavery, he rose rapidly to prominence during the slave insurrection. He served briefly with the Spanish Army where he earned the commission of general but then defected to the French and in a short time restored order to the strife-torn colony after successfully repelling English and Spanish interventions. He became the undisputed master respected by all. He dispatched an army to the Spanish part of the island and rapidly brought the whole island under his control. His personal prestige was so great that in short order he got the ex-slaves back to work on the plantations on a sharecropper's arrangement. Production had practically ceased for some years, but prosperity and stability returned almost immediately under his leadership. His authority now established, Toussaint called an assembly in 1801 which adopted a constitution for the colony and confirmed his title as governor general for life for the whole island. Napoleon Bonaparte, then first consul who referred to Toussaint derogatorily as the "gilded African," considered this act tantamount to secession and organized a powerful expedition under the leadership of his brother-in-law General Leclerc to regain control of the colony. Toussaint Louverture was treacherously lured into a trap and sent to France as a prisoner where he died shortly after in
1803. Notwithstanding this setback, his followers, led by General Dessalines, Christophe and Petion and spurred by the news that slavery had been reestablished in Martinique and Guadeloupe, renewed their struggle against the French troops. The war lasted one year during which the French army, reinforced several times, was decimated by fighting and the ravage of malaria and yellow fever epidemics. After the death of General Leclerc and the last defeat of the French Army, General Rochambeau signed an armistice in November 1803.

On January 1, 1804, Dessalines proclaimed the independence of the old French colony of Saint Domingue. He restored to it the original Indian name of Haiti and gave it its own flag, red and blue, by symbolically ripping out the white of the French tricolor. Thus, after defeating the most powerful army of the time, Haiti became the first Negro nation in the world, and the second nation after the United States to establish an independent government on the American continent.

It was France's last attempt to regain the lost colony of Saint Domingue. It was also the end of Napoleon's hope to carve a vast French colonial empire in North America, for the army which was needed to hold it had been destroyed in Saint Domingue. This fact contributed to Napoleon's offer to the United States to sell the vast region of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

B. Early Days of the Republic

Jean Jacques Dessalines was proclaimed Governor for life of Haiti. The most pressing task facing his new nation was to defend
itself from any further attempt by France to regain the colony. A strict military regime was maintained and much energy was devoted to building fortifications. His fanatical hatred of the French led him to an act of vengeance of extreme cruelty. A few months after independence, he organized the systematic massacre of all remaining French residents in Haiti. Children and women were not spared, but priests, doctors and other French citizens who could be useful to the new nation were left unharmed. Precautions were taken so that no whites other than the French were slaughtered. The passion of the period explains this massacre without justifying it morally, and it won for Haiti the alienation of the civilized world. Dessalines turned his energy next to the submission of the Spanish part of the island which had put itself under the protection of the French after the fall of Toussaint Louverture. He failed in this attempt and after proclaiming himself Emperor Jacques I, in imitation of Napoleon, he devoted his attention to reorganizing his new country. In his position of absolute ruler he forced the black masses back on the plantations as serfs and maintained order by force. However, he fared less well when he attempted to settle the delicate question of land distribution which eventually cost him his life. He made powerful enemies especially among the mulattoes who claimed the

---

5The majority of the French had left. The exodus began in 1791 and reached its climax in 1802. About 10,000, French planters, gens de couleur and their respective slaves resettled in New Orleans. Others resettled in other parts of the West Indies and the United States but the majority returned to France.
estates of their French fathers. Added to this, his tyranny and the corruption of his administration made him the object of fear and hatred and led to his assassination in 1806. Nonetheless, he remains today the national hero of Haiti and is considered the father of its independence.  

To build a country on the ruin and ashes of 13 years of bloody civil wars with the former ruling class completely exterminated, to create a nation out of a mass of ex-slaves and a handful of educated gens de couleur was a momentous task. From the very beginning Haiti had no chance to solve its overwhelming problems and embarked on the stormy road of its destiny armed only with political independence and the will to maintain itself by day to day expedients.

The question of succession to Dessalines presented itself next. A republic was established and Henry Christophe, Commander of the Army of the North, was named the first president with greatly reduced power. Ignoring this he moved to consolidate his authority over the entire island but his army was opposed by Alexandre Petion, Commander of the Army of the West. Christophe returned to Cap-Haitien while his adversaries elected Petion president, whereupon Haiti became two republics: one governed by Christophe in the North and the other in the West, governed by Petion. A few years later Christophe turned

---

6Foreigners familiar with Haitian history generally consider the achievements of Toussaint Louverture and even Henry Christophe much more outstanding than those of Dessalines which are dwarfed by his cruelty. However, Haitians revere the memory of Dessalines above the other heroes of independence.
his republic into a kingdom, crowned himself Henry I and created a
nobility. Born a slave and illiterate, he was a dynamic and dramatic
leader. He rapidly launched his little kingdom on the road of
order, progress and prosperity through an iron-fisted rule. He
established a feudal system maintaining large scale plantations,
traded with Europe, filled his treasury with hard currency, erected
public buildings among which the colossal citadel stands as a monument
of what determination can accomplish. He drove his subjects relent-
lessly. He stands as the only leader in the history of Haiti who advo-
cated by his actions that the road to progress is through discipline
and hard work. Unfortunately he was ahead of his time and his tyran-
nical methods and stern measures brought rebellion among the people who
only yesterday had removed themselves from the yoke of slavery. When
he realized his downfall was inevitable he shot himself with a silver
bullet in 1820.

Meanwhile Petion's republic in the west embarked on a different
path. Petion, a well-to-do mulatto, had been educated in France and
chose to rule constitutionally in an attitude of laissez-faire border-
ing on indecision. Unlike Christophe who re-instituted large scale
plantation to the profit of the state, Petion parceled out his
national domain to the mulatto aristocracy, to the veterans of his
army and subsequently to the masses on lenient terms. While he
achieved social stability by creating a landowning peasantry, pro-
duction declined drastically. During his regime he gave sanctuary and
help to Simon Bolivar, liberator of South America who in turn kept
his pledge to abolish slavery in the territory he freed. As a whole Petion's government was a weak one and when he died in 1818, although he was sincerely mourned by his people, he left a divided country with a treasury plundered by his officials. While Christophe was the most effective, Petion was the most humane and popular chief that Haiti ever possessed. Nonetheless, many historians maintain that many of the ills of the future can be traced to his administrative measures. It was during his administration that the former *affranchis* emerged as a mulatto elite destined to dominate the power structure of the country.

His successor Jean-Pierre Boyer, also a mulatto educated in France, was named president for life and ruled for 25 years. He reunited the north and south at the death of Christophe in 1820 and one year later reannexed the Spanish eastern part of the island. For 21 years thereafter, Haiti controlled the whole island. In 1825, France recognized the independence of Haiti after extracting a huge indemnity for the former French planters of Saint Domingue. This unreasonable debt to France and its humiliating conditions were to cause many misfortunes and high-handed foreign interference in the future. Yet Haiti had no other alternative but to seek international recognition to secure its independent status. Boyer also instituted a series of laws and codes such as the civil and rural codes. These codes established military government for the peasants while urban dwellers enjoyed civil government, a situation which still exists today and which has perpetuated and reinforced the rural-urban
estrangement. In the hope of increasing production, Boyer reenacted some of the stern measures of Toussaint and Dessalines to effectively tie the peasant masses to the soil. After the laxity of the Petion regime, these measures were unpopular and added to the discontent stemming from the acceptance of the French indemnity. A plot toppled Boyer's government in 1843. Taking advantage of the situation, the eastern part of the island which had been mismanaged and treated as conquered territory by the Haitians revolted and proclaimed itself the Dominican Republic in 1844.

The next period of Haitian history up to the first decade of the 20th century is referred to as the era of ephemeral governments. It was an era of stagnation and regression. The land was continually divided and redivided into uneconomic minifundia resulting in increased poverty. Oppressive and corrupt governments succeeded each other rapidly through revolution and violence. Economic irresponsibility and political instability became institutionalized. A growing gulf separated the peasant mass, forced to shift for themselves, from the urban elite living parasitically on the export crops. Every effort to reorganize the country seemed to throw it into greater chaos. Power groups concerned only with the selfish interests of their cliques took turns governing, altering the constitution to favor their vested interests, plundering the national treasure and following each other in exile. During the 72 years from the fall of Boyer to the American intervention in 1915, 22 presidents succeeded each other, of which three died in office, two retired, three were murdered and 17 were
driven out by revolutions. Eleven presidents served less than a year. While the majority of them were not of the mulatto elite, they were in effect doublures, that is, fronts for governments essentially controlled by the mulatto elite. Whether the rivalries were on a regional basis between north and south or one a color basis between mulatto and black, they really involved less than five percent of the population, namely the urban dwellers, the mulatto commercial and administrative elite, and the black generals and their respective followers. The vast majority of the people were the passive victims of this power game and went about their daily task of eking out a subsistence living largely ignored by the ruling class.

Notable during the period of ephemeral governments were two rulers, one for the worse, the other for the better. For the worst chief of state Haiti had had thus far, Faustin Soulouque, an illiterate ex-slave takes first place. He misruled the country for 12 years in opera-bouffe style crowning himself emperor in great pomp and circumstance. Originally he had been chosen as a tool to be manipulated but to the surprise of everyone he reversed the politique de doublure and persecuted the mulatto bourgeoisie mercilessly. His attempts to reconquer the Dominican Republic ended in fiasco. Tired of his antics and despotism and the ridicule he was bringing to Haiti on the international scene, his followers finally put him down and he
was succeeded in 1859 by Fabre Geffrard. His successor, a potentially good president, was powerless in a situation beyond repair. Handicapped by conspiracies, he nevertheless accomplished certain reforms which stimulated education, agriculture, industry and trade. High prices for Haiti's export crops because of the American Civil War brought a measure of prosperity. In 1860 a concordat was signed with the Holy See of Rome making Catholicism the official religion of the Republic. It was also during his regime that belatedly the United States recognized Haiti in 1864. Geffrard encouraged the emigration to Haiti of American Negroes and sent agents to recruit them. As a whole the plan was a failure and many who came returned to the United States disillusioned. Harrassed by the old perverse game of political intrigues, Geffrard resigned in 1867 and left the country. His last words were "poor country! what a state of anarchy will follow my departure!"

---

7 The Empire of Faustin I coincided with the Second French Empire. Napoleon III was suspicious and vindictive. To downrate him without danger, the opposition in France published on Soulouque the most grotesque buffoneries, but the malicious and cruel allusions were transparent: one emperor masking the other. However, the profusion of ridicule heaped upon Soulouque rebounded upon Haiti, so that educated Haitians were humiliated, and consequently hated the emperial regime. Dorsainvil, op. cit., p. 228.

8 For a fuller treatment of this interesting question see Ludwell L. Montague, Haiti and the United States, 1791-1938 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940).

9 St. John, op. cit., p. 112.
C. The American Occupation

By the beginning of the 20th century the collapse of the Haitian state seemed imminent not only politically but financially. Bankruptcy had been avoided so far by a series of high interest foreign loans, new loans being used to pay back delinquent ones. However the point had been reached where foreign creditors were foreclosing and their governments were threatening intervention.

As for the political scene, anarchy seemed to have become a way of life. Within the seven years preceding 1915, seven presidents were elected and deposed.

Of these seven, one was blown up in the national palace; one died it is said by poison; and of the other five, all of whom were deposed by revolutions, one was butchered in a massacre of political prisoners, and another was torn to pieces by a mob.10

The day of the latter incident in July 1915, the United States Marines landed in Haiti to protect American lives and property but stayed for a 19 years' occupation.

The reasons for the occupation are rather obscure and are still much debated. There seem to have been economic and political ramifications besides the genuine desire to restore order. The precedent had been set before by U.S. intervention in the domestic affairs of Cuba, Panama, Mexico, Honduras, and an outright occupation of Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. The Monroe Doctrine as interpreted by Theodore Roosevelt meant that continued disturbance in

any Latin American country would force the United States to intervene to forstall intervention by European powers in the affairs of the hemisphere. Of course this has been interpreted by others as imperialistic expansion, of wanting to make the Caribbean area an American lake and of profiting from the involvement of European powers in World War I to grab the Caribbean market and secure the area once and for all as a zone of American influence. To the criticism of "big stick policy" (political coercion) against small defenseless nations was added the one of "dollar diplomacy" (economic dominance) whereby American investments were guaranteed protection by armed intervention.

It is a matter of historical record that one year preceding the occupation the U.S. government was involved in a dispute between the Haitian government and the National City Bank of New York; that the latter had pressured for American intervention; that the United States was desirous of transferring the foreign debts of Haiti from Europe to New York so as to remove pretext for European involvement; and lastly, the U.S. was concerned about Germany's interest in securing exclusive customs control of Haiti and establishing a naval base at Mole St. Nicholas across the windward passage from Guantanamo Bay. In addition, Haiti's chronic revolutions had become a public nuisance at the door step of the United States.

With the typically American obsession to remain within legality, the occupational forces masterminded an election with a handpicked president from the elite who agreed, in spite of bitter opposition,
to sign a treaty with the United States legalizing the occupation. The convention was for ten years but within the same year it was signed, the president was pressured to renew it for another ten years. The chief provisions of the convention were the following:

1. American control of custom and finance.
2. Organization of a Haitian gendarmerie, officered by Americans.
4. Haiti to cede no territory to any nation but the U.S.
5. Control over public works, agriculture, health and sanitation.

Only justice and education were left outside the realm of American control, but by holding the purse strings the Americans were in effective control. Military law was established. A Haitian government was maintained which functioned in certain matters as long as it was willing to cooperate with the American authorities. The constitution of Haiti was re-written.\(^\text{11}\)

The Americans went about their task not without opposition. First they had to subdue the cacos. The cacos were rural peasant mercenaries who made up the revolutionary armies of aspirants to the presidency. They first appeared in 1867 in northern Haiti. Being the ignorant tools of ambitious politicians, they did not bother themselves with revolutionary ideology but sold their services to the highest bidder. They were very active in the unstable period

\(^{11}\)It was Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, then Assistant-Secretary of the Navy, who wrote the Haitian constitution.
of 1910-15. The Marines started an active campaign to crush them. Next the occupation was confronted by a peasant uprising stemming from the revival by the Marines of an old work law which had fallen into disuse. This corvee law stipulated that peasants had to furnish six days of free labor a year to maintain roads. Other peasants, who had been dispossessed of their land to reconstitute large plantations for American interests, joined in the protest. At one time more than 5,000 peasants participated in the insurrection under their chief Charlemagne Peralte. They were eventually overpowered after putting up a stubborn fight and Peralte was ambushed and killed by two marines disguised in black face. The courage of Peralte, defying the U.S. authorities, made a sort of national hero out of him for he symbolized the wounded pride of a people being occupied. After 1920 the country quieted down and the Marines proceeded to give Haiti the tidying up of a century. In general the people cooperated with the occupation program. What were the realizations of this program? In the short run the achievements seemed impressive but in the long run looking at Haiti today, one wonders. The immediate benefit of the occupation was that it brought Haiti out of isolation and into the modern world. A climate of order and stability was restored. The Americans reorganized the administration, established the honest handling of revenues, curbed graft and put the country on a sound financial basis. Achievements were made in sanitation, public health, and public works such as buildings, roads, wharfs, sewage, etc. However, these were at best palliatives. The roots of Haitian problems
were left untouched. Perhaps the occupation was of too short a dura-
tion to alter the basic structure of Haitian society or the Marines
did not know how to make these reforms or failed to make them within
the framework of the Haitian mentality and cultural predispositions.
Instead the Americans busied themselves with comparatively easy and
more visible projects such as building roads, hospitals, and install-
ing telephones.

As a whole the occupation was a fiasco. The U.S. gained nothing
from it but left a legacy of ill-will that persists, though in a
diluted form, to this day not only in Haiti but in the rest of Latin
America and which has jeopardized our subsequent efforts to help the
hemisphere.

The occupation was terminated in 1934, when President Roosevelt
in pursuit of his good neighbor policy withdrew the U.S. Marines.

The Haiti the departing Americans left behind them was
obviously neither the Haiti of 1915 nor what that Haiti
might have become had it continued to evolve along the
path it was then following. ....It was true that [Achieve-
ments] were superficial improvements imposed by alien
forces; that no fundamental change had been wrought in
the economic, social, and political character of the
community; that the basic problems of 1915 were still
the problems of 1935.12

Once American control was removed things gradually returned to their
former state.

President Vincent, who was chief of state when the Marines left,
extended his mandate until 1941 by revising the constitution. During

---

12 Montague, op. cit., p. 276.
his administration a barbaric episode occurred in 1937 which shocked the world. Some 60,000 Haitians seeking work had spilled over the years across the ill-defined border of the Dominican Republic creating a serious problem of unemployment and becoming the target of increasing hostility in the host country. Trujillo, to solve the problem once and for all, avoided the trouble of deportation by ordering the wholesale massacre of the Haitian migratory workers. It is estimated that as many as 20,000 were brutally slaughtered and thousands of others escaped back into Haiti. International opinion found Trujillo guilty of the atrocity and he agreed to pay an indemnity to the Haitian Government of which only $250,000 was paid, thus adding to the affront by pricing Haitian victims at about $15.00 a piece. President Vincent's ineffective handling of the situation made him unpopular with his people thereafter. He was succeeded in 1941 by Elie Lescot's bourgeois and autocratic regime which among other things conducted with the connivance of the church an anti-vodou campaign which was as intolerant as it was unnecessarily brutal. He was ousted in 1946 when he tried to re-elect himself. By that time the accumulated resentment against the selfish mulatto oligarchy which had consolidated its power again during the American occupation reached the exploding point and was going to shape the future events.

D. The Social Revolution of 1946

Haitians refer to the period which followed the taking of office by President Dumarsais Estime in 1946 as their social revolution.
It is not really a social revolution in the sense of the Mexican, Bolivian or Cuban Revolution for it did not transform Haitian society. Nonetheless, 1946 represents a date when important changes took place which differentiates the Haiti or pre-1946 from contemporary Haiti. The social revolution was aborted in 1950 and resumed in 1957 but has since been completely perverted. Yet its seeds lie dormant and whatever the outcome of the present-day chaotic conditions, it can be safely assumed that Haiti will never return to the traditional status-quo of pre-1946.

The social revolution of 1946 had been incubating for a generation and had its roots in the American occupation. World War II accelerated its tempo. It was characterized by three inextricably linked movements: nationalism as a unifying ideology, the emergence of a middle-class, and the rising expectancy of social justice by a larger sector of the population.

The nationalist movement led by Haitian intellectuals started during the American occupation as a natural reaction against it. Its first expression was to refute the imitative French culture imposed on the nation by the mulatto bourgeoisie. Interest was focused on rediscovering the neglected Haitian cultural heritage which led to the unashamed recognition of the African cultural legacy. It was a realistic re-appraisal of Haiti's natural cultural destiny. The growing spirit of nationalism broke down certain traditional barriers, united the articulate segments of the society including those members of the mulatto elite who had resented bitterly the
paternalistic and racial attitudes of the American Marines. The intellectuals started an indigenous school of literature drawing on Haitian and Negro themes. Style and content changed noticeably as social questions became more prominent while French romanticism declined. At the same time folklore and vodou, until then a tabu subject, became the object of serious ethnological studies. A museum of folk art was started and the success of Haitian primitive painting which rapidly gained world recognition started a veritable cultural renaissance.

The prevailing nationalist ideology coincided with the accession to power of a non-mulatto, non-bourgeois government reversing a long established tradition. There had been previous "black" government but they were ultimately controlled by the mulatto elite or they proved themselves incapable of national unity.

President Estime, misleadingly nicknamed the "peasant of Verettes," came from a provincial middle-class family, was a well-educated man but did not belong to the bourgeoisie. A general "defrosting" of the rigid class system resulted from his administration with notably better employment, educational and other social opportunities for members of other classes. His regime was in effect a reaction against the three traditional power wielders: the mulatto bourgeoisie, the foreign-dominated Catholic clergy and American economic dominance.

Members of the mulatto bourgeoisie until then occupied all the government posts and white collar jobs. They monopolized
professional occupations and ran the few commercial enterprises not in the hands of foreigners. The Estime government, while taking the precaution of maintaining some mulattoes in leading positions, purged the administration from their dominance and started the rise of the black bureaucracy in public office which has continued since, while the mulatto elite maintained their dominance in the private sector. Estime dedicated himself to a program of broad social and legislative reforms. The few schools and public services, predominantly catering to the elite until then, were made accessible to members of the new urban middle class and the urban proletariat. The role of women was much improved as they gained opportunities for higher education, and began to participate in national life. A social security system was established and unions were organized for the first time.

Estime also limited the political meddling of the Catholic clergy. The clergy, mostly French, were the traditional allies of the bourgeoisie which they considered as the only civilized group in Haiti. Notorious for their colonial mentality, they favored the maintenance of the status-quo, and by their virtual control of the school system, the clergy were effective agents of socialization. By increasing secularization and silencing the more vocal priests, Estime was in fact expressing the growing anticlericalism of the educated classes.

Estime had reservations toward U.S. aid and too strong an economic reliance on the United States. While relatively small,
American interests in Haiti still represented the major foreign investment and the United States was the chief customer for Haitian exports. Estime's government attempted a rapprochement with France and England so as to be more independent. During the occupation, certain young Haitians, most of them from the bourgeoisie, had been trained by the Americans to be the cadres of the future. Most of them had benefited from fellowships in the United States. When they returned to Haiti, they tended to dominate the education and medical profession and form cliques which systematically kept out those who did not agree with their new ideas. The Revolution of 1946 greatly diminished their influence.

President Estime was a popular as well as progressive president though his reforms were limited to the urban sector and did not reach the peasants to any significant degree. For the first time, signs of democracy were appearing: the press criticized the president, and members of the cabinet hinted in their speech about areas where they were not in agreement with the president. Unfortunately there were abuses of confidence and the old game of intrigue cropped up again. When Estime manifested the desire to alter the constitution so that he could be reelected, a coup d'etat led by the chief of the Army Paul Magloire forced him to resign in 1950.

The army insured the power to its chief Magloire in whom the traditional bourgeoisie enthusiastically recognized a Messiah; the Catholic clergy found an opportune supporter; the US Embassy saw a surer guarantor; and the opportunist faction of the middle classes recognized a rescuer from the total eclipse that would have engulfed them if a more orthodox member of the light-
skinned Bourgeoisie* had succeeded to the presidency.13

The regime of Magloire from 1950-56 was not reactionary to the social revolution but brought it to a stand still. His policy of "national reconciliation" between the mulatto elite and the black bureaucracy was an attempt at equilibrium but, as always, ignored the remaining 90 percent of the population: the peasant mass. Being dark but from a prominent family he did pacify color antagonism, but at the same time served the interest of the bourgeoisie class and his own personal ambitions. Inheriting the improvements brought about by his predecessor as well as expansion of tourism and favorable prices on the international market for Haiti's crops, his regime coincided with a period of relative prosperity and little internal dissention. A congenial bon-vivant himself, he squandered national wealth as he led the country into the illusion of progress on a path of false prosperity. This was short-lived when the economic boom ended followed by Hurricane Hazel's devastation of southern Haiti in 1954. Scandals of corruption and graft discredited his government and when Magloire sought to reelect himself in defiance of the Haitian constitution as so many presidents had attempted to do in the past, he was "run out" of office by a general strike in 1956.

Then followed a chaotic period of ten months during which five

---


*The author used the term oligarchy meaning the elite or bourgeoisie.
governments succeeded each other.

The 1956-1957 crisis marked a complete return to the old traditions of the pre-American occupation era; in this brief period, Haiti exhausted, one after the other, all the forms of transitory government that had been used throughout the 19th century.\(^{14}\)

Four presidential candidates emerged: Dejoie, Jumelle, Fignole and Duvalier. Duvalier was the most obscure. Those who threw their support behind him expected that he would be an easy front-man to manipulate. Having been a cabinet minister of Estime, he was the candidate of the new middle-class, not of the urban proletariat like Fignole nor of the bourgeoisie like Dejoie. Finally Fignole was eliminated and Jumelle withdrew his candidacy, which pitted the mulatto Dejoie representing the privileged elite and the status-quo against Duvalier.\(^{15}\) Duvalier won on the banner of the social revolution of 1946. He assumed the presidency for six years in 1957, and at this writing is still ruling Haiti having proclaimed himself president for life in 1964. (A detailed analysis of the Duvalier regime is given in Chapter seven devoted to political institutions.)

It was the biggest surprise of the century when the colorless and shy country doctor turned out to be the most ruthless dictator in the history of Haiti. In less than a decade he has driven the country down the path of economic deterioration, social regression and

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 43.

\(^{15}\)During his political campaign, Dejoie used to darken his face when addressing the masses. Perspiration made it run.
moral disintegration to the lowest level of poverty and general misery that the nation has ever known. Yet Duvalier does not represent an isolated phenomenon. He is merely speeding up the inevitable debacle of a century and a half of laissez-aller, expediency, irresponsibility and instability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>Columbus discovers the island of Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1503</td>
<td>Appearance of the first Negro slaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>French buccaneers settle on the western part of the island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1685</td>
<td>The Code Noir is promulgated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1697</td>
<td>Treaty of Ryswick. Spain cedes the western part of the island to France. Henceforth it is called Saint Domingue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>The French Revolution brings unrest to the colony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>The slaves rebel against their French masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>Emancipation of slaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Toussaint Louverture becomes Governor, later unites the whole island under his rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>Napoleon sends Leclerc expedition to subjugate the colony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>After the defeat of the French, Dessalines proclaims independence. The name of Haiti is restored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Henry Christophe rules after assassination of Dessalines. Proclaims kingdom in the North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Founding of Republic under Petion in the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Reunification of the North and West under President Boyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Spanish Santo Domingo becomes part of Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>France recognizes Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Severe earthquake does considerable damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Spanish part of the island secedes and becomes the Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>Concordat with the Holy See in Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>United States recognizes Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>United States occupation of Haiti begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>United States occupation ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Dominican soldiers slaughter 20,000 Haitian migratory workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>&quot;Social Revolution.&quot; Lescot is deposed; Estime is elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Estime deposed by coup d'etat. Magloire becomes president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Hurricane Hazel ravages Southern Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Revolution deposing Magloire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Duvalier becomes president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Duvalier stays in power beyond his legal term. Unrest in the country leads to conflict with the Dominican Republic. Conflict is brought to the attention of the OAS and UN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Hurricane Flora devastates Southern Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Duvalier proclaims himself president for life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2. Important Dates in the History of Haiti**
Figure 3. Map of the Republic of Haiti.
CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLE

A. Population Characteristics

Until recently, demographic documentation in underdeveloped countries has been largely neglected. Traditional societies involved in self-sufficient economies and living in isolation had little need for censuses and vital statistics. Now that their isolation and equilibrium have been broken, this absence of basic data is a severe handicap to societies trying to organize themselves along modern lines. It is obvious that any serious planification has to be based on an accurate knowledge of the size of a population, its rate of growth, its sex and age composition and many other social characteristics.

In the case of Haiti, the first and only census taken which deserves this name was the official census of 1950. In spite of the merit of this undertaking, the results are far from satisfactory.¹

¹Some of the more remote areas never saw a census taker. Eight out of 116 communes were never surveyed, some members of the "floating" population were recorded twice, some never at all. St. Surin, who evaluated the 1950 census by applying a UN statistical criteria, demonstrated that it fell into the "poor quality" category. This accuracy index varies between 0 and 20 in the case of a satisfactory census; between 20 and 40 in the case of a census of average acceptability. Above 40, a census is considered of poor quality. He obtained an index of 53 for the Haitian census. See Jacques Saint Surin, Indices Demographiques et Perspectives de la Population d’Haiti (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1962), p. 5.
Nevertheless, it is the only data available and it is very frustrating to work with inaccurate and conflicting figures which are already fifteen years old at this writing. In view of the poor quality of the statistics available, this study will stress relative figures rather than absolute ones.

Before the official census of 1950, several population estimates had been made throughout the history of Haiti. At the close of the French colonial period, Moreau de St. Mery estimates the population of 1779 at 520,000 individuals.\(^2\) One year after independence in 1805, a census was taken which revealed the heavy casualty of thirteen years of revolution; the population was then estimated at 380,000.\(^3\) In 1824, another census was taken in connection with the indemnity to France which revealed a population of 873,000.\(^4\) More than likely, it was an exaggerated figure, for in 1843 the population is assessed at only 880,000.\(^5\) In 1919, the population totaled 1,631,000, an evaluation made by the U.S. occupation authorities which admittedly did not cover the whole population. In 1928, the population was


\(^3\)Maurice A. Lubin, Du Recensement en Haiti (Port-au-Prince: Institut Haitien de Statistique, 1951), p. 7.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 8.

estimated at 2,500,000 which seems more plausible. All these censuses are so unreliable that it would be futile to establish some kind of rate of population growth before the first official census of Haiti in 1950 which established the population at 3,097,220. The latest United Nations estimate for the population of Haiti is 4,346,000 for 1962. Since we are dealing with estimates of estimates, it would suffice for our purpose here to assume that the population of Haiti is roughly four million.

Haiti is the most densely populated country in the Western Hemisphere, although some of the Caribbean island-possession have heavier concentration. In 1962, the United Nations estimated 406 inhabitants per square mile. This would compare roughly to the density which would result in Louisiana if the population of Texas were added. As for density of total population to arable land, Haiti ranked third in the world after Japan and Egypt, according to one survey. A report of the Inter-American bank estimated the density of the Haitian rural population in proportion to its cultivated and pasture land at 923 inhabitants per square mile in 1960.

---

7 Estimate was based on the calculated balance of birth, deaths, and migration.
The regional distribution of the Haitian population is uneven. Roughly, there are two zones of heavy population: the region extending from greater Port-au-Prince to the center of the southern peninsula and the central part of the northern coast pushing to the interior (see figure 3). The northeast peninsula is the least populated. By and large, zones of unfavorable natural climatic and soil conditions and high altitude zones are the most sparsely inhabited. Moral estimates that 48 percent of the population lives in the most fertile zone whereas eight percent live in the least desirable zone. However, it would be unwise to elaborate further as to why some regions are more heavily populated than others. Historical and cultural factors as well as geographical ones have played their part. Regardless, the country is so heavily populated that no matter where one travels, even in the most remote mountains, one finds human settlements. 

The distinction between urban and rural population is difficult to establish in Haiti. According to the 1950 census, 12.6 percent of the population is urban. This census included as urban all administrative centers of communes regardless of their size. For instance it included as urban the famous historical port of Mole St.

Figure 4. Population Density in Haiti. Moral, L'Economie Haitienne, op. cit., p. 32.
Nicholas, now a ghost town of 477 inhabitants. If the criteria of 2,500 minimum was used, 9 percent of the population would be urban. However, as Moral points out, the towns of the interior present more the aspect of large villages than towns. Urban Haiti is essentially the capital and the active eleven coastal towns totaling 7.7 percent of the population. In view of the increasing rural-urban migration of the last decade and the rapid growth of Port-au-Prince, the author estimates the urban population at 12 percent in the absence of more accurate figures.

The urban population is distributed in one large city, four large towns of over 10,000, eight small towns of over 5,000 and eleven urbanized villages of over 2,500. Since 1950 the population has increased considerably in the capital city and in some of the large towns, but the rate of growth in smaller towns seems to be slower.

The only city, properly speaking, in Haiti is Port-au-Prince. The current population of Greater Port-au-Prince including the adjacent

11 Mole St. Nicholas, once known as the "Gibraltar of the New World" was an important port during colonial days. As late as 1890, it had an estimated population of 15,000 for the town and commune. See Senexant Rouzier, Dictionnaire Geographique d'Haiti (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Heraux, 1927), vol. III, p. 260.


13 Ninety three agglomerations ranging from less than 500 to over 2,000 inhabitants and totaling approximately 70,000, were classified officially as urban for reasons mentioned above, but are discounted here.
residential town of Petionville is estimated in excess of 200,000.
This represents about 5 percent of the total population or 40 percent of the urban population. In Port-au-Prince are concentrated the commercial, industrial and governmental activities. It is the transportation center of the republic and its port and airport are the links to the outside world. Port-au-Prince has most of the conveniences expected of a modern city, although of limited quality and quantity.

There is a marked contrast between the city of Port-au-Prince and the other towns. Cap Haitien is the next largest urban agglomeration. Its population has been perennially estimated at 25,000 but judging by its crowded conditions, housing shortage and occasional food shortage, 40,000 would be a more accurate estimate. While noticeably larger and enjoying somewhat more modern conveniences than other towns, Cap Haitien resembles the other provincial towns more than it does Port-au-Prince. Other large towns are Gonaives and Les Cayes, both with population currently estimated at 15,000. Jeremie -- 11,000 inhabitants -- was hit by hurricane Hazel in 1954 from which it never recovered. It is a deteriorating town and is more similar to the smaller towns with its lack of sewage, sporadic electricity and regressing economic activities. Among the smaller towns are the ports of Saint Marc, Jacmel, Port-de-Paix, and Petit Goave. With the exception of still moderately prosperous Petit Goave, they all display the symptoms of economic decay. Fort Liberte with over 6,000 inhabitants looks like a ghost town with blocks of deserted houses in ruin. Its proximity to a large American-owned
sisal plantation keeps it alive. Hinche, in the central plateau, should be classified as an urbanized village in spite of its 5,000 inhabitants. Most of the eleven urbanized villages with population between 2,500 and 5,000 are situated in the interior and function as trade points for agricultural produce. Not in the interior are Aquin and St. Louis du Nord, both moribund ports, and Miragoane, which has received an economic spurt from the nearby Reynolds bauxite mines.

The remaining 88 percent of Haiti's population lives in rural areas, making Haiti the most predominantly rural country in the American Hemisphere. Eight out of ten Haitians live in little communities of less than 100 inhabitants or in scattered farmsteads.

In 1806, right after the revolution, it was estimated that 60 percent of the population was female. The 1950 census brought the female population down to 51.6 percent, which seems too low. In any case, women outnumber men especially in the adult urban population where the sex ratio is approximately 66. The sex ratio in the less than one year category for the entire population is 81.

With respect to age composition, the Haitian population is essentially young. This is actually visible; the preponderance of young people is striking to the observer. About 38 percent of the population is less than 15 years old and 48 percent under 20, according to the census of 1950. In the productive age category, namely the 15-64 age group, the proportion is of 57.7 percent and four percent of the population is 65 years old and over. These figures should be substantially the same today, keeping in mind always that the census
of 1950 does not have a high rating of accuracy and that many Haitians do not know their exact age. The proportion of youngsters in the Haitian population compares favorably with that found in the less developed countries of Latin America and in other underdeveloped areas of the world, as of 1950. It is about the same proportion which was found in the United States a century ago in 1860.

The recording of biostatistics in Haiti is so deficient that only a fraction of deaths and births are registered, thus making it very hard to estimate birth rate, mortality rate and the rate of population growth. Saint-Surin attempted in a recent study to estimate Haitian biostatistics by applying a method used in measuring birth and mortality rates in areas with defective registration. He arrived at the following estimates for the period 1960-65: 14

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Birth Rate:} & \quad 44 \\
\text{Mortality Rate:} & \quad 22 \\
\text{Rate of Increase:} & \quad 2.2% 
\end{align*}
\]

Despite the weakness of the available data on birth rates in Haiti, it is safe to assume that the rate is very high. Moreover, conditions generally associated with low fertility—namely, a high degree of industrialization and urbanization, high per capita income, and a high level of educational attainment—are absent in

\[\text{Saint Surin, op. cit.}, \text{ p. } 16. \text{ See pp. 5-10 for method employed.}\]
Haiti. Nonetheless, there is a differential fertility ratio between urban and rural population. For 1959, the figure was 36 for urban areas and 52 for rural districts, averaging 49 for the nation. This is probably also a reflection of social class differentiation in fertility rates. Family limitation among the exclusively urban elite and middle class is not unknown whereas for the peasant "pitite c'est riches" (children are wealth). High fertility trends are not likely to diminish in Haiti, at least for the time being.

The high mortality rate in Haiti is believed to be slowly decreasing. Large scale disease eradication programs, notably against yaws and malaria, have been carried out during the last two decades with the assistance of the United States and several international agencies. As yet, it is difficult to evaluate accurately the effect of such programs on the mortality rate. In general, health conditions have steadily improved since 1915 date of the beginning of the American occupation. While certain endemic diseases have been brought under control, diseases, such as tuberculosis, which are related to substandard living conditions are still the main killers. Infant mortality is very high. It is believed that only one of two

---

17However, the trend seemed to have reversed itself in the mid-sixties when under the Duvalier dictatorship the country reached the rock-bottom of economic stagnation and two successive hurricanes in 1963 and 1964 took a heavy toll in human lives and brought conditions of semi-starvation in the areas affected.
children born in the republic reaches the age of five. \(^{18}\) Children's funerals are part of the daily scene in Haiti. There are no figures on maternity mortality; however, like elsewhere in the world, the women outlive the men. The expectation of life at birth was estimated at 32 in 1950. It might be lower now.

Population growth in Haiti can be attributed to natural increase since migration to and from Haiti is numerically small. The rate of growth of 2.2 percent is below the median rate of population growth for Latin America. This might substantiate the fact that while high birth rates have been maintained, mortality has not been reduced drastically. At the present rate of growth, the population of Haiti doubles every thirty two years and will be about nine million by the year 2,000.

B. Racial Composition

The people of present-day Haiti are predominantly negroid with some caucasian strains. They are, for the most part, the descendants of African slaves and French settlers of the 17th and 18th century. The aboriginal Indians were almost totally eliminated by the early conquerors, so the amerindian strain in the population is negligible.

Although there is no such thing as a racial or ethnic census in Haiti, it is possible to make an approximate evaluation of the racial composition of the country. The white population represents

---

no more than a fraction of one percent of the total population. The mulatto population, meaning a population in which the caucasian genes are dominant, would be less than two percent. In the remaining 98 percent there is some incidence of caucasian strain varying from hardly visible to more pronounced, perhaps in one third of this category as various writers have arbitrarily advanced. Still, the majority of the population approximate the so-called racially pure or unmixed Negro. A Haitian anthropologist recently classified the Haitian population as being 85 percent pure Negro and 15 percent mixed-blood, thus Negroes with a fraction of caucasian blood and near whites are lumped together in one category.\(^{19}\) Since it is the social implications of race which are of interest it is more realistic to classify the Haitian population in the following two groups:

(1) **The light population:** which would include the few whites and the mulattoes whose Negro ancestry is relatively minor.

(2) **The dark population:** which would include the unmixed Negroes and Negroes with some white genes.

Using this classification, one could say that out of a total population of about four million, 98 percent are dark or Negro and about two percent are light or mulatto. There are about 5,000 whites in Haiti of which roughly half are Haitian citizens; the others are foreign residents.

1. **Indian Ancestry**

At the time of the discovery of Haiti, it was estimated that the aboriginal Indian population was about one million for the whole island. These were Arawaks and Tainos who had been preceded by the less advanced Ciboney. Early chronicles describe the aborigenes as less than five feet tall, copper-skinned, with heads flattened at the top, small hands and feet, jet black hair and a melancholic facial expression.\(^2^0\)

The Indian racial strain is hardly noticeable today. The Haitian historian Louis Elie claimed in 1944 that there are a few racial enclaves of Negro-Indian hybrids today. He mentions the "Zip-zip" of the mountains of the Central plateau and the "Viens-viens" of Saltrou near the Dominican border. He also points out the presence of Indian traits among the inhabitants of the Lamarque plantation of Kenscoff, as well as two rural sections near Petit-Goåve. While it is true that these groups have a distinctive physical appearance, there is no proof that this variance is due to Indian blood. Other scholars have described Elie's proofs as unconvincing.\(^2^1\)

2. **The Negro**

A few Negroes were found in the colony as far back as 1503. Their presence seemed to have been accidental. In 1517, official


\(^{21}\) See Achille Aristide, "Le Probleme de l' Indien et de ses Survivances en Haiti," *Optique*, No. 27 (Mai 1956), p. 35.
permission was granted to import slaves. But it was only after 1650 that the pattern was established for a steady slave traffic. It reached its peak in the 18th century:

Figures presented in official reports to the minister of marine estimate the slaves in 1701 at 20,000 and in 1754 at 230,000; a very conservative estimate for 1789 would be no less than 450,000. As over 1,000,000 slaves were imported into St. Domingue in a little over one hundred years, it would seem that the mortality rate was abnormally high.  

The slaves came mainly from the Guinea coast of West Africa, but points of origin extended as far north as Senegal and as far south as Angola. The slaves came from many tribes, but it seems that Dahomey and the Congo nations were the most heavily represented. Moreau de St. Mery gives the following interesting description of the slaves of St. Domingue:

The Senegalese...are tall and well-built, slim and of an ebony black color. Their noses are narrow and similar to those of the whites; their hair is less kinky and more susceptible to be matted...

The Voloffs are similar to the Senegalese but they are even taller. The Cap Verd Negro...are darker than the Senegalese, tall, have regular features and the women could be called beautiful if they didn't have such large breasts. They have shining white teeth...

The Foules or Poulards have the same height as the Senegalese but are of a reddish color.
...The Bambaras are the tallest of Africa, but they have a melancholic facial expression and have scars on their faces...

The Mandigos have lighter skin...

The Negroes from the Gold Coast of which they are many in St. Domingue... are generally well-built...They have sparkling eyes, small ears, thick eyebrows, a flattened nose with a slight curve at the tip, the mouth

---

22Davis, op. cit., p. 289.
is rather large, the teeth are white and regular, they have shining skin and hair that can be matted. . . . The Aradas belong to this group . . .

The Negroes of both the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast don't really have black skin but it is of a yellowish color which makes it possible to mistake some of them for mulattoes if it wasn't for scars which identify them as Africans . . .

The Congos are of medium height and of a color in between the Senegalese and the Gold Coast Negro. 23

While most of the slaves came from West Africa, it is obvious from the quotation above that a considerable variety of subraces were introduced into Haiti, making the present so-called pure Negro population heterogeneous in appearance. Therefore, it is difficult to decide whether a physical type which is at variance with the norm stems from a Caucasian or mongoloid strain or has an African tribal origin. In the community of Desdunes in the Artibonite valley, for instance, the population is unusually tall and leptosome. 24

3. The Mulatto

The mulatto population resulted from the mixture of Africans and Europeans. The Caucasian strain is primarily French since the Spaniards did not stay long enough to leave an appreciable imprint on the population.


24 The writer witnessed a parade of militiamen coming from all parts of the Republic. When the detachment from Desdunes appeared, they were a head taller than all the others thus confirming the first impression he had about this particular community. Romain in his study of the anthropometry of the Haitian, finds that the inhabitants of the Artibonite Valley are taller than those from other parts of the country. Romain, op. cit., p. 60.
Cross-racial unions between whites and Negroes occurred almost simultaneously with the arrival of the first slaves. The general atmosphere of libertinage fostered by slavery and the scarcity of white women encouraged miscegenation. This gave rise to a new physical type with the generic designation of mulatto as well as a new social group, the Affranchis (free people of color), for it was the accepted custom for a white father to free his mulatto offspring. At the same time, the purchase of freedom was a regular legal procedure relatively easier for the mixed-blood than for the black slave. Color thus became a status symbol. It was assumed that the mixed blood was free and the more he approximated the white the greater his prestige. It made for the conscious identification in the society of different degrees of blood mixture. Moreau de St. Mery describes the 124 possible combinations of Negro-white race mixture using 13 different labels to describe the resulting skin color. The labels discussed below are still in use today.

The griffe is technically the off-spring of a Negro and a mulatto, and thereby supposedly of three-fourths Negro ancestry. Today, the term generally refers to a person of some white blood but whose physical characteristics are predominantly Negro. The feminine counterpart is griffonne generally implying a pretty dark skinned girl.

The mulatto is supposedly the result of white-Negro union and

thereby of half-Negro ancestry. There is great variety in his physical characteristics as he is further subdivided into light mulatto and dark mulatto. The presence of white ancestry is always quite manifest. Today the term mulatto as used in Haiti no longer connotes a person who is half-white. Rather it means a person whose caucasian features dominate his Negro ancestry. It is synonymous with near-white, but also the not-so-white who are socially prominent. The term can be pejorative depending on who uses it and at what occasion.

Moreau de St. Mery did not mention the grimaud. Today it is the most commonly used term and the feminine counterpart is grimelle. It refers more or less to a person of half or more Negro ancestry, thus it comes close to the academic definition of mulatto. Generally the grimaud has negroid features and hair texture and a yellowish-brown complexion. The grimaud is not considered particularly attractive.

The marabou, unlike the grimaud, is a much admired type which corresponds roughly to the moreno type of Brazil and the trigueno type of Puerto Rico. The term is supposed to have derived from "Moor." It represents the harmonious blending of the best elements of the caucasian and Negro races with a possible admixture of Indian blood. It is not exactly clear what degree of Negro ancestry is implied in the use of the term marabou. It is not a very common type. The outstanding feature of the marabou is his fine straight black hair. His skin is brown with a coppery rather than yellowish hue. His profile is generally aquiline. He resembles the East Indian.
Among the rural people, the term *rouge* is also used for persons who are somewhat lighter than the general population. He is nicknamed *blanc* if he is markedly lighter than the norm.

Toward the end of the colonial period, there were 28,000 free people of color, which would equate roughly with the number of mixed-bloods. While few free people of color were black, fewer slaves were mulattoes. The members of Haiti's present-day small elite class are for the most part the descendants of these *affranchis*. They have maintained their lighter color by endogamy. However, the inbreeding of the elite has not produced a homogeneous local type as the new ladino type of mestizo America. Yet the gene pool has substantially remained the same for the last 150 years.

The political situation of the last five years has accelerated the steady emigration of the mulatto population. At the same time, the tabu of the mulatto class to marry within their color is slowly breaking down. So it is expected that the two percent light population will continuously decrease and leave Haiti racially darker than ever.

4. Rural Hybrid Enclaves

There are a few isolated communities in rural Haiti where by historical accident the physical type of the population approximates more that of the caucasian than the Negro. In general the southern half of the country is more racially mixed than northern Haiti but these rural hybrid enclaves are extremes. These fair-skinned peasants share the typical life of other black Haitian peasants without showing
any color consciousness or making any attempt to preserve their caucasian strain. Geographical isolation has done it for them.

Such a community is Fond des Blancs, situated in a remote plateau in southern Haiti. During colonial times, the region was settled by French and Spaniards of lesser means who raised cattle on small ranches. They owned few slaves. The region was not involved in the revolutionary troubles outside of having their communications cut off which were never adequately reestablished. The massacre of the whites did not occur much in the south and it is assumed that, instead of fleeing, the whites of Fond des Blancs just stayed there and were host to other fleeing whites from surrounding areas. Over the years they gradually mixed with the neighboring darker population. All the inhabitants of Fond des Blancs are of mixed blood, some being lighter than others. This trait extends to other villages in the region. It is not unusual to see a blue-eyed, yellow-skinned peasant girl. As the years pass the population is getting progressively less "mediterranean" in appearance as new people from the outside tend to settle in the region and intermarry. Many of the people of Fond des Blancs have moved to the towns of Petit Goave, Miragoane and Port-au-Prince. It is said that brothels in Port-au-Prince are always eager to recruit peasant girls from the region for whom they can get a much higher price. It is known that successful black politicians on their way up the social ladder have picked peasant mulatto mates from this hybrid community in order to lighten the second generation which might thus gain an entry in the closed
mulatto bourgeoisie.

The mountain community of Casale, about 30 miles north of Port-au-Prince, is another hybrid island. It is somewhat isolated in the mountains but much more accessible than Fond des Blancs. This community was born out of a curious historical incident. During the revolution, a Polish regiment defected from Napoleon's army and joined forces with Dessalines. They were spared during the massacre and founded the community of Casale. Today Casale and vicinity count about 6,000 inhabitants, all mixed-bloods of various degrees. Some of the families have gallicized Polish names.

There are other similar communities in Haiti. One could mention Coridon on the northwest coast and to a lesser extent the region near Port Salut in the southern peninsula. The latter's caucasian strain is said to come from the survivors of a Portuguese shipwreck long ago.

One should also mention that as one approaches the Dominican border, Spanish traits in the Haitian population become apparent, especially in regions which have shifted back and forth between French and Spanish control and later between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Racial enclaves can occur in smaller groups than communities. For instance, in Carrefour, the red-light district of Port-au-Prince, there is a small group of low-class mulattoes living in one neighborhood who are the accidental offspring of prostitutes and foreign sailors and visitors.
It has been said that 19 years of American occupation in Haiti has increased the white genes in the population. While there is no denying that it has, the effect is so insignificant that it hardly needs to be mentioned. Occasionally one sees a mulatto person in the countryside who might be the offspring of an American marine or of a French priest, for that matter. Generally mixed-bloods of that type migrate to the capital and reinforce the rank of the low-class mulatto, or if they are luckier, use their color for social advancement. Often the same pattern occurs when a mixed-blood is the offspring of a mulatto bourgeois and his peasant servant.

5. The Whites

The first Europeans to settle Saint Domingue were the Spaniards. Their number increased rapidly during the first part of the 16th century but then they moved on to other colonies. They were followed in the 17th century by French adventurers most of them of Norman origin. With their few Negro or Indian slaves or white engaged they established the first French settlement. At first they cohabited freely with Indian or Negro women or the few French women sent by

26 Leyburn, op. cit., p. 104.

27 It is said maliciously in Haiti that they are "good" fathers in both sense of the word, or "he is a bad church father but a good family father."

28 Indentured servants. They had a status a few degrees above slavery for three years during which they worked for the cost of their passage to the New World. Their masters would obtain them from the ship captain for the cost of the passage and would set them free after 36 months. They were also referred to as "thirty-six months."
the government when it periodically emptied its jails to populate the colonies. The colony grew slowly and it was only in the 18th century that the population increased rapidly. However, the white population always remained a small minority. At its height in 1789, it numbered 40,000 or eight per cent of the total population. The tendency for the white population was to be transient. Only one fourth were creole (born in the colony). The other three-fourths came from various parts of France, still many from Normandy. A handful came from other European countries and from other French colonies. By the beginning of the 19th century, practically the entire white population had fled or had been massacred.

During the greater part of the 19th century, the white population of Haiti was negligible. Most were either on official missions or were clergymen. It was only toward the end of the century that small groups of white foreigners started to settle in Haiti. The two most important were the Germans and the Syrians. The German colony remained important until World War I. It has all but disappeared now by emigration and by assimilation. The Syrians—a generic term for Levantines mostly from Lebanon, Syria and Egypt—started coming around 1880 as poor immigrants and now control the commerce of the country. They are a non-integrated minority in Haitian society. They tend to marry among themselves or send for brides to the Near East. It is not known how numerous they are, for no special records are kept of them since they are Haitian citizens. Perhaps 2,000 would be a fair estimate. They were more numerous in the past.
Their mediterranean type and in some instances an infusion of Negro blood give them an appearance not unlike the light mulattoes.

A few French, Italians and Americans have settled permanently in Haiti. A few white women, mostly French, have married Haitians. Many of these foreigners become assimilated into the mulatto population within a generation. One could call white Haitians those caucasians who have opted for Haitian nationality, participate in Haitian life, use French or creole as their native language but marry among themselves and retain their former national identity in their private lives. The Syrians personify this group.

6. **Transient Whites**

About half of the whites living in Haiti could be classified as transient in the sense that they do not intend to stay permanently. The largest of this group are the Americans who since the American occupation of 1915-1934, have conducted business enterprises, religious, educational or medical missions in the Republic. Since 1955, there has been an increase in aid programs and technicians have brought their families with them. Before the political unrest of May, 1963, which resulted in mass evacuation, the American colony in Haiti numbered about 1,300.

The second most important group of transient whites is the clergy. About 1,000 foreign priests, sisters and brothers, mostly French, Belgians and French Canadians, teach and tend medical missions in Haiti. A few Dominicans, British West Indians and other Latin Americans reside in Haiti for various and sundry reasons, but
their number is small.

The white population of Haiti in early 1963 represented about 0.15 percent of the total population. Their number has since diminished.

7. Racial Awareness

An attempt is being made here to investigate to what degree the Haitians perceive racial diversity. We are not interested in their awareness of social differences due to race which topic will be treated in another Chapter. Of course it is hard to disassociate social difference from racial difference, especially in Haiti where it is automatically assumed that a light-skinned person occupies a high social position.

The following observations are the reactions of Haitians to racial types departing from the Negro norm. They pertain mostly to the Haitian rural mass for whom the presence of whites and light mulattoes is a novelty.

Most Haitians are capable of discriminating between fine shadings of skin color which many whites would not be able to distinguish. Even in the whites they discern whether they have yellow, pink or very white skin. On the other hand, they seem to feel that white people all look alike and that there is more variety of types among Negroes than among whites. They fail to see the difference between a mediterranean and nordic type. Any hair which is light brown, red or blond is lumped together as "red." However, they are very conscious of the grain and texture of the hair. In fact hair texture
is about the only thing that they really admire about the caucasian physique. Non-kinky hair is described as "good" hair whereas very kinky hair is referred to derogatorily in creole as cheveu graine, cheveu poivre guinee or tete gridappe. Otherwise the caucasian appears to many Haitians as somewhat colorless or washed out. "They have no color, they are the color of ash all over," one informant said. "They have yellow teeth and a slit for a mouth," said another. "They have very, very long noses;" "they are too big and fat, especially the men;" "they have bad skin, rough and sallow;" "they have squinty eyes;" etc. These were some of the remarks obtained by discrete inquiries. The remarks were accompanied by grimaces to imitate how the white man looks. In general they conceded that the caucasian female makes a more favorable impression. However, they felt that she did not approach the beauty of a brown-skin creole with big black eyes, what is termed as une belle haitienne. The current ideal type in feminine beauty is described as brown skin, curvaceous, with regular features and if possible, fine hair. A generation ago, the pale mulatto type was considered the ideal woman and would win the beauty contests and be carnival queen. But she has been displaced. Recently such a "pale" girl competing at a beauty contest was termed

29 Both cheveu graine and cheveu poivre guinee are best translated as pepper corn hair. "Tete gridappe" are little tin kerosene lamps with a long neck that sticks out like a candle. The term is used to refer to female hair which is so kinky that the only thing that can be done with it is to tie it in little braids which stick up around the head like candles.
by the rowdy crowd watching from behind the fences as "Miss Pax Villa," the name of the local mortuary establishment.

There is a socio-political explanation for this change of taste. It correlates with the decreasing power of the mulatto elite to impose their values on the whole population. Possibly growing nationalism and negritude explains why the "aryan" physical type does not seem to be as fully appreciated in Haiti today as it was.

Peasants have difficulty in hiding their curiosity in regions where few white people are seen. They stare outright or if they are more subtle, they will hide behind a tree where they can stare at their ease. Invariably they will greet you as "docteur" or "pasteur" and you have the greatest difficulty in convincing them that you are neither. One wonders if some of them conceive of a white skin as the badge of one occupational group—the missionary. The very light mulatto may experience the same type of reaction in the backcountry where he is not known, especially if he speaks creole with a French accent. Of course the dark Haitian traveling in rural Europe experiences similar curiosity in reverse. 30

30While this writer was on a field trip in the interior of the isolated island of La Gonave off the Haitian shore, he ran into a group of children who apparently had never seen a caucasian before. They pointed at the author and laughed heartily. It was clear from their remarks that he was the most ridiculous looking human being they had ever seen. In another remote place in the country when a child saw this writer he ran to a hut and dragged out a little albino boy, stumbling half-blinded by the bright sunlight and said: "Li blanc too!" Actually albinos are called blanc manant an old term designating the poor whites during the colonial period.
We are dealing here with the phenomena of cultural frame of reference. Members of a society will identify what they have learned consciously or unconsciously to be significant and might overlook what is not in their experience. The Haitian frame of reference for physical appearance stresses skin color and hair texture and sees the dark Negro as the prototype. He is aware of those who do not fit the prototype and has words in his language to label them.

C. Migration

While migration in Haiti is relatively small when compared to other Caribbean islands, the phenomenon is sociologically interesting and presents rather original aspects. Should suitable opportunities present themselves, it is anticipated that the population would rapidly increase its internal as well as external mobility. For this reason we will investigate the phenomenon at greater length.

Internal migration was inhibited by law in the early days of the republic. For the greater part of the 19th century, the leaders of the nation were anxious to keep the masses on the land to produce the export crops on which the urban elite was dependent for its income. It also effectively barred the peasant mass from political power by confining political rivalries to the small urban community while the peasants docilely tilled the soil and provided the cash crops. Peasants at first were not authorized to leave their rural sections and could not enter the towns without a pass. However, by the turn of the 20th century, the equilibrium population-resource
began to be compromised, resulting in a trickle of migration to the
towns which was encouraged further by the impact of the American
occupation. This population movement has persisted since but has
only gained momentum in the last decade. Unfortunately there are
no realistic estimates of the size of this migration. The most
important internal population movement is the rural-urban migration
to the coastal towns, particularly to the capital. Regional intra-
rural migration has occurred also to certain zones of sparse settle-
ments such as the border zone with the Dominican Republic and the
offshore islands. The population of certain regions are more mobile
than others. For instance, the southeast has provided the bulk of
the migrants mainly directed to the capital, whereas the Artibonite
has the most sedentary population. This seems to be an established
tradition, for the former region is not more deteriorated nor more
over-populated than the latter. In general, one migratory trend is
discernable: the population movement from the surrounding mountain
slopes to the more fertile plains adjacent to towns (Ex: Plaine
des Cayes, region south of Port-au-Prince, Plaine du Nord around Cap
Haitien.)

Reasons for migration are diverse but economic motivations pre-
dominate. To the young peasant, it is the hope of a job which will
give more return for efforts expended than working a parched or
eroded mountain slope. To the son of the peasant landlord with

31 Moral, op. cit., p. 38.
larger holdings who had a few years of schooling, it is the hope for a higher social status. Those who migrate to the towns are generally the extremes of the rural social hierarchy: the landless peasant who has no alternative but to join the floating population of urban slums dweller and the better off peasant family who if lucky might make the jump in three generations from a rural coffee buyer to provincial lawyer-teacher to the new middle class dweller of the capital. 32

Rural-urban migration in Haiti follows universal trends in that it is selective of youth and women. In long distance migration, as well as in the temporary migrations of sugar cane workers and sisal plantation workers, men are dominant. Migration to the capital city is by far the heaviest and is often done in three stages: from the rural section to the nearest village, then to the nearest provincial town, and eventually to Port-au-Prince. Another noteworthy development of the last two decades is the increasing migration of the provincial town elite to the capital. Students from the provinces are also migrating in increasing number to Port-au-Prince to obtain their higher education and seldom return home. Those who return generally have important family economic interests there but often maintain a residence in the capital to which they return frequently.

As a whole, rural-urban migration has created more problems than

32 Ibid., p. 39.
progress in Haiti. For the great majority, the hope for a better life has resulted merely in exchanging one misery for another. There is no industry to absorb this migration. It is the general consensus among the migrants, however, that they do achieve a sort of cultural "enlightment" by their urban experience, and a few of them do manage to enhance their socioeconomic status. The latter act as a symbol of emulation for future migrants. The following study illustrates the plight of rural migrants who have moved to the town of Cap Haitien and live in its slum area known as La Fossette. Other towns have similar "bidonvilles": Port-au-Prince has two blighted areas of unbelievable poverty, La Saline and La Cour Brea; Gonaïves has its Raboteau; St. Marc its Portail Guepe, and Jeremie its St. Helene, where thousands live in the most abject conditions.

Rural Migration to Cap Haitien: A Case Study

Cap Haitien, the second largest urban center in Haiti (population approximately 40,000), has been the recipient in the last decade of a growing number of rural migrants who have settled in the least desirable part of town, an agglomeration of flimsily built shanties known as La Fossette. This zone, not much larger than one square mile, contains an estimated 7,000 people of which 35 percent are migrants of recent vintage. La Fossette, which had already an undesirable reputation in colonial days according to St. Mery, is today

33 Much of the data in this study came from a research project made in 1962 by Mr. Jehan Mervelle, student at the University of Haiti, under the supervision of this writer.
a slum teeming with life. It is the habitat of the perennially unemployed, vagrants, prostitutes and others existing on no visible means of income or at best on marginal occupations. Their number is constantly increased by the steady influx of rural migrants. Here and there are a few older and more respectable families living in better houses who have been there for generations and refuse to be budged in spite of the sea of confusion which has grown around them. An atmosphere of noise, excitement and promiscuity reigns in La Fossette. People mill about the street at all hours of the night and the cries of peddlers selling their wares mingle with the raucous sound of music coming out of the bidjonelle which never closes its gates.

La Fossette receives its immigrants from all the rural areas surrounding Cap Haitien and also from more distant points of the Department du Nord. In the latter case, a two-stage migration is often involved: from an isolated farmstead to the nearest large village and then on to Cap Haitien.

Reasons for migrating are primarily economic. The migrant sample population which was interviewed gave the following reasons: land exhaustion; land expropriation because of debts incurred for expensive ceremonies to vodou gods, first communion, or funerals;

34A recently created creole word derived from the Spanish velonera = juke box. It designates a primitive amusement complex which offers cockfights, gambling, taxi dancing, vodou dances, bordellos, food and drink stalls. All these are assembled in one compound and cater to the lowest class.
or loss of land to unscrupulous lawyers in succession lawsuits; or for failing to meet the exhorbitant rates of usurers. In another category, many came looking for a better job and an easier life. Others came because they were misfits in their communities: those who ran afoul with the local law, or had serious quarrels with their neighbors or relatives or who felt threatened by evil spells cast on them by real or imaginary persecutors. Sometimes a person already established in La Fossette convinces rural relatives to migrate. Some migrate to obtain better educational opportunities for their children or to send their children to stay with relatives there for that purpose. Finally a small percentage, upon visiting Cap Haitien at the occasion of a fiesta or carnival, are "fascinated" by what they consider city life and decide to stay. Very often disillusionment follows shortly but they are too proud to return to the rural hamlet they have downrated.

Cap Haitien has no industry to speak of and has difficulty in absorbing this excess population. The migrants accept whatever work they can find. Many of the girls fall into prostitution or part-time prostitution. Others work as servants for a few dollars a month often with the tacit understanding that they are to serve as a sexual outlet for the master and the sons of the family. If a pregnancy occurs they are sent back to the countryside with some money. The men work as laborers, stevedores, shoe shiners, or
assistants to truck drivers. 35 A much-sought job is that of street cleaner, which is a government job and has some kind of civil status and permanency. Some of the younger and more alert men become artisan's apprentices or mechanic-apprentices. Likewise some young girls become seamstress-apprentices. In general, it is years before an apprentice earns a salary beyond his expense money and during that time he is at the mercy of the whims of his boss. Other migrants are street peddlers, beggars or depend on the generosity of their relatives for a corner of a room to sleep in and a food handout. Most of the migrants live by expediency.

There was a noticeable hostility between the native population of La Fossette and the migrants. The latter were generally dissatisfied with their present state and, while few wanted to return to rural life, many were awaiting an opportunity to move on to Port-au-Prince and even out of the country to Nassau. In the meantime, little if anything was being done by governmental authorities to alleviate the plight of thousands of people caught in a socially unhealthy milieu with little hope and chance to get away from it.

1. Migration out of Haiti

A relatively small but growing number of people emigrate from Haiti every year. This migration is also selective of the extreme

35 An assistant of this sort is called secrétaire in creole. It implies the position of a man-Friday helping his boss in a wide variety of tasks. The relationship is very informal. The secrétaire himself will have a secrétaire and so on down the line to the poorest individual.
in social classes. The peasant masses are spilling over into the neighboring islands and members of the elite and educated middle class expatriate themselves to foreign lands voluntarily or as political exiles.

The expatriation of the elite is the type of migration that Haiti can least afford, yet it has grown rapidly in recent years. Traditionally there has always been a group of people forced out of the country after each new government but generally they returned when their political party was back in power, while their opponents in turn went into exile. Today the situation is more serious. The more educated segment of the population has lost faith in the country's ever being able to get out of its political and economic morass, and permanent emigration from the top is becoming a reality. Haitians of this class have settled in various Latin American capitals, in Canada and in Europe, mainly in France. The bulk of them are in New York City where the Haitian colony has grown to an estimated 20,000, not all of them of the elite class. More recently, Haitian specialists have obtained professional positions in the new African nations. Hundreds are in the Congo alone. Opportunity in Africa is considered the "miracle of the 20th century" by the Haitian elite. Those who have gone have done well and are in increasing demand as teachers, agronomists, physicians and legal experts.  

36Congolese students impressed by Haitian specialists have expressed the desire to study in Haiti!
There is a keen competition for these positions. Likewise, Haitian students compete fiercely for the obtention of foreign scholarships, often as a first step to settle abroad. As the trend is increasing, Haiti will suffer seriously in the long run from the loss of its most productive and trained population:

It has been estimated, for instance, that 70 percent of the physicians graduated in the last 10 years have left the country. The entire group of nurses, graduated in 1960, has emigrated. International organizations have been assaulted by engineers, teachers, economists, physicians, and lawyers seeking jobs in the newly emerging nations. It has been said... that more than a thousand Haitians, experts and professionals, are now on the staffs of services and agencies in Africa. We are witnessing a kind of new Haitian diaspora which spreads its youngest and most dynamic elements throughout the world.37

A check of some sort is being made to curb this emigration. The president of the Republic personally approves the list of Haitians applying for exit visas. However, this policy is motivated more by political revenge than the concern over the loss of specialists valuable to the country.

While emigration of the elite is the result of the lack of opportunities for trained Haitians to exercise their skills or dissatisfaction with the practice of placing political patronage above merit and ability, the emigration of the mass is due to more basic reasons. It is the natural outcome of over-population, land-hunger and a stagnant economy. It started around 1915 with a large-scale migration to

37 Manigat, op. cit., p. 78.
Cuba. Simultaneously there was an exodus to the Dominican Republic. The latter had received for a long time a steady influx of Haitians living near the border crossing over without considering themselves in a foreign land. More recently Haitian migrants have been going to Nassau.

Since each of these population movements presents different aspects, we will examine them individually.

Migration to Cuba

Large scale migration to Cuba began in 1915, the year of the American occupation. Some writers interpret this as a protest against the occupation or as the only alternative left to landless peasants whose holdings had been seized on pretext of irregular titles to reconstitute the more profitable latifundia of the past. Whether this is exaggerated or not, it is a fact that the occupational authorities encouraged migration to Cuba for several reasons. First it relieved population pressure in rural Haiti, and was a good way of getting rid of potential troublemakers, at the same time it served American sugar interests in Cuba clamoring for more arms to cut cane, and lastly it became an important source of revenue when an emigration tax was created. This tax was for several years one of the chief sources of internal revenue for the Republic. 38

The port of Les Cayes in southern Haiti was the chief center

for migration to Cuba. While not the nearest point to Cuba, the
crossing from Les Cayes was the smoothest for sailing vessels.
Haitian laborers rapidly gained a reputation for being faster and
less demanding than other foreign seasonal workers imported into
Cuba. Therefore, Cuban sugar companies delegated representatives in
Les Cayes to recruit laborers. In the beginning most of the migra-
tion was illegal. At first most of the migrants were landless
peasants who had no other choice and they were consequently exploited
and much abused. If while in Cuba they deserted the sugar planta-
tions, they often did not return to Haiti but ended in the slums of
Santiago. There were more than 10,000 residing in Oriente province
in 1917; by 1920, it is estimated that 70,000 Haitians lived in
Cuba; "Haitiano" became synonymous with "poor devil." Those who
returned to Haiti were called "viejo;" an ambivalent term meaning
both "old-hand" and disillusioned repatriate:

However, beginning in 1923 noticeable improvements
occurred. In the name of a rediscovered nationalism,
the dangers of a rapidly diminishing rural labor force
was denounced. The government tried to limit emigra-
tion by increasing passport fees, by regulating the
operations of hiring companies, by controlling free-
lance migration. Emigration was even legally prohibited
in 1928. It was fruitless. The annual rates of depar-
ture increased (an average of more than 20,000) with
the intervention of two powerful banana companies, the
Atlantic Fruit Company, and especially United Fruit.
The latter made her transit stop Port-de-Paix, the
center of Haitian emigration. It made for a profit-
able return freight on its Honduras route. It was
not rare to see several thousand workers, who had

---

39Ibid., p. 70.
come on foot from all over the republic, assembled on
the beach waiting to embark. Haitian emigration hence­
forth had its customs, its traditions. It had organized
by itself. In all the market-towns of "Oriente", there
were Haitian traders; creole became the second lan­
guage; vodou practices spread widely in the Cuban
countryside; the pioneer emigrants, the "viejos" constituted already
a sort of aristocracy, distinct from the mass of "engages"
who hadn't succeeded. At each new crossing, the free­
lance "viego" brought in relatives and friends. When
he returned home, he created a sensation with his loud
jewelry, his eccentric clothes, his broad-rimmed felt­
hat, his sunglasses and his Spanish jargon. At Port­
de-Paix, Cayes, or Petit Goave, the return of the
"Cubans" in July was the big event of the year: busi­
ness picked up; the greenbacks, genuine or counterfeit,
circulated; provincial life woke up. But all this was
brutally interrupted by the depression of the thirties.
It is difficult to evaluate the total number of depa­
tures, official and clandestine, between 1915 and 1930:
300 to 400,000 laborers perhaps, of which half no
doubt have settled in the region of Santiago. The
Cuban exodus had disrupted peasant life for nearly a
generation, notably in the southern peninsula. But
it is true that the return of many "viejos" had brought
in some money and a new and more enterprising mentality. 40

Most of those who returned settled in the region of Les Cayes
where they flashed their gold teeth and new ways acquired in Cuba.

To this day the region of Les Cayes is marked by Cuban influence
such as the consuming interest in "borlete," the clandestine lottery.

In 1937 under the pressure of Cuban syndicates which could not
compete with the cheap Haitian labor, the Cuban dictator Batista
deported thousands of Haitians and curbed immigration drastically:

Native Cubans quite understandably resented the influx
of cheap labor which threw them out of work, depressed
the wage scale, and thwarted efforts to improve working
conditions; as the tide of Haitian immigration

40Ibid., pp. 70-1. Translation mine.
increased during the 'twenties and the depression period of the 'thirties, resentment flamed into action. Murders occurred; ships to Cuba were not allowed to land; workmen were beaten and otherwise persecuted.\footnote{Leyburn, op. cit., p. 271.}

Today emigration to Cuba is a thing of the past. In 1953 according to the Cuban census, there were 28,000 Haitian citizens living in Cuba. The others, already in their second generation had become integrated into Cuban society as Cuban citizens. It is said that many Cubans of Haitian origin played an important role in the Revolution of the Sierra Maestra and have since benefited socially through Castro's land reforms and suppression of racial discrimination. In Haiti today one finds many people among the older generation who have been "viejos" at one time.

\textbf{Migration to the Dominican Republic}\footnote{Much of the data presented here came from a research project made in 1962 by Miss Marcelle Lafond, student at the University of Haiti, under the supervision of this writer.} \footnote{Trujillo who had a Haitian Negro grandmother Luiza Chevallier was very eager to pass off the Dominican Republic as a non-negroid country. He reportedly settled hundreds of Central European male immigrants near the Haitian border in order to whiten the population. Unfortunately for his plans they did not stay.}

In spite of the policy of rigidity which has traditionally characterized contacts between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the border between them has not been impermeable and a certain amount of osmosis has occurred. The tendency has been for the Haitian population to spill over into the relatively under-populated Dominican Republic so that the Dominican population near the Haitian border is largely Negro.\footnote{Trujillo who had a Haitian Negro grandmother Luiza Chevallier was very eager to pass off the Dominican Republic as a non-negroid country. He reportedly settled hundreds of Central European male immigrants near the Haitian border in order to whiten the population. Unfortunately for his plans they did not stay.}
Negroes are largely of Haitian origin whether they have settled there in the historical past or are first generation Dominicans. In the 20th century, massive immigration grew to such a point that it led to a ruthless extermination ordered by Trujillo in 1937 as a salutary warning to Haitians to keep out once and for all. An estimated 20,000 Haitians were massacred by machetes and carbines. Nonetheless, the very next year a trickle of emigration resumed. In 1950, there were 19,000 Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. It is hard to estimate numbers for much of the migration is seasonal. However, it is reported that during the April-May crisis of 1963, as many as 6,000 Haitians fled across the border. In 1964, exiled Haitian migratory workers refusing to return to Haiti numbered from 35,000 to 60,000. After the massacre and the payment of indemnity to Haiti, the Haitian and Dominican governments signed an agreement regulating the seasonal migration of Haitian cane workers. This agreement has been on and off. When it is off, the migration continues just the same, for Haitian laborers are simply smuggled across the border in a well-organized racket. In fact, Trujillo was involved in it in the past. American sugar mill operators in the Dominican Republic paid ten dollars to be divided between Trujillo and one of his colonels for each of the several thousand sugar cane

---


45*Hispanic American Report* 17 (October, 1964), p. 713.
cutters illegally brought into the country every year.\textsuperscript{46} Few Dominicans will cut cane, a job reserved for the "congos" as the Haitian cane cutters are called by the Dominicans.

Migrants to the Dominican Republic are all rural and belong to the peasant class. They are exclusively men and their ages range from late teens to late thirties. Many of the younger men are motivated by the opportunity to earn some cash which will enable them to build the house which is customary for the Haitian peasant to have before he starts a family. Some will go as often as three years in a row to accumulate the necessary funds. The older group is generally made up of peasants harassed by economic problems who volunteer in order to earn some cash income. In addition, there are a few misfits, adventurers and those whose intention is to migrate permanently.

Migrant cane cutters come from all parts of the republic but mainly from the southeast region of Jacmel. In the years when the migration is sanctioned by the Haitian authorities; the Dominican sugar companies send their representatives to Jacmel to hire the cane cutters. They hold office in the public square where there are lines for registration, identification and a perfunctory medical examination. In the last line a "passaporte" is delivered. Already at registration the prospective migrants are treated like chattel. Closely packed for hours in the broiling sun, stealing each other's

place in line, the tempers of the men often flare up and occasionally fighting results. The rough treatment of officials makes this anarchic scene even more lacking in human dignity. Those who come from distant rural sections sleep in the public square in order to be the first in line the next morning. During that period, the streets of Jacmel become veritable public dormitories.

The Dominican companies provide the transportation and give a dollar to every migrant for food on the trip. Then they are packed in trucks and taken to various parts of the neighboring republic. The trip takes from two to four days depending on the location of the Dominican sugar plantation to which they are assigned. It is a sight to behold, according to a Dominican informant, to see these men arrive at their ultimate destination. Tired, dusty and hungry after several days of traveling, guarded by soldiers, they look more like the inmates of a concentration camp than voluntary workers. When seasonal migration is illegal as it has been for the last five years, underground traffic is just as institutionalized but simplified. Haitian agents gather the men and take them to the border where they cross on their own, "passer en bas fil" as they say. On the Dominican side, trucks await them. In this case, the emigrants have no legal protection against abuse.

The life of the Haitian migrant worker in the Dominican Republic is reminiscent of slavery days. Their work consists of cutting or carting cane from dawn to dusk. The companies provide them shacks and hamacs but they have to shift for themselves for food. It is
incredible how they subsist on a meager diet of a little rice and beans which they cook themselves on open-fires with occasionally some bread and very rarely some meat. They get their energy from the cane that they chew all day long while working. They are intent on saving money on a salary of a few dollars a week. They generally keep to themselves, gamble or play cards with each other. Some manage to cohabit with Dominican women but in this case they generally return to Haiti empty-handed or don't return at all. Within a month they can communicate adequately in the Spanish patois of the Dominican masses. They seem to get along fairly well with the latter.

This seasonal migration lasts from three to four months. When it is time for them to return, some of them hide and stay illegally in the Dominican Republic. Every year fewer return than have left Haiti and thus the number of Haitians settling in the Dominican Republic increases. The return trip is at the expense of the worker and sometimes uses up half of his savings. Some actually walk all the way back. Since the majority are illiterate, they are occasionally short-changed when converting their Dominican pesos into Haitian gourdes. When they reach their native village in Haiti, there is general rejoicing. It is a noticeable boost to the local economy and prices have a tendency to rise temporarily. Here and there a thatch roof is replaced by corrugated tin and houses are improved in other ways. The returning migrants are noticeably better dressed. They all wear a new pair of shoes, sometimes a wrist-watch or a felt
hat, which to them are important status symbols. They irritate the local inhabitants by speaking among themselves in a Spanish-creole gibberish.

While migration to the Dominican Republic provides a few thousand Haitians a year with some cash income, it is on the whole a shocking exploitation of people who are educationally and economically deprived and defenseless.

Migration to Nassau

After the virtual closing of migration to Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the teeming masses of Haiti looking for socioeconomic opportunities turned to Nassau. This emigration is comparatively recent and is causing many headaches to this British crown colony, for much of the emigration is extra-legal. Although migration to Nassau is temporary and not permanent expatriation, it is so dynamic that as many as 10-20,000 Haitians (one fifth of the total population of the Bahamas) are estimated to be in Nassau at one time even though the turn-over rate is high. Because of the increasing economic hardship in Haiti, the outflow of migrants is in excess of the returning migrants.

Port-de-Paix in northwest Haiti is the chief center for migration to Nassau. For many years sailing vessels in this region have supplied agricultural products to the British Bahamas. In the last

\[47\] Much of the data presented here came from a research project made in 1962 by Miss Alma Rose Cadot, student at the University of Haiti, under the supervision of this writer.
decade when Nassau developed a booming tourist industry and experienced a labor shortage it was natural that many Haitian laborers took this opportunity to migrate to the island. Even though the Nassau labor force is now over-saturated, the migration continues and has assumed a clandestine aspect in view of the restrictions the Nassau authorities have taken to curb this unwanted migration. This exodus to the Bahamas, in spite of miserable treatment by unscrupulous sea captains, hardship suffered in Nassau and the likelihood of deportation back to Haiti, reflects the conditions of the poor Haitian masses who notwithstanding persist in their intent to seek a better life outside Haiti. In 1962, some 1,300 persons were deported to Haiti from the Bahamas at a cost of $18.00 per person to the British Colony. In 1963, the total was expected to reach 3,000. Thus far more than 20,000 Haitians have been deported from Nassau. This problem has been of concern both to the British and Haitian governments and there has been some vague talk of bringing the question to the United Nations for, whether sincere or not, the Haitian immigrant is now requesting political asylum rather than be deported to Haiti. On the Haitian side, half-hearted attempts have been made to regulate the migration but the government cannot do much without interfering with the vested interests of supporters of the Duvalier regime in Port-de-Paix, for migration to Nassau has given an important economic

boost to this moribund port.

Migrants to Nassau are recruited principally among the masses: the peasant class as well as the proletariat. Going to Nassau means an opportunity to improve one's economic as well as social status. In spite of the great number of failures among those who have been deported or who have voluntarily returned, the "Nassau fever" has stimulated the hopes of a large proportion of the masses. The bulk of the migrants come from the northwest, although an increasing number come from all over the republic.

One can discern three major types of migrants. First, there are those who migrate back and forth and stay in Nassau for a period of one to three months. These are the sea captains and their crew and those who trade and traffic in foodstuff and bring back British manufactured goods, often in contraband. Secondly are those who migrate in quest of jobs and stay from one to five years. A few stay indefinitely; many return for another stretch of time. One informant who went with the first migration 25 years ago has been there four times and spent a total of more than twenty years in Nassau. A third group are those who go to Nassau in transit hoping from there to enter the United States, where it is believed that formalities are easier and more rapidly filled than from Haiti. Recently newspapers have reported the case of twenty-five Haitians who landed in Florida from Nassau seeking asylum rather than be deported back to Haiti. These exiles who were refused admission by the Department of Immigration appealed their case to a federal judge.
The case, which has political implications, is considered a test case that could open the door to thousands of other Haitians.\textsuperscript{50}

Migrants to Nassau are of both sexes, generally between the age of 18 and 40. In some cases they are quite young.\textsuperscript{51} As to occupations, one finds besides unskilled laborers, agricultural workers and jacks-of-all-trades, more skilled workers such as barbers, tailors, shoemakers, masons and mechanics among the men, and dressmakers, hairdressers, cooks, laundresses and household servants among the women. However, once in Nassau, they are liable to take whatever occupation is available. Many of the women fall into prostitution.

A recent article in a Haitian newspaper condoning the Haitian government's decision to suppress the traffic said:

\ldots\textsuperscript{\textit{The reasons brought forth to put a stop to migration\textsuperscript{3}are of a moral order, affecting the prestige of our country compromised by the behavior of certain Haitian women in the houses of pleasure of Nassau. It seems that once on foreign soil, these women in order to earn their daily bread without too much sweat, sell their charms instead...We are in agreement with the responsible Haitian authorities who are putting an end to this state of affairs which has compromised the name of our country and the dignity of our compatriots especially those who earn a living in a 'horizontal position.'}}^{52}

\textsuperscript{50}Text-Picayune (New Orleans), September 18, 1963.

\textsuperscript{51}The Nassau Daily Tribune of September 13, 1961 informed that 70 Haitians were condemned to six months in jail for illegal entry into the Bahamas. Among them were two boys of 14 and 15 respectively who were sent to an industrial school.

\textsuperscript{52}Le Matin (Port-au-Prince), October 21, 1961.
The educational level of the migrants is very low; most of them are functional illiterates. Nonetheless, they show a surprising aptitude for the English language. Those who pick it up the fastest get the better jobs.

There are two means of getting to the Bahamas: the legal and illegal way. In view of the disparity between the number of migrants and number of passports issued, the illegal way is by far the more frequent. Those who use legal means can apply for a marine passport valid for three to six months and costing $40.00 including the cost of the trip and food and water while traveling. Otherwise they can apply for a regular passport with a visa of one to three years at the cost of $25.00 plus a $5.00 pay-off to help their chance in obtaining one. In all cases the proceedings might take from one to six months and result in a refusal. At this point the migrant determined to leave will use the "contraband" method. He will try to obtain a marine passport by "greasing the palm" of a venal government employee. This passport, while valid in the open seas and in ports of transit, is not valid for an extended stay in Nassau. In case of arrest in Nassau some get away by saying: "the boat hasn't left yet." This latter group is completely at the mercy of sea captains to whom they pay $40.00 cash or $60.00 on credit terms. To obtain these sums which are colossal to most migrants, many sell their land, their livestock or get themselves heavily indebted. One informant, a woman of 33, mother of two children, agreed to pay back $80.00 within two months after borrowing $40.00 to go to Nassau. She felt reasonably sure that
she could earn this sum easily in Nassau. It had not occurred to her that she could be deported and then forced into prostitution in order to pay back her creditor.

The trip if effectuated by motor boat takes from five to eight days. By sail boat it takes from 15 to 22 days. There are about 20 to 30 passengers per boat plus cargo. By the time it is loaded the deck of the boat is dangerously near the sea. There is no record of the number of shipwrecks, but as far as one can judge the rate is not abnormally high. The boats generally sail in late afternoon and more often than not stop at the tip of Tortuga Isle where they pick up the clandestine passengers who have no papers whatsoever and whose only guarantee is the word of the captain. They pile up on top of the crowded passengers but no one complains in fear of the autocratic captain. If the wind is good and the sea is calm, the passengers stay in good spirit and entertain themselves with jokes and songs. If the sea is rough or there is no wind, a mood of depression affects everyone. Not all trips are without incidents. Arguments arise because of lack of space and over drinking-water. Captains, who feel themselves the master of the lives of all, use the slightest pretext to act arrogantly and brutally. Two years ago, a woman disappeared on one of the trips and the captain was arrested later in Haiti. In 1962, the Haitian newspapers were filled with a notorious case which aroused public indignation. The Haitian coast guard, after discovering a corpse in the high seas, arrested a captain who was accused of murdering two men. He had to reenact the
scene of the murder in front of a large crowd on the wharf of Port-de-Paix as it had been told by witnesses to the crime. It seems that a quarrel had started over drinking-water which soon deteriorated into a fight for life. With an axe, the captain clubbed his victim and another man who tried to prevent him and then threw both of them in the sea. Then he wiped the blood with his handkerchief saying: "Devil! I gave you blood." Some of the other passengers, locked in the hold of the ship for the night, witnessed the scene through a crack. At last hearing the captain was condemned to death, and executed.

Some of the effects of migration to Nassau are noticeable in the changed behavior of the "Nassauman" as the returning migrant is called. At times they are resented by the non-migrant population. While they are more sophisticated and economically better off when they come back, they are often frustrated by the fact that their economic ascension does not provide them automatically with a higher status. Their origin and lack of education prevents their acquisition of the prestige to which they feel their new station in life entitles them. Some react positively to this by making much sacrifice for the education of their children hoping that they will obtain the status which has been denied them. Others react by arrogant

53 This confirmed for many the widespread belief that captains make pacts with the devil since it is known that some of them serve vodou gods in order to get more passengers and more sailing speed.
behavior and naive ostentation. The fact that they have found work in Nassau and received much higher wages than in Haiti makes them down-rate everything Haitian and consider the Bahamas superior. They often remark how everything works better in Nassau, praise English organization and work discipline. They dress in loud Palm Beach clothes, walk around with transistor radios, wear identification bracelets and sport American haircuts. Girls not long removed from going barefoot now wear spiked heels to market, wear bouffant hairdos and their style of dressing is considered in poor taste by more conservative Haitians. They mix a "yes" or an English expression in all their conversation. In fact the creole language in northwest Haiti has been affected by the "Nassauman" and many anglicisms have been incorporated.\textsuperscript{54}

However for a good many migrants the situation might not turn out as enviably:

\textit{Diario Las Americas} described a situation in which unscrupulous sea-captains promised hungry Haitians a land of milk and honey, carried them to Nassau and then dumped them there, without legal admittance or work permits. If they were able to find work, they did so in constant fear of being discovered by the police. If arrested and found to have entered the country clandestinely, as dozens were daily, they were condemned to six months's imprisonment, after which they were deported to Haiti.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54}This writer heard a peddler in Port-de-Paix say in creole: "Bam la paix m' pas vle'tchuble." (Leave me in peace, I don't want...) The last word was incomprehensible at first then it turned out to be an anglicism: trouble.

\textsuperscript{55}Hispanic American Report, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 869.
Interviewed informants who had been deported said that even in prison their life was not comparable to the one they lead in Haiti. They said they were well-treated, well-fed and taken care of when ill. Often those who have been deported wait for the first opportunity to return under the same conditions.

In conclusion it can be said that this migration is profitable to many people in Haiti. The economy of Port-de-Paix and the government authorities benefit from it. The captains have made small fortunes and ship building has been stimulated. Thousands of returned migrants have been able to buy property and improve their homes and the level of living of their children. Educational aspiration and desire for a higher standard of living have been stimulated. However, the anarchy and the flagrant abuses of this migration traffic should be brought under control. Illegal migration of Haitians continues to be a serious problem for Nassau. Restrictions, arrests, condemnations, deportations--nothing seems to prevent the legitimate aspirations of people trying to obtain a better life elsewhere in view of lack of opportunity to do so at home.

As a general conclusion to the problems of external migration, it can be said that Haitian emigration is on the whole more temporary than permanent since the Haitian is an unwanted immigrant because of his ethnicity and low educational level. So far these handicaps have been serious in affecting a successful emigration as a solution to over-population. There has been some vague talk at one time by former presidential aspirant Louis Dejoie for a large scale migration
to French Guiana which is of French culture and predominantly a mixed blood community with less than one person per square mile. So far nothing more has been said about it, although the idea seems full of possibilities. However, for such an enterprise to be successful, it will be necessary to conduct it rationally under the joint auspices of the French and Haitian Governments or the United Nations. Efforts at relocating population have been notorious failures in the past when not rationally planned. Responsible Haitians would welcome alleviating the population problem by voluntary emigration but not at the expense of the flagrant exploitation of the migrants.

D. Standard of Living

As can be expected the standard of living in Haiti is extremely low. While Haiti lacks most of the basic statistics necessary for a quantitative estimate of its level of living, indirect estimates can be attempted.

The gross national product of Haiti is estimated roughly at $280 million and the population at four million, giving us a per capita income of $70 a year. However, income is very unevenly distributed. Judging summarily by the style of life of the upper 10 percent of the population of which half must have a per capita income of $500 and the other half of at least $250, the per capita income of the remaining 90 percent of the population would then average the more realistic but incredibly low figure of $36. These figures are somewhat meaningless, for the great majority of Haitians manage to keep
alive outside the money economy. Conditions of misery are worsening as per capita income has been stationary and even declining for the last 40 years. This makes Haiti not only the poorest country in Latin America but one of the poorest countries in the world.

The extremely low income level of Haitians reflects itself in the employment situation. Unemployment, underemployment, self-employment on the subsistence level, and unpaid family employment are difficult to separate. As a whole they sum up to a situation where there is a large labor force disposed to work but no work of any consequence is available. Figures on unemployment do not exist but various professional sources in Haiti have estimated that more than half of the labor force is idle. Furthermore this labor force is largely unskilled.

Other socioeconomic indicators such as education, diet, health, housing and clothing are consistent with the overall low standard of living.

**Education:** Ninety percent of Haitians over 10 years of age are unable to read or write, a percentage which is probably growing rather than diminishing. Thus Haiti has the highest illiteracy rate in the world with Ghana and the Sudan and the highest for the American hemisphere. Furthermore approximately 75 percent of the children of elementary school age are out of school largely because there are
no schools available for them. Of those who attend school only a small proportion reach secondary school and the process of elimination continues as less than 300 a year graduate and only a fraction of these are able to enroll in the sole university. Qualitatively the situation is even more dismal. Outside of a few exclusive Catholic schools for the privileged, standards of instruction, administration and equipment are extremely low. Schools are understaffed, teachers poorly paid and inadequately prepared, classrooms overcrowded, basic tools such as texts, chalk and ink often lacking, and curriculum hopelessly antiquated and ill-adapted to the needs of the country.

During the colonial period, no educational system had been created. In the 19th century members of the elite continued the colonial custom of sending their sons to France for a higher education. Toward the end of the century, the government instituted a token system of public education largely through the efforts of foreign religious orders. During the occupation, Americans set up agricultural schools and took over the school of medicine. Vocational education was also encouraged during that period. Today the public school system is highly centralized. About 10 percent of the national budget is devoted to education. The Church still plays a large role in primary education with many of the parochial schools subsidized by the state. Urban education is patterned after the French

multi-track system, whereas rural areas have only elementary schools
with a special curriculum.

Notwithstanding the law stating that education is free and com-
pulsory, and the elaborate administration set up on paper, the fact
remains that to this day the education of the bulk of the rural masses
has largely been neglected and education in Haiti is primarily an
urban activity. The curriculum is modeled after the elite education
of 19th century France. It is ornamental to social status rather
than a tool to earn a living. Its stress on belles-lettres and beaux
arts enhances gracious living but is completely unrealistic in view
of the conditions of the country. The fact must not be overlooked
that this archaic classical education was introduced by an upper-
class who shared the aristocratic European and Latin American value
which honors literary and professional work and looks down upon
manual work and work on the land. Viewed from a practical angle, it
is less costly to teach latin or jurisprudence than industrial
workshop, for modern education requires a heavy reliance on expen-
sive material whereas the traditional system relies on rote learning.
Educational reform in Haiti is plagued by lack of funds. The
estimated cost of an up-to-date comprehensive educational system
including adult education would be higher than the total national
budget.

The most serious challenge is the overwhelming problem of
illiteracy. Illiteracy acts as a brake upon the development of
not only the individual but of the society as a whole. The illiterate
is a diminished person whose capacity for abstract reasoning, learning and remembering is seriously hampered. He is a slave of routine activities, difficult to reach with new ideas, and a prey for exploitation. Efforts to alleviate the extensive adult illiteracy were started by private organizations in the thirties. In 1943, the Haitian government officially recognized these efforts and subsidized them. UNESCO and foreign governments provided various technical assistance.

The program of alphabetisation (literacy) has made little headway because of a serious controversy not yet settled over whether to use creole or French as a language. French is the official language of the country although no more than 15 percent of the population understands it. Presently French has very little functional use in the lives of the peasants. Nonetheless the French language is an instrument which will eventually permit them to share in the scientific and technological progress of the modern world. Creole is spoken by all Haitians and is the true language of the country. However, it is only in the last 15 years that attempts have been made to put it down in an efficient phonetic system, a system over which there is still disagreement. The publications in creole are scant, and until a larger literature is available in that language, knowledge of written creole is of little use. However, it takes about two months to teach someone to read in creole whereas about four years for French. Attempts have been made to teach creole

---

57United Nations, Mission to Haiti, op. cit., p. 47.
as a stepping stone to French but to little avail, for the problem has deeper roots. It is not so much the barrier between two languages but between two worlds: rural and urban Haiti. Until rural Haiti is brought out of isolation and into the main stream of national life by providing a proper education to its youth, the barrier will remain. By the same token the gap between the urban masses and the elite will be narrowed by encouraging vocational education thus creating a middle strata of artisans and skilled workers, an essential condition for industrialization and economic development.

**Diet:** The general physical aspect of the Haitian population is that of an undernourished people with an unbalanced diet. This has become more apparent in the last few years, with the exception of the moneyed-class which has a standard of nutrition comparable to the average North American. The Haitian compared to the American Negro of similar racial stock is generally much shorter and slighter of build. Few obese and fat people are seen in the population. Babies at birth average between three to five pounds. Most children have the huge bloated bellies associated with malnutrition. In the poorer rural areas it is not uncommon to see young people of 16 who appear not older than 12 and have delayed puberty. The average daily calorie intake for the Haitian peasant is 1,500, a deficiency of 23 percent below the normal requirement. There is an excessive

---

58 Moral, L'Economie Haitienne, *op. cit.*, p. 42. The average daily calorie intake in the U.S. is 3,150. For a young population in a tropical climate like Haiti the daily calorie intake should be 1,950.
consumption of carbohydrates and a serious lack of proteins. Fruits, rice, beans, plantain, corn, yams are the regular meal fare. Hot pepper and herbs are used extensively to spice the food which is generally tasty. The Haitian masses do not eat regularly; instead they nibble all day long as they chance upon food. They eat more in some seasons than others. During the mango season a saving is made in cooking fuel, for the masses eat little else and noticeably put on weight as a result of eating this fruit which is exceptionally rich in calories. Then during the sugarcane season cane stalks are chewed all day long; next comes the avocado season and so on. Coffee and tafia (cheap rum) are consumed to kill hunger during leaner periods. While isolated cases of starvation have been mentioned from time to time, widespread famine so far has never occurred. However, malnutrition as a whole has aggravated the health condition of the people.

**Health:** Travelers in the beginning of the 20th century and public health specialists who came with the American occupation described the Haiti of half a century ago as a most unsanitary place, with a large proportion of the population in poor health. The organization of public health and sanitation was one of the most outstanding

---

59 The writer witnessed a scene in downtown Port-au-Prince where the last car of a train loaded with sugarcane got accidently stranded and was literally sacked by the population. By the time the engineer retrieved the car, it had been emptied of several tons of sugarcane stalks. The Haytian American Sugar Company tried unsuccessfully to develop a strain of cane tough to eat to cut down on the important loss they incur yearly by the hundreds of tons which is eaten by the cane cutters and passerbys.
achievements of the occupation. Several international agencies and private American organizations have carried on the work since. Today standards of health are much higher although poor sanitation in rural areas and urban slums is still an acute health hazard. The fact that the climate is mild and healthy has played no small part in keeping the population functioning at such a low standard of living. Under a more rigorous climate, the minimum requirements for staying alive would be much higher.

Malaria, hookworm and tuberculosis are prevalent diseases in Haiti today. Yaws, a debilitating contagious tropical disease, akin to syphilis in its symptoms, but not a venereal disease, still afflicted 70 percent of the population in the forties. However, by the sixties this disease has been practically eliminated, representing one of the great successes of the American Health Mission in Haiti. Malaria is endemic in coastal regions and Haiti has the highest national incidence of malaria in the Hemisphere. A systematic campaign for the eradication of malaria is currently in progress under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization. Hookworm and tuberculosis are related to low standards of living and sanitation and will not be brought under control unless sewages, latrines, water supplies free of contamination, and housing conditions are improved, not to mention standards of nutrition and personal hygiene. Nearly 100 percent of the population has some form of intestinal parasites.

The lack of medical personnel and facilities considerably
aggravates the state of health of the Haitian masses. In 1950 there was one hospital bed for 1,500 inhabitants and one physician for 11,000. While the residents of Port-au-Prince and the principal provincial towns, who can afford medical care, have doctors and medical facilities at their disposal, there was in 1948 a total of 26 physicians to care for the ordinary medical needs of well over 2,500,000 people living in the smaller towns and rural areas. While this situation improved in the fifties, it has worsened since. Rural dispensaries built during the American occupation are closed most of the time and if open have no equipment nor supplies. The people simply turn to their docteur-feuille as they have done since colonial times. These vodou practitioners, knowledgeable as they are in the curative properties of indigenous plants, can hardly meet the challenge of 20th century medicine. The indolence of which the Haitian peasant is frequently accused is due in no small part to the state of his health.

**Housing:** For the Haitian rural masses and urban slum dwellers, that is for over 90 percent of the population, a house is little more than a shelter. It is a place to sleep, to get away from the


61 In one case known to this writer, a docteur feuille applied a concoction of moss that fermented over night on an infected wound and cured it. A Catholic priest who witnessed the cure sent a sample of the moss to a New York laboratory. It was found to contain a high percentage of penicillin. However, there are also much incantations, wearing of charms and other practices of doubtful medical value except for the psychological effect on the patient.
inclemency of the weather, to prepare food, and store a few worldly possessions. The houses are generally built, and thereby owned, by the occupants. The structure and materials used have changed little since slavery days. A typical caille (house) consists of dried mud walls with a dirt floor and a thatched roof as ceiling. According to the 1950 census, 75 percent of the dwellings have no more than one or two rooms and house an average of four to five persons. One room is used for eating and receiving, the other for sleeping. Most people sleep on mats made of dried banana leaves or share primitive homemade beds. Cooking is done outside in the open or under a flimsy adjoining structure called ajoupa. These dwellings are quite small (average 12 x 10 feet) but are difficult to keep reasonably sanitary. They are prone to vermin and humidity and the thatched roofs are infested with rats. For the total republic, only 1.6 percent of the dwelling units have water, 10 percent have latrines and 1.8 percent have electricity.

In the urban areas excepting the incredibly sordid slum, most homes are of wood or cement construction. The older houses of the well-to-do, now occupied by less prominent dwellers, have a colonial architecture not without charm but with an aspect of decaying elegance.62 In the capital the wealthy and those in political favor live in modern villas of bold design and color, an architecture

reminiscent of Le Corbusier cubic style of the thirties adapted to tropical conditions. A few are quite luxurious and stand out conspicuously amid the general poverty.

The government has attempted several public housing projects. Since these schemes were primarily politically motivated they have not accomplished much. The town of Belladere near the Dominican border was rebuilt as a model town by President Estime in 1946 so as not to be outdone by Trujillo who had done the same with the outpost of Elias Piña across the frontier. Unfortunately this isolated town had no resources to sustain the civic improvements and is surrounded today by hovels covering an area five times the size of the original model town; the latter is badly in need of repair. A few low-rent housing projects were started under Magloire and continued by Duvalier. At the most they are token and inadequate projects not even appreciated by the people they are supposed to benefit. Duvalierville is another model town a la Pontemkine. It was started in 1961 with much fanfare and propaganda but turned out to be a pretext to extort important donations from the private sector and from government employees. At this writing it is not yet completed although it has been inaugurated twice, but stands as a ghost town with no economic activities and now serves as a weekend resort for the lower echelon of the Duvalier

63 Potemkine was a favorite minister of Katherine the Great who hastily built pseudo-idyllic villages in the Russian countryside to impress on his touring sovereign that the people were happy and prospering. Hence the expression in French.
regime. The local population which had been temporarily relocated have never returned to their "showcase" town. Duvalierville will remain as a monument to the ineptitude of a regime which lost interest in the project once it had extracted from it the maximum political benefit.

**Clothing:** The population is generally ill-clothed. Few wear shoes regularly, outside the educated class, and because of the polluted soil, due to the absence of latrines, expose themselves to hookworm infection. The peasants wear baggy denim clothes and straw hats. The women wear wide skirts of coarse material and bandannas wrapped around their head. Working clothes are tattered, dress clothes of bright colors. Children run around half-naked until five years of age. In the remote mountains, the peasants all dress alike in the traditional blue vareuse (loose shirt) of the 19th century, reminiscent of European peasant costumes of the past. In the rest of the country, clothing between urban and rural population is becoming similar. There was a thriving market in secondhand clothes from the United States called Kennedy's in creole but it

---

64 A law was in vigor at one time forbidding the peasants to enter the capital without shoes. A business in shoe rental mushroomed at the main entrance of the city. Today one often sees peasants walking with their shoes on their head and putting them on at the approach of town.

65 The creole term was formally odedes = hand-me-downs. It seems that the controversy over the importation of secondhand clothes arose at the time of President Kennedy's election and his name got inadvertently associated with the controversy. Another amusing event concerning clothes was the flooding of the Haitian market with 48 stars American flag material after Hawaii had become a state. The
was outlawed by the government on grounds of dignity. The upper-class dresses in the latest French and American styles. Men used to be very conservative and formal in dark suits and ties of temperate zone material. The influence of tourists has relaxed standards of dress, although fashions still tend to be formal among Haitians who can afford to dress in style. As a whole the Haitian masses seem to be conscious of their appearance and are remarkably clean under the circumstances, but crushing poverty defeats their efforts.

Poverty, malnutrition, ill-health, the low standard of living in Haiti revolve in a vicious circle hard to break. The obstacles seem so insurmountable that a spirit of fatalism reigns among the Haitian masses. The idyllic picture of the poor but carefree islander, satisfied with little, owner of his little thatched hut and plot of land, enjoying his cockfights, market days, and vodou dances is in reality a nightmare of hopelessness, physical misery and quiet desperation.

material had been bought at low cost in the U.S. by Syrian merchants and within a few months the Haitian landscape was dotted with skirts, blouses and bandannas made with Old Glory. The action was denounced in the U.S. Senate and the Syrian merchants promptly offered to resell the material to the U.S. Government at an exhorbitant price. The offer was turned down.
CHAPTER IV

THE LAND

A. General Description

Haiti has a land area of 10,700 square miles, which is about the size of the state of Maryland or Belgium. It was most appropriately named "Haiti"—meaning high land—by the aboriginal Indians, for 80 percent of the area is mountainous. Peaks rising to an altitude of 9,000 feet are flanked by fertile alluvial plains. Legend has it that Christopher Columbus when asked by his sovereign to describe the topography of Haiti, dramatically crumpled a sheet of paper and tossed it onto a table. This description is still good today. Roughly, mountains make up 20 percent of the territory, the plains another 20 percent and the remainder are lower mountain slopes and plateaux.

The climate of the island, although geographically equatorial, is noticeable for the absence of really high temperature because of the presence of constant land and sea breezes. Haiti's coastal area has the reputation of having one of the most agreeable climates in the world. The temperature of the coastal area is pleasantly warm and equable ranging from 70-85°F year around, summer being only about five degrees warmer than the winter months. In Port-au-Prince, the mean temperature is 81°F and the average humidity 68 percent. 123
The mountain regions are considerably cooler with temperature no higher than 65°F. Because of the mountains, there are wide differences in rainfall, from a high of 122 inches in Mirebalais to a low of 20 inches a year in Mole St. Nicholas. Sometimes, marked differences in rainfall and thus vegetation occur within a short distance. The weather rather than temperature determines the seasons in Haiti. The two rainy seasons, spring and fall, are fairly consistent throughout the republic. By the same token, winter and summer are dry. For Port-au-Prince, the wet season is from April to June and during September and October, most of the rain falls in the evening. About 25 percent of the country could be classified as semi-arid and a much larger percentage is seasonally arid. Climatic conditions in Haiti allow for several crops a year in the more endowed regions while chronically bringing drought to arid zones. Likewise, the many streams of Haiti become torrential during the rainy season and may dry up completely during the rest of the year. The larger streams are noticeably lower during the dry season. Canalizing this water for irrigation while important during colonial days, of which imposing ruins remain, has been neglected since. Today only 42,000 hectares are irrigated while other areas are dependent upon capricious weather conditions. The unrestrained courses of streams have contributed largely to the main ravage to Haitian land resources, namely erosion. Together with over-population, erosion is seriously affecting the precarious ecological balance between man and land in Haiti. Tropical lands and mountainous areas are fragile by nature.
Only heavy forestation is the natural counteraction to erosion. However, deforestation in Haiti was begun as early as the 18th century when entire mountain ranges were cleared by the French to plant coffee. With time and population pressure, more wood and more land was needed so that today the number of trees has decreased to an alarming degree, thus accelerating the process of erosion. With every rainfall, tons of top soil find their way into the sea and from a distance the river mouths of Haiti are detectible by the reddish muddy stains which extend for miles into the Caribbean Sea. During the rainy season, the streets in the waterfront area of Port-au-Prince are flooded with silt, inches thick, whereas the mountains surrounding the capital show every year deeper indentation and diminishing vegetation. The peasants, unaware of what is going on, complain that the rocks in their fields are "growing taller" every year and they persist in cutting down the few seedlings planted by the reforestation service to use as fuel. The fabrication of charcoal used by 99 percent of the population for cooking purposes and the raising of goats on mountain slopes continue to do their share in accelerating erosion. With no trees to hold the earth, roads are washed away regularly by torrential rains. The problem of erosion is part of the many vicious circles found in Haiti. Thus, the peasant masses have to be reasonably educated to understand the merits of conservation techniques; to this end regional schools have to be founded; but roads have to be built to bring students and material to the school; roads are washed away because of erosion,
thus completing this vicious circle. Today there are only three forest districts left in the Republic, one of which is the scenic "foret des pins" near the Dominican border which Trujillo tried unsuccessfully to wrench away from Haiti during a border dispute. It is also believed that the depletion of mountains and hills has noticeably affected climatic conditions and has contributed to the growing aridity of the country, as well as to increasing the violence of rain and floods.

B. Natural Resources

The natural mineral resources of the Republic, largely undeveloped, include some copper, bauxite, cement material, manganese, iron, alluvion gold, limestone, clay, gypsum, lignite and salt. While prospection of these resources is still very incomplete, the general picture which appears is that the country is not richly endowed with mineral resources. Therefore, Haiti cannot hope to divert much of its predominantly agricultural economy towards extractive industries.

Of all the minerals listed above only copper, bauxite, and cement material are actually being exploited today by modern enterprises, while clay, limestone and salt exploitation is in the hands of small scale peasant industries.

Consolidated Halliwell of Canada—now controlled by U.S. financial interests—has the concession on copper mining near Terre-Neuve (northwest Haiti). The presence of copper there was probably known as
early as the 17th century. Moreau de St. Mery mentions the ruins of abandoned Spanish mining installations discovered as far back as 1728. In the beginning of the twentieth century, efforts were made to work the mining deposits and after several unsuccessful attempts, a small scale operation was maintained for several years and discontinued in 1920. In 1954, Halliwell formed the SEDREN Company and reactivated mining operation. After a pre-production phase of eight years during which the company encountered many difficulties it had not anticipated and at a cost of eight and a half million dollars in investment, the company made its first shipments of 13,000 tons of copper concentrate in 1961. Mineral reserves are estimated at 10 million tons with 2.6 percent copper content. This is a relatively poor reserve which could, if worked at full capacity, be exhausted in three years. However, the company is prospecting elsewhere in the region with an additional expenditure of capital. As yet the enterprise is not profitable and will not be until it can export about 4,000 tons every six weeks. In 1961 it employed 285 Haitian workers with a yearly payroll of $577,000. The workers receive various social services some of which are also extended to the villagers in the vicinity of the mines. Only the future will tell whether this enterprise will be successful and profitable to both Haiti and foreign entrepreneurs.

Bauxite deposits are being worked at present by the American

\footnote{Moreau de Saint Mery, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 781-2.}
Reynolds Mining Company at Miragoane (south Haiti). Production started in 1956 after many years of planning and prospection. Reserves of 10-12 million tons with 48-52 percent aluminum content have been reported. The company has invested in mine shafts and modern port facilities. It employs 390 Haitian workers but so far has not made an appreciable contribution to government revenues. Production, export and investment figures were unavailable at this writing.

Cement material is currently worked by Ciment d'Haiti founded in 1954 at Fond Mombin near Port-au-Prince. A French company with some shares held by Venezuelan and Haitian interests, Ciment d'Haiti had a daily output of 240 tons in 1962, although it was not working at full capacity. It produces more than the need of the country and it is currently stock piling in view of current low consumption and the absence of an export market. While the cost of cement which is distributed by the government has not diminished for the consumer, this enterprise has given a noticeable boost to foreign savings by cutting out a yearly import of 20,000 tons. Raw materials in vast quantity are found on the company's concession with the exception of gypsum, imported from the Dominican Republic while waiting further prospecting in Haiti. The company employs about 160, all of them Haitian with the exception of a top management of six. Liberal social services are provided to employees although in a company town setting.

---

Small local industries work clay for brick and ceramic fabrication of limited output and quality. Lime is being produced from limestone throughout the Republic where it is available. Limestone is remarkably pure and not scarce. Archaic colonial methods are still in use today and are noticeably wasteful of wood. While workers have acquired considerable skill in making lime using such crude methods, the final product leaves much to be desired. Crystal salt of very poor preparation used for cooking as well as fish salting is another peasant industry in the region of Gonaïves. Salt is obtained by evaporating sea water with the natural heat of the sun. Recently, imports from nearby islands have reduced local production.

The other mineral resources mentioned remain undeveloped. Manganese deposits in the vicinity of the copper mines of Terre-Neuve were known for a long time and seemed to be of commercial interest. They are currently being prospected in view of eventual exploitation. Iron ores are of no economic interest in the two regions where prospection was made. Likewise, alluvional gold is found only in minute quantities in the sands of some northern rivers. The Spaniards depleted the island of its gold resources 400 years ago.

As for fuels, lignite deposits with commercial possibilities have been reported near Maissade in the central plateau. Some mineral analyses have been made and a United Nation Mission to Haiti\(^3\) has strongly recommended further investigation of the extent and tonnage

\(^3\)United Nations, Mission to Haiti, op. cit., p. 185.
of the deposits and the best methods of mining and subsequent industrial processing. Unfortunately, the project has never gone much further than the talking stage. Oil prospecting was carried out in the forties but nothing conclusive was reported; however, an aura of mystery surrounds petroleum prospecting. Some Haitians are convinced that foreign companies are just biding their time for a political regime friendly to foreign interests which would give them generous concessions to exploit oil in Haiti at the expense of the Haitian people. The day that substantial oil reserves are found in Haiti, a frantic "bataille royale" will take place over land titles which are presently in a state of confusion. Finally, another interesting untapped natural resource is guano. The island has numerous caves inhabited by bats and abounding with guano. As far back as the thirties, the U.S. Agricultural Soil Bureau made analyses of guano collected in Haiti which showed that it would be of value for fertilizer, some running high in nitrogen and the other in phosphoric acid. Again, nothing more has been done. Probably because of the considerable investment which would have to be made in roads to transport the guano.

In conclusion, it can be said that while Haitian mineral resources are not extensive, they still offer opportunities for some diversification of the economy provided government policies and the political

---

climate are propitious to the considerable amount of foreign investments which alone could develop these resources. Haiti does not have the capital, the technological know-how, nor the managerial experience to set up its own extractive industries. However, it is equally understandable that the country is not interested in the exploitation of its natural resources by foreign enterprises if it does not result in substantial employment for her population or governmental revenues. Haitians also reject the colonial philosophy that idle natural resources belong to those who take advantage of them.

Agricultural Resources

Haiti is primarily an agricultural country. The soil is its chief resource, the principal source of revenue of its government, the direct means of livelihood of 88 percent of its population and indirectly of another five percent. Agriculture by far dominates the economy. Coffee is the chief product, along with sisal, sugar, cocoa, tobacco, bananas, dyewoods, cotton, as well as rice, fruits and other food crops for local consumption.

In the 18th century, Haiti was France's prized colony and provided most of the sugar and coffee for Europe. In the year 1791, exports from Haiti included roughly 177 million pounds of sugar; 74 million pounds of coffee; seven million pounds of cotton; seven million pounds of dyewoods and about one million pounds of indigo, valued at a present rate of 50 million dollars, and produced by a population

---

5Davis, op. cit., p. 25.
of 520,000. Today a population of four million produced the following exports for 1961: 146 million pounds of sugar; 48 million pounds of coffee; no cotton for export, no indigo, a negligible amount of dye-woods and 52 million pounds of sisal, a new crop, the total valued at 32 million dollars. Production is 30 percent lower than what it used to be 170 years ago (see Table I). This illustrates several problems: 1) overpopulation which forces people to devote most of the land to subsistence crops; 2) the ravage of erosion and agricultural mal-practice which has reduced the amount of fertile land; 3) the consequence of illiteracy and ignorance which inhibits the introduction of modern cultivation methods; and 4) the irresponsibility of venal governments which have let this state of affair accumulate for a century and a half and is faced today with a problem of such magnitude that no one knows how to cope with it.

**Coffee:** Haiti is one of the oldest coffee growing regions of the New World and today coffee is still its chief agricultural resource. It is also the most valuable export crop, on which the whole economy depends, earning as much as 60-70 percent of foreign reserve. Coffee export tax is also one of the main source of government revenues. Haitian production has widely fluctuated through the years with generally a good year alternating with a lean one. For the last thirty years an average of 58 million tons has been exported. Local consumption is unknown although estimated by Moral at 18 million
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Items</th>
<th>1791</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>177 million lbs</td>
<td>146 million lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>74 million lbs</td>
<td>48 million lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>7 million lbs</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyewoods</td>
<td>7 million lbs</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>1 million lbs.</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisal</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>52 million lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>$50 million</td>
<td>$32 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>520,000</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coffee was first introduced into northern Haiti from Martinique by Jesuits in 1738. Its culture spread rapidly since it was especially adaptable to mountain slopes though it never displaced sugar as the prime export in colonial times. From seven million pounds in 1755 it reached 77 million pounds in 1789 on the eve of the slave revolt. After independence and the break up of the plantation system, coffee growing wild in the mountains waiting only to be picked became the chief export crop and has retained its place ever since. However, it took nearly one hundred years to reach the pre-independence level. There was also a social revolution in production. During the colonial period, 3,800 coffee plantations produced an average of 20,000 pounds; today 150,000 peasant families produce an average of 330 pounds on their subsistence farms employing 3/4 million people. About one third of the total productive land is devoted to coffee.

Sugar: Sugarcane originating from the Canary Islands was introduced into Haiti probably in the beginning of the 16th century. Relatively slow in getting started, by the 18th century it was extended to nearly every small alluvial plain or wherever sugarcane could be grown, and represented more than forty percent of the wealth of the colony. It was also around the production of sugar that the socio-economic plantation system knew its greatest development. Revolution

---

6 Moral, L'Economie Haitienne, op. cit., p. 100.
7 Ibid., p. 92.
followed by independence in 1804 destroyed that system and with it
sugar production. From a height of 163 million pounds exported in
1788, production rapidly declined to 600,000 pounds in 1821 and to an
all time low of 43,000 pounds in 1871. With the American occupation
in 1915, an effort was made by American companies to reconstitute a
few large plantations to produce sugar again on a commercial basis.
It took many years to achieve this end. In spite of the endorsement
of this policy by the Haitian government, the peasants resisted the
return to the plantation system and in comparison to Cuba where large
plantations were being organized at the same time, the effort has not
been altogether successful. Today, the Haytian American Sugar Company.
(HASCO), established since 1916, is the main producer of sugar in
Haiti. It grows 40 percent of its production on its own land and
the rest is bought from independents. It processes an average of
700,000 tons of cane a year which gives about 70,000 tons of sugar
of which half is exported.\(^8\) The rest is turned over to the government
which has a monopoly on the internal sale of sugar from which it
derives a profitable tax. The development of sugarcane is handicapped
by lack of available land, poor irrigation and exhausted soils which
give it a low yield of 60 to 65 tons an hectare.\(^9\) As a whole, Haiti
is a low-cost sugar country, having an abundant supply of cheap labor.
The Haitian cane cutter has a reputation for being a strong, enduring

\(^8\) Moral, Le Paysan Haitien, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 288.

\(^9\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 290.
and efficient cutter. The main problems inhibiting sugar development are population pressure on the land, lack of capital to expand sugar production, and no less important is the general distrust to revert to the more productive large scale sugar plantations, for it inevitably results in a landless peasant class, a reminder of slavery days.

**Sisal**: Sisal fiber is derived from a cactus-like plant, and is the raw material for binder twine and an increasing number of other products. Although it was cultivated by the aboriginal Indians it was never an export crop in colonial times, although it was used by the slaves for such things as fishing nets. In the nineteenth century a small quantity of sisal was actually exported.

One of the advantages of sisal is that it grows well on semiarid land, a type of land more and more prevalent in Haiti. Large-scale production of sisal was introduced during the American occupation and the American-owned Plantation Dauphin is today the largest sisal plantation in the world. It processes about 80 percent of the sisal produced in Haiti. After Tanzania and Mexico, Haiti is today the third largest producer of sisal in the world. Sisal represents about 25 percent of total exportation. The problem with sisal production is that the return on investment is low and the producers do not control the world price which fluctuates from year

---

10 For instance, the padding of Volkswagen seats.

to year. Sisal is produced in Haiti primarily because of low-labor cost. Attempts have been made to produce it in Puerto Rico where it grows well, but the labor costs made it prohibitive. Shortage of unoccupied land prevents further extension without dispossession. When one compares the present standard of living of the 3,000 or so laborers on the Plantation Dauphin to that of the independent peasant, it has not improved enough to warrant the transformation of the poor but self-sufficient peasant-owner into a landless proletarian.

G. Relation of the People to the Land

The land area of the Republic of Haiti is about 10,000 square miles. It is estimated that about 30 percent is used for cultivation and pasture, with the land under cultivation amounting to 17 percent, representing less than one acre per capita for a country which is essentially agricultural. Another 40 percent of the land is potentially productive but unused, the main reasons being lack of irrigation, need for drainage, or other difficulties of a technical nature which would require capital expenditures beyond the means of the nation. The remaining 30 percent is wasteland or forested.12 There is strong evidence that the country is less fertile and getting less productive every year. The Haitians did not inherit a new country. It had been thoroughly but fairly rationally exploited during the colonial period. Absence of conservation measures and

other agricultural malpractices have since caused deterioration of the land. Farming tools consist essentially of the broad-bladed machete and the West African type hoe. Fertilizer and rotation of crops are unknown, consequently yields are extremely low.

Outside the marked differences between the mountain and plain areas, there is a surprisingly similarity in Haitian rural life from one end of the country to the other in spite of little communication. This is explainable perhaps by the fact that the rural population is reduced to the common denominator of subsistence living which affords little variation.

With respect to settlement patterns, the scattered homestead prevails. There are some concentrations of peasant homes in linear villages along roads, especially in the plains and in the vicinity of urban centers. In the foothills, valleys and mountains, the isolated farm dominates. Settlement patterns evolved from the plantation slave villages of the 18th century to the patriarchal African style hamlet—the lacou of the 19th century—to the gradual break up of the latter, to dispersion as the final pattern. It is also thought that the settlement of peasants in the most remote mountain region resulted in part from the presence of maroons (fugitive slaves) in the colonial period, the pertubations of the war of independence and the compulsive conscription of the early 19th century, which forced many peasants to flee the plains.

In regard to land tenure, Haiti is rather unique in Latin America in the sense that the vast majority of peasants own their plot of land.
While most of Latin America has a problem of landless masses resulting from the latifundia system, Haiti has a problem of low and uneconomic production resulting from minifundia. According to the census of 1950, 84 percent of the peasants are proprietors of their land; 3.8 percent farm on state-leased land; 3.2 percent farm on privately-leased land; 4.1 percent are tenants and 4.7 percent are sharecroppers. The high percentage of proprietorship conceals the fact that many do not have their land titles in order.

After independence the large estates of the French were broken up into individual holdings with the exception of some of the ex-affranchis and military leaders who retained their large estates. The rest of the public domain was gradually distributed to veterans of the revolution, the size of donation varying according to rank and finally the rest of the land was made available to the general population on generous terms. The owners of the few large estates experienced increasing difficulty in finding agricultural workers and were forced to lease their land or use a démoitie (sharecropper) arrangement. Eventually most of the large estates disappeared. The pattern of family enterprise on small scale properties was set. Furthermore the Napoleonic code had been adopted making every child heir, and Dessalines had included into the law equal inheritance rights for natural children. In view of the common practice of polygamy among peasants, the holdings rapidly split up from one generation to the next. Moral cites an example of a family whose original land grant of 39 acres in 1840 is divided today between 50 inheritors and their respective
families. As population grew, plots of land continued to be sub-divided until most holdings were atomized into inefficient minifundia. In some cases inherited plots are widely scattered and impossible to consolidate; in other cases the plot has gotten so small that relatives live in indivision (non-division) or some of the members are forced to migrate to towns, squat on marginal land or become sharecroppers. With the American occupation a few commercial large scale plantations were reconstituted. They are practically all foreign-owned and managed and represent the first successful enterprises of that nature since colonial times. However, the trend is not continuing in that direction partly due to the difficulties involved in carrying out the inevitable dispossession and the strong resentment of the rural masses.

According to the census of 1950, over 50 percent of the holdings are between one and a half acres and six acres; 12 percent less than one and a half acres and six percent over sixteen acres (see Table II).

13 Moral, op. cit., p. 185.

14 One of the houseboys of this writer had inherited one tree as his part of the family’s patrimony.
TABLE II
PERCENTAGE OF FARM HOLDINGS IN HAITI BY SIZE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Farms</th>
<th>Percentage of Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1.5 acres</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 3 &quot;</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 6 &quot;</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 10 &quot;</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 16 &quot;</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 16 &quot;</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


We face here the dilemma of economic progress with latifundia versus social stability with minifundia. Latifundia are certainly economically more profitable for such crops as sugarcane, bananas, sisal, and a few other cash crops but their social costs are heavy, as far as underdeveloped countries are concerned. First they occupy the best land and turn the local peasantry into a landless agricultural worker; then they cannot guarantee full employment because of the seasonal nature of their activities, and lastly the price of the product is at the mercy of international speculation, and the worker is the first victim of a drop in price. As for the minifundia, land ownership has an integrative effect resulting in social stability, but at the cost of decreased production, economic stagnation and regression. Today the Haitian peasant's holding is no longer large enough to support his family in a style which is above subsistence and which would secure and maintain a decent standard of living and a
respectable existence. The solution is far from simple. Attempts at forming cooperatives, a system which ideally if not in practice combines the best elements of both systems, are handicapped by the low level of education of the Haitian peasant.

The problem of land titles in Haiti is even more complicated. The need for a general land survey has been pointed out for years. The basis for the cadastre is still the survey made by the French in the 1830's in conjunction with the claims of the former French planters who were compensated by the indemnity Haiti paid France to secure recognition of her independence. The carelessness of a century or more has resulted in a most confused state of anarchy in land titles which is a serious impediment to any efforts to put agriculture on a rational basis. Even the state, which is--on paper at least--the largest proprietor, does not know the extent of its holdings. Very often claims are fictitious. When the government sold land to American companies, squatters were found on the land who had been there for generations. In some cases title to one holding has been issued to several persons. Archives have been destroyed by the ravages of tropical weather or revolution. Some times divided land is not recorded, for the cost of the survey is more than the value of the land. Another problem is the idiosyncratic custom of some peasants to use the given name of their fathers as a patronymic name; after several generations it becomes utterly confusing to trace
a genealogy. 15 The result of this anarchy is a great sense of insecurity among peasants and distrust of officials. The peasants find themselves in endless litigations over clouded titles in inheritance claims. Unscrupulous urban lawyers thrive on this situation. During the American occupation, a rational cadastral survey was attempted but so much apprehension and disputation were re-activated that the project was abandoned. As passive and deferent as the Haitian peasant is toward autorité as he calls officials, when it comes to his land, he is willing to stake his life to defend it. The many tyrannical governments in the history of Haiti have carefully avoided this issue, for while they have abused the peasants in many ways, they have realized that if they tried to interfere with the land question they would have an uprising on their hands which they would not be able to control.

In conclusion we can say that the man and land ecological equilibrium in Haiti is very fragile and obviously cannot continue for very long in its present state.

15 As an example: Louis Alcee (ego), son of Alcee Duverger (ego's father), son of Duverger Legrand (ego's grandfather), etc. Sometimes a peasant takes it upon himself to change his given name. There is a lot of fantasy in given names. Many names of latin origin such as Mercilus, Ferilus, Charius, or names such as Assefille (enough girl), Semblenou (looks like us), Beltinoi (pretty little black), Dieudonne' (God gave him) Maculee (immaculate), Chimene (from chimin = road), the latter girl was born on the highway!
CHAPTER V

THE SOCIAL CLASS SYSTEM

The fundamental key to an understanding of Haitian society is its class system. No other social institution is as firmly established and as well-defined. The class structure divides the society roughly into two social groups: the "haves" and "have nots" and permeates all other social institutions. It determines the type of family, economic, political and religious activities, educational opportunities and above all people's attitudes. It determines the individual's degree of orientation toward African or French derived values. A veritable process of de-africanization occurs as one moves up from the black peasant mass to the urban mulatto bourgeoisie.

A. Evolution of the Haitian Class System

Social stratification in colonial times consisted of three main strata: the whites, the affranchis (free people of color), and the slaves.

The whites were subdivided into grands blancs who were government officials and planters and petits blancs who were whites of smaller means and lesser social importance.

The affranchis (free people of color) made up the second stratum. These affranchis held a relatively advantageous position. Many had been freed for generations, owned considerable property, and some
were educated in France. They enjoyed many rights but were excluded from public office and some occupations. Many were slave owners and identified with the whites rather than the Negro slaves. Others were artisans whose social aspirations were with the whites but whose recent servitude forced them at times to identify with the slaves.

The third stratum comprised the slaves, who in turn were differentiated between house servants and field hands, and those born on the island and the newcomers. The latter were derisively called neg bossal (raw Africans) while the former neg creole (creole Negroes).

In 1789, on the eve of the slave rebellion, Moreau de St. Mery estimated the population composition of the colony as follows: 40,000 whites (8%), 28,000 free people of color (5%) and 452,000 slaves (87%).

The colonial stratification pattern set the stage from which subsequently evolved the present day Haitian class system.

As the St. Domingue Revolution annihilated the whites, the free people of color eventually filled the vacuum left by the former ruling class and became the new elite while the slaves became the peasant mass. For over a century i.e., until two decades ago, Haitian society remained essentially a two-class society with an urban mulatto elite and a peasant mass. Between these two classes there existed a small group of skilled workers, small-time

---

1 Moreau de St. Mery, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
politicians, declassé individuals, etc., who were usually moving up or down between the elite and the mass. They did not constitute a middle class but simply a transient group with no particular class identification of their own.

The rumblings which were slowly undermining the rigidity of this traditional class structure erupted with the Social Revolution of 1946. Since this period, the social class system has been in a state of restructuring. The most important development occurring in the past twenty years has been the emergence of an urban middle class which is challenging the traditional power of the bourgeoisie and the appearance of a small urban proletariat differentiating itself from the peasant mass. The current political regime opposed to the mulatto bourgeoisie is accelerating this change.

In summary, contemporary Haitian society is stratified in the following way: at the top, there is an urban, predominantly mulatto, traditional bourgeoisie representing no more than two percent of the population, followed by an emerging middle class which represents about four percent of the population and an urban proletariat of about six percent. The remaining 88 percent makes up the peasant mass. The foreign whites and Syrian colony, representing less than one tenth of one percent of the population, while economically important, are not generally integrated into Haitian society and are considered here as a subcultural group.

Fundamentally, the main features of the Haitian class structure have not changed since its origin. The same percentage, 87 or 88
percent of the population still remains at the bottom of the social pyramid as a peasant mass, first as slaves, now as free men. The top of the pyramid was occupied in the 18th century by a small French colonial minority, who were displaced at the beginning of the 19th century by a small mulatto minority, and now the mulatto elite is being challenged in turn by a rising "brown" middle class (see figure 5).

B. The Present-day Class System

Instead of considering Haitian society in the standard three class system, it would be more realistic to analyse first the Haitian social class structure by making a rough dichotomy between the more privileged and the under-privileged segments of the society. The more privileged group would include two urban classes, the bourgeoisie and the middle class which represent together about six percent of the population. While social distance between the bourgeoisie and the middle class is quite manifest, it does not compare with the social gulf separating these two strata from the mass. The bourgeoisie and the middle class represent the enlightened segment of the population. They are world-oriented; they possess education and command of the French language. They are aware of what is going on in their country in the sense that they can comprehend and appraise the complex political situation, can be influenced by reason, and are articulate in expressing their wants, dissatisfaction, and aspirations. The members of this more privileged group
Figure 5. Comparison between the Colonial and Contemporary Class Structure of Haiti
divide among themselves the power, wealth, and prestige existing in Haiti. While the wealth and prestige is overwhelmingly in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the new middle class possesses today the political power. In reality then, six percent of the population own, control, and represent Haiti to the outside world.

The other segment of the society is the underprivileged, inarticulate mass. *Les inconscients*—meaning approximately, unconscious, unaware, unconcerned—is a descriptive term used in Haiti to characterize the peasant mass and the urban proletariat who make up together about 94 percent of the population. They are overwhelmingly illiterate, do not understand French—the language used in all legal and official transactions—do not communicate effectively with the more privileged classes, are superstitious, and of course have no political power. They have a subsistence economy and are largely oblivious to what is going on in the country. Their main concern is how to eke out a daily hand-to-mouth existence. Revolutions come and go, governments are created and collapse, political rivalries split asunder the privileged classes, but the Haitian peasant goes about his daily task as he has for the last century and a half, largely unaware of and unconcerned with the world of his urban countryman.

While the extraordinary cleavage between the "haves" and "have nots" has been traditional in Haitian society and could be considered as the outstanding characteristic of its class system, a relatively new factor of importance introduced into this situation is the power struggle among the "haves," that is, between the bourgeoisie
and the middle class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION PERCENT</th>
<th>Masses</th>
<th>Bourgeoisie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CULTURE</td>
<td>African derived</td>
<td>French derived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARRIAGE PATTERN</td>
<td>common law, some polygamy</td>
<td>legal marriage, monogamy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCCUPATION</td>
<td>manual</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY YEARLY INCOME</td>
<td>less than $100</td>
<td>$2,000 to $6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLING</td>
<td>illiterate</td>
<td>educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LANGUAGE SPOKEN</td>
<td>creole</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELIGION</td>
<td>vodou</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLOR</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>mulatto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Comparison between The Two Polar Extremes of The Haitian Class Structure

1. The Bourgeoisie

The estimated two percent of the population, which constitutes the privileged bourgeoisie, are for the most part the descendants of the free mulattoes of the colonial period. Their proportion has been steadily decreasing because of their relatively lower birth rate and increasing migration out of the country, especially in the last decade. Nonetheless, this class has maintained its prestige position and lighter color by endogamy and interlocking family ties. In fact, they have intermarried to such an extent that they all seem to be related. Occasionally, they have married white foreigners. However, marriages with Haitians of other classes seldom occur and if they do, it is generally the female of the upper class who marries a prominent male of the middle class. Since the question of color plays an important part in mate selection, generally there will not be a
wide color disparity in marriages across class lines.

Class solidarity is the most outstanding trait of the bourgeoisie. It is rooted in a strong family system, blood relationship, and common heritage. It has enabled this small minority to dominate the rest of the society for a century and a half. Class solidarity is relatively absent in other strata. The bourgeoisie is exclusively urban and in recent years has concentrated in the capital city. The average annual income of the elite ranges from $2,000 to $6,000\(^2\) which is relatively high for a country with a per capita income of $70.00. They own their own homes, which are comfortably spacious but not ornate. It is difficult to compare their style of life to that of the elite of other countries. In manners, savoir faire, art of conversation, entertaining, and handling of servants, they have the sophistication of the European elite, but their material comforts and conveniences compare to lower middle class Americans.

The members of this elite class are found in the professional, managerial and administrative occupations. More preoccupied with professional status, they have allowed the business and trade of the country to slip into the hands of foreigners, mostly Syrians. In regard to public administration they have lost their dominance to the new middle class and at the present time are being systematically squeezed out of the army and from all positions controlled by the

\(^2\) These income figures as well as those for the other social classes were obtained from Schaedel, op. cit.
government. Since the Haitian government is the largest employer and politics is the quickest way to wealth and power, the bourgeoisie has suffered a serious set back as the uncontested leader class by the gradual erosion of its political power, which reflects negatively on its economic status.

The bourgeoisie, nonetheless, is still very much the social elite to be admired and emulated. It receives more deference from the mass than do the power wielding "black bureaucrats." Their style of life is pleasant and leisurely. It has an archaic French colonial flavor and it is similar to the style of other Latin American elites. Their social life consists of large family reunions which include relatives several degrees removed. They maintain class solidarity through exclusive social clubs such as the Cercle Bellevue in Port-au-Prince and Union Club in Cap Haitien.

The members of the bourgeoisie are not all of similar status. They are informally divided in what can be called the haute (top) and the nouvelle (new) bourgeoisie. The new bourgeoisie shares with the top bourgeoisie a similar standard of living based on income but generally do not share their private social life. This latter group consists of politically and financially successful families who lack the social background of ancestry possessed by the elite. Among these are some families of foreign origin who because of their prominence and economic contribution can no longer be considered outside the Haitian class structure.

How does a member of Haiti's haute bourgeoisie live? What are
his attitudes and values? The following case study attempts to answer these and related questions: 3

Dr. D., age 34, can be considered the prototype of the Haitian bourgeoisie. He is a light mulatto with finely chiseled features and wavy black hair which makes him look more like a Dominican than an average Haitian. His distinguished French name identifies him as a member of an old family from the aristocratic town of Jeremie in south Haiti. 4 He is a pediatrician with a successful practice for he has close associations with the members of his class, who are the main clients of a pediatrician in Haiti.

Dr. D. lives in a villa in the capital's suburb of Petionville. His neighbors are of the same social background as he. His home is large, comfortable, but not luxurious. It is staffed by many servants. 5

3 All three case studies presented in this chapter are composite case studies approximating the modal type of a member of each class.

4 The town of Jeremie, dominated by wealthy affranchis during the colonial period and geographically isolated from the rest of the country, retains a unique and anachronistic mentality. Social differentiation along color lines imposed by the mulattoes on the non-mulattoes has resulted in an informal color segregation in residential areas and semi-public social activities. These pretensions have occasioned several acts of violence and vengeance in the last two decades. Many of the "aristocratic" Jeremiens have moved to Port-au-Prince where they have a tendency to stick together.

5 In Haiti few servants are trained and styled like the traditional European domestic. They come from the country, are generally illiterate, and learn to do whatever the mistress of the house teaches them. They are paid what would amount to pocket money, are fed, housed and given hand-me-down clothes. The master assumes other paternalistic responsibilities such as medical care and occasionally bailing out of jail. Often servants bring with them their family or their own child-servant so that the master of a family of five might have six persons in the servant quarters whom he can call upon for service.
Rooms are sparsely furnished with locally made mahogany furniture but there are a great number of chairs and armchairs in the veranda-living room needed for the large family gatherings. There are many plants around the house, a few knickknacks picked up on foreign travels, and an outstanding original painting by a primitive Haitian artist, a concession to the social revolution of 1946 and a safe investment in view of the growing world recognition given to Haitian painting. There are few books around the house although Dr. D. has a fairly extensive medical library in his office. The family subscribes to French magazines such as *Paris-Match* and the literary journal *L'Esprit*, and Mrs. D. reads *Vogue*.

Every morning Dr. D. drives his new car the nine miles which separates the cool hills of Petionville from his office in downtown Port-au-Prince. His car is washed every morning by the yard boy and is always immaculate. He drops his two young sons at the St. Louis de Gonzague school, the most exclusive and best private Catholic school in the country. He also drops his wife at the Ethiopian embassy where she is a private secretary to the ambassador. Dr. D. himself is an alumnus of St. Louis de Gonzague. After graduating, he pursued his medical studies in France and later did internship in French Canada and the United States. His wife, who is of part-German extraction, is white in all appearances and comes from a family which owned a hotel and an import-export firm. She has been exposed to cosmopolitan influences since her childhood. She is equally fluent in Spanish and English, had a Catholic convent education in
Haiti, and studied secretarial work for six months in Jamaica prior to her early marriage. She is younger than her husband and has known him all her life since both families were closely allied through distant kinship ties. Her widowed mother now lives with them.

About half of the siblings of Dr. and Mrs. D. live abroad as expatriates or exiles. Many of their friends have also left the country and the D.'s assume that they might have to leave too if the political situation deteriorates further. However, Dr. D.'s experiences as a student in France and North America on an insufficient budget, away from his kin and friends, exposed to a harsh climate, and some mild forms of discrimination, do not make him relish the idea of leaving Haiti. So he is very careful not to become involved in politics and makes it his business to keep amicable relations with some high government officials who are of lower social status. As a physician, he has opportunities to render gratuitous services to people who could protect him in case of political persecution.

Nearly every evening there are many cars parked in front of the home of Dr. and Mrs. D. They entertain often in an informal way. The majority of their friends are close relatives, distant relatives, and old family friends. On more formal occasions, such as the birthday of one of their sons, they serve only imported whiskey instead of the excellent local rum. The women, somewhat overdressed, tend to group themselves in the drawing room, while the men gather on the veranda. Children are left to shift for themselves and create their own amusements under the watchful eye of a nursemaid.
Persons like Mrs. D. resent this old custom of division of the sexes at parties and find the conversation of men far more interesting than that of women. French is the language spoken at such gatherings with an occasional sentence in creole, such as repeating a joke heard from a market woman.

The combined income of the family should be around $7,000 a year although Mrs. D. spends her salary as part-time secretary on her clothes, non-essentials for the children, and is trying to save for a vacation abroad. As the political and economic situation of the country worsens, the income of Dr. D. diminishes, and he has greater difficulty in collecting his fees. Their debts as well as their savings are negligible. They have titles to land they have inherited somewhere (they do not know exactly themselves) in the southern peninsula, cultivated by tenant farmers whom they have not seen for over ten years. They consider the land lost to the tenants and feel rather indifferent about it. If oil or something valuable were found on it, then they would be the first to claim their rights.

For leisure they occasionally go to one of the tourist beaches or to the private beach house of one of their friends. On such occasions there are as many as thirty close friends and their children gathered together. During the Christmas holiday, which is the most active social season, Dr. and Mrs. D. go out with a small group of friends to various public places, semi-private dances, and the exclusive Cercle Bellevue club of which they are members. They patronize Cabanne Choucoune, the most famous nightclub, popular with the
bourgeoisie and foreign colony, and not *Djoumballa*, an equally expensive club, patronized by the middle class and government people—although Dr. D. might have gone there a few times as a stag. In the summer, they often visit the nearby mountain resort of Kenscoff, for which they have a special wardrobe such as Tyrolean hats, Italian sweaters, and walking canes. During August, they rent a bungalow there for one month and Mrs. D. goes up with the children while Dr. D. joins her over the weekend. Many of their friends follow the same pattern and social life is largely similar except that it is transported to a cooler setting with a more bucolic atmosphere. During the period Dr. D. often sleeps in his office instead of going home. Perhaps this is the favorable time of the year for a little marital indiscretion for Dr. D. does not maintain a steady mistress which would not be considered *comme il faut* among the top bourgeoisie. His wife is always careful to pick up plain looking female servants for the house and have them report on each other, and his receptionist-nurse is a close relative. Mrs. D. has a resigned gallic attitude to this: "Men will be men," she says. "As long as propriety is maintained and the family's unity is not threatened, an occasional fling is good for their nerves."

Dr. D. and his wife consider themselves liberal Catholics, that is, they go to church fairly regularly but have rather anti-clerical views and resent the colonial attitude of some of the French clergy. They consider the ban on birth control nonsense. They know little about vodou which they dismiss as odd superstitions of the mass and are
sensitive about the subject, especially if asked about it when traveling abroad. They feel that vodou has given a bad name to Haiti. How do they feel about the peasants and the new middle class? "Le peuple est bon (the masses are good). They are simple honest folk. If only they could be educated and if the economy of the country could be improved, Haiti would be a paradise. It is these government people, this militant middle class grasping for power with no background, no moral principles, who are poisoning this country." A furtive glance made sure that no servants were listening. "Nowadays you cannot even trust them; they spy for the government; I don't know what they have against the mulattoes."

2. The Middle Class

Students of the Haitian class system have generally neglected the middle class. This is understandable since most studies of that aspect of Haitian society were done prior to the Social Revolution of 1946, generally considered as the date of the emergence of this

---

6Leyburn, The Haitian People, op. cit., for which the field work was done in 1938, is the most comprehensive and scholarly work to date on the Haitian class system. The author emphasizes the caste aspect of the Haitian social structure, identifying the elite and the peasants as the two castes. He dismisses the middle class in one paragraph as "a slightly larger group than the elite that would fit neither category." (p. 10).

John Lobb, "Caste and Class in Haiti" American Journal of Sociology, 46 (1940), pp. 23-34. Mr. Lobb accompanied Leyburn on one of his field trips. He agrees substantially with the latter on the caste aspects of Haitian society but he also forecasts the emergence of a middle class: "With the broadening of educational opportunities, however, it may be anticipated that the cultural barrier will be lowered, and from the merging of the elite 'fringe' and the upper-stratum Noirs there will develop the necessary middle class."

George E. Simpson, "Haiti's Social Structure" American Sociological Review, 6 (1941), pp. 640-649, the field work for which was
class from an embryonic stage into a recognizable stratum. It is difficult to estimate the numerical size of this class for it is still a residual category between the bourgeoisie and the peasant mass. Perhaps four percent is a more than generous estimate. Like the bourgeoisie, this is an urban class, concentrated largely in the capital but more numerous than the latter in the provincial towns. Unlike the bourgeoisie, membership in this class is relatively fluid, with a lack of traditions, of shared class values, of solidarity. Middle class criteria are education, the mastery of French, non-manual occupation, and moderate income allowing a style of life above that of the masses. Family prestige and color play a secondary role to material wealth as a status giver. However, this class is generally of mixed blood even though the negroid strain predominates. "Brown" is a fair designation for the majority in the middle class, with some being darker and others lighter.

The most prominent members of this class are the "black bureaucrats" currently in political favor: top government officials, government employees, military officers, etc. Since the man behind the title is very interchangeable in Haitian politics, this impermanency prevents individuals in this class from achieving status
done before 1939, treats Haitian society more realistically as a closed class system instead of a caste. The author acknowledges the presence of "a diminutive middle class...considerably smaller than the elite...relatively unimportant in the life of the nation." (p. 642).
stability. As a result, this class is socially insecure, self-conscious, sensitive and suspicious. It is the most overtly color conscious. Members of the middle class have a latent inferiority complex towards the bourgeoisie, resent them and accuse them of color discrimination which they consider the sole factor preventing them from enjoying elite status. Duvalier was the candidate of this class and exploited this feeling successfully. 7

In the lower echelons of the middle class one finds shopkeepers, school teachers, lesser government employees, clerks, and those skilled artisans who are owners of their establishments.

More than half of the members of the middle class are salaried, and are directly or indirectly dependent on the government for their occupational security. Family income ranges from 500 to 2,000 dollars a year. Some own a small car at a great strain on their budget. They generally live beyond their means and are often in debt. This class recognizes education as the best avenue of social mobility and strive to give their children a maximum education. The majority of the students at the University of Haiti come from this class. Religiously they are Catholics, and the women of that class seem to be the main supporter of the church. They are more flexible than the bourgeoisie in their marriage customs but normally marry within

7 Duvalier is partly responsible for reviving class warfare along color lines. For an evaluation of his ideas on the subject see: Lorimer Denis, Francois Duvalier, Le Probleme des Classes a Travers l'Histoire d'Haiti (Port-au-Prince: Les Griots, 1958, 2d edition).
their strata in legal unions.

The following case study is illustrative of this particular stratum.

Mr. M., age 40, can be considered a fairly typical representative of the upper echelon of the middle class who is being favored by the current political regime largely because of his governmental position. While not openly active in politics, he plays the game astutely in order to stay in the good grace of the present regime and not be the victim of revenge by the opposition should the present government fall. His origin is provincial. He was born in a small town of a few thousand inhabitants in the Artibonite Valley. His father, a mulatto, who came from an impoverished Port-au-Prince family, was the school teacher in this town. His mother was the daughter of a black peasant-proprietor who possessed large land holdings, had his children educated and gave generous dowries to his daughters. At an early age Mr. M. was sent to Port-au-Prince for his education where his parents eventually acquired property. He is dark but of mixed blood, dresses well, always in formal dark suit and tie, has good manners and education and holds a law degree. He occupies a responsible position in the Department of Justice which is somewhat politically involved but leaves him enough free time to be a part-time professor in a private secondary school and supervise the small store he owns near his home. His wife, who is a little lighter than he, was the daughter of a printer. She has a high school education, is primarily a housewife but tends the store
part-time. Mr. M. drives a little European car bought second hand which is his pride and joy. In some involved way, he manages to charge the upkeep of the car to his office. He owns his house which is modest and is situated in a fair neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. They have two servants whom they treat rather harshly. The house is kept in a rather slovenly fashion and is decorated with "imported" dime store knickknacks which, they feel, are more prestigious than hand-carved Haitian handicrafts. Mr. M.'s combined income is approximately $2,500 a year. He is not able to save and is in debt. His government position helps him keep creditors at a distance.

They are Catholics and attend the most socially prestigious church every Sunday. They send their four children to private Catholic schools in the price range they can afford. They hope their son will eventually go to medical school but do not expect him to study abroad unless he is lucky enough to get a full scholarship. They speak French to their children but creole among themselves and with their friends. One can detect by certain vocal inflections that they learned creole before they learned French whereas the French of their children is flawless. Their friends belong to the middle class and some of Mr. M.'s friends are of the nouvelle bourgeoisie. Like most Haitians, the people they entertain in their home are mostly relatives and old family friends who are more than like compadres.®

®The compadre bond in Latin America implies that they are the god parents of each other's children.
Mr. M. also sees regularly his menage (mistress), a practical nurse whom he met when he was hospitalized two years ago. He pays the rent for the little house she shares with her mother. Mr. M. also has friends among the intellectual group and there is nothing he enjoys more than an evening of polemics in history, literature, and inevitably politics. However of late, he tends to avoid this group because their anti-Duvalier stand might compromise his government position. It is highly likely that his intellectual friends avoid him likewise because they distrust his government connections. Once a week Mr. M. takes his family to the drive-in but seldom goes to other public places patronized predominantly by the bourgeoisie.

Both Mr. M. and his wife are color conscious. They feel the "brown" man should be given a chance. Their occasional remarks about the mulatto bourgeoisie reveal much aggression. They might concede to their intimates that they strongly disapprove of the tonton macoutes, that Duvalier is un incapable but that he did give the non-mulatto a chance to advance and that personally the regime has been good to them even though the brother of Mrs. M. involved in an army plot had to flee the country and they are taking care of his children.

What are Mr. M.'s aspirations? They are essentially material:

---

9Haiti's only drive-in is located in the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. Unlike the U.S., it is considered quite "chic" to patronize it because of the novelty and obviously only people with cars—a symbol of relative wealth—can go. The bourgeoisie, the foreign colony and others who have cars, are the patrons.
better home, better car, better salary, and to be able to save because of the insecurity of tomorrow. He is very concerned about his children's future and even envisions the possibility of their having to earn their livelihood out of the country.

3. The Urban Proletariat

The lower stratum of Haitian society is made up of a small urban proletariat (6%) and a large rural peasantry (88%). Together they form the great underprivileged mass of Haitian society.

The urban proletariat which did not exist as a class a few decades ago, is largely concentrated in Port-au-Prince and to a lesser degree in the nine coastal towns, representing about 50 percent of the urban population. The towns of the interior, while classified as urban because of the size of their population, are oriented towards rural life and have a peasant rather than urban proletariat. The proletarian class originated with and is composed of peasants migrating from the back country in search of employment and a better life. Migration has increased considerably during the past five years, especially to the capital. While there are no census figures available, the growing favela type slums surrounding all the coastal towns and especially Port-au-Prince attest to this fact. In most cases, the peasant's hope for a better life results merely in exchanging one misery for another. A few manage to find employment. For this reason, the proletariat can be sub-divided

---

into an upper and lower strata. The majority fall into the lower stratum. These are the unemployed or sporadically employed who are forced to depend on relatives or ingenuity to meet their daily subsistence needs. Poverty among this group is endemic and worse than it is in the countryside. They constitute the hordes of shoe shiners, peddlers, beggars, *brouetteurs* (streetporters), and dock laborers working for thirty cents a day when a ship comes in.

The upper stratum of the proletariat consists of the more regularly employed semi-skilled artisans, truck drivers, market women, household servants, lottery ticket vendors, a few factory workers, in other words the bulk of the urban labor force. Labor and communist movements have begun to organize this class and the Duvalier government recruits its militia, the dreaded *tonton macoutes*, from its ranks. Political activities of whatever leaning are undoubtedly helping to transform a loose aggregate of rural migrants into a proletariat with its own aspirations. Through education and political participation, some ambitious elements of this stratum are achieving mobility into the lower ranks of the middle class.

While their level of living and literacy rate is higher, the proletariat has retained in other respects their peasant characteristics, namely manual occupation, common-law marriage, vodou beliefs, etc. Their language is creole and their racial characteristic is that of the peasant.

The following case study is representative of a member of the
urban proletariat:

Emmanuel age 28, drives a taxi in Port-au-Prince to which occupation he acceded after being an aide to an apprentice mechanic for many years. He is black, has regular features and wears a mustache. He is short, slim, exuberant, dresses rather loudly and always wears a straw hat cocked on one eye. He expresses himself in colorful creole but never in French although he understands the language fairly well, having been in public school long enough to be able to read and write a little. He never reads the papers, which are all written in literary French, and is intent on learning English, for he hopes to make more money eventually by acting as a chauffeur-guide for tourists. He was born in the boisterous and populous Belair neighborhood where he still lives. Both his parents were born in Jacmel and migrated to the capital as young adults. His parents died recently and he takes care of two small sisters who live with him, his common-law wife and their four children and one other child his wife had by a former placage. The little house they rent for $10 a month is of cement but dilapidated and very crowded. The nine of them share one double bed and a floor matress. They have no running water but have "cumberland" electricity, i.e., electricity stolen from someone else's line.\footnote{The creole word cumberland refers to an extensive practice in Port-au-Prince and suburbs of filching electricity from the American-owned electrical company which charges one of the highest rates in the world. The company estimates that it loses up to 50 percent of its electricity by such practices. To recuperate on their losses, they...} His children and his sisters go to an overcrowded...
neighborhood public school. His wife does not work although she does a little embroidery which she sells to a small handicraft export firm. Her brother is a *tonton macoute* who lives next door and occasionally donates food stuff, stolen from hospital supplies. Emmanuel was thinking seriously of joining the *macoutes* but is hesitant because of the low esteem they have among his cronies. However, if the economic situation worsens he might join with the hope of thus obtaining a better chauffeur job. His average monthly income is around $30 but it is getting lower all the time as the tax on gasoline goes up and competition is getting fiercer as more and more private cars turn into part-time cabs. He is three months behind on his rent, owes money he borrowed from acquaintances at high interest rates, is being dunned for an old garage bill. Every week he buys a lottery ticket in the hope of winning and clearing all his obligations and making a fresh start. He does not spend much time at home, for his days are getting longer as he tries to average a minimum one dollar a day profit from his fares. Sometimes he leaves his house at five a. m. only to return at ten p. m. Although of a jovial nature, he is getting increasingly short-tempered as the maintenance of streets worsens and an increasing number of passengers are harassing him to resort to blackout periods during the peak hours of the evening. Cumberland methods range from the crude attachment of a wire on a line, which causes many accidents, to sophisticated "fixing" of electrical meters. The devices used are ingenious and it is reported that Haitian electricians have actually invented several new methods of fixing a meter not known elsewhere. The name *cumberland* supposedly derives from an American who lived in Haiti.
ride at cut-rate or for free. Even though everybody pays the same
fare, he has a tendency to treat his passengers according to the social
class to which they belong. A foreigner, a bourgeois or a bureaucrat
will get more courteous treatment than market women. He might squeeze
as many as five of the latter and their bundles in the back seat and
shut them up in no uncertain terms if they protest. His attitudes
towards other classes are difficult to assess since he is not the
most articulate person. He feels vaguely that there is an injustice
somewhere along the line which results in his working so hard and
finding himself deeper into debt every month while some privileged
persons ride around leisurely in their own cars. However, he says
"there are plenty of people in the same boat with me and there are
so many Haitians who are worse off than I am." He is somewhat intimi-
dated by more privileged people and feels that their education and
importance entitle them to a higher station in life. However, he
is contemptuous of peasants and calls them derisively *moune morne*\(^12\)
and finds them stupid.

His leisure activities consist of his neighborhood carnival club,
and he participates actively in their parades during the January to
Lent carnival season. He is an ardent fan during the football season.
The use of his taxi when off duty gives him a special status with the
women of his class and the means to go to more secluded places in
the outskirts of town to conduct his amorous affairs. They

\(^{12}\)Literally: *mountain people* = *country bumpkin.*
inevitably cost him a substantial part of his small salary or he has
to drive his paramours free for an indefinite period of time. He
gives $10 a month to his wife for the household expense, puts $10
aside for the rent and tries to cover his own expense on $10 a month
but never makes it.

Like every Haitian he says he is a Catholic, although he and his
family seldom go to church. He attends occasionally the more colorful
vodou rituals such as the erotic Guede\textsuperscript{13} ceremonies, but for his
amusement rather than beliefs. He seems rather disinterested in his
family and children. "Everybody has a family and children, like
everybody eats and sleeps," he says. What are his aspirations? Again
they are difficult to evaluate. His main preoccupation is with trying
to make a better living. He expressed an interest in cigarette contra-
band, he is curious about the outside world, could he possibly drive
a cab in Nassau or maybe even New York? He has heard glowing reports.
But he doesn't even know how to go about it and for the time being
his energies are consumed by the task of getting along from day to
day. While he acknowledges that the general political and economic
situation in Haiti is worse today than he has ever known it, he keeps
his political beliefs to himself and avoids passing remarks on the

\textsuperscript{13}In the guede cult--cult of the dead--which takes place during
the week of All Saints Day, death is associated in some obscure way
with reproduction. These ceremonies as practiced in the slums of Port-
au-Prince have become lewd spectacles where participants possessed by
guede gods dance suggestively and sing obscenities notorious for their
crudity and cleverness. These ceremonies attract a considerable num-
ber of spectators from all walks of life.
current regime especially in his neighborhood. He feels that no one is to be trusted and everyone is out for himself. He quotes the Haitian proverb: "Depuis nan Guinee neg trahe neg." 14

4. The Peasants

At the very bottom of the social pyramid are the three and one third million peasants. No more than five percent of them could be considered relatively comfortable and merit the title of gros neg or gros habitant (creole expressions for a rural power wielder). These more important peasant-proprietors have earned their status by the size of their holdings, leadership and intelligence. Some writers 15 classify them as a rural middle class, but while their station in life is better than the other peasants, they are nevertheless peasants and identify with the rural mass much more than they do with the urban middle class. They often wield tremendous power over a large number of peasants and some exploit, in a feudal manner, the retinue of laborers and country servants at their service. However, their status is regional and has no bearing outside its boundaries. This class has little cash income and a simple standard of living with none of the conveniences of modern life such as electricity and plumbing. A great gulf separates their style of life from that of an urban dweller of comparable wealth. Politically it is a courted group for they control block voting in rural areas. However, their political

14 Translation: Ever since Africa, Negroes have betrayed each other.

15 Notably Schaedel, op. cit., p. 17.
rewards are largely intangible, consisting of favors and promises. The education of this class ranges from complete illiteracy to a few years of rural schooling. A small proportion understand French and even fewer speak a broken variety of creolized French. Recently, however, many have been sending their children to study in the capital. The more ambitious and intelligent of these never return and therefore are a primary source of recruitment for the new urban middle class.

The other peasants represent 83 percent of the Haitian population. It is ironical that in spite of their incredibly low standard of living, their complete lack of political power, and total illiteracy, they are, nevertheless, responsible for the existence of Haiti. Their ancestors did the fighting which threw off the yoke of slavery; they have created the creole language, the rich folklore, folk religion, and picturesque culture for which Haiti is best known to the world. They provide almost exclusively the export crops on which the nation's economy is completely dependent. If the other 17 percent of the population disappeared, the peasant would still be self-sufficient for he consumes little that he does not produce himself, whereas should the peasant mass disappear, Haiti would disappear with it.

In this bottom stratum, the process of de-africanization is the least manifest. The caucasian strain is slight and the vast majority of peasants approximate the pure negroid racial type. His technology has not evolved much beyond that of his African ancestors. His exclusive language is creole. French, the official language, is a
foreign tongue to him. Lack of schooling and cultural isolation leave him on the one hand with the most naive conception of the outer-world, and yet, in other ways, he displays remarkable ingenuity and common sense. He worships his vodou gods. It is only in the localities of active missions that elements of Catholicism have modified animistic vodou beliefs. His marriage ties are of the common-law type (placage) and polygamy is common. His family is large and the peasant population is increasing while the land is yielding less. The average cash income derived from selling his produce is under one hundred dollars a year per family.

In general the life chances of the Haitian peasant are very limited. Nothing is done for him and there is little he can do to improve his lot. The peasant, much to the advantage of the more privileged population, accepts his plight fatalistically and is waiting patiently for his revolution.  

C. Class Differentiation

In Haiti the basis for class differentiation is set by the elite. Some of the more important criteria used to rank people socially are:
(1) family prestige and background; (2) color; (3) wealth and style of life; (4) education, including formal and home education and the ability to speak French; (5) occupation. It is difficult to determine

16A case study illustrating the peasant class was attempted in several instances but the project was abandoned for lack of adequate communication on an intimate level with members of that class.
precisely which of these is the most important, for they are closely
interrelated. It can be pointed out, though, that family background,
color and, to a certain extent, wealth, are ascribed statuses whereas
education and occupation are achieved.

Family Prestige and Background: Social status in Haiti is not
determined primarily by economic criteria such as wealth and occu-
pation, for family prestige and background commands respect in the
Haitian ranking system. This old tradition has noticeably weakened
since the Social Revolution of 1945, and is truer of provincial towns
where the background of a family is known to the entire population.
Many of these families have now moved to the capital where their
prestigious names have meaning only to the top stratum or to their
own intimate circle. Thus today one hear the name R... referred to
as an aristocratic family of Jeremie, the name D... as descendant of
the Christophian nobility of Cap Haitien, the name V... as an old
family of Jacmel, or other names are simply referred to as well
established Haitian families. These families also have poorer
branches and illegitimate branches which are often darker. More
ambitious members of the latter could count on their name to help
them get ahead. However, inheriting a prestigious name by itself is
not enough to secure high status. With it is expected the restraint
of noblesse oblige, respecting conventions as well as the contribution
of distinguished services to the community. In the past there were
many more families of this type than exist today. Some have vanished,
others have become declasse', others have left the country.
Color: The question of color is a very explosive one in Haiti today. Color is a badge which has become a stereotype. A light color has always been and still is an outward symbol of upper class membership, whereas black implies lowly origin. It is not color per se which distinguishes the mulatto elite from the mass; it is all their privileges of which color became the symbol. Color attitudes have their roots in the earliest days of the colony and since then have flared up chronically as a political issue. Today it is the most effective political weapon of the black bureaucrats against the mulatto bourgeoisie. All the ills of the nation are blamed on the mulatto and his color prejudice. It has become a convenient scapegoat on which to peg all the failures of the current regime. The most rabid, including Duvalier, want the elimination, if not physically, at least socially, of the mulatto class. The bourgeoisie is not altogether without blame. They are reaping today the accumulated resentment of generations of color snobbery, arrogant clanishness and paternalism. Notwithstanding the current trend, a light skin still remains a badge of prestige for the vast majority of Haitians.\(^\text{17}\) The most outspoken black bureaucrats have wives considerably lighter than themselves. A light-skinned peasant provided with education could effectively use his color for social advancement. Among the mulatto

\(^{17}\)During the troubled period of May, 1963, all cars were periodically stopped and searched except the cars of foreign diplomats. At one time the Ambassador of Liberia was stopped in his car. The chauffeur yelled: "ambassador!" The sentry looked in the car and said: "I don't see an ambassador."
elite color endogamy remains the rule. However, color alone is not sufficient to assure high social status even when combined with wealth. The bourgeoisie does not accept automatically as their equal a person whose light color comes from a mesalliance with a foreigner, whereas a few dark elite families have always existed.

Wealth and Style of Life: While there is a great disparity between the poor and the rich in Haiti, no one is extravagantly rich as in some other underdeveloped Latin American countries. Until the American occupation everyone lived simply in Haiti. Among the more privileged, there were no great material ambitions and the French tradition discouraging ostentation was observed. Ever since the American occupation economic and political ties to the United States have become closer with consequent North American influence on patterns of consumption. With the Social Revolution of 1946 the nouveau riche appeared on the scene and one can say today that the desire for material achievement and ostentation is much stronger than it was in the past. Naturally in Haiti only a small fraction of the population can afford such consumption but it has set a dangerous pattern of envy and emulation. Economists call this the "demonstration effect."

While the old bourgeoisie frowns upon conspicuous consumption, the

---

18 This writer has heard insidious remarks about the foreign mothers of wealthy Haitians whose mediocre social background was well-known. One was referred to as an ex "planteuse de pomme de terre," another as an ex "cocotte de boulevard." The expression "mulatre de cuisine" was used to describe a person whose father was a Syrian merchant and whose mother had been his servant.
new bourgeoisie, the middle class and even the proletariat are impressed by material display. Showy villas, flashy cars, foreign gadgets and other symbols of "arriving" are in great demand and naturally cause a drain on the foreign reserves of an economy which is so poor. Most of the people who indulge in this style of life live beyond their means.

Education: In Haiti education implies two distinctive things. The word "education" means home education, manners, moral training, good breeding, a sense of social obligation. Most writers on Haiti have commented about the politeness of the Haitian people. The importance of civilities is shared by all classes. To say that someone is mal élevé (badly brought up, impolite) is a gross insult to any Haitian. Education, as we understand it, is called "instruction." Instruction means formal education which is of course the prerogative of only a small proportion of the population and is expected only of the middle and upper-class. Good "instruction" which is an achieved status is especially stressed by the middle class. Most intellectuals in Haitian society are of the upper middle class. Members of the bourgeoisie who lack a solid "instruction" can camouflage it by displaying savoir faire and sophistication acquired by travels and greater contact with foreigners. One original aspect of the criteria of education in Haiti is the question of language. The vernacular creole is spoken by everyone whereas only the middle and upper classes speak French. The elite learn creole from their nursemaids, servants, and in their daily dealings with the peasants at the market, and use
it among themselves in their intimacy, for creole is especially effective in expressing spontaneous feelings and humor. Although creole is a language in its own right, the elite has a tendency to regard it as a distortion of French. They go to great pains to make sure that their children master "good" French before they inevitably learn the creole vernacular. The middle class, more nationalist in orientation, accepts creole as the language of Haiti and uses it more extensively. However, knowing that good French is the sign of a well educated person, they tend to imitate the pattern of the bourgeoisie in speaking to their children in French. It is comparatively easy for an educated Haitian to detect the social origin of someone by his speech. Quoting an informant: "A person just needs to open his mouth and I know who they are and where they come from after the first sentence." The informant meant both geographical and social origin. Thus there are several linguistic variations from pure French to a broken creolized French and from picturesque country creole to slick city creole to the gallicized creole of the bourgeoisie. As Lowie stated, referring to consciousness of kind: "Minor difference in pronunciation create sociological cleavage." Haitian culture clearly defines the social situations when one is expected to use French and those when one is to use creole. In general French is used in formal and creole in informal situations. It would be an

---

insult to address a university class in creole, it would be gauche
to use creole in a fashionable shop whereas it would be pretentious
to address a cab driver in French, and awkward to engage in small
talk with one's peers in French. Thus the creole-French dichotomy
becomes a sociologically significant criteria of class differentiation
in Haiti.

**Occupation:** Haiti shares the Latin American tradition which views
work as a necessary evil, and the "good life" and social activities are
considered more important than are productive activities. Glorification
of work, so much a part of the North American "Protestant ethic"
is notably absent with the result that work does not have the dignity
and status-giving power that it has in the United States. Occupational
status is essentially determined by whether the occupation is manual
or non-manual. With respect to non-manual occupations, the tra-
ditional genteel professions of medicine, law, and intellectual pur-
suits enjoy high status. However, in recent years the status of
lawyers has diminished for the field is overcrowded and there are
all types of lawyers from the prestigious *notaire* to the petty
operator who foments disputes in search of lawsuits. To the contrary,
the engineer-architect has acquired in recent years a higher status
for in Haiti he has become a wealthy real-estate and contractor

---

20An attempt was made to measure occupational prestige with a
North-Hatt scale adapted for Haiti. The results proved unsatisfac-
tory. Probably because labor division is still rudimentary in Haiti,
respondents failed to perceive nuances between various occupations.
The disproportional amount of "don't know" answers led to the abandon-
ment of the project.
entrepreneur employing many workers. Proprietors of business firms have prestige commensurate to the size and the number of years the firm has been in existence. The intellectual in Haitian society has a relatively high status out of keeping with his low income. Again this is an expression of Latin culture which differs from North America, and is also the result of the educational system which stresses philosophical speculation over applied sciences. The masses also seem to give high regard to the man of learning. A chapel aide is respectfully called pasteur; an elementary school teacher is called maitre; young people who can scarcely read walk around carrying a book; and there is a brisk market for inexpensive fake glasses, since both books and glasses are considered symbols of intellectuality.

Another noteworthy facet of the Haitian occupational system is the multi-occupational activities of people of prestige, making it hard to decide from which occupation they derive their status. For instance, a doctor might own a clinic and a hotel; a banker might have a real estate firm; a lawyer is also a professor; a government official is also a newspaper editor, and so on.

Government administrative positions have ambiguous status. Occupants of these positions generally do not last longer than the current regime. Those who outlast several regimes generally acquire status not only because of their tenure but their ability to weather political fluctuations. Today administrative, army, and official positions are associated with the new middle class.

All manual occupations have a low status although the degree of
skill, creative imagination and cleanliness of job makes a difference. Thus a cabinet worker will have a higher status than a truck driver; a hairdresser or a musician will have a higher status than a house painter. However, the element of entrepreneurship plays a part. Those who work for themselves and employ other people have a relatively higher status in spite of manual activities. There is a great difference between the free-lance musician and the one that plays in his own night club. The young woman who studied hairstyling abroad and employs several assistants in her own parlor is in a different category from the girl who straightens hair in a stall near the market. The lowest occupations are the dirtiest and the least skilled such as shoeshiners and porters. In fact it is considered undignified for anyone in Haiti to be seen carrying things. \(^{21}\) There are men in Haiti who have never worked and who do not have lower status because of it, as they undoubtedly would in the United States.

D. Social Mobility

A class system such as exists in Haiti provides few opportunities for social mobility. However, no society is completely static and there are always some elements who manage to improve their social status. In non-industrial societies including Haiti, the more desirable economic and social positions do not expand to provide room for newcomers. In fact, there is no room at the top and to get there

\(^{21}\)Haitians are amused to see foreigners carry their own groceries.
someone else must be displaced. The limitation of this type of mobility results in the fiercest competition for power. Thus a person of obscure background who manages to complete his education and obtain a law degree will use every means at his disposal to enter public administration as a stepping stone to the political arena. If he is successful in obtaining political power his chances of making his fortune are good, whether by selling his political favors or by plundering the public treasury. Many Haitian fortunes old and new have their origin in politics. Politics are often referred to as the only industry in Haiti. If a person retains political power long enough to feather his nest, so to speak, he is on his way up the social scale. He can "lighten" his children by selective marriage who in turn will enjoy the educational and cultural advantages of the privileged class. They will lead a bourgeois style of life and as the family becomes more firmly established social acceptance will eventually come. Color alone will not assure mobility but will make the steps easier. The young Haitian with the normal ambition to improve his status is discouraged from the start from entering economic activities which might benefit the country, for he is realistic enough to see that they will lead him nowhere. The remunerative professions are monopolized by the bourgeoisie who reserve them for their sons. Business is in the hands of foreigners. Capital is unavailable to start new entrepreneurial ventures; so public administration becomes the only alternative left; therefore the newcomer is obliged to play the political game. Thus the vicious circle
perpetuates itself. Political regimes have top heavy administration to keep their followers happy shuffling papers as the economy of the country stagnates. To be sure, since the Revolution of 1946 when the traditional bourgeois political power was broken, a new middle class has emerged. However, it is a middle class of revolution, not of evolution. It is not a middle class which has emerged as the result of economic development and industrialization and which is closing the gap between the masses and the bourgeoisie. Instead it has only forced the bourgeoisie to share the spoils with them. So the picture remains essentially the same as it has been since colonial times: over ninety percent at the bottom subservient to a few percent at the top.
CHAPTER VI

THE FAMILY

While an analysis of the class system gives us an overall view of the structure of Haitian society, the family can be considered as the basic cell of Haitian social organization. Three general factors characterize the Haitian family. First it is similar to the type of family found generally in Latin America, where Latin European traditions modified by colonial conditions developed a type of family different from that of North America. Secondly, a background of slavery where sexual mores were weak has left its imprint on the Haitian family system. Thirdly, African traditions have had a chance to survive in Haiti more so than in any other place in the New World and are reflected in the Haitian familial institutions.

A. Evolution of the Haitian Family System

During the colonial period, the institution of slavery prevented the growth of stable family traditions. Sexual relations between slaves knew little restraint. Masters used freely their female slaves or cohabited openly with free women of color. In turn, these women of color preferred to be concubines to white planters than marry men of their own class. The lack of interest in legal unions permeated all social classes. An atmosphere of libertinage prevailed. Toward the end of the colonial period when European women were more
numerous, some whites and more prosperous affranchis had established legal families with social ambitions but they represented no more than five percent of the total population.

After independence, Haiti was isolated from the outside world for the greater part of the 19th century. Even the Catholic Church had no recognized priests in Haiti until 1860. The government made a futile attempt to encourage marriage and family customs patterned after European norms by passing laws. However, it was largely left to the people themselves to organize their own family norms. Since 40 percent of the slaves at the time of independence had been born in Africa, it was natural for the newly freed mass to revive some African traditions. This took the form of the institution known as the lacou.

The lacou emerged as a socioeconomic system when the large plantations were broken up and land was distributed to the peasants. The lacou (from the French la cour = courtyard) was a clan of blood relatives living together in a sort of familial hamlet clustered around a central court. This African-like compound was characterized by strong bonds of solidarity, communal working and living under the uncontested authority of an elder. This patriarch, often called the don, his concubines and their descendants representing three to four generations were the members of this self-sufficient socioeconomic unit. They produced their own food, held the land in common, had their own vodou shrine and burial ground. The lacou generally bore the name of the patriarch, who had the last word in any important
decision, was the arbiter of disputes, the guardian of traditions and the spiritual leader. The system inevitably broke down as the lacou grew in population and complexity, forcing some to leave for lack of land, others out of discontent. Today a more flexible type of lacou is still found but in general the system has disintegrated. Nonetheless the lacou system dominated the Haitian rural landscape for nearly a century until the first decade of the 20th century and, as such, has shaped the Haitian rural family of today.

While the lacou system was firmly entrenched in rural Haiti, forming nuclei of family clans throughout the republic, a different development was taking place in the urban area. There resided the gens de couleur who had now become the elite. This class had not lost its European ties and in spite of the absence of a recognized clergy, they patterned their family organization after that of the conventional French Catholic family.

What is the typology of the Haitian family today? Two polar types are discernable. At one extreme we find the family of the bourgeoisie, a family of French cultural orientation, and at the other the family of the peasant mass, a family of African cultural orientation. In the latter, we can include with some reservations, the urban proletarian family, while we can consider the family type of the urban middle class as being more or less of French orientation. It is the family of French orientation representing less than 10 percent of the population which is the official model found in the laws of the republic.
B. Marriage and Sex Patterns

The marriage and sex patterns of Haiti seem rather unconventional by North American standards.\(^1\) It is estimated that 80 percent of the children are born out of wedlock,\(^2\) and that nowhere else in the Western world are there so few legal marriages. Furthermore, a form of polygamy is commonly practiced by the Haitian masses. However, Haiti is not a unique case. Latin America is in a class by itself when it comes to shying away from legal matrimonial ties.\(^3\) This situation does not prevent the Haitian family from being relatively stable, in fact it is the primary institution of Haitian society providing the minimum basic economic, educational, security and affectional needs of the individual.

According to the civil code of Haiti, only monogamous marriages sanctioned either by the church or the state are accepted as legal. Substantially the law remains a dead letter for the vast majority of Haitians. Even the Catholic Church, embarrassed at its ineffectiveness in altering this condition, has been obliged to adopt the prevailing tolerant attitude. Though so-called conventional marriage is considered the only acceptable form for the upper strata, as one descends the social ladder the greater becomes the deviation from the

---

\(^1\)"Sympathetic tolerance for foreign ways has never been an outstanding American characteristic; it is least evident in connection with divergent sexual practices." Leyburn, op. cit., p. 177.


legal norms. Placage becomes the predominant marital pattern.

1. Placage and Polygamy

Placage is a form of consensual or common-law marriage which is the most common type of union in Haiti. It is prevalent among the rural and urban masses but is seldom found in the middle class and rarely in the bourgeoisie. If it occurs in the middle class, it is generally among people who have recently achieved middle class status, and their children are not likely to continue the practice. When it happens in the bourgeoisie it is with women of lower-class who do not enter their social circle and whose status resembles that of the European style "mistress."

Placage is a union whereby a man takes a woman as his sexual partner without legal obligations but with social and moral obligations. Placage implies a certain degree of permanency and is not entered into nor dissolved lightly. The meaning "to settle down" is implied in the word itself. There are different kinds of placages. The first type differs little from a legally sanctioned marriage except that no civil nor church formalities are made. In some cases a formal agreement is made between the families of the betrothed, occasionally sealed by a celebration. A placage of this sort is generally as stable as a

---

4This writer observed a custom in one isolated mountain region which resembles the African bride price trait. Young men when choosing a placee make a payment in cash and goods to the girl's parents who set the price. The payments are made in installments and in advance. One peasant who had two unusually attractive daughters stated that no one will "touch" them for less than 500 gourdes ($100). This practice is not known elsewhere in Haiti as far as this writer could judge, nor mentioned but very indirectly in the literature.
legal marriage. Another type, widely accepted among the masses is polygamous placage. It is estimated that one in four placage is polygamous. In that case one man has several places and may support as many families. Generally one place is favored above the other and is referred to as femme caillé (woman of the house). This seems more of an economic arrangement than a case of sexual prowess. It is also a status symbol among peasants: only the more affluent and larger proprietors or the vodou priests can afford several wives. If a peasant possesses widely scattered holdings, it is more economical to set a place on each one of his plots than hire an outsider. He can trust that the mother of his children will look after his best interests. In rural church registers, it is not uncommon to see a peasant listed as head of four or five families. While polygamous placage is sometimes motivated by libertinage among the urban proletariat it can also be an economic arrangement. For instance, it is more convenient for a provincial truck driver who commutes regularly to Port-au-Prince to set up a second place in the capital instead of boarding. She will do his laundry, run his errands and provide companionship and a home where he can rest and receive his friends.

There is a thin line separating polygamous placage from adultery in the case of legally married men who maintain one or more concubines. While these unions are considered popularly as an extension

of the practice of *placage* they are in reality defined by the law as adulterous. A child born of such a union cannot be recognized by the father and cannot claim any inheritance. These children are commonly referred to as *enfants de la main gauche* (children of the left hand). While the practice is common in urban areas, this type of extra-marital *placage* is the least acceptable socially and the women who enter such an arrangement have a lower standing than other *placees*. The fact that the man is married presupposes he has a higher status than his concubine and the union is not one among equals. A woman who consents to such an insecure union was either the man's concubine prior to his marriage or a woman who preferred to be the "favorite" of a man of prestige than make a poor marriage or become a spinster. The type of extra-marital *placage* can vary from a temporary to a permanent liaison. The man if estranged from his legal wife may cohabit with his concubine, or otherwise only visit her. If there are children, he may provide for them or neglect them. In general this type of relationship can be considered *placage* only in communities where the union is accepted as such, otherwise it should be considered as the Haitian counterpart of the French institution of having a mistress.

The perpetuation of the customs of *placage* and polygamy is due to poverty as well as cultural heritage. Haiti inherited both the traditions of African polygamy and the more subtle French "polygamy," i.e., maintaining a mistress. Social conditions during the colonial period encouraged rather than discouraged these traditions which crystallized into norms after independence for lack of an alternative
model. Excepting a small percentage of the population, Haiti never had a tradition of legal monogamy, whereas free-union and polygamy have always been tolerated. For that reason, there is little incentive for the Haitian masses to break away from a time-honored practice and marry legally. As for the factor of poverty, getting married in church is considered by the Haitian masses more of a luxury than indispensable. Getting married means an elaborate and costly ceremony, new clothes, a house big enough to hold a reception; it means the beginning of a whole new way of life, for church marriage is essentially associated with a higher station in life, otherwise it is considered as a pretentious emulation of the rich. Furthermore, the peasant distrusts signing a legal register which he does not understand for he has been victimized by authorities at many occasions and therefore shies away from legally binding documents. Another factor which encourages *placage* and polygamy is the availability of women. Ever since independence, Haiti has had an excess of women and as long as women consent to non-legal marriages, the practice will continue. Most Haitian women would rather be legally married; it is the men who are hesitant and most women will accept a *placage*, no matter what type, rather than remain single. The institution of *placage* is highly favorable to men. They escape legal obligations and the restrictions of monogamy with no effect on their status. Even when a man is legally married the sexual mores of Haiti condone to a certain extent extra-marital relations and adultery is frowned upon only in the higher circles when it disregards the rules of decorum.
and the wife threatens to make a scandal. In general, the Haitian man with many wives or many mistresses is mildly reproached as a bon coq (good rooster = lover boy) and is not ostracized as a bigamist or an adulterer.

As for the stability of placage, at one end there is monogamous placage entered into semi-formally which is no more unstable than a legal marriage. To discard a placee of many years for no substantial reason is not as easy as one thinks. Social pressure and other forms of social control exercised by the community tend to prevent separation. When placages do break up it is because of the infidelity of a placee or the failure of the man to support her, or by mutual consent. Nonetheless, placage by its very nature encourages male philandering and occasions inter-personal conflicts. The Haitian countryside abounds with scenes of rivalries, jealousies, scandales (commotions) and vodou revenges due to the insecurity of women sharing the same mate. However, women of the Haitian masses have learned to live with the insecurity of placage and polygamy and make an effort to maintain a measure of harmony.

2. Legal Marriages

Legal marriages are practiced by the upper strata of Haitian society or those of the masses who have fallen under the influence of the church, notably Protestants. It is more common among the proletariat than among the peasant masses. While placage tends to foster multi-unions, legal marriages tend to inhibit them in the long run. In placage, there is the general understanding that other women are
tolerated, which is not the case with legal marriages. Legal marriages also foster class endogamy. While males of the privileged class have few compulsions against liaisons with women of lower class, they will draw the line when it comes to marriage. Marriage is considered a family alliance among equals and not a personal pact between two individuals. The marriage contract in Haiti is decidedly in favor of men and prejudicial to women's property rights and freedom of decision. Divorce is relatively easy in Haiti for Haitian citizens at least, and inexpensive by American but not by Haitian standards. While religious beliefs are not internalized enough to act as a deterrent to divorce, many couples who don't get along separate without filing divorce for economic reasons, unless one of the spouses wishes to remarry. There is no special stigma attached to divorce status and many women-divorcees remarry. The problem of infidelity seems to be the fundamental cause of most Haitian divorces.

Very few people live alone in Haiti; therefore, the position of the unmarried adult is an awkward one in Haitian society, for they

---

6 The Social Welfare Institute has been trying under the Duvalier regime to police public morals by forcing people who lived in common-law and by extension people who are often seen together, to get married. These "social welfare weddings" as they are derisively tagged by the population have been sometimes aimed at people of higher status in political disfavor as a means to humiliate them by forcing a mesalliance. The same Institute promulgated a law requiring blood tests before marriage with only three places in the entire Republic where they could be taken, an absurdity in view of the fact that the majority of the marriages are non-legal.

remain a part of an extended household instead of the head of their own home. There are very few bachelors but there are some spinsters, principally in the mulatto bourgeoisie. Malicious comments are made about them such as: "Mademoiselle is too good to marry." As they grow older they often become church pillars and other flippant remarks are made about their frequent visits with the priest.

3. Prostitution

Prostitution is widespread in Haiti and growing at a rapid rate as the economic situation worsens and the migration of rural women to urban centers increases. Prostitution is not illegal in Haiti and it is difficult to determine where prostitution actually begins. Sex is rarely for nothing among the Haitian masses; the women always expect or demand some form of compensation for their sexual favors. Therefore, it is a question of degree between the serial monogamy of the placee who changes her common-law husband frequently, to the woman who grants her sexual favors to several men in exchange of gifts, to the one who makes a more intensive practice of selling her body during hard times and resumes a more normal life when she is not so pressed financially, to the professional prostitute who hustles in the street.

---

8This writer witnessed an amusing scene in a remote rural area where a family council was arbitrating the dispute between two women. Apparently the husband of one woman had an affair with the other woman (who was the wife of his uncle) and had refused to give her a present. She then took the towel he had around his neck as her compensation. The towel belonged to his wife and the two women were disputing the ownership of the towel in front of the whole extended family including the cuckolded uncle. It was suggested that the towel be cut in two but both women refused.
or is the inmate of a bordello.

Some form of organized prostitution has probably always existed in Haiti but increased during the American occupation and subsequently with the coming of more foreigners and tourists. Organized prostitution has spread to the small towns of Haiti and even villages are known to have their "marked" women. Generally the prostitutes of provincial Haiti are not natives of the region and are purposely interchanged from one area to another. In small towns where no boarding houses are available, it is customary for travelers who are strangers to the region to stay in the bouzin\(^9\) district. In Port-au-Prince, the suburb of Carrefour is the red light district par excellence, with tie-ins to international prostitution rings in which the present regime seems involved. Most of the higher-priced prostitutes are foreigners from Latin America and are referred to as Dominicans. However today Dominican prostitutes are few since Trujillo a few years ago, incensed at the idea of his compatriots prostituting themselves in a Negro country, ordered the revocation of their passports forcing their repatriation. They have been replaced by women from Colombia, Panama and other Latin American countries. They are periodically replaced by fresh arrivals. The highway which crosses Carrefour is nicknamed the "frontier" for on one side are the more expensive brothels staffed mostly with foreign prostitutes and

\(^9\)Bouzin = creole for whore. The terms arona and jeunesse are also used. The latter meaning literally "youth" implies a slut on her way to becoming a prostitute.
on the other side are the Haitian bordellos ranging from medium priced inmates to low-priced free lancers catering to the masses. While men of all walks of life are the patrons, currently the bulk of the clientele are government and army officials, foreign sailors when a ship is in port, and young men of the bourgeoisie and middle class who do not have access to the protected girls of their class and have their sexual adventures with prostitutes when not with house servants or older married women. Recently the price of prostitutes has decreased for the profession is getting over-crowded and moneyed customers are scarce. Some have instituted a credit system with their steady clients.

C. The Role and Status of Women

While considered inferior by law and customs, the Haitian woman plays an important social and economic role in the Haitian family and community, and her status is higher than one would normally assume. Generally her status is the best in the lower classes and recently among certain elements of the upper bourgeoisie who through higher education and employment have become emancipated. The status of women is the lowest in the conservative bourgeoisie, in the middle class and upper proletariat. When compared to the rest of Latin America, the status of Haitian women is quite high and women enjoy a considerably wider range of freedom in "archaic" Haiti than in "progressive" Puerto Rico, for example. It was not always the case. A half a century ago peasant women were whipped by their spouses for disobedience, for
criticizing their philandering or because their meals were not ready; at the same time the elite women were cloistered with their children and servants, and their universe did not go far beyond their own threshold. It is possible that the American occupation has played a role in improving the status of women, at least in the more privileged class, but the peasant woman and the woman of the urban proletariat largely emancipated themselves through their important economic role. The peasant woman participates actively in the economic life or her family. Not only does she run the home and give a hand in the fields, she also acts as the treasurer of the family. Like her ancestor, the Guinea Coast market woman, she sells the product of the land and does the buying for the family. Her constant trips to the markets, sometimes far distant, her high degree of interaction makes her much more evolved (evolved = worldly) than the males of her family. Hence she is more independent although she does not contest the authority of the male head of the household. Nonetheless, her important economic role has established a latent but effective egalitarianism in rural Haitian families. Likewise, the proletarian woman engaged in petty retailing for which she has a remarkable aptitude is among the most aggressive elements of Haitian society. Often she is the head of her family and while she might share her household with a series of more or less temporary common-law spouses, should the

---

man leave she remains the only permanent provider and authority figure for the children.

In the remaining classes, traditional attitudes still linger on, especially in the provincial towns. There are mores which guide the behavior of women but which don't apply to men. Work and recreational activities are divided more strictly along sex lines. The woman's role is restricted largely to that of mother and housewife. Double standards of sex are more rigid with the leftover of machismo and the accompanying virginity complex. The father is a more dominant figure; a daughter will seldom marry against the will of her father. There are anachronisms of chaperonage and old-fashioned chivalry, do's and don'ts, for instance women often eat separately from the men by force of tradition.  

However these traditions are gradually changing and the general attitude to the changing role and status of women is not inflexible. Women have the suffrage and participate increasingly in civic affairs but they still have a long way to go before they attain the status and freedom of North American women.

11Among the provincial bourgeoisie, the middle class and the lower class, women do not customarily eat with men. This writer has asked many times his hostesses why they would not sit down and eat with the men and their guest. The answers were always the same: "There is no reason not to, it isn't really a rule, it is simply that I am too busy supervising the servants to see that everything is served right and I prefer to eat after with the children when all is done."
D. Children and Socialization

1. Illegitimacy

The vast majority of Haitian children are born out of wedlock without being necessarily victimized by their status as natural children, for no special stigma is attached to illegitimacy. Of course a legitimate child has a higher status. Natural children are of two types. First are those recognized by their father, who will bear his name and consequently enjoy the same legal rights as legitimate children. In many cases illegitimate status is only a matter of official record not necessarily known by others outside the primary group. The second type is a natural child not recognized by his father because he is already married or refuses to claim the child as his own. Legally the child is adulterine, called popularly enfant en dehors (outside child) and takes the name of his mother although many take their father's name if the latter has recognized them affectively. Cases are fairly common in the lower classes of women giving birth to children who are the fruits of temporary liaisons or promiscuous behavior and the child vaguely or never knows his father. These women might have under the same roof several children of different fathers plus a common-law husband with his own progeny, thus the make-up of their household is quite heterogeneous. Children are seldom abandoned by both father and mother although recently in Port-au-Prince

---

12 An old military leader who has been stationed throughout the country boasted to this writer of having fathered about 70 children.
the Public Hospital was decrying the fact that they had over 200 children abandoned by mothers who after delivery escaped the hospital leaving their newly-born behind. However, this is a comparatively new phenomenon due in no small part to the wretched poverty of the capital's slums and the higher degree of anonymity present in the city. Adoption has never been formally acknowledged in Haitian laws for unknown reasons, but the practice is not discouraged and takes place informally. Adoptions generally occur between members of an extended or closely allied families including god children. When it occurs across class lines such as a member of the elite adopting a peasant child, the adopting parents may be victims of blackmail. At several occasions the natural parents have waited for the adopting parents to become emotionally attached to the child and then extracted money from them by threatening to withdraw the child.

Widespread illegitimacy in Haiti can be understood in the light of several factors. First is the absence of rigid legal monogamous standards, and the laxity of the sexual mores. Another reason is the ignorance by the great majority of the female population of the most rudimentary form of birth control, and the indifference of the male to the possibility of conception. Lastly children are easily taken care of in Haitian society and an additional child in an extended household does not represent new responsibilities or new hardships. Of course the long range consequences of this state of affairs is an accelerated population growth in an already overpopulated area and the burden of hardship falls disproportionately on the female population:
As long as the Haitian man can beget children here and there without fear of sanction, without taking the entire responsibility, as long as he can share his favors with several concubines, the Haitian woman will remain a slave forced to toil painfully for the maintenance of her children and expose herself through poverty to the lowest depth of degradation. 13

2. Socialization

Few people in Haiti rationalize on the desirability or non-desirability of having children. Children come and are accepted as part of the natural laws of life. Nonetheless, children are considered an economic asset, a security for old age, and a source of pride. In all strata of Haitian society children are brought up very strictly. Respect and obedience are stressed. Punishments are harsh and corporal chastisement frequent. The child is included in many adult activities but taught not to disturb adults, to be seen but not to be heard. By American middle class standards, however, the Haitian child is somewhat casually taken for granted in the sense that he is not the center of attention once he outgrows the "cute" stage nor the cause of burdensome sacrifices. Excluding the mother, the presence of children does not change greatly the life of the other members of the family and certainly not that of the father. Responsibilities are shared by the usually large household including aunts, older siblings, grandparents or servants.

13 Bouchereau, op. cit., p. 237.
Socialization Among the Peasants

The woman of the masses goes about her daily chores up to the last days of pregnancy and occasionally gives birth outside her home, on the road or at the market. In any cases parturition occurs in generally unsanitary conditions. After delivery the placenta is buried so that no one can take it for magical purposes; the child is wrapped in a towel and a charm is hung around his neck to ward off evil spirits. A self-trained midwife usually assists the mother and child for the first week, after which the mother goes back to her normal duties. The baby is never left alone. He sleeps with his mother and she takes him with her whenever she can or leaves him with a member of the household. The baby is almost always breast fed and at the age of three months starts eating premasticated solid food. He is generally weaned around 15 to 24 months or earlier if the mother is expecting again. After that no special diet is planned. The infant is generally baptized shortly after his birth, his baptismal certificate often acting as his birth registration. The parents are very permissive about toilet training. The child urinates any place in the house, and it is cleaned off with little scolding. He is

---

14 Based on the study by Frances W. Underwood and corroborated by the observations of this writer. See Frances Underwood, Irma Honigmann, "A Comparison of Socialization and Personality in Two Simple Societies," American Anthropologist, 49 (1947), pp. 557-77.

15 Haitian peasant women often have their babies standing up. This writer heard of one particular case of hard delivery when a heated stone was applied on the back of the neck of the patient who, caught by surprise, contracted violently from the pain thus speeding delivery.
generally toilet-trained by five years old when he is fully clothed instead of wearing only a loose shirt. There is an absence of pressure to make him walk or speak early but the world of the child is high in daily interaction in a very verbal milieu, so he learns early. Direct attention and supervision are given until the fifth year. By that time the child has mastered his physical and social environment which presents few dangers. Then he graduates rather abruptly from a permissive world where he is the center of attention to a stern world of adult-imposed discipline where transgressors are whipped harshly. The child is assigned an economic role early. Play activities are limited to free time. Sex differentiation occurs with assignment of tasks. Little girls watch over younger siblings, fetch water, accompany their mother on washing or market expeditions. The little boy will accompany his father to the field, take care of small animals, run errands. Girls will sleep in one area, boys in another and play activities will also be sex differentiated. Little money is spent on children but more will be spent on boys who are generally favored. There is no formal sex education; the lack of privacy in the household allows the child to know the facts of life early. There seems to be a considerable amount of sex experimentation before puberty and sex activities are considered fun rather than wicked. After puberty the girls are watched more closely. There is little display of affection. The Haitian masses never display affection overtly. They don't kiss but embrace symbolically.

Summing up the socialization process of the child of the Haitian
masses: his infant discipline is weak whereas his child discipline is severe; there is a notable absence of compulsive toilet training, due in part to the primitive physical milieu with its lack of latrines; there is no rigidity either in the sex area. Due to the natural handling of these two basic problems, little psychological stress is present. But other psychological stresses are present such as hunger, lack of personalized attention, a no-nonsense approach to discipline, resulting often in arbitrary punishments by elders. The Haitian child grows up in a group-oriented society with constant interaction with the members of his community. He understands his assigned role in the group early, has a feeling of belonging from which he derives a sense of security.

**Socialization Among the Privileged**

Among the privileged classes of Haiti, namely the bourgeoisie and the upper middle class, women give birth either in a hospital or in their home attended by a physician or a licensed midwife. The new mother is the object of much solicitude and many gift-bearing visitors call upon her. The newly born, dressed in hand-embroidered clothes, has its own crib and a nursemaid or child servant is assigned to watch over it. The mother breast-feeds the baby for nine to twelve months but if she works weans him earlier. She spends a lot of time with him, fondles him and supervises all the activities

---

16 Based on the study by Madeleine Sylvain Bouchereau and corroborated by the observations of this writer. See Chapter III, Bouchereau, *op. cit.*
relating to the baby. By the time he is three months old he is introduced to other foods, imported baby foods if the family can afford it, otherwise carefully prepared bland foods. Women of this class have a tendency to overfeed their baby to make them look chubby. The infant is generally baptized the first month and it is the occasion for an elaborate celebration with the chosen god parents taking their role seriously and contributing to the cost of the affair. Toilet training begins very early. The child is trained not to wake up the household at all hours of the night and is punished if he does not control his bladder and bowels by two years old. He is the center of attention and is encouraged to learn to speak and walk early. People are constantly teaching him new French words and he generally expresses himself in French and understands creole by the age of four. He has toys and playmates to keep him occupied. There is little sex differentiation between girls and boys until school age except that more fuss is made over the clothes and the appearance of girls. Their ears are pierced like all Haitian girls and hours are spent arranging their hair in complicated hairdos. Most schools are segregated by sex and consequently playmates and play activities tend to be differentiated on the basis of sex, a division which becomes

---

17The institution of god parents is important in all strata of Haitian society. It is the least important when it is across class lines. Then it becomes a form of exploitation by which the less fortunate seek god parents for their children in the more privileged class to have a protector and to receive periodic gifts, whereas the god parents tends to accept the honor paternalistically without paying much attention to their many poor god children.
more pronounced each year. Other activities consist of private lessons in piano, painting and dancing for little girls, whereas little boys are left free to organize their own play activities. There is a notable absence of any work activities. The weekends are devoted to visiting, family outings, church and the movies. Among the elite, elaborate children's parties and children's balls are organized where they meet other children of their class. Like all children, Haitian children of the more privileged class are democratic and will play with anyone, but by the time they are of school age, an effort is made to restrict them to children of their own social background, especially to those who speak good French and have good manners. While parents and servants have a tendency to be indulgent to the child in his early years, discipline becomes stricter as he grows. He learns early that whatever misbehavior he might get away with, he has to conform to the two fundamental rules of Haitian education: respect and politeness to adults and instant obedience to his parents; otherwise he will be chastised corporally and psychologically. Affectionate display is encouraged. The Haitian child of that class automatically kisses and shakes hands with any visitors. As the young girl approaches puberty, she is carefully supervised and chaperoned. Young boys graduate from short pants to long pants as their voice changes and are given much freedom. There is no sex education at home. It is not considered proper to discuss such matters between parents and children. The boys will have the opportunity to experiment with girls of the lower classes but a girl, if she marries
very early, might be rather naive about the facts of life, although
she is taught in her adolescence the art of running a home and being
a decorative wife.

Summing up the socialization process of the child of the privi-
leged class: his infant discipline is more rigorous than that of the
masses but he does not go through an abrupt change during his child-
hood. His socialization is gradual until he reaches the age of reason.
There is a notable difference between the upbringing of boys and
girls. Girls are supervised, protected and given a somewhat romantic
education in view of making a good marriage, whereas boys are given a
much wider latitude in their activities as long as they observe the
decorum of respecting and obeying their parents. There is a notable
absence of utilitarian activities designed to develop a sense of
initiative, of the value of work and practical knowledge. Early in
their lives children are made aware of social differences and are
taught the values and attitudes of their class. They also grow up in
a group-oriented society with constant interaction but it is restricted
to the members of their family and class.

3. Children in Domesticity

Thousands of Haitian children are involved in a curiously bar-
baric and widely practiced institution known as children in domesticity
or gratuitous domesticity. These domestic children or ti moune, as

18 Much of the data about children in domesticity came from a study
made in 1962 by Mr. Claude and Eric Sylla, students at the University
of Haiti, under the supervision of this writer.
they are called, live a life of servility not far removed from slavery except that they have the advantage of choosing their own destiny once they reach the age of reason and become aware of their servile condition. A few remain in this condition the rest of their lives. The institution consists of a family's taking in one or more peasant children at an early age and giving them urban "enlightenment" in exchange for their gratuitous services as servants. This institution, probably a vestige of colonial slavery, has since thrived on the poverty of the masses but has degenerated into a veritable children market. While some families fulfill their responsibilities to the child and are even motivated by humanitarian reasons, more consider the practice as an inexpensive way of getting servants.\footnote{This author is not in agreement with Herskovitz who considers the institution as an example of adoption complex in Negro culture. See Melville J. Herskovitz, \textit{Life in a Haitian Valley} (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1937), p. 103.}

Haitian peasantry is the vast reservoir from which the urban bourgeoisie, middle class and even proletariat draw their domestic children. Peasant families who enter into those voluntary agreements do not realize the consequences of their act. Generally coming from the most overpopulated and undernourished sections of the country, they are persuaded that their children will be better provided for materially, will be enlightened by urban civilization, will acquire some education, the good manners and savoir faire of city folk. Other misled peasants not motivated by sheer poverty actually think they
are entering some sort of free boarding school type of arrangement by which the child gets his room and board in exchange for working. The principle causes for the phenomenon of children in domesticity lies in economic underdevelopment, lack of schools in rural areas, the ecological disequilibrium in some regions where not enough food can be raised to feed everybody, the ignorance of peasants, and the passive acquiescence of the urban population. The number of ti-mounes has increased in recent years ever since the devastation of Hurricane Hazel in 1954 and the continuous economic crisis of the last decade.

Children of both sexes are placed in domesticity from the age of seven. There is a sort of tacit agreement between the parents of the child and his future "protector" by which the latter takes on the responsibility of the parents as long as the child makes himself useful. Sometimes the child is offered by the peasant himself or town people visit the country in quest of children "they wish to educate." Sometimes parents visit their children in domesticity or send them extra-food and it is generally customary for the child to return home once a year. His work consists of getting up early in the morning to sweep and mop the house, get water, run errands, watch over younger children, play with them, and engage in whatever useful activities he can handle depending on his age. All too often he does

\[20\text{It is known that after Hurricane Hazel, children were sold in the region of Jeremie for 25 cts. or $1.00 with their birth certificates.}\]
all the jobs considered beneath the dignity of the members of the family. He is often severely punished when he fails at his tasks. Being defenseless he often becomes the whipping boy of the household. Thrashings are motivated by wrath rather than by correction. When he is young there is a fraternal relationship between him and the children of his master but as the children grow older they perceive his social inferiority, consequently the friendship cools off and they demand his services as their parents do. Ti-moumes are notably abused in the lower class families where they are often treated as beasts of burden, sent out in the streets to peddle, and no attention is given to their schooling. In the higher class families they are generally much better treated and they are given time off to go to school. However it is only in a few enlightened homes that the child gets more than he gives. The vast majority, if they go to school at all, go to inferior and overcrowded schools where they learn little, are discriminated against and have little time for homework because of their duties. They are notably poorly fed for their physical appearance even after several years contrasts

21The worse case this writer witnessed was that of a child of seven who was a domestic in a small boarding house in Jeremie. The child was up before dawn and started the day by emptying the chamber pots of all the guests. She was reprimanded all day long and her tears caused further threats. Her wardrobe consisted of two tattered dresses and she did not own a pair of shoes. She was "too young" to go to school according to the manager but old enough to be washing glasses in the bar until past 10 p.m. She slept on two old blankets in the hallway. The managers who incidently showed themselves the most gracious host during the stay of this writer insisted that the child was much better off with them than where she came from and owed them a debt of gratitude.
strikingly with that of the master's children of the same age.

Generally they eat alone squatting in the courtyard with a plate in their hand or in a corner of the kitchen when it rains. They eat what is left after the family has eaten even sous-barbes as they call the leftovers from the plate of their master. Their clothes are the hand-me-downs of the family; rarely something new is bought for them. Little consideration is given to their personal needs. They are on call twenty-four hours a day. Often the ti-moune has no quarters of his own and sleeps on a straw mat on the floor of the living room which prevents him from resting during the day and at night he has to wait until the living room is vacated before retiring. When he is sick the family provides him with rudimentary medical care but if it is serious they send him back home to his parents. Ti-mounes are constantly made to feel that they are the benefactors of the system, that they should be grateful. If one of them, tired of abuse, runs away, often his parents bring him back under the illusion that the child is an ingrate, unappreciative of what is being done for him. Occasionally acts of rebellion lead to more serious consequences. From time to time a brutal beating which results in injury or sexual molestation by an adult comes to the attention of the public but the Haitian milieu beset already by so many problems does not consider children in domesticity as a major social problem.

22Creole expression for leftovers on a person's plate meaning literally "under the beard."
The consequences of this institution are definitely detrimental to the domestic child. The veneer of civilization he acquires does him more harm than good. Hungry, he learns to filch; fearing harsh punishments, he becomes a master of deceit, of cunningness; he acquires a mentality of servility which snuffs out his sense of initiative and reinforces his inferiority complex. One cannot discount the legacy of bitterness which warps the mind of many persons who grew up as ti-mounes. Practically every juvenile delinquent in the house of correction in Port-au-Prince, according to records, was at one time a domestic child. Young domestic girls swell the ranks of prostitutes, sometimes starting at the age of 13 after being initiated by their masters or the sons or friends of their masters, or return home pregnant with a cash settlement. Very few become "enlightened" adults as their parents had hoped, or have been able to climb the social ladder. The Social Welfare Institute of Haiti is aware of the problem of children in domesticity but their hands are tied by lack of funds. The day when rural schools will be adequate and poverty not so endemic the institution will regress. Peasants in zones of relative prosperity refuse to send their children in domesticity. However, the institution is likely to continue for

23A Haitian physician told this writer that when his father caught him masturbating at the age of 13, he strongly disapproved and sent for a ti-moune girl of the same age to be his sexual companion during his teens. The physician thought the idea excellent and plans to do the same thing for his son. However, he and his family are presently in exile in New York and his son is about 13 now.
some time, unless the basic socioeconomic structure of the society changes. This shocking exploitation of children is morally debasing not only to the individual but to the society as a whole as it perpetuates a tradition of social inequality and contempt for human dignity.

E. Conclusion

The family of all strata of Haitian society fulfills essentially the same primary functions and is similar in many respects. It is an extended type family and kins several degrees removed are recognized as relatives. Haitians know their genealogy and are always eager to establish some familial connection with a new friend. If they discover him as a relative, no matter how distant, he is "in." It is not unusual to find an extended family living together in the same house or same compound, and if they live separately they will be in touch with each other frequently. The family is patriarchal although not of the extreme authoritarian variety prevalent in Latin America. Nonetheless the father is the uncontested head of the family. Whether he chooses to exercise his power or not, he remains the central object of attention and respect. It is also a male-dominated family where men enjoy many privileges at the expense of the weaker sex, although the Haitian woman can assert herself and enjoy a comparatively high status.

As far as the mores and folkways are concerned, the family of the masses and of the more privileged classes differ considerably. At
one end, the elite carefully observes the proprieties which are the mores of France and are concerned with perpetuating families with social ambitions, whereas at the other end the family is primarily an economic unit of which the members are partners in the struggle for survival.

As for function, the Haitian family represents the basic cell of Haitian society in which the individual is socialized and derives his identity and security and to which he has strong loyalty bonds approaching clan spirit.

Haitian family organization is both the strength and the weakness of the Haitian social system. Loyalty, solidarity and mutual aid among the members of an extended family has prevented the total disintegration of Haitian society, for it provides the minimum social security an individual needs to survive. When a person loses his job, he knows he can count on his family to take care of him; a family is evicted, relatives will take them in automatically; a younger needs to go to school in the capital, a relative will board him; a member of the family gets into trouble with the authorities, a distant relative with political power will inevitably be found to rescue him. At the same time this kind of solidarity has a negative effect, for it turns loyalties inward. It encourages clannish, selfish, nepotistic attitudes, inhibits community spirit and civic sense essential to social progress. Thus the Haitian family plays the paradoxical role of counteracting the disintegration of Haitian society and at the same time preventing its development.
With respect to the laxity of sexual mores in Haiti, with its high incidence of free-unions, polygamy, illegitimacy, adultery and prostitution, it can be surmised that these phenomena can be considered as matter of form of relatively minor importance so long as children are socialized and integrated into stable familial systems. While the Haitian family is fairly stable, it is apparent that this state of affairs is a source of serious inter-personal conflicts and a hardship for many children and women. The legacy of libertinage of colonial days has not died away and tends to contribute in the long run another unstable element to the general disorganization of Haitian society.
CHAPTER VII

POLITICS

Political institutions play a dominant role in Haitian life, at least among the more privileged sector of the population. The political history of the nation has been characterized by turbulence. Haiti was born out of a violent revolution, and since then, violence and counter-violence with intermittent periods of silent oppression have been the pattern of Haitian political life. If every rebellion, aborted revolution and palace revolution are counted, Haiti had nearly 140 uprisings in 160 years. Of some 35 chiefs of state, 24 were killed or overthrown. The constitution has been changed approximately 20 times. In essence, Haitian politics represent a relentless power struggle between rival groups of the privileged strata from which the masses are excluded. The latter so steeped in ignorance and misery have always accepted the status quo but have participated at times in uprisings as the instruments of the privileged.

With regard to form of government, Haitian political history can be divided in four periods. From independence to mid 19th century, there was a succession of various types of regimes, a kingdom, several republics, two empires. By 1860, a republican but totalitarian form of government was instituted until the American occupation. During the American occupation (1915-34) new elements were introduced in the political institutions, but being imposed from the outside they faded.
within a decade after the occupation to return to the totalitarian republican form which has been in existence since. The form of government matters little, for under the title of king, emperor or president, a strong man has always ruled Haiti. Some were more beneficent than others; nevertheless, a tradition of authoritarian non-democratic rule was firmly established. From the beginning there was a spirit of intransigence and non-compromise between rival power cliques.

A. Characteristics of The Haitian Political System

The Haitian political system in spite of its instability has shown some persistent characteristics over the years which can be summed up as follows:

1. **Constitution and coded law**: Like most Latin American governments, the Haitian government is based upon a constitution inspired by French and American liberal traditions. It features legislative, judicial, and executive branches. Only the similarity stops there and the executive dominates everything. The laws of the Republic are based on the Napoleonic Code to which has been added a plethora of other codes such as the rural code, civil code, work code, etc. These codes presume to foresee everything, a tour de force in predicting behavior, anticipating situations down to the minutest details in a society which is so turbulent. Laws are often revised and appended. Nonetheless what was not predicted is that these laws would remain dead letters, for in practice everyone of the democratic institutions
on paper are perverted. There is a fundamental cleavage between the written law and government in actuality. The artificial implementation of French laws in the Afro-Haitian setting makes them ill-adapted to the social conditions of the country. Yet there is a persistent legalistic approach to problems. In reality, however, frontier type law prevails.

2. Presidential System: In reality all powers of the government are vested in a chief executive accountable to no one but to the clique that puts him in power. The constitution becomes a mere instrument in his hands. A personality cult rapidly grows around the president. He is a father figure and every trivial detail of administration or personal matter is liable to be brought to his attention often, bypassing the normal chain of command. The result is a highly centralized government and the cabinet members function as mere chief clerks for the president. He is literally bogged down by minutia. Being a one man government, he is more vulnerable to a coup d'etat than a party president would. He personifies the ultimate in power and he has to protect his much coveted post by showing aggression, cunningness, and the drive to dominate and impose his will on others; in other words, he must be a dictator.

3. The Legislature: Haiti could easily dispense with its legislature, for its chief function is to give a facade of republican government. Since there are no political parties, deputees are generally handpicked by the president before they are elected by their district. The chamber of deputees functions as a debating
society which rubber stamps legislation handed down by the presidential palace. Deputies are vocal in their disagreements only in proportion to the patience and benevolence of the president in power.

4. **The Judicial**: Likewise the judicial does not play a prominent role. Judges are appointed by the president and since most court decisions have political overtones, judges are astute enough to feel out presidential wishes before handing down their verdicts. Traditionally foreigners have little chance of winning a case in a Haitian court nor does a person in political disfavor. The tendency has been to settle matters outside the confines of courts whenever possible.

5. **The Military**: When General Dessalines declared Haitian independence, it was a logical step to install a military government; since then, the military has played a strategic role in Haitian politics. Since President Boyer instituted his rural code in 1826, rural Haiti has been under military command. The army functions also as a police force and thereby exercises control over the entire population. The army makes and unmakes presidents. The majority of Haitian chiefs of state were military leaders, most of them took the presidency through revolutionary armies, all of them had at least the tacit backing of the army. Therefore it is essential for any president to enter into an alliance with the army or manipulate the military deftly.

5. **Constitutional Rights**: Freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the sanctity of a person's home, guarantees against arbitrary
arrests, and other basic individual freedoms recognized today as international norms, exist of course in the Haitian constitution. In reality these rights are subordinated to the whim of the presidency, thus maintaining a perennial sense of insecurity among the citizens. This insecurity has translated itself into many patterns of behavior typical of Haitian society; for instance, clan solidarity which makes the extended family the basic cell of mutual protection which in turn encourages the peculiar brand of Haitian nepotism: mounepaisme (from creole moune pam = people who are for me) and its opposite, keeping the others out: the complex du panier de crables.\(^1\)

6. The Spoil System: The tradition of political patronage is deeply anchored in the Haitian mores. With every new presidential regime, the administration is overhauled from top to bottom, from cabinet ministers to the lowest charwoman, and replaced by the partisans of the new president. There is no continuity in any project from one administration to the next, nor does a merit or civil service system exist. Since the government is the biggest employer, Haitian political institutions have important economic functions. Politics becomes an end in itself rather than a means to assure the well functioning of other institutions. The morbid preoccupation of so many Haitians with political activities has a valid basis, for their

---

\(^1\)Literally: the complex of the basket of crabs. A euphemism often used in Haiti based on the observation that crabs in a basket pull back those which are trying to crawl out. The euphemism describes the kind of behavior whereby a person will consciously put obstacles in the way of a more successful person to cut him down to his size.
livelihood is at stake. Politics are the tools par excellence of
economic betterment and social ascendance for those who are "in."
Those who are "out" bide their time and participate in intrigues with
the hope of being "in" with the next regime. To the question of what
keeps people going, in view of the great insecurity due to politico-
economic rivalries, an informant answered rather eloquently: "chaque
haitien a un politicien qui dors en lui."\(^2\)

As long as a non-profiteer \("out\) group\) thinks of nothing
else but to displace a profiteer \("in\) group\), to become
himself a profiteer, as long as everyone has but one regret,
that of not being able to build his handsome villa, as long
as the nation remains a cake for each to wait his turn to
cut his slice, we will never get out of our impasses.
There is not a Haitian who does not recognize that we have
lived until this day, of selfishness, individualism, and
that this has made our misfortunes and will continue to
do so if we do not change ourselves.\(^3\)

Those in political favor know only too well that their situation
is ephemeral and consequently take advantage of it while they can.
This has perpetuated a tradition of greed, graft, corruption and
abuses to such a point that political dishonesty is taken for granted
by the majority of the population as a necessary evil and the poli-
tician is expected to fill his pocket at the expense of public funds.
Sometimes resentment stems more from envy of his "luck" than contempt
for the immorality of his act. Haitians have become very cynical.

\(^2\)Every Haitian has a politician asleep within him.

author of this editorial, a native Catholic priest, was deported in
1964, and the magazine closed down by government order.
In summary, the Haitian government is not a government of law but of men. It is a one-man system backed by his partisans and the army, and held in balance to a small extent by an opposition. Should the opposition get restless and circumstances be propitious, the time for revolution arrives and the balance swings. Out goes the government and the new clique moves in and the game starts all over again. It might be noted that these revolutions are not mass uprisings but palace revolutions of short duration. For the vast majority of the Haitian masses, the notion of state is an abstraction beyond their comprehension. They generally know the name of the current president who represents for them a distant final authority. They are completely unaware of political events which occur only in the "Republic of Port-au-Prince" and have no far-reaching effects on them. As the peasant sees it, the government is made up of the chief of the rural police and the local court of justice to whom he brings his endless land quarrels. He fears and respects these autorité, as he calls them, for he senses their overwhelming power and knows that sanctions can be brutal, and, of course, there is no appeal.

B. The Duvalier Regime

The Duvalier regime which is currently ruling Haiti has earned worldwide notoriety for its tyranny and has displaced vodou as the

4Most Haitians don't know their exact age. They gauge their approximate age by knowing the name of the president who was ruling at the time of their birth. It is customary to ask the age of a peasant by saying: "Sous qui president ou faite? (Under which president were you made (born)?)
chief reason for which Haiti is known to the outside world. Duvalier is probably the last of the old style Latin American caudillo and represents an anachronism in the mid-20th century. Yet the Duvalier regime is not an anomaly for Haiti. It represents by all its extremes the logical end result of a social system exhausted by the recurrent political game which has played itself out. The Duvalier regime might prove to be the turning point of the Haitian nation in the sense that it is precipitating the day of reckoning. How long can a society continue in the present state of Haitian society? How far can a nation regress? In view of the current world political climate it is unlikely that Haiti will collapse on its own but it is more likely that outside forces will intervene to avert a total collapse either by a Congo-style trusteeship or a Cuban style communist take over. The Haitian people are no longer able to repair the social, economic and political ills of their country. All that can be done is delay the final debacle.

Duvalier is a "phenomenon" in the sense that every method which has been used throughout Haitian history to remove a despot has been used against him but up to now has failed. He has a remarkable political flair for he understands well the Haitian political system in all its complexities and delicate power balance and has dominated the Haitian scene to become its supreme boss with power of life and death over his four million subjects. He enjoys a degree of personal power unknown to any American president and to very few chiefs of state in the world. Though a pseudo-scholar, he has nonetheless a
great psychological understanding of the character weaknesses of his compatriots and has exploited them to his benefit.

When Duvalier acceded to power in 1957, he inherited a difficult position. There had been great political unrest for the preceding nine months during which five governments succeeded each other and the political tension was not over when he took office. He also inherited the worse economic crisis known thus far in Haiti. His predecessor Magloire and his era of false prosperity left a deficit of $50 million which coupled with a bad coffee crop left the public treasury virtually empty. These and other events seemed to point to an early collapse of his regime. At first Duvalier proceeded cautiously, but then at an accelerated pace he consolidated his power. The various factions which stood in his way to emerge as the uncontested chief can be enumerated as follows: (1) his early partisans; (2) political opposition; (3) the legislature; (4) the army; (5) the bourgeoisie in politics and commerce; (6) the clergy; (7) the intelligentsia and students; and (8) the most elusive and worrisome: the U.S. State Department. He set out to crush or control everyone of these obstacles at the price of bleeding his country. However Duvalier has shown by his actions that the misery of his people is not too great a price to pay to maintain his power.

(1) Weeding out Early Partisans: To the consternation of everyone Duvalier first got rid of the friends and supporters who put him in power and to whom he owed political debts. One of the first to go was Colonel Antonio Kebreau who conducted the election for Duvalier and
gave him the backing of the army. He was sent to Rome as ambassador and in 1963 died under mysterious conditions in Haiti. Within a year, the original duvalieristes were out. Since then there has been a steady reshuffling in Duvalier's clique. Favorites come and go, a few come back, many vanish in exile, prison or oblivion. The original supporters of Duvalier among which were men of talent, have been replaced by men of obscure background with little training or administrative gifts but sufficiently unscrupulous and servile to meet Duvalier's needs. They seem to be the only men he can trust. They are jealous and resentful of men with training or with special abilities, especially those of the traditional elite, and distrustful of each other. Duvalier tacitly encourages their rivalries, so as to have no potential rivals within his government. Every year, the caliber of the men surrounding Duvalier is lowered and currently includes criminal and gangster elements.

(2) Eliminating Political Opposition: In the beginning, the Duvalier regime was threatened by political opposition from the ranks of the defeated candidates and their followers. There were several unsuccessful invasions from the outside but he effectively crushed them. He proceeded vigorously to liquidate his opponents or those he suspected, through arrests, murder, deportation and voluntary exile. The opposition remaining in the country has been silenced and is devoid of power for the time being. Of course the ranks of the exiles are growing, but they are torn by dissention and have been incapable thus far of presenting a united front against Duvalier.
For the time being Duvalier has successfully crushed political opposition.

(3) Silencing the Legislature: While always a superfluous branch of the Haitian government, the legislature has been reduced to complete uselessness under the Duvalier regime. Legislation is not even debated but unanimously approved and time is filled with interminable speeches about the "indefectible attachment of the Haitian people to their spiritual leader Papa Doc" or inventing new honorific titles for the president. Originally the legislature was bi-cameral but Duvalier simplified the system by reducing the number of deputees and merging them into a uni-cameral chamber. He called a legislative election in 1961 and to the surprise of no one all his candidates won. It was at this election that Duvalier contributed a novel ruse to the history of fraudulent elections. Duvalier's name appeared on all ballots above that of the candidates for the legislature. Since his term of office was to end in 1963 and there was no mention of a presidential election, it was a profoundly shocked nation which woke up the morning after election to find out they had reelected Duvalier to another six year term. He announced with a straight face that overwhelming support of his candidates meant reelecting him, then added humbly: "As a revolutionary, I have no right to disregard the voice of the people." In a later speech, he explained that Haitian democracy is different and is not to be compared to American, French
or any other type of democracy. 5

(4) Dividing the Army: In order to control the army, Duvalier resorted to two basic tactics: frequent reshuffling of high ranking officers and the creation of a militia responsible directly to him.

Officers suspected of possible disloyalty were purged from the army at the beginning. Others are continuously retired in the middle of their careers with pensions, causing a heavy drain on the treasury. These are replaced by lower ranking officers who are grateful to the president for being promoted so rapidly. Officers are also constantly transferred from one end of the country to another to prevent them from establishing personal influence among the local officials and population. The military academy was closed. Ammunition was stock-piled in the basement of the palace where it is issued under the personal supervision of Duvalier.

Duvalier revived the tradition of cacoism, i.e., the mercenary armies of presidential aspirants of pre-occupation days, by organizing his personal militia, the notorious tonton macoutes and pitting them against the army. Thus he has effectively neutralized the capacity of the army to overthrow his regime. The militiamen are drawn from the lowest strata of society or from the most disreputable

5Dr. Jacques Fourcand, Duvalier's minister of Health and head of the Haitian Red Cross, added in a speech in April 1963 that the United States was a democracy of sluts. The same man in October 1963 at the time of hurricane Flora scoffed at the warnings of U.S. weathermen and went on the radio angrily denying all danger. Flora left 100,000 homeless and killed an estimated 5,000 in Haiti.
elements of other classes. They operate as a sort of primitive gestapo and terrorize the population with their abuses. Duvalier has given them little money but much authority. By doing this, he has shown an astute understanding of the Haitian mentality where personal power means more than anything else. The symbol of power is the pistol a macoute sports and his favorite tactic is intimidation. Every macoute is a law unto himself in his own circle of influence and can deal arbitrarily with the population with little fear of retaliation. Intoxicated with their new power and so deeply involved in the crimes of the regime, they are committed to maintain Duvalier in power out of fear of the bloody revenges which would be their fate should Duvalier fall. In the meantime, as henchmen of the regime, they are responsible for an increasingly longer list of murders, rapes, tortures, beatings, thefts, blackmail, false denunciations, extortions, and other abuses. They are held in very low esteem by the entire population who has given them the derogatory epithet of tonton macoute (bugbear) and fillette lalo (female ghoul) to their female counterpart, but who, nevertheless, are kept in line through fear of them.

(5) Persecuting the Bourgeoisie: After 1946 the bourgeoisie began losing their stronghold in politics and Duvalier finished the job of purging them out of the administration and army. Nonetheless, they still remain the social elite of the country and Duvalier has a consuming hatred for that class and loses no opportunity to persecute and humiliate them, or make them the scapegoat of all the ills of the
country. He has revived effectively anti-mulatto racism and has inflamed class hatred. He is obliged to tolerate the bourgeoisie to a certain extent because of their dominance in the private sector, their association with the foreign interests in Haiti and their exterior connection for credit. As long as they remain apolitical and submit to periodic extortions, they can avoid more open persecution. During the last few years, there has been a massive exodus of this class and more are leaving taking with them the little capital and professional skills left in Haiti. However, Duvalier considers the problem of the bourgeoisie licked. He said recently to a Mexican journalist that the mulatto (loosely synonymous with the bourgeoisie) were now in jail, in exile, or three meters underground.

(6) Harassing the Clergy: The high clergy who are the traditional allies of the bourgeoisie were bound to receive their share of persecution. Duvalier expelled from the country under most humiliating conditions, the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, titular head of the Catholic Church in Haiti, bishops of provincial dioceses, superiors of religious congregations, priests, both native and foreign, whose influence interfered with his policies. He closed down Catholic newspapers and revues. He earned himself an excommunication from the Vatican. The excommunication did not name the President directly but covered those officials who had signed the deportation decrees,

---

6One high prelate was escorted out of the country so fast that he did not have time to retrieve his false teeth and had to be fitted with new dentures upon arrival in Miami.
and Duvalier was among them. The ambivalence with which this was carried out contributed to the greater discredit of the Catholic clergy in Haiti.\textsuperscript{7} Duvalier's action against the church has not offended the Haitian people as much as it has offended the outside world, for there is a growing resentment toward the traditional reactionary attitudes of the foreign clergy. Duvalier continues to harass the church and in 1964 expelled all the Jesuits, converted their properties into army barracks and also deported the American Bishop, head of the Episcopal Church. Much of the alienation with the church was due to the vodou controversy. Under the pretext of revitalizing the "African soul" of Haiti, Duvalier has given a new dignity to vodou and occult activities and he includes vodou priests among his partisans. He is the only president to do so with the exception of the opera-bouffe Emperor Faustin I, in the 1850's. All other chiefs of state including the founders of the nation have considered it beneath their dignity to have anything to do with vodou. It is rumored that Duvalier himself practices vodou, that he holds vodou ceremonies in the palace, that he offended an African diplomat by inviting him to one of these ceremonies while diplomats of western countries were not invited. It seems reasonable to believe that he is influenced by certain vodou superstitions. It is a known fact that he communicates regularly with the more powerful vodou priests but in doing so he is primarily motivated by political reasons. He recognizes in vodou priests

\textsuperscript{7}Manigat, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 53.
natural leaders of the masses and uses them as rumor mills. They have spread the belief that Papa Doc, as he likes to be called by the masses, is invulnerable; that he has been especially chosen by the gods to guide Haiti, even that his magical powers caused the overthrow of President Bosch and the assassination of President Kennedy.

(7) **Muzzling the Intelligentsia and the Students:** Duvalier who considers himself a sociologist attempted to attract the intellectual milieu to his foggy Afro-Negro-Haitian mystique. Few were fooled and those who were at first soon realized that his ideology was nothing more than a thinly disguised political hoax. Many tried to remain neutral and uncommitted to the regime as long as they could function reasonably in their professional capacity. The intelligentsia of Haiti, while the least powerful group in the political system, are probably the most independent-minded and the most outspoken. They tried to resist the regime indirectly but inevitably came to a head-on showdown with Duvalier. He first broke up the Association of Secondary School Teachers. In his policy of dissolving systematically all professional organizations, he attempted to break up the University Student Union in 1960, but ran into serious difficulty. The students went on strike and were joined by high school students and it looked as if the strike were going to spread to other sectors. Strikes in Haiti are political ill-omen. Many presidents in the past including Duvalier's three predecessors were removed from office by a general strike. On the pretext that the strike was communist inspired, Duvalier broke it up brutally, imprisoning and torturing teenagers,
dismissing students and professors alike, and reorganized the university under direct political control. He placed informers among the student body and filled the hard-to-enter medical school with the poorly prepared sons of his partisans. He extended the policy of duvalierization to all sectors of the economy where the government had some control which resulted in heavy dismissals among the small technical cadres of Haiti. Some went underground in the ranks of the unemployed, others joined the growing exodus abroad.

The Haitian technical talent outside Haiti very probably exceeds that inside. There are an estimated 1,500 Haitian technicians or teachers in Africa, several in the United Nations and working in inter-American banks in New York, some 200 doctors in the U.S., and about 60 in Canada.

While not all the participants in the exodus out of Haiti are technicians or intellectuals, the latter represent a substantial number.

Embassies are beset with demands for visas. In late 1964, the American Embassy had a waiting list of more than 2,500 applications for visas and processed an average of 25 a day. A person without priority status has to wait more than a year for his turn to come up. As Haitians say in their typical humor: "Haitians don't need a visa; Haiti needs a visa!"

(8) Out-maneuvering the U.S.: During the first 100 years of Haitian independence, the United States remained largely aloof from Haitian affairs, to become since the American occupation of 1915-34,

---

8Al Burt, Miami Herald, October 31, 1964.
the most involved foreign nation, if not the only nation really concerned about political developments in Haiti. There is an unshakable conviction among articulate Haitians that because the U.S. occupied Haiti for 19 years, it is now responsible for whatever happens.

There is a strong belief that a regime stands by U.S. support and the U.S. State Department is considered as a latent but powerful faction in the Haitian political system. There is some truth in this belief. Haiti depends heavily on the United States. The U.S. is the biggest client for Haitian exports, represents the largest foreign investments in Haiti which controls the few basic industries and public utilities; the Haitian gourde is pegged to the U.S. dollar. Haiti is also tied to the U.S. by important debts and depends on American foreign aid for development. This state of affairs is a logical source of frustration for a Haitian chief of state trying to assert his power.

When Duvalier came to power, the U.S. was somewhat cool to him and delayed negotiating with his government until he settled a $500,000 claim as an indemnity for a Syrian merchant with American passport who had been killed during the troubled period preceding his election. Duvalier, who had not yet consolidated his power, had no other choice but accede to the wish of the Embassy. By 1959, Washington felt that

---

9Duvalier had popular support in this case since the person in question belonged to the Syrian minority which is generally resented, and like some other Syrians, though born and raised in Haiti, had taken out American citizenship for his own protection and consequently was an American on paper only.
Duvalier had proven himself a strong president and gave open political support to the regime and major aid programs were started. The U.S. has poured over $35 million into Haiti since 1957, much of it in outright grants. With the encouragement of the State Department, the Export-Import Bank made loans amounting to $25 million and the Inter-American Development Bank turned over $3.5 million. The United Nations added another $4.8 million and lent $6.5 million through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This largesse does not include millions of pounds of surplus food and other relief supplies. Duvalier requested and got a U.S. military mission to train his army which turned out to be nothing more than a tactic on his part to show U.S. approval of his regime. Perhaps the State Department was naive enough to believe that Duvalier would be amenable to U.S. guidance in straightening out the chaotic conditions of the country, but Duvalier meant the aid to have no strings attached. He withstood all pressures, instead hinted that the aid was a pittance, that his country needed a massive injection of money, and threatened to get it from other sources. He asked and obtained the removal of American personnel whom he felt were unfriendly to his regime. Five American ambassadors have been changed thus far. The U.S. became increasingly suspicious of the motives of Duvalier and when he re-elected himself illegally in 1961, the U.S. Government felt that its

---

support of the Duvalier regime was embarrassing to its world image and started to apply pressure. Duvalier retaliated in 1962 by withholding his crucial vote at the Punta del Este O.A.S. conference which held the balance between keeping or expelling Cuba from the Inter-American System, relented for the price of a jet airport. Exasperated the U.S. began cutting off aid, and one by one the development programs phased out. Duvalier expelled the American military mission, now useless as a symbol of U.S. support, and started an anti-American campaign. He accused the U.S. of discriminating against a poor Negro nation and exploited the nationalist feeling of the people by hinting that he had rather lose U.S. Aid than yield an inch of the sovereignty of Haiti. He purposely closed his eyes on the leftist activities of intellectual groups and labor unions as a means to worry the U.S.

Duvalier felt that he had altered the old internal balance of forces in Haiti enough to be able to face the growing hostility of the U.S., whose supporters, allies, and traditional sources of involvement in Haitian political life had been neutralized. ¹¹

Duvalier won the first round in the sense that his feud with the U.S. did not weaken his position. The ineptitude with which the U.S. State Department handled the Duvalier regime won the alienation of the more intelligent sector of Haitian society. Under the excuse that despite the incompetence and tyranny of the regime, Duvalier is the constitutional president, maintains internal peace, and is anti-

¹¹Manigat, op. cit., p. 59.
The American plan had failed. It was short sighted and underestimated Duvalier's determination to stay in power at all costs.

At the present time the U.S. maintains normal diplomatic relations with the Duvalier regime, feeling that in view of Haiti's proximity to Cuba it is in the best interest of the U.S. to have observers on the scene. As a Haitian informant said: "The State Department suffering of 'the communist psychosis' still falls for the worn out trick of Latin American dictators representing themselves as great enemies of communism." Recently, Duvalier has made repeated appeals for the resumption of aid but his appeals have remained unanswered.

U.S. officials believe that the Duvalier regime is beyond reform and a resumption of aid would be wasted. It seems that the policy for

\[12\text{Time Magazine, June 14, 1963.}\]
the time being is to wait patiently for Duvalier's death. Meanwhile a token $2.3 million aid for a new water system for Port-au-Prince was awarded. A small sum to be sure, but it still represents about 10 percent of the Haitian budget. It infuriates many Haitians who feel that

It is actually because of this 'bone' which is periodically tossed at Duvalier to chew on, that he manages to survive in famine, but survive nonetheless to satisfy the exigencies of his militia, and the appetite of his political entourage and it is especially through this token aid cleverly exploited by the receiver and translated into his own political language that one can continue to believe that his government is being helped, therefore backed and even approved.\(^{13}\)

The present American ambassador, with his policy of "correct relations" determined to get along with Duvalier, has made himself increasingly unpopular with the Haitian people outside the partisans of the regime and even with some members of his own staff. Meanwhile Duvalier still handles the U.S. with a policy of diplomatic blackmail. When hurricane Flora hit Haiti in October 1963 and went down in history as one of the most devastating storms ever to strike the western hemisphere, the Duvalier regime was totally incapable of handling the disaster and turned to the United States for help. The same day an American prisoner was released in Port-au-Prince, and Haiti, the only nation in the hemisphere besides Cuba to withhold its signature from the

\(^{13}\)Jeune Haiti (New York), March, 1965. An exile publication.
Test Ban Treaty, proceeded to sign it. On another occasion, an agent of Duvalier arrested in Miami for attempting to ship contraband arms to his country was released without charges the same day that a group of American tourists were released from a Haitian jail. Duvalier, hoping the State Department will lift its official discouragement of tourist travel to Haiti and hoping for resumption of U.S. aid, maintains a lobby in Washington and votes faithfully with the U.S. in international organizations. Recently Haiti reversed its traditional voting position in the U.N. by being the only Negro nation to sign a declaration endorsing the U.S.-Belgian intervention in the Congo. It becomes apparent that the U.S. State Department has not had the last word yet in handling the Duvalier dictatorship, much to its discredit.

As it has been demonstrated, Duvalier is at war with every traditional institution in Haitian society and yet seems to have the nation well under his control. Oppression grew increasingly strong from 1957 to 1961. The year 1962 was a year of great tension, and 1963 ushered in a reign of terror which has paralyzed the country since and made it unlivable.

1. Methods of Social Control

Methods of social control used by Duvalier to maintain himself in power are lifted out of the "world manual of dictatorship" so to

---

14 A year later in August, 1964, when hurricane Cleo struck Haiti, the government requested U.S. help again and promptly released this writer who had spent 18 days in jail following his arrest at the Port-au-Prince airport for having a list of names of Haitian exile leaders among his field notes.
speak, but take on novel aspects on the Haitian scene. Duvalier's mentors are reported to be Machiavelli and Mustapha Kemal Attaturk. He secretly admired Trujillo and has good words for Salazar, Sukarno and N'krumah. The techniques of coercion he employs range from those used in preliterate societies to those used by the fascist regimes of Europe, and compare favorably with those of Trujillo.

After Duvalier destroyed the traditional power balance of Haitian political life, disarmed the population and outlawed all forms of associations, he set up a more or less effective machinery of propaganda. For the 10 percent of the population who can read, he muzzled the local press and imposed censorship on foreign publications. After closing down all the newspapers which showed any sign of independent opinion, he granted subsidies to the others by directing the government to buy up the majority of their subscriptions. Each newspaper is also assigned a government man as assistant editor and is expected to publish all government press releases and editorials prepared in the palace. The local press vie with one another in singing Duvalier's praise, never criticizing, only remaining silent at times. Extravagant compliments for modest achievements border on the ridiculous except that at times it is difficult to determine whether praise is a subtle form of mockery or servility. To wit: G. J. Figaro, the man to whom Duvalier entrusts his propaganda, is a known "ham" whose excursions into amateur dramatics had made him the laughing stock of Port-au-Prince. It is the consensus of opinion that, his voice heard all day long on the radio is as painful to the ears as
his words are insulting to the intelligence. Yet he was described
as follows by a local newspaper:

The programs of the 'Voice of the Republic' are unanimously
appreciated. The choice and the style of the editorials,
born of the pen of the Under Secretary of State G. J.
Figaro and read by him with such warmth and with such an
arresting tone are really pleasing. We take this oppor-
tunity to present to our colleague and his immediate
collaborators our warmest congratulations.15

With regard to censorship of foreign publications, the low-
educational level of the clerks employed at that task makes the service
notoriously incompetent and to resolve the problem, stores selling
these publications are made accountable for any omissions. Since
Duvalier is convinced that there is an international conspiracy
against him, sympathetic articles about the country are no longer
expected, so that any features dealing with Haiti are automatically
clipped out.

The radio does not fare much better. Radio stations exercise
self-censorship and now most of them have ceased broadcasting news
for fear of making a mistake and displeasing the government. Even
on foreign news the stations are responsible for informing themselves
first of the government's line and more often limit themselves to
reading the local newspapers over the air. It goes without saying
that continuous praise of Duvalier as well as calypso style music
with lyrics extolling Duvalier's love for peace are the order of
the day. Duvalier's speeches are rebroadcast frequently. His

15Le Matin (Port-au-Prince), June 3, 1962.
political success is not based on his ability to move the masses by force of words. He is an ineffective speaker with a slow, nasal, inarticulate voice. His speeches are filled with the usual fog of demagogic ideological jargon expected of most dictators except that practically no one understands what he says, even the small minority who understand French and have enough education to decipher the 

**duvalierist** terminology. To illustrate:

...Haiti can and must survive, providing that a chief accepts without hesitation the crucifixion of the history of the present moment and of the history of tomorrow to espouse among all the great contemporary human calls, creators of events and of transformations, the ones as captivating and troubling as the others, to espouse, I say, the major problems that the Haitian man must resolve himself in function of his own existence in liberty.\(^\text{16}\)

Since the language of the mass media is French, propaganda reaches only the 10-15 percent of the population who can understand that language. Furthermore, the content is so obnoxious, boring and puerile, that it fools very few and is therefore a limited if not ineffective form of propaganda. For that reason, Duvalier relies on

\(^{\text{16}}\text{Presidential State of the Union Message, January 2, 1962. (translation mine).} \text{...Haiti peut et doit survivre, a la condition qu'un chef accepte sans defaillance la crucifixion de l'histoire du Moment present et de l'histoire de Demain pour epouser, parmi tous les grands appels humains contemporains, geniteurs d'evenements et de transformations aussi captivants et troubnants les uns que les autres, pour epouser dis-Je, les problemes majeurs que l'homme haitien doit resoudre lui-meme en fonction de son existence propre, dans la liberté...} \text{Jeune Haiti in its March, 1965 issue spoofed the obscure linguo of the regime in a mock advertisement: HELP WANTED: United Nations looking for translator speech Haitian Delegation; new language patriotico-historic-ethnologico-mystico-philosophico-esoteric of the indigenous school of Doc which escapes the comprehension of ordinary translators. The French Academy declines all responsibility.}
the much more effective tool of the rumor mill. The rumor mill or *tele-djol* (*djol* is creole for the French *gueule* = animal mouth) is a peculiar Haitian institution worthy of mention. In a country where 90 percent of the population is illiterate, where telephones and telegraphs function only sporadically, where there is one radio per 1,000 inhabitants, it is extraordinary how fast a rumor can spread. By implanting a rumor in the right channel, within hours it can make the rounds of Port-au-Prince and in twenty-four hours the whole republic. Of course the rumor is much embellished and distorted by the time it is passed down from person to person. This extraordinary feat has impressed every foreigner who has lived in Haiti.

Duvalier sends waves of fear through the population by starting a rumor and then when the effect is obtained, a counter-rumor. For instance, it is said that he has started rumors of plots against him and then used this pretext to repress brutally some of his political enemies to show the population how strong he is. He uses the same channel of communication to impress upon the superstitious masses that he communicates with the occult and vodou gods. While this has a tendency to discredit him with educated Haitians and on the international scene, he is so discredited among these groups at the present time that he is more concerned with keeping the masses intimidated.

Another propaganda device reminiscent of trujillism is the general personality cult. Pictures of Duvalier are plastered everywhere, as well as the slogans of the regime. Haitian paper flags are distributed by the thousands with his picture in the center, and adorn
every vodou temple, class rooms, and semi-public places in all corners of the republic. There is a picture of Jesus Christ resting his hand on Duvalier's shoulder with a caption reading: "I have chosen Thee." In the capital, there are big neon signs with his name and excerpts from his speeches such as: "I am the Haitian Flag, one and indivisible." His name is linked with the heroes of independence. Radio station identification breaks add after their call letters: "Haiti the fatherland of Dessalines the Liberator, Christophe the Emancipator, Petion the Pan-Americanist, and Francois Duvalier the Renovator." The new labor and rural codes bear his name. The former town of Cabaret has been renamed Duvalierville, a new housing project is called cité Simone Duvalier, after his wife. Slogans are full of duvalierisms: "The Duvalierist Peace," "Duvalier or death!", and the legislature has bestowed upon him the title of "Renovator of the Fatherland," "Chief of the Revolution." Also worthy of note are the "spontaneous" manifestations of popularity for the regime. Thousands of poor peasants and slum dwellers are rounded up at a moment's notice, under threats, to create the crowds necessary for political rallies. Peasants are trucked in from all over the country for the annual May 22 commemoration of Duvalier's reelection, to create massive demonstrations of faked popular support. A political farce of such magnitude seems incredible unless one remembers that the absurd pageantry of the Duvalier regime provides for the masses a sense of excitement, which is a release from the misery of their daily lives. Besides the prospect of a free trip to the capital they are given the
illusion that they are participating for the first time in national life. It is pathetic to see the wondrous look on the faces of the likeable Haitian peasantry, obediently singing, applauding and shouting, interrupting stuffy French speeches at the wrong places; it is pathetic to see them being duped so grotesquely.

Distrustful of his entourage, Duvalier uses the method of divide and rule, playing one faction against another, and reshuffles his favorites frequently. He has a policy of self-commitment. Neutrals, and moderates are under suspicion. To be trusted necessitates compromising oneself by open acts in support of the regime. Duvalier pressures his partisans to involve themselves deeply and to be the accomplices of the regime's excesses so that if he falls they will fall with him. Therefore it is to their advantage to fight for the maintenance of Duvalier. Luckner Cambronne, one of Duvalier's closest confidants whose crimes have made him a marked man said at a legislative session in 1963: "There are traitors among us. We must sacrifice everything for the Duvalierist Revolution even if you have to kill your wife and your children." The traitors, according to him, are the passive supporters of the regime such as the government workers who know they will lose their jobs if Duvalier falls. However, they also know that they will have to continue living in Haiti with those who have suffered from the regime and therefore are careful to avoid as much as they can the power wielders of the regime and do their job quietly so as not to get too involved. These are the people who warn opponents of imminent arrest.
Another method used to keep people in line is intimidation. However, intimidation is an old Haitian game and part of the Haitian temperament. Serious threats are quickly forgotten by those who make them and dismissed lightly by those who receive them. Threats are generally answered by counter-threats and it becomes a sort of power contest. When it involves politics under the Duvalier regime, the consequences are more serious. Today, intimidations quickly deteriorate into blackmail, false denunciations, and arrest. To be arrested for political reasons in Haiti is so common that there is even a sort of status attached to the person who has managed to get out alive.

As for reprisals, they are getting increasingly barbaric. The day that it becomes possible to assess the number of people who have been imprisoned, tortured, murdered or who have simply disappeared, at the hand of the Duvalier regime, there is little doubt that his regime will go down as the bloodiest dictatorship in the annals of Haitian history. Those who incur the presidential wrath but manage to escape will find their families victim of his revenge. This is one of the most effective tools of social control Duvalier has in a society where family ties are so meaningful. A person will think twice before endangering his family. An illustration of this is the vengeance Duvalier took on the family of an army officer he suspected as the culprit in the plot to assassinate his children in April, 1963. The President's children escaped unharmed but their bodyguard and chauffeur were killed. It seemed that only a sharp shooter could have done this feat under the difficult conditions of the crime. Duvalier immediately
thought of Lt. Benoit, then in political asylum in the Dominican Embassy
and in spite of the overwhelming proof that no one had left the embassy,
he sent his tonton macoutes to the home of the Benoit family. After
killing the lieutenant's mother, his child, a woman visitor and the
servants, they sprayed water on the adjacent houses, then set fire to
the Benoit home. The monstrousness of the crime shocked everyone in
Haiti as well as the outside world and nearly started a war with the
Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, it paralyzed people with fear and
was thus an effective device for repression. More recently the 80
year old crippled mother of Duvalier's ex-minister of education, now
an important rebel leader in exile, was yanked out of a hospital and
incarcerated in Fort Dimanche, the dreaded political prison. The
families and distant relatives of a group of young exiles whose invasion
was defeated in November, 1964, were massacred, including a baby, and
one family was first marched naked through the streets. The two cap-
tured survivors of the rebel force were condemned to death and their
public execution was televised. To guarantee a crowd for the event,
people were brought in by trucks, schools were let out, and government
workers were requested to attend the execution and then marched in
front of the National Palace to give Duvalier an ovation.

Periods of intense repressions are generally followed by strange
lulls during which nothing seems to happen. This is another effective
psychological device for it relaxes the general tension and arouses
false hopes of possible coexistence with the dictator in those who
otherwise might be driven to frantic acts of rebellion simply out of
Despair.

Duvalier has let it be known during the May, 1963 crisis, when there were both national and international pressures to unseat him, that "God alone could remove him," and that should he fall, his thugs would massacre all whites and mulattoes in the country, the earth would be scorched, that there would be "himalayas of corpses" and that "flames would be seen as far away as Bermuda." The United States did not dismiss his threats as those of a madman, for it was only too obvious that he would be capable of ordering such a massacre and the U.S. State Department could not be certain that his thugs would not carry it out. Therefore the U.S. proceeded cautiously to avert a possible blood bath and Duvalier defeated all efforts made to remove him, even though he degraded his nation by such barbaric threats.

It is said that Duvalier is a Haïtian of recent origin, that his forefathers came from Martinique. It is true that his family alone carries the name Duvalier in Haïti and that he has few relatives. Some Haïtians interpret this fact by pointing out that unlike other presidents he does not have a large extended family to exert social control over him, that for instance should President Magloire have acted like Duvalier, his godmother or an uncle from his home town would have come to see him in the palace and in typical Haïtian informality would have told him: "Mon cher, you are the President, you cannot do this," and that the traditional respect and loyalty to the family would have a sobering effect.

Duvalier knows that his people are defenseless, that his partisans
are divided against each other and that his assassination alone would remove the corner stone and make the regime collapse. He is so well guarded that on his rare ventures outside the palace a whole army is mobilized to protect him; even anti-aircraft weapons are taken along. He is always armed and even his close partisans are disarmed before they enter the sanctity of his office. He takes great precautions against possible poisoning. The display of arms when he appears in public is enough to make a would-be assassin realize that it would mean self-immolation to kill Duvalier. Should Duvalier die, he expects rather unrealistically that his self-effacing wife will take over, for there is no second in command. Indeed, many Haitians have pinned all their hopes on the death of Duvalier. He is in poor health, but only 58 years old and has outlived a major heart attack and several plots against his life. In the meantime he has used and is still using a wide range of social control devices to dominate Haitian life.

2. The Duvalier Program and Accomplishment

An objective analysis of Duvalier's propaganda and speeches leads to the conclusion that the so-called "Duvalierist Revolution" stands for nothing. It is but a continuation of the Haitian political tradition by new men with the same old ideas. It is almost hopeless to seek out any political principles to which Duvalier has adhered consistently. He has no ideology, no coherent doctrine of his own, except clichés and generalities about black nationalism and a "New" Haiti.

Black nationalism in the hands of the Duvalier regime becomes a sort of collective defense mechanism masking a collective inferiority
complex. It translates itself in a "we are a poor but independent Negro nation" type of rationality. He exhorts Haitian pride in the glories of the war of independence and the achievement of the national heroes of 160 years ago. In his search for negritude (Negro-ness) he has fostered black racism.

As for building the "New" Haiti, the "Duvalierist revolution" has been a revolution of descending expectation. In the first days of his regime, he had elaborate plans, blue prints and maquettes which he showed with pride to visiting journalists. Then he presided over an embarrassing series of abortive ground breaking ceremonies for projects which never went beyond that stage. He admits that he has not "yet" been able to put his plans to execution because of his political enemies and lack of funds, that "the country is exhausted by misery, hunger and nudity." Every Haitian was in agreement with him when he made that statement. It is the consensus of all Haitians young and old, from the masses to the elite, that in their life time they have never seen the country in the state that it is in today.

Missionaries say that people who would have been insulted to receive a food handout a few years back, now sneak in at night so as not to be seen to receive a plate of food. It is not possible to walk down the

17A Haitian informant said: "No doubt the fathers of our independ-ence would turn in their graves if they saw how their revolution has been betrayed. It is pathetic that we have to remind ourselves constantly of our past greatness in order to mesmerize ourselves and hide from our view the present chaos. We glorify them for what else do we have to show the world with pride: only the past nothing in the present."
streets of Port-au-Prince without being followed by hordes of begging children and adults. Signs of decay are everywhere from the un repaired streets, to the crumbling houses to the non-functioning public utilities. Meanwhile, the Duvalier regime spends 60 percent of the budget on the military and militia and new taxes are introduced constantly making Haiti one of the highest taxed nations in the hemisphere. A visiting African diplomat remarked recently: "If in 50 years my country is in a condition like this, I would wish that we had never won our independence." Those who can do so leave the country. The others, looking at Duvalier's mottoes plastered everywhere: "Survive in Dignity," "The Duvalierist Peace," are silently living without work, without food, without hope and as Haitians say: "live without life."

Quoting a clandestine newspaper:

The Duvalierist peace? Yes surely there is one, with many faces: the silent peace of stomachs without food, the peace of lifeless tortured bodies; the peace of insanity, the peace of death. Here is your Duvalierist peace, this rotten peace which is going to explode one day in the light of justice.

Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic was as ruthless and as terrorizing as the Duvalier regime. Nevertheless, the country improved under his iron-fisted rule. Apologists for Trujillo can point out that before his advent, their country had a lower standard of

---


19 Haiti Demain (Port-au-Prince), August, 1962. (Clandestine newsletter attributed to the communist party of Haiti.)
living than Haiti and now has a fine network of roads, public utilities, schools, the beginning of industrialization and a per capita income of $226 versus $70 for Haiti. Apologists for the Duvalier regime can point to nothing tangible to attenuate the heavy price of despotism. Not only has Haiti stagnated under the Duvalier regime but, every aspect of Haitian life has regressed.

The accomplishment of Duvalier can be summarized very simply: he has devoted relentless energy in keeping himself in power.

C. The Consequences of Despotism

1. Institutionalized Corruption

Corruption in Haitian public life existed long before President Duvalier came to power. However, Duvalier has institutionalized corruption in the sense that under his regime dishonesties of all kinds have become so flagrant that Haitians expect little else.

The most unfortunate consequence of this state of affairs is the demoralization of the younger generation. They cannot be expected to internalize ideals of honesty and personal integrity when they have as models of successful men Duvalier's partisans who for the vast majority, if not all, have obtained rapid wealth and power by overt dishonest and unscrupulous means. Schools have become diploma mills, cheating is rampant, grades can be bought, a diploma can be obtained through political pull. In high schools, teachers are intimidated by aggressive

---

20See St. John, op. cit. The descriptions St. John made about corruption in 1863 have a striking similarity to those of 1963.
students who belong to Duvalier's junior macoutes. The regime tries and is often successful in monopolizing all the scholarships offered by various foreign embassies, to send the sons of the faithful abroad. The latter, supposedly the future cadres of the regime, often don't even bother to go to classes as for instance, the duvalierist students in Madrid. In Mexico City, they have behaved so scandalously as to affect the status of all Haitians at the University of Mexico.

With regards to governmental practice, Duvalier did not disregard democratic procedures but corrupted them by making a mockery of them. After getting away with his illegal election of 1961, there was little to hold him back and as it was expected, he voted himself president for life in June, 1964. The vote actually came on a popular referendum to approve a provision of his new constitution stating that Duvalier will exercise for life his high functions in agreement with the will of all Haitians. There was no opposition. All the ballots were marked yes in advance and voters were allowed to cast as many as they wished. Duvalier claimed victory half a day before the polls closed.

As to the problem of financing the regime with diminishing internal revenues, a series of steps were undertaken to find new sources of income. First heavy emergency taxes were imposed on basic consumer goods; toll gates were installed at the entrance and exit of every town. Compulsory donations from government employees cut their salaries by 20 percent and pressure was exerted on them to buy government lottery tickets and government bonds. Public utilities had to convert 25 percent of their liquid assets in bonds called "certificates of Economic
Liberation," businessmen, foreign and Haitian alike, are solicited to make "voluntary" donations, the amount of which is predetermined. Threats and blackmail deter the most recalcitrant. In one instance, the cancelled donation check of a business firm bore the signature of the mistress of Luckner Cambronne, Duvalier's chief collector. Although this particular instance was brought to the attention of the President, he chose to ignore it. Duvalier seems unable to do anything about graft and therefore has closed his eyes to the abuses of his henchmen. In the beginning of his regime, he gave the impression, in spite of his other limitations, of being honest and frugal in contrast to the flamboyance and extravagance of his forerunner, President Magloire. However, there is increasing evidence that funds larger than the President's income are periodically deposited in Switzerland. Furthermore, it would be hard to believe that the central figure of a ring of corruption is uninvolved. In 1963, the International Commission of Jurists, a semi-official United Nations body, charged President Duvalier in a published report, of running a "bloody and tyrannical dictatorship" to enrich himself and his followers. They estimated that the Duvalier regime was milking Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world, of about $10 million a year. Many of the funds used to pay off the partisans of the regime come from so-called "non-fiscal accounts"

---

21 Bulletin of the International Commission of Jurists (Geneva), "The Situation in Haiti," December, 1963, pp. 19-26. The report concludes by saying: "In the world today there are many authoritarian regimes. Many of them have at least the merit of being based on an ideology, but the tyranny that oppresses Haiti has not even this saving grace."

i.e., governmental monopolies on the sale of tobacco, sugar, etc., which are not included in the budget and not accounted for publicly.

The consequence of this policy of extortion is to further reduce economic activities, in a downward spiraling, vicious circle. The customhouse, the chief source of internal revenues, finds its returns diminishing as businessmen fail to replenish their stock for fear of further extortion. Therefore, the regime tries to extort more to make up for the customhouse deficiencies. To aggravate the situation further, most foreign suppliers have withdrawn credit facilities and honor orders from Haiti only when cash payments are made in advance. In turn local credit has been cut off and consumption is at an all time low. Businesses which dare close expose themselves to government seizures. Economic stagnation is reflected in the near-empty stores and places of business, and the crowded government offices overstaffed with untrained political appointees are not much busier. The regime is interested in giving as much employment as possible to its collaborators but does not seem to care whether they have anything worthwhile to do. There are many sinecures, even non-existent positions, which are included on the government's payroll. A visit to a government office is illuminating. The confusion and disorder are striking as groups of clerks are assembled together in idle conversations while stacks of papers gathering dust wait to be filed, peddlers going through the offices, beggars soliciting in the hallways, long lines of people from the masses waiting to see an undersecretary for a job or a political favor, the high degree of
absenteeism in spite of the numerous holidays, all point to the inefficiency and incompetency of the regime. If a chief clerk is bold enough to try to extract work from his subordinates and demands a semblance of efficiency, he is quickly cut down to size by threats or he is reminded that government checks are two months in arrears and have been so for the last year. In government hospitals, Haitian nurses have occasionally gone home while on night duty and let patients die for failure to treat them at the prescribed hour. As a whole, it is the system which is corrupted, not the individual, but it is practically impossible for an individual to fight the system without being overwhelmed by it. Many Haitians trained abroad who have demonstrated their ability in another environment have returned to Haiti full of new ideas and resolutions only to be cut down to size and succumb to the routine of the system where competency is considered a threat to others. Whether Duvalier realizes or not what is happening in his administration, he is preoccupied with much more important matters such as possible plots against him. With one hand he signs the liberal Duvalier Labor Code and with the other he makes a cash present of $10,000 to a newspaper owner who flaunts the code by paying his workers starvation wages but pays diligent lip service to the regime. Occasionally abuses of public servants are brought to the president's attention via the local press, but Haitians are sceptical about these public denunciations, for they are always directed against subalterns and stem very often from rivalries within the ranks of the administration itself. Duvalier proclaimed a reign of austerity to
face the hard times since the withdrawal of American aid while at the same time, his favorite partisans build themselves $50,000 villas on monthly salaries of $200-$500. The regime has passed the stage of being concerned with reforming abuses. As members of the opposition say, Doc's vicious circle spells his own sobriquet: Degradation, Oppression, Corruption.

2. Social Movements

Haitians who are aware of the duvalierist hoax are forced through fear, to watch silently the steady disintegration of their country. Their hatred and resentment have taken the form of latent social movements. Worthy of mention are the currents of anti-Americanism and communist sympathy inside the country and the activities of the exiles outside the country.

Anti-Americanism

Anti-American feeling, or at least coolness toward the United States, has existed since the American occupation, the younger generation's attitudes being shaped by their elders or one-sided history books. Of course nowadays it is fashionable to be "anti-yankee," and by extension to be leftist. Not to be, is to risk being labeled a reactionary or neo-colonial. Anti-Americanism is associated with anti-capitalism, not the form of mixed capitalism found in the United States today but the exploitive laissez-faire capitalism prevalent

22 Social movements in Haiti are really quasi-social movements and represent marked changes in attitude in the educated sector of the population rather than organized social movements with action programs.
in Haiti. Capitalism is equated with imperialism: the American-owned enterprises with their arrogant managers and their dependents living aloof in their enclaves, the American company with its castelike hierarchy, the exploitation of cheap labor, the low prices paid for Haitian exports, the high price of American imports that only the privileged can enjoy. At the same time, the pro-American element of the country is the most reactionary, the most selfish, and are the biggest exploiters who help in no small way to round up an unfavorable stereotype of Uncle Sam. Frustrated by the seemingly insoluble problems of underdevelopment and their dependence on the U.S., many Haitians have a tendency to blame all their problems on the so-called imperialist exploitation of the United States. Of course American companies are easy scapegoats. It is easy to convince people that they are making unreasonably high profits and interfere in a high-handed way in the government of the country. Though they have been exploited many times, Haitians tend to exaggerate the degree of exploitation to which they have to submit. There is a certain ambivalence in their attitudes toward Americans. In one way they admire the accomplishment of American civilization and are only too happy to come to the United States, but otherwise they fear and resent the overwhelming power and wealth of their neighbor to the north. In a poll taken among university students, Haitian students listed as the three leading positive characteristics of North Americans: practical, hard working, generous whereas the three top negative characteristics were imperialist, cold and materialist.
Under the Duvalier regime, anti-American feeling has increased in a disturbing way although it has not attained as yet the virulence demonstrated among the student and labor sectors of some other Latin American countries. The U.S. State Department seems to have an aptitude for siding with unpopular causes in Latin America or vacillating and making enemies on both sides. Such is the case in Haiti. Partisans of the Duvalier regime resent bitterly the U.S. for cutting off their bread and butter and for not taking them seriously, while the opposition is enraged at the do-nothing attitude of the U.S. which lets them suffer indefinitely under the Duvalier tyranny. This latter group represents the vast majority of articulate Haitians. The U.S. has alienated itself from these Haitians by supporting a corrupt, incompetent and unpopular government even though today the support is a token one and diplomatic relations follow the "cool but correct" formula. While they were personal admirers of President Kennedy, they feel that the Johnson administration has let them down; that the U.S. has buttressed the Duvalier regime with millions of dollars and a military mission and that in spite of the valiant anti-Duvalier campaign conducted by the U.S. press, the U.S. government has shown itself insensitive to all the atrocities which are taking place in Haiti as long as Duvalier shows himself a foe of communism and respects American interests in Haiti and that this is an essentially selfish policy. They argue that the inadequate policies of the State Department are pushing them into the arms of communism as the only salvation from duvalierism, for they feel that in the name of humanity alone the United
States should help them rid themselves of Duvalier; that if they manage eventually to topple Duvalier alone they will owe nothing to the U.S. and a new government will show itself hostile to the United States.

**Communism**

As for communism, it is obvious that the present conditions in Haiti are a seedbed for leftist causes, and movements with radical solutions are the most popular. The Haitian brand of communism is communism in the broadest sense of the word. There are a few foreign trained communists with organized cells but many more self-styled marxists who are in effect only communist sympathizers with no serious understanding of communist doctrines and tactics.

The communist party of Haiti started in the thirties when young intellectuals exposed to communist doctrines while studying in France came back with revolutionary ideas. Some of these are in the country today in important positions including top officials of the Duvalier regime. However, it is quite misleading to say that the Duvalier regime is infiltrated with communists for the latter have long since forgotten their lofty ideals and are leading the comfortable lives of bourgeois. Their dedication was skin deep for as soon as they became affluent their outlook on life changed. Because of their former allegiance, they play, nonetheless, an important role in protecting the activities of professed communists which are illegal but generally ignored by the government. It is thought that a gentlemen's agreement has been made between Duvalier and the communist groups that as long
as they restrict their activities to proselytizing and make no attempt to overthrow his government, they will be left alone. At the same time Duvalier can use them to worry the United States. The communists themselves are in no hurry. They feel that the Duvalier regime will inevitably collapse from the weight of its own corruption and in the meantime is providing them the ideal conditions to gain converts, and is giving them time to organize a long range plan and train their future cadres. Their ultimate objective is to destroy the old socio-political system and restructure the society along the lines of a modern socialist state. Their program has general appeal and recruiting is fairly easy among the younger set. Today the communist group is by far the best organized and the largest of all clandestine groups. Originally divided into two rival factions, they consolidated into an uneasy alliance in 1963. For the time being, it is essentially a movement of intellectuals and students with inroads within the ranks of the semi-skilled labor force. They receive token outside help probably through the Polish embassy, circulate foreign communist as well as their own publications. There are nightly broadcasts in creole from radio Havana and some Haitian students are studying incognito in Russia.

The increasing ease with which the communists gain sympathizers among neutrals in Haiti is due to three inextricably linked causes: anti-duvalierism, anti-americanism and anti-capitalism.

With regard to anti-duvalierism, many Haitian communists concede that communist regimes are equally totalitarian but that at least they have higher ideals of honesty, work, discipline and social justice
whereas the Duvalier regime is an example of the last stages of decadence and corruption in a capitalist system.

As to anti-Americanism, there are several reasons for it. First some communist sympathizers are bitter at the U.S. for not having toppled Duvalier long ago, sparing them the long drawn out misery they are now enduring. They have lost confidence in the U.S. and feel that the American government is only concerned with protecting American investments which are better guaranteed by a despot like Duvalier than a more progressive government. As most literate Haitians, they are great admirers of the Cuban revolution and are excited by the challenge of Castro. They resent the American use of the word freedom versus communism, for they interpret it as the freedom of Wall Street to have a free hand in the economic affairs of the hemisphere with the collaboration of local capitalists. They consider U.S. aid insincere and motivated only by fear of communism. Above all they are frustrated by the fact that nowhere in the world today, can a weak country choose its own destiny without the intrusion of the most powerful neighbor, that a communist take-over would be relatively easy in Haiti but the chief obstacle is the U.S. which lets them suffer under Duvalier but would use force to crush any attempt to install a leftist regime.

Anti-capitalism is linked closely to anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism. It is often motivated by a genuine desire to reform the economy of the country along more rational and equalitarian lines. They are convinced that the capitalist system is incapable of bringing about significant economic improvements in Haiti. "If what we have
had so far, "is democracy and free enterprise," they say, "then give us communism." Communism has great appeal to underdeveloped areas; it is the only untried way out of socioeconomic stagnation. It is generally agreed that the vicious circle of underdevelopment can only be broken by major social restructuring. Communism appeals in that it seems to be able to effect this major restructuring in less time than the free enterprise system. Haitian communists are further encouraged by similar trends of thoughts in other Latin American countries.

For the time being, the communist movement in Haiti, although it is gaining ground, is at the talking stage and has not yet passed to action. What would prevent communism from taking over Haiti? First of course, the intervention of the United States. Not to be dismissed are obstacles in the Haitian milieu itself. Many communist sympathizers are undisciplined and motivated by self-interest. At the same time that they are professing their leftist tendencies and voicing concern over the state of their country, many are applying for American visas in order to earn a living in New York. Individualism and self-interest are so incrusted in the Haitian character that communism will have a hard time taking firm roots. Furthermore, there are few industries to seize or estates to break up and redistribute. More than 80 percent of the Haitian peasantry are proprietors of their small plots and to nationalize the land, the Haitian communists would have a major uprising on their hands. Lastly, international communism, while sympathetic to Haitian communists' efforts, is not really interested in
Haiti at the moment. A communist power has no reason to get involved in a hornet's nest such as Haiti, when there are many more attractive and receptive areas of the hemisphere to infiltrate. Little of what has taken place in Haiti so far has affected world affairs in any tangible way. Haiti is culturally, linguistically and racially isolated from the rest of the hemisphere with little influence on the rest of Latin America. A communist take-over would be of necessity a dead-end project as well as a costly and difficult one with little prospect of return.

**Activities of the Exiles**

Exiles leave the country in various ways. There are voluntary expatriates who are not politically persecuted but can no longer endure the chaotic conditions of the country and consequently seek a better life outside Haiti. This group is by far the most numerous. Then there are those who are pressured by the government to leave, or are deported outright, and lastly, those who flee for their lives. Many of the latter leave after taking asylum in foreign embassies. The right of asylum is a sacred right throughout Latin America and is a tradition especially strong in Haiti where it has existed since the nation was host to its first foreign representatives in the 19th century. All parties, the oppressor and oppressed, are equally interested in its observance since the cyclical pattern of "in" and "out" political groups results in each alternate group enjoying
foreign protection in its turn. 23 Partisans of the regime today have
probably already secretly chosen the most accessible embassy should
Duvalier fall. Foreign embassies are concerned with the possible
abuse of this privilege for it is the cheapest and easiest way of get-
ting out of the country and it is hard to determine the merits of each
individual case. With each recurrent political crisis, foreign embassies
are filled with refugees and reluctantly Duvalier is obliged to give
them safe conduct passes out of the country. Since then he has sur-
rounded all foreign embassies with his guards to deter his enemies
from seeking asylum.

With the steady exodus of Haitians during the last eight years,
little Haitian colonies have sprung up in the principal cities of Latin
and North America. The three most important and active centers for
political exiles are New York City, Caracas, and Santo Domingo. Recently
the Santo Domingo group has moved to Puerto Rico because of disturbances
in the Dominican Republic. These three main groups are in contact with
each other and with minor Haitian groups throughout the world.

Exile seems to bring out the worst rather than the best in people.

23 The United States does not participate in the Inter American
convention regulating the right of asylum since it is essentially a
reciprocal arrangement and no one in the U.S. needs to flee from
political persecution by taking asylum in an embassy. If the U.S. did
participate it would need a grand hotel annex to most of its Latin
American embassies for people would probably choose the American embassy
where asylum would be more comfortable and lead to a chance to go to
the U.S. Nonetheless, in Haiti it is known that the American embassy
under the Duvalier regime has helped many Haitians secure asylum in
other embassies and assisted them in obtaining residence visas to the
U.S.
To be in exile is a frustrating and traumatic experience that few people are aware of. It is like robbing a person of his status, of his natural milieu, of his friends, of his family, on top of the great insecurity of the future. The exile is a marginal man who does not readapt himself to a new environment but waits endlessly to return home. These frustrations are reflected in the continuous bickerings and arguments entered into among exiles in New York and elsewhere. Energies are consumed in forming future imaginary governments instead of banding together to defeat the common enemy. A fact bearing heavily upon the whole exile predicament is that exiles get immersed in the new environment to which they have to adapt to make a living. Often this new environment is none too friendly to them. It becomes too much of a strain to battle on two fronts and they postpone their fight for Haiti. The more they postpone the more the promise they made to themselves upon leaving the native soil dims away in the past. They rationalize, using often sincerely as a pretext that they have left their relatives behind and do not want to jeopardize the safety of the latter by getting too involved in resistance activities. Most of the exiles are people of intelligence, in fact to a great extent the intelligentsia of Haiti is in exile.

The exiles have undertaken several unsuccessful invasions of Haiti and conduct a more or less steady anti-Duvalier propaganda through their publications and public appearances. They are split into many rival associations which manage to present a united front only when a severe crisis threatens the Duvalier regime. They receive
only token support from their host government since the relative unim-
portance of Haiti makes the outside world rather indifferent to their
cause. Those in the United States are further handicapped by the fact
that while the U.S. public is sympathetic to their plight, the U.S.
government still maintains relations with the government they have
fled. Division among the ranks of the exiles is not necessarily along
traditional class lines but more so on ideological ground between the
old and new school of thought. Those who left the country a long
time ago fail to understand that the old political game has played
itself out and that it is essential that personal ambitions be
subordinated to the interest of the group. On the other hand, the
excesses of the Duvalier regime have at last opened the eyes of the
more recent and younger groups of exiles who reject the traditional
opposition and are looking for new solutions. Although divided by
political beliefs ranging from moderate center to far left, they
represent the only hope for a new start in Haiti. However, in this
writer's opinion, it is only when they put aside the hollow pride of
nationalism and accept the fact that only with the initial support of
a United Nation mandate or another form of international supervision
will they be able to be the successful cadres of their country. As
capable as they are as individuals, they are still part of the
"system" which is too strong for them to reform alone without outside
help.

As a general conclusion it can be said that the bane of Haitian
political life has been the inability of united action, or the
subordination of individual interest to group interest. Too many educated Haitians still feel today that they alone can handle Haitian problems with the support of those individuals who share their particular views, and given a chance to lead they will inevitably turn into dictators with their own cliques. It seems that the tradition of Haitian individualism has been shaped by the history of the country and reinforced by its social institutions.
CHAPTER VIII

RELIGION

Probably nothing else comes to mind more vividly whenever mention
is made of Haiti than its religious institutions, i.e., its dominant
folk religion: vodou. However, the role of religion in Haitian
society is a relatively secondary one in the sense that religious
beliefs do not play a key role in shaping values nor determining
behavior nor do they have a major impact on other social institutions.
A study of Haitian religious activities, while giving important
insights into the folkways and habits of Haitian people, would not
necessarily lead to a comprehensive understanding of Haitian society
as it might in another semi-literate culture. Nonetheless, religious
activities have definite functions in Haitian society although they
might not be necessarily religious ones, but rather functions that
other social institutions have failed to provide for.

Freedom of religion is a real fact of Haitian life. Perhaps a
more accurate statement would be religious indifference. Catholicism
is the official faith of the country and all Haitians consider them-
selves Catholic with the exception of about eight percent who claim
they are Protestant and those among the intelligentsia who profess to
be agnostics. However, for the vast majority of the Haitian masses,
Christianity is but a thin veneer and nearly 90 percent of the
population adhere in one way or another to vodou beliefs.

A. Vodou

Much nonsense has been written about vodou, although a growing serious and scholarly literature on the subject is gradually offsetting the cheap, sensational books. However, the latter are still around and the average person is more likely to read "Voodoo Fire over Haiti" than a serious ethnological monograph. Even the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics defines vodou as:

devil-worship and fetishism brought from the Gold Coast of Africa by Negro captives to the U.S. and the West Indies. Its chief sacrifice is a girl child referred to by the initiates as 'the goat without horn'...There is a regular priesthood to intimidate and rob the devotees... Few white people realize the menace of vodoo due to its absolute power on a certain class of mind.\footnote{James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), Vol. XII, pp. 640-41. The definition of vodoo is authored by Mary Owen, president of the Missouri Folklore Society and listed as admitted to tribal membership with the Algonquin Indians.}

Actually, by sociological definition, vodou\footnote{The term is derived from a Dahomean word signifying god or spirit. The spelling VODOU and VODUN are acceptable renditions of the creole pronunciation of the word. The spelling voodoo is generally avoided by serious writers for it has a negative connotation of black magic, child sacrifice and other forms of sensationalism. Most of the vodou terminology is of African origin.} is a religion. It is a social institution built around the idea of a supernatural being and the relation of man to this supernatural power.\footnote{Henry Pratt Fairchild (ed.), Dictionary of Sociology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), p. 256.} A religion presupposes
three fundamental elements, namely: 1) a belief system; 2) a set of rituals; 3) a place of worship. Vodou has all three.

Vodou followers believe in the power of the divinities to which they attribute their fortunes and misfortunes. They practice elaborate rites, rituals and ceremonies. Finally vodou believers worship in temples known as houmfort. Vodou is a form of animism in the sense that its followers believe that certain objects are inhabited by spirits. However, Catholic rituals and prayers are also incorporated into vodou through the curious process of syncretism.

While Catholicism is the official religion of Haiti, every vodou adherent including a vodou priest considers himself a Catholic. Those who practice vodou are often baptized Catholics and occasionally attend mass. They fail to comprehend that Catholicism automatically excludes other religions. They do not conceive of Catholicism as an organized religion with a set of responsibilities and privileges to which one owes an exclusive loyalty. They feel one can be both a vodou believer and a practicant Catholic, for vodouism has a friendly disposition toward the Catholic Church.

1. Origin and Development of Vodou

Vodou has its origin in African beliefs and ceremonies transplanted by slaves to the New World where they assumed new forms. Therefore, it would be more correct to say that vodou was born in the New World but has its major roots in Africa. There is an essential syncretic quality about vodou. It is not simply a West African cult transplanted to the American hemisphere. It is a composite of African
beliefs and practices, Catholic rites, magical practices of European origin as well as Haitian innovations. While vodou cults occurred only in Haiti and Louisiana during the colonial period, similar cults developed in other parts of Latin America wherever there was a concentration of African slaves. For instance, the condombre and macumba rites of Brazil, the nanigo of Cuba, the obeah of Jamaica and the shango cult of Trinidad, some of them still flourishing today.

The slaves brought to Haiti represented many different tribes with different languages and religious beliefs. However, they all had dance as a common medium of religious expression, and it is around the dance complex that the composite Haitian vodou beliefs emerged, dominated principally by Dahomean culture.

There is no evidence that during colonial times vodou was ever considered important by the white ruling class. In a way, it proved to be their undoing for vodou played a decisive role in the mass slave uprising during the Haitian war of independence. It was in the seemingly innocent vodou dance gatherings that the idea of revolt germinated and spread across the island. It was in vodou gatherings that the bond of solidarity essential to a successful revolt was born. Haitian history records the celebrated ceremonie du Bois Caiman directed by the vodou priest Boukman where a pig was sacrificed and the participants drank its blood as a loyalty oath on the eve of the successful revolt of half a million slaves. Vodou was suppressed in the period which followed independence. The new black rulers, realizing what an effective tool vodou meetings had been in fostering rebellion, feared
that this same tool might be used against them. However, the suppression gave way slowly as there were no effective means to implement it, and by the middle of the 19th century, vodou had gradually crystallized into the form it now exhibits. Occasionally campaigns have been waged to suppress the cult with the connivance of the Catholic and Protestant Churches. The last anti-vodou campaign, staged in 1941, was so intolerant and brutal that it brought severe criticisms upon the church and government by responsible citizens. With the Social Revolution of 1946, educated Haitians began to accept the African cultural heritage as an integral part of the national culture, henceforth vodou activities, while not encouraged, have been tolerated and not interfered with. It goes without saying that the six percent of the nation which makes up the urban bourgeoisie and middle class do not participate in vodou activities or beliefs. In fact, the elite chooses to ignore vodou rather than condemn it. Of course, anyone living in Haiti, as removed as they might be from the masses, cannot help hearing about the fantastic stories, strange happenings and exploits of vodou followers. However, this knowledge is usually acquired secondhand. To participate in or even to witness vodou ceremonies would threaten the social status of an educated Haitian unless he is an artist or a student of folklore.

2. The Structure of the Vodou Cult

Vodou is not an organized religion with a dogma, a set of written traditions, a centralized organization, a membership roll, or a chosen day for worship. It is governed by oral traditions and anyone who has
the call can technically be a vodou priest. However, leadership is generally passed down within the extended family. Every community and temple has its own organization, with traditions varying from region to region. Vodou activities are notably weak in the north but strong in the region of Port-au-Prince and in the southern peninsula. The most powerful vodou priests are in Port-au-Prince caring for the needs of the capital's growing proletariat. In regions where Protestant missions are active or where the Catholic church has a progressive program of social services such as schools and dispensaries, vodou traditions weaken.4

A vodou priest is called hougan. There are various types of hougans ranging from the imposters to the much feared powerful ones. Generally they are illiterate or have little education, but it is compensated for by their cunning, natural intelligence and leadership qualities. They possess an extensive knowledge of the curative properties of herbs, and are the carriers of a vast oral tradition of beliefs, rites and mythology from one generation to the next. The female counterpart of a hougan is known as a mambo. Sometimes in the more important temples she serves with hougans or she has an establishment of her own. Next in line in the vodou hierarchy are the canzos. These are the initiates who have gone through the first or second degree

4For instance on Tortuga Island in northern Haiti, vodou was thriving until the arrival of a dynamic French priest who founded a model hospital and provided many social services for the island's 10,000 inhabitants. He prides himself of the fact that the two last vodou priests died at his hospital.
initiation rites. After the third initiation they become full-fledged *mambos* or *hougans*. Two other personages associated with vodou are the *bocor* and *docteur feuille*. The *bocor* is an individual endowed with magical knowledge but who is involved essentially in negative magic. He sells *ouangas* (damaging or protective charms). The *docteur feuille* is a medicine man whose knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants and magic incantations makes him an important person in rural Haiti where there are practically no physicians. He can be an independent but very often he is also a *hougan* or at least a *canzo*. Another personage worthy of mention is the *pere savane* (bush priest) who stands midway between vodou and Catholicism and is thus a sort of a human representative of syncretism. He is a layman whose knowledge of Catholic prayers is called upon to officiate at blessings, funeral and other solemn occasions in rural Haiti.

The vodou temple is called a *houmfort*. It has a makeshift appearance, seldom more than a thatched roof over wooden poles with a dirt floor. There are several benches on the sides and its central pole, *poteau mitan*, has religious significance. At one end of this rectangular space are two doors leading to altar rooms which are private. A vodou altar is similar to a Catholic one but is littered with the oddest assortment of objects: crucifixes, candles, offerings of food and drink, plastic toys, stone artifacts of aboriginal Indians, covered clay jars (*govis*) believed to contain the souls of certain deities, and other various and sundry objects. The urban temples are a little more elaborate and generally more gaudy, but they never
approximate the dignity of a church, nor is an effort made to achieve that effect. A vodou temple reflects by its appearance the general informality of vodou ceremonies.

It is hard to decide whether vodou is a polytheistic or a monotheistic religion. It is monotheistic in the sense that the Christian god is considered the master of all the other divinities. However this supreme god (Bon-dieu) is not worshipped in vodou temples but in churches. There are hundreds of vodou divinities called loas. They could be compared to the saints of the somewhat primitive Catholicism of southern Europe, where the statues of saints have more meaning to the faithful than an abstract god.

The vodou deities are divided into two classes: the rada divinities of African origin, and the petro divinities of Haitian origin. In every temple there are two altar chambers, one for each class of gods. The two ceremonies are kept separate and have different drums, rhythms, chants and dances. The rada rites are more common and more important, whereas the petro rites are characterized by their violence, the greater use of magic and therefore are more exciting to watch. Each deity has his rhythm and to each rhythm corresponds more or less a dance.

Through the process of syncretism the identity of some of the vodou deities has become confused with Catholic saints. To name a

5The Catholic Church was indirectly responsible for this phenomenon of mistaken identity by flooding the republic with inexpensive lithographs of Catholic saints. For instance the lithograph of St. Patrick shows him with snakes at his feet, hence the confusion with the snake god Damballa. This could also be considered an example of cultural reinterpretation.
few: Damballa, the snake god, associated with St. Patrick. His rhythm and dance is yanvalou, imitative of snake movements. Maitresse Erzulie, goddess of love is conceived as a beautiful fair-skinned woman, and is associated with the Virgin Mary. Perfumes, flowers and cakes are offered to her. Sometimes her male devotees go through a curious ceremony where they enter into a marriage pact with her. Legba, master of the crossroad, is associated with St. Anthony. Ogun, the god of war, is found in Africa and Brazil with the same name and function. Agoué is the master of the seas and is honored especially by sailors and fishermen. Simbi is a petro god who inhabits trees and is reportedly temperamental, for each deity has its own personality. There are special cults for twins (marassa) who are believed to be endowed with special graces, and cults for the dead. The latter, known as guédé, is celebrated during All Saints Day with erotic dances symbolizing the duality of life and death.

3. The Vodou Service and the Phenomenon of Possession

Vodou services vary from a handful of people dancing and chanting to the accompaniment of drums, to very elaborate ceremonies of several days' duration involving hundreds of people, props and animal sacrifices. Drumming, dancing, chanting, possession and sacrifices are the chief activities of vodou services. Women participants far outnumber men. Contrary to popular beliefs held by foreigners, vodou ceremonies do not end in orgies and the drinking which occurs is hardly ever excessive.

By far the most outstanding aspect and the central part of the
vodou ceremony is the possession. Under the hypnotic effect of drum rhythms, stimulated by dancing and possibly by beliefs, a participant, always an initiate, suddenly falls into a hysterical state similar to an epileptic seizure. His whole body tenses and he moves frantically, still staying in rhythm until the vodou priest brings him out of his trance. It is interpreted as a state during which a deity enters the soul of the person possessed. The personality of the possessed undergoes radical changes and takes on the specific personality of the deity. For instance someone possessed by Damballa will start moving like a snake. Ethnologists have reported extraordinary feats accomplished by persons in a state of possession, such as walking on red hot charcoal without physical injuries, staying under water for an incredible length of time, etc. Psychological studies are currently being made to give a scientific explanation to the phenomenon of possession.

---

6 To give an idea of a vodou ceremony, the following is a brief account of a Petro ceremony witnessed by this writer on Christmas Eve 1960, at Croix des Missions near Port-au-Prince.

We arrived at the houmfort around 8 p.m. Only a few persons were there. People came casually one by one and milled around, while the sacred objects were being prepared. After two hours the temple was filled with people. Drummers started to tighten their drums and play a little, someone started a song, someone else started to dance and before we knew it, the ceremony had gotten underway. The vodou priest emerged in very colorful clothes; he opened the door to the Petro altar chamber which was blazing with candlelights. He stepped outside of the temple with a large whip which he cracked in the dead of night to call the spirits. Drumming started to get louder and faster, the dancing became more general and energetic. Tafia rum was passed around but on the whole, drinking remained moderate. The first possession occurred around midnight. A woman who was an active dancer withdrew to the side and acted as if she were fighting off being sick
4. General Remarks about Vodou

Because of its syncretic nature and the absence of written tradition, vodou appears as a loose body of beliefs, rituals and customs which are not clearly elucidated by its non-literate followers. Therefore, it is difficult to give a concise general picture of the religion for it is a religion of action not one of reason. The following is an attempt to summarize the essence of vodou.

Vodou is a cult through which the believer worships divinities to which he attributes his fortunes and misfortunes. Through the medium of a priest, divinities can be pleased or appeased by making offerings and by following certain rituals. These generally take

when suddenly she leaped into the center, her body violently shaking from head to toe. She rolled on the dirt floor and immediately other canzos came to her assistance taking off her belt and other sharp objects so that she would not injure herself in this uncontrollable state. The hougan brought her out of her trance by spraying rum on her face. About an hour later the sacrificial animal, a dog, was brought in. He was carefully bathed with a solution of water and crushed fragrant leaves. Then a torch lit procession took the dog to a decorated open tomb where he was buried alive as a sacrifice to the deity which protects this temple. Before his burial, a few Ave Maria and Pater Noster were recited in group. Another woman got possessed and started to bark and assume dog-like posture. When we left on Christmas morning, the ceremony was still going on.

Another description from a term paper of one of this writer's students relating his personal experience which is admittedly rather atypical for a university student:

...A mother was going to lose her child which seemed threatened by diabolic forces. The child could hardly breathe and was expected to die. She called upon a vodou priest in Belair (populous section of Fort-au-Frince). The latter organized an elaborate ceremony during which he called upon the deities. In a state of possession he suddenly grabbed the child from the lap of his mother saying to her "give me your little one." He put him in a basin containing ceremonial accessories, shook him, blew air in his nostrils, his eyes and ears and bathed him, slapped him all over, and returned the child to the woman saying: "Here is your little one." The child today is taking courses in sociology at the University of Haiti...
place at services where dances and chants accompanied by drum rhythms are used to create a state of exaltation or possession bringing the initiate closer to his god. The priest is believed to be endowed with supernatural powers and to be able to dispense his powers by selling magical objects or giving prescriptions capable of bringing or warding off evil.

With respect to the question of why is vodou so notorious, one can trace it back to an incident, the famous *affaire Bizoton* which occurred in the 19th century and was given wide publicity. Bizoton is a suburb of Port-au-Prince where in 1863 a little girl disappeared. After a few days it was discovered that she had been used as a human sacrifice by religious fanatics. A police investigation resulted in the arrest of eight persons who were brought to trial, found guilty, condemned to death and executed rapidly so as to calm public indignation. Much publicity was given to the trial by foreign journalists. Twenty five years later Spenser St. John, a former British diplomat in Haiti, published his memoirs and devoted two chapters to this affair and other alleged cases of cannibalism which he linked with vodou, thus reviving and recording for posterity the unfortunate episode.  

Since Sir Spenser's time tourists to Haiti have habitually spent a few hours ashore, heard drumbeats from the hills, and shuddered deliciously as they conjured up images of weird going-on—black magic, licentious dances, and frenetic orgies. Novelists during the past half-century have spun their tales full of local color, while 'serious' authors have made small fortunes out of pseudo-scientific

---

7See St. John, *Hayti or the Black Republic*, op. cit.
books with just enough facts mingled with their lush imaginings to give 'an air of similitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative.' Their language runs into such purple phrases as 'blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened,' to describe the religious exaltation of the people at a vodun service. Under this constant rain of misrepresentation, Haitians who care for the good opinion of other nations have become extremely sensitive on the subject of the folk religion.

Another factor adding to the disrepute of vodou is the generally disorganized, frantic and crude appearance of vodou ceremonies which makes it hard for a foreign onlooker to perceive a respectable or dignified element in this folk religion, especially if he conceives of religion in rigid moral terms.

With respect to the question of whether vodou plays an important or even dominant role in Haitian society, opinions are divided. First are those who feel that vodou permeates every phase of Haitian life and is one of the chief barriers to progress. Others feel that while vodou is an important aspect of Haitian culture, its impact is not so inclusive and its influence on national life has been greatly exaggerated. This writer adopts the latter view while agreeing that superstitions can retard progress, but there are many factors inhibiting progress in Haiti more important than its folk religion.

As to the function of vodou, it is obvious that if it did not serve any needs, vodou would not show the vitality it still manifests among the Haitian masses. Like any religion, it has many functions, those usually described as the needs of the inner man, i.e., security

8Leyburn, op. cit., p. 133.
against the fear of the unexplainable, security against the danger of want and illness, the security of hope and trust placed in the supernatural. Furthermore, vodou has important social and recreational functions. Participating in the singing and dancing of a vodou service is enjoyable and exciting and offers an escape from the reality of crushing poverty. It has a therapeutic function as an acceptable channel to vent off tensions and even hostility. Possibly the low rate of crime among the Haitian masses is related to the vodou practice of magic into which envy, anger, insult, malice and many other aggressive feelings are channeled. Vodou caters to some of the basic needs of the people. As long as the Christian missionaries fail to provide a form of evangelization which is more realistic to the inner needs of the Haitian masses, as long as the government fails to provide adequate medical, educational, recreational, and other social services as well as better economic opportunities, the Haitian masses will turn to vodou for daily strength for daily needs.

B. Catholicism

The history of the evolution of Catholicism in Haiti explains to a great extent the relatively indifferent role played today by the Catholic Church in Haitian life. Religious organization remained chaotic during the first two and a half centuries of the colony. The great prosperity of Saint Domingue during the 18th century coincided with the age of enlightenment in France where religious influence was waning. The planters of St. Domingue, preoccupied with amassing
fortunes and luxurious living, remained indifferent to religion, even somewhat insolent to the clergy. There were few priests in the colony and the discouraging conditions made for a high turnover rate. As a whole, religion was little known and even less practiced. Those priests who tried to abide by the Code Noir in regard to the compulsory baptismal and religious instruction of the slaves were frustrated by the indifference of the masters and their defiance when it interfered with the slaves' work. Thus efforts at Christianization among the slaves were only superficial. As for the affranchis, Holy Mass represented for many of them an occasion to display their fineries to the other classes. Toward the end of the colonial period when segregated seating was instituted, they tended to avoid church altogether. During the long revolutionary period which ushered in Haitian independence, Catholicism almost disappeared, to reappear officially only half a century later in 1860 when Haiti signed a concordat with the Vatican. During the period of schism, the unrecognized Catholic Church of Haiti appointed by the Haitian government was in the hands of defrocked priests or priests expelled from other countries or even imposters who saw in the credulous masses of Haiti an easy prey for exploitation:

There was one priest in the south..., who turned his attention to money making and every week he sallied forth from the town of Les Cayes to forage in the country districts. So that he was paid his fees, it was immaterial to him what he was called upon to bless; he would indifferentely sprinkle holy water on a new house or a freshly built temple dedicated to the Vaudoux-worship. The simple inhabitants would bring out their stone implements...used in their fetish rites, and the priest would bless them; then he
would return to town in a jovial mood and chuckle over his gains. In comparatively a few years that man remitted to Europe through an English house the sum of twelve thousand pounds sterling.\(^9\)

Documentary evidence of pre-concordat days gathered by the Catholic Church reads like the Decameron and is full of references to the general debauchery of those religious renegades. Some lived openly with their mistresses and children, engaged in commerce, or left living witnesses of their libertinage in the Haitian countryside. Nowhere else in the world was the dignity of the clergy so compromised, nowhere else was the sanctity expected of men of God profaned to the degree it was in Haiti.\(^10\)

The long schism contributed in no small measure to the development of the Afro-catolico syncretism of the religion of the masses as well as reinforcing anticlericalism among the élite revulsed by the behavior of the so-called priests.

After the signature of the concordat, a French archbishop was installed at Port-au-Prince whose task was the complete reorganization of the Haitian Catholic Church. The new clergymen had a difficult task; they faced on one side the hostility of the so-called priests they were displacing but gradually drove them out of the country. On the other side they met the suspicion of the elite imbued with the ideas of Voltaire and attached to free-masonry. As for the masses,


\(^10\)Dorsainvil, op. cit., p. 334.
the reform came too late. Their folk religion had an unhampered growth of half a century and their attachment to vodou was not to be uprooted by the new official clergy. From the beginning the Roman Catholic Church failed to win the popular support of the Haitian people. The latter only manifested tolerance, indifference and at best showed interest in their educational establishments and in the social but superficial church functions such as attending mass, celebrating feast days, church weddings and baptismals. A surprising 80 percent of the Haitian population are baptized, showing their interest in this sacrament.

In time, the position of the Catholic Church improved in Haiti but it has always remained understaffed and run by a foreign clergy. Very few Haitians have been attracted to the orders, and the foreign clergy has not encouraged the formation of native priests, whom they feel are not ready. The Catholic clergy today numbers about 1,000 of which one third are priests and the remainder are the brothers and sisters of some 15 different congregations engaged in school and hospital mission work. The majority are French, but there are some Belgians, French Canadians and Americans. About 80 priests are Haitian. As a whole the caliber of the French clergy of Haiti leaves much to be desired for it is recruited from the most backward parishes of France, notably Brittany. The Breton priests in Haiti are notorious for their narrow-minded, conservative and colonial mentality. The French Canadians and North Americans are more progressive, and there are some interesting, dynamic, and well educated elements among the
native clergy, half of whom are unfortunately in exile.

In spite of the ambivalent feelings toward the foreign clergy, the latter has had a significant political influence in the country. The Church possesses a centralized organization with a network of parishes allowing for uniformity of action. It virtually controls the school system which gives it a powerful means to influence the educated class, and holds the government in check, for without the Church and the funds it raises outside Haiti there would be no school system. Traditionally the clergy has given tacit support to the status quo maintained by the bourgeoisie whom they consider the only civilized element in Haiti. They are notably apprehensive of a progressive government which might denounce the concordat, the terms of which afford them special protection. Much of the rampant anti-clericalism among more enlightened Haitians stems from the foreign clergy's reactionary attitudes, their political meddling, their paternalism toward the "natives," their 19th century conception of religion, their intransigent opposition to vodou which now has been reduced to a cold war and also the fact that all relations between Haitians and the Catholic Church involve money and appears mercenary in so poor a country. The priests themselves have but a thinly disguised contempt for the Haitian people whom they feel are scarcely out of barbarism and have no moral principles because of the lack of religious faith among the educated class and superstition among the masses.

As a whole the clergy has failed to instill Catholic values in
all strata of Haitian society, not even among the women who are tradi-
tionally the main supporters of the church. The influence the
clergy exerts on youngsters tends to wane as the latter grow older.
As for the masses, the benefit they derive from church services in
French and Latin of which they are totally ignorant is questionable.
Nonetheless, appearances are very deceptive in Haiti. A casual
observer might conclude that urban Haitians at least are devout
Catholics and that religion is an important part of the daily lives
of the people. Churches draw large attendance at mass, although at
times the distracted and chatting crowd of faithful appears more like
a debating society than participants at Holy Mass. *Fetes patronales*
(Patron saint feast days) are very popular and every town honors its
patron saint with a week of festivities. Pilgrimages to Our Lady of
Alta Gracia, unofficial patron saint of Haiti, at Saut d'Eau and at
Higuey in the Dominican Republic are popularly attended by Haitians
of all walks of life.  

11At the picturesque waterfall of Saut d'Eau, an apparition of
the Virgin in a palm tree occurred in 1884. After her departure people
who approached the tree were miraculously cured. The parish priest,
distrustful of the miracle, tried to cut the tree but was wounded by
his own machete. Thereafter the church grudgingly approved pilgrimage
to the sight. At the same time the miracle got incorporated in vodou-
lore and the pilgrimage has both its Catholic and pagan aspects.
Herskovits relates another story of a subsequent apparition of the Vir-
gin during the American occupation, when a priest asked a Marine to
help him suppress the superstition. The Marine ordered a Haitian sol-
dier to shoot at the vision and cut down the tree. Soon after, it
was said, the priest's house burned down and he suffered a paralytic
stroke, the Marine became ill and the soldier went temporarily insane.
The Protestants have not fared any better than the Catholics and have devoted themselves largely to the proletariat and peasantry. Protestant traditions are alien to Haitian culture and while they claim a membership of 383,000 in 1955 the figure seems over-enthusiastic for they have made little impact on national life.

The original Protestant missionaries were brought into the north in 1807 by King Henry Christophe, an admirer of the "Protestant ethic" and Anglo-Saxon discipline. In 1816 the Wesleyan Methodists arrived in the west, the Baptists in 1824, and the Episcopalians in 1861. The latter religion was introduced by North American Negro immigrants to Haiti. Since then, various Protestant sects of the storefront and street corner meeting variety, reminiscent of North American Negro sects, have been introduced. In general, Protestant missions have provided better social services and many of their converts have made a clean break with vodou. However the appeal is limited, for some rigid sects demand that the Haitian peasant abandon his gambling at cockfights, dancing, singing, drinking, smoking and philandering, in other words, the entire gamut of his traditional escapes from the misery of his daily life. Stern Protestantism has little compensation to offer for the sacrifices it demands.

In general there is a great sense of religious tolerance in Haiti. It is the one true freedom of the Haitian people. Outside the clergy, few people care about the religion or lack of religion of others. The general religious indifference in Haiti is not necessarily a liability. Absence of religious dogmatism makes a society more pliable to new
ideas and in the case of Haiti, religious indifference would represent one less rather than one more stumbling block toward a program of planned social change. Furthermore, there is no conclusive evidence that lack of church influence inevitably leads to moral decay. Those who consider the moral level of Haitians relatively low should look for the main causes outside its religious or lack of religious institutions.
CONCLUSION: A SOCIETY IN CRISIS

No social system is perfect. Every society has problems, some having more than others. A society which is able to find solutions for its more pressing problems, which maintains its equilibrium and improves the standard of living and the satisfaction of its members, is considered progressive whereas a society which does not solve its problems but still maintains a certain equilibrium is referred to as stagnant. However, a society which accumulates problems without solving them will eventually pass from the stagnant stage to the regressive stage and reach the point of disequilibrium. Such is the case of Haitian society. The recurrent crises which have chronically beset Haiti in the century and a half of its existence are becoming more acute. It is getting increasingly difficult for Haitian society to maintain itself on a day-to-day, hand-to-mouth basis and use expedient solutions as palliatives to fundamental problems which have accumulated for a century and a half. However, as was mentioned before, unlike business firms, social systems do not go bankrupt; they are remarkably resilient. A nation may disintegrate but the process is long, tortuous, and its course is unpredictable. As hard as it is to predict future events, it can be said with certainty that the situation in which Haiti finds itself today is ripe for a
radical solution.

A. Summary

Summarizing the various topics discussed in this study, we turn first to the historical legacy of the nation. The colonial period was an era of great prosperity for the French but a period of oppression and exploitation for those whose descendants are the members of Haitian society today. Class hatred and cruel behavior set off the remarkable St. Domingue revolution in which the world's first successful slave revolt not only defeated the world's greatest military power of the time but established the first Negro nation in the world. Despite such an auspicious beginning, Haiti was never able to achieve political, economic and social stability but managed nonetheless to survive as a viable nation with a sociocultural identity of its own. To build a country on the ruin and ashes of 13 years of bloody civil wars with the former ruling class completely exterminated, to create a nation out of a mass of ex-slaves and a handful of educated gens de couleur and facing at the same time the hostility of the outside world, was a momentous task. From the very beginning Haiti had no chance to solve its overwhelming problems and embarked on the stormy road of its destiny armed only with political independence and the will to maintain itself while solving its problems day by day. The republic in its first century of existence experienced a series of crises which became more and more serious and climaxed in the American occupation of 1915-34. The american occupation brought only a superficial stability and no fundamental changes in the political, economic
and social character of the nation. Once American control was removed, things gradually returned to their former state. While the American occupation retarded the inevitable debacle of a century and a half of laissez-aller, expediency, irresponsibility and instability, the current Duvalier regime is accelerating the country down the path of economic deterioration, social regression and moral disintegration to the point that the very survival of the nation as a sovereign entity is at stake.

There are other factors at work besides the historical background which explains the disequilibrium in which Haitian society finds itself, namely its ecology. The Haitian setting of today is characterized by overpopulation, diminishing land returns and consequently a dropping standard of living. Haiti is the most densely populated as well as the most predominantly rural country in the American hemisphere. The high birth rate is offset to a certain extent by the high death rate; nonetheless, the population is increasing and will double itself in about 30 years. Life expectancy is estimated at 32 years, per capita income at $70 but since income is very unevenly distributed the figure of $32 a year would be more accurate for 90 percent of the population. More than half of the labor force is underemployed or idle. Furthermore, this labor force is largely unskilled, for 90 percent of the population is illiterate, the highest rate for this hemisphere and one of the highest in the world. Approximately 75 percent of the children of elementary school age are out of school largely because there are no schools available for them. The few
schools available are for the most part understaffed, with inadequately prepared teachers overcrowded classrooms, basic equipment often lacking, and curriculum hopelessly antiquated and ill-adapted to the needs of the country. Whatever educational facilities exist have been largely instituted by foreign religious orders and are primarily located in urban areas. The estimated cost of an up-to-date comprehensive system including adult education would be higher than the total national budget. The overwhelming problem of illiteracy acts as a brake upon the development of not only the individual but the society as a whole. The illiterate is a diminished person who is a slave to routine activities, difficult to reach with new ideas and a prey for exploitation.

The general physical appearance of the Haitian population is that of an undernourished people with an unbalanced diet. The average calorie intake for the vast majority is 23 percent below the normal daily requirement. While isolated cases of starvation have been mentioned from time to time, widespread famine so far has been averted. However, malnutrition as a whole has aggravated the health and the stamina of the people.

Standards of health are higher today than they were before the American occupation due to the work of American and international organizations. Endemic diseases prevalent in Haiti today are related to low standards of living and sanitation and the lack of medical personnel and facilities. The latter are concentrated in urban Haiti while millions of people in rural areas have no medical facilities.
within reach and consequently rely on their vodou practitioners.

As for standards of housing, a house is little more than a shelter for over 90 percent of the population. Dwellings are small, crowded and difficult to keep reasonably sanitary. For the total republic, only 1.6 percent of the homes have water, 10 percent have latrines and 1.8 percent have electricity. The urban slums are incredibly sordid, whereas the wealthy lives in modern villas which are quite luxurious and stand out conspicuously amid the general poverty.

The population is generally ill-clothed, although the Haitian masses seem to be conscious of their appearance and are remarkably clean under the circumstances, but crushing poverty defeats their efforts.

Poverty, malnutrition, ill-health, the low standard of living in Haiti, revolve in a vicious circle which is hard to break. The obstacles seem so insurmountable that a spirit of fatalism reigns among the Haitian masses. The idyllic picture of the poor but care-free islander is in reality a nightmare of hopelessness, physical misery and quiet desperation.

A closer look at the land reveals how precarious is the basis on which Haitian society rests. Its chief asset is the climate. The fact that the climate is mild has played no small part in keeping the population functioning at such a low standard of living, for under a more rigorous climate, the minimum requirements for staying alive would have been much higher. Climatic conditions in Haiti allow
for several crops a year in the more endowed regions. It is on the fertility of the land that the prosperity of the French colony was based. The Haitians, however, did not inherit a new country. It had been thoroughly but fairly rationally exploited during the colonial period. Absence of conservation measures and other agricultural malpractices due to ignorance have since caused the progressive deterioration of the land. The country is becoming increasingly arid. Canalization of water for irrigation, while important during the colonial period of which imposing ruins remain, has been neglected since. On the other hand, the unrestrained courses of streams during the rainy season have contributed largely to the main ravage to Haitian land resources, namely erosion. Only heavy forestation is the natural counteraction to erosion. However, with time and population pressure, more wood and more land were needed so that today the number of trees has decreased to an alarming degree. With every rainfall, tons of top soil find their way into the sea. With no trees to hold the earth, roads are washed away regularly.

Haiti is primarily an agricultural country. The soil is its chief resource, the principal source of revenue of its government, the direct means of livelihood of 88 percent of the population and indirectly of the remaining 12 percent. Coffee is the chief product along with sisal and sugar. Yet over the years production has decreased. In 1791 the colony exported crops valued at $50 million produced by a population of 520,000. In 1961 a population of four million produced $32 million worth of exports. Production is 30 percent below
what it was 170 years ago while the population has grown by 800 per-
cent. This illustrates several problems: (1) overpopulation which
forces people to devote most of the land to subsistence crops;
(2) the ravages of erosion and agricultural malpractice which has
reduced the amount of fertile land; (3) the consequence of illiteracy
and ignorance which inhibits the introduction of modern cultivation
methods; and (4) the irresponsibility of officials who have let this
state of affair accumulate for a century and a half and are faced
today with a problem of such magnitude that no one knows how to cope
with it.

Shortage of land is felt strongly in Haiti, the land under culti-
vation represents less than one acre per capita for a country which
is essentially agricultural. About 40 percent of the land is poten-
tially productive but unused because of lack of irrigation, need for
drainage or other difficulties which would require capital expen-
ditures beyond the means of the nation. For the 17 percent of the land
which is under cultivation yields are very low.

In regards to land tenure, while most of Latin America has a
problem of landless masses resulting from the latifundia system,
Haiti is rather unique, for 84 percent of the peasants own their
small plots of land. The pattern of family enterprise on small scale
properties was set in the 19th century, but because of liberal
inheritance laws, holdings have now become atomized into economically
inefficient minifundia. Over 50 percent of the family holdings are
between one and a half to six acres. This has created a social
revolution in production. During the colonial period, for instance, 3,800 coffee plantations produced an average of 76 million pounds; today 150,000 peasant familiés produce an average of 50 million pounds on their subsistence farms employing 3/4 million people.

We face here the dilemma of economic progress with latifundia versus social stability with minifundia. Latifundia are certainly economically more profitable for certain cash crops but their social costs are heavy as far as non-industrialized countries are concerned. First they occupy the best land and turn the local peasantry into landless agricultural workers; then they cannot guarantee full employment because of the seasonal nature of their activities, and the price of the crops is at the mercy of international speculation. As for minifundia, land ownership has an integrative effect resulting in social stability and security, but at the cost of decreased production, economic stagnation, and eventually regression. Today the Haitian peasant's holding is no longer large enough to support his family in a style which is above subsistency and which would secure and maintain a decent standard of living and a respectable existence. The solution is far from simple. Attempts at forming cooperatives, a system which ideally combines the best elements of both systems, are handicapped by the low level of education of the Haitian peasant. Those who obtain some education generally forsake the countryside for the town. Furthermore, the scattered homestead settlement pattern of the Haitian peasant makes it difficult to develop community projects. Another serious impediment to agricultural reform is the problem of
land titles. No general land survey has been made since the 1830's. The carelessness of a century or more has resulted in a most confused state of anarchy in land titles; consequently, the peasant suffers from a great sense of insecurity and distrusts officials. The high percentage of proprietorship conceals the fact that many do not have their land titles in order. This is a delicate question that every Haitian government has avoided tackling thus far for fear of having a peasant uprising on its hands which it could not control.

As a whole, the man and land ecological equilibrium in Haiti is compromised and cannot continue for very long in its present state. In the meantime, the vast majority of Haitians are reduced to the level of satisfying their minimum biological needs, making Haiti not only the poorest country in Latin America but one of the poorest in the world.

Turning next to the major social institutions which have emerged out of the Haitian context, we find them plagued with archaic and dysfunctional elements. The most striking and pervasive institution is the social class system. The class structure divides the society roughly into two social groups: the "haves" and "have nots," with over 90 percent of the population in the latter group, and permeates all other social institutions. It effectively separates both groups by color, language, wealth, family organization, political participation, religious affiliation, degree of education and life opportunities. The colonial stratification pattern between the whites, free people of color, and the slaves set the stage from which subsequently
evolved the present-day Haitian class system. As the war of independence annihilated the whites, the free people of color filled the vacuum left by the former French ruling class while the slaves became the peasant mass. Up to two decades ago, Haitian society remained essentially a two class system. However, with the Social Revolution of 1946, a new urban middle class emerged. Today Haitian society is composed of a predominantly mulatto bourgeoisie representing no more than two percent of the population, a middle class of about four percent and a proletariat of about six percent. The remaining 88 percent makes up the peasant mass. The exclusively urban bourgeoisie and middle class represent the more privileged and enlightened segment of the population. They possess education and command of the French language. They divide among themselves the power, wealth, and prestige existing in Haiti. In reality then, six percent of the population own, control and represent Haiti to the outside world. The remaining 94 percent of the population are the underprivileged inarticulate mass.

While the extraordinary cleavage between the "haves" and "have-nots" has been traditional in Haitian society and could be considered the outstanding characteristic of its class system, a relatively new factor of importance introduced recently is the power struggle among the "haves," that is between the bourgeoisie and the middle class.

The bourgeoisie, descendants of the free mulattoes of the colonies, has maintained its prestige position and lighter color by endogamy and interlocking family ties. Class solidarity, relatively
absent in other strata, is the most outstanding trait of the bourgeoisie. They enjoy a pleasant and leisurely style of life. Recently members of this elite have lost their political dominance to the new middle class and have suffered a serious set back as the uncontested leader class by the gradual erosion of their political power which reflects negatively on their economic status. They remain, nonetheless, the social elite.

Unlike the bourgeoisie, membership in the middle class is relatively fluid, with a lack of traditions, of shared class values, of solidarity. The most prominent members of this class are the "black bureaucrats." Since the man behind the title is very interchangeable in Haitian politics, this impermanency prevents individuals in this class from achieving status stability. As a result, they are socially insecure, self-conscious, sensitive and suspicious. They have a latent inferiority complex toward the bourgeoisie and accuses them of color discrimination which they consider the sole factor preventing them from enjoying elite status.

The proletarian class originated with and is composed of peasants migrating from the back country in search of employment and a better life. In most cases, the peasant's hope for a better life results merely in exchanging one misery for another. He joins the ranks of the unemployed or sporadically employed who are forced to depend on relatives or ingenuity to meet their daily subsistence needs. Poverty within this group is worse than in the countryside. Those who find employment are integrated into the upper stratum of the proletariat
which consists of the bulk of the urban labor force.

At the very bottom of the social pyramid are the peasants. No more than five percent of them could be considered relatively comfortable. It is ironical that in spite of their incredibly low standard of living, their complete lack of political power, and total illiteracy, they are nevertheless responsible for the existence of Haiti. Their ancestors did the fighting which threw off the yoke of slavery; they have created the creole language, the rich folklore, folk religion and culture which personify Haiti; and most important of all, they provide almost exclusively the export crops on which the nation's economy is completely dependent. Yet virtually nothing is done for them and there is little they can do themselves to improve their lot. The peasant, much to the advantage of the more privileged classes, accepts his plight fatalistically and is waiting patiently for his revolution.

The Haitian social class system provides few opportunities for social mobility. In non-industrial societies such as Haiti, the more desirable economic and social positions do not expand to provide room for newcomers. To get to the top means that someone else must be displaced. The limitation of this type of mobility results in the fiercest competition for political power which is the traditional avenue of mobility in Haitian society. When the traditional bourgeois political power was broken in 1946, a new middle class emerged. However, it is a middle class of revolution, not of evolution. It did not emerge as the result of economic development and industrialization,
thereby closing the gap between the masses and the bourgeoisie. Instead it has only forced the bourgeoisie to share the spoils with them thus enlarging the privileged group by a small percentage. Therefore the picture remains essentially the same since colonial times: over ninety percent at the bottom is subservient to a small number at the top.

While the analysis of the class system gives us an overall view of the structure of Haitian society, the family functions as the basic cell of the society in which the individual is socialized, derives his identity and secures his minimum economic, educational and affectional needs. Haitians have strong loyalty bonds to their families approaching clan spirit.

Departure from the family mores of Western society by the Haitian masses can be explained in the light of the background of slavery with its loose sexual mores, the survival of African traditions, and the adjustment made by a society of ex-slaves left to themselves to organize their own family and marriage norms. On the other hand the urban elite never lost their European ties and have patterned their families after that of the conventional French Catholic family. It is this latter type representing less than 10 percent of the population which is the official model found in the laws of the republic.

The marriage and sex patterns of Haiti seem rather unconventional by North American standards. An estimated 80 percent of the children are born out of wedlock, legal marriages are in the minority and a form of polygamy is commonly practiced by the Haitian masses. This
situation does not prevent the Haitian family from being relatively stable. Common law marriage (placage) is the most frequent type of union for the Haitian masses. When it is monogamous it differs little from a legally sanctioned marriage. However, one in four placages is polygamous. There seem to be an economic basis for this custom, as illustrated by the peasant with widely scattered holdings, who prefers to start a family on each of his plots rather than hire help. The case of a legally married man who maintains a concubine is considered popularly as an extension of polygamous placage although the law defines it as adultery. This type of union can be considered the Haitian counterpart of the French institution of having a mistress.

There is little incentive for the Haitian masses to break away from the time-honored practice of free union and polygamy. One of the factors which seems to maintain the practice is the excess of women and their willingness to enter into non-legal marriages. The fact that placages are socially sanctioned tends to formalize them and social pressures exercised by the community prevents separation. Nonetheless, placage by its very nature encourages male philandering and occasions inter-personal conflicts. The Haitian countryside abounds with scenes of jealousies. However, Haitian women have learned to live with the insecurity of sharing their mates with other women.

While considered inferior by law and customs, the Haitian woman enjoys a higher status than one would assume for a Latin American country. Generally her status is best in the lower classes and more recently has come to be so among the progressive elements of the upper
bourgeoisie. The women of the Haitian masses have largely emancipated themselves through their important economic role. The peasant woman not only runs her home and helps in the fields, but does the selling and buying for the family. Her constant trips to the markets, her high degree of interaction, make her a much more enlightened person than the males of her family. This has established a latent but effective egalitarianism in rural Haitian families. Likewise, the proletarian woman engaged in petty retailing is among the most aggressive elements of Haitian society. Often she is the only permanent provider and authority figure in her family. In the remaining classes, traditional attitudes still linger on. There are restrictions imposed on women which don't apply to men. However, these traditions are gradually eroding and the general attitude toward the changing role and status of women is not inflexible.

As for Haitian children, the vast majority are born out of wedlock without being necessarily victimized by their status as natural children, though legitimate children have a higher status. Natural children are of two types: those recognized by their father enjoy the same legal rights as legitimate children, while those not recognized are considered legally as adulterine. Widespread illegitimacy in Haiti is due to the absence of rigid legal monogamous standards, the laxity of the sexual mores, the ignorance by the great majority of the female population of the most rudimentary forms of birth control, and the indifference of the male to the possibility of conception. Lastly, children are easily cared for in Haitian society, where they
are considered an economic asset, security for old age and a source of pride.

The Haitian family is an extended type family and kin several degrees removed are recognized as relatives. It is not unusual to find related families living close together. The family is patriarchal although not of the extreme authoritarian variety prevalent in Latin America. As far as the mores and folkways are concerned, the family of the masses and of the more privileged classes differ considerably. At one end, the elite are concerned with perpetuating families with social ambitions, whereas at the other end the family is primarily an economic unit in which the members are partners in the struggle for survival.

The Haitian family organization is both the strength and weakness of the society. Loyalty, solidarity, mutual aid and protection among the members of an extended family have prevented the total disintegration of Haitian society, for it provides the minimum social security an individual needs to survive. At the same time this kind of solidarity has a negative effect for it turns loyalties inward. It encourages clannish, selfish, nepotistic attitudes, inhibits community spirit and civic sense essential to social progress. Thus the Haitian family plays the paradoxical role of counteracting the disintegration of Haitian society and at the same time preventing its development.

With respect to the laxity of sexual mores in Haiti, with its high incidence of free-unions, polygamy, illegitimacy, adultery and
prostitution, it can be surmised that these phenomena are of minor importance so long as children are socialized and integrated into stable familial systems. While the Haitian family is fairly stable, it is apparent that this state of affairs is a source of serious interpersonal conflicts and a hardship for many children and women. The legacy of libertinage of colonial days has not died away and tends to contribute in the long run another unstable element to the general disorganization of Haitian society.

As for political institutions, they play a dominant role in Haitian life. The political history of the nation has been characterized by turbulence. In essence, Haitian politics represent a relentless power struggle between rival groups of the privileged strata from which the masses are excluded. A strong man has always ruled Haiti. A tradition of absolutism, non-democratic rule with a spirit of intransigence and non-compromise toward the opposition, is deeply rooted.

The Haitian political system in spite of its instability has shown some persistent characteristics over the years. They are:

1. a fundamental cleavage between the written law and government in actuality;
2. a presidential system with a dictator as chief of state;
3. a rubber stamp legislature;
4. a judiciary which is an instrument in the hands of the president;
5. an army which makes and unmakes presidents forcing the latter either to enter into an alliance with the military or to manipulate them;
6. constitutional rights
subordinated to the whim of the president; (7) a spoils system which results in the overhauling of the administration from top to bottom with every new regime and which has perpetuated a tradition of greed, graft, and corruption.

Politics becomes an end in itself rather than a means to assure the proper functioning of other institutions. Haitian political institutions have important economic functions, which explains the morbid preoccupation of so many Haitians with political activities, for their livelihood is at stake. Politics are the tools par excellence of economic betterment and social ascendance for those who are "in." Those who are "out" bide their time and participate in intrigues with the hope of being "in" with the next regime, to feather their nests in their turn.

The Duvalier regime which is currently ruling Haiti has earned worldwide notoriety for its tyranny and even for Latin America represents an anachronism in the mid-20th century. Yet this regime is not an anomaly for Haiti. It represents by all its extremes the logical end result of a political system which has played itself out. The Duvalier regime might prove to be the turning point of the Haitian nation in the sense that it is precipitating the day of reckoning. Total collapse might be averted by outside forces either by a Congo-style trusteeship or a Cuban-style communist take over.

Duvalier is a "phenomenon" in the sense that every method which has been used throughout Haitian history to remove a despot has been used against him but up to now has failed. He has a remarkable
political flair, for he understands well the Haitian political game in all its intricacies and has a great psychological understanding of the character weaknesses of his compatriots and has exploited both to his benefit. Duvalier has crushed or controlled every obstacle which stood in his way. These can be enumerated as follows: (1) his early partisans; (2) political opposition; (3) the legislature; (4) the army; (5) the bourgeoisie; (6) the clergy; (7) the intelligentsia; and (8) the U.S. State Department. Duvalier is at war with every traditional institution in Haitian society, handles the U.S. with a policy of diplomatic blackmail but has the nation well under control through a reign of terror. Methods of social control used have been inspired by other dictators in the world plus his own innovations, the most famous being his illegal reelection in 1961.

Methods include crude propaganda, control of mass-media and censorship, the rumor mill, the personality cult, faked popularity demonstrations, divide and rule tactics, intimidation, increasingly barbaric reprisals including the murdering of innocent relatives of enemies, and the threat of an all-out massacre by his thugs should the regime fall. Nothing short of his assassination will deter him; for this reason he is extremely well guarded. Many Haitians have pinned all their hopes on the death of Duvalier, for in 1964 he proclaimed himself president for life.

An objective analysis of the so-called "Duvalierist Revolution" leads to the conclusion that it stands for nothing. It is but a continuation of the Haitian political tradition by new men with the same
old ideas. It is almost hopeless to seek out any political principles to which Duvalier has adhered consistently. He has no ideology, no coherent doctrine of his own, except cliches about black nationalism and a "New" Haiti. Nationalism in the hands of the Duvalier regime is nothing more than black racism used as a defense mechanism masking a Negro inferiority complex. As for building the "New" Haiti, the "Duvalierist Revolution" has been a revolution of descending expectations, for it is the consensus of all Haitians young and old, and of all walks of life, that in their life time the country has never been in such a state of misery. Signs of decay are everywhere while the regime spends 60 percent of the budget for internal defense. Those who can, leave the country. The more educated segment of the population has lost faith in the country's ever being able to pull itself out of its political and economic morass, and a veritable Haitian diaspora which spreads its youth and most dynamic elements throughout the world is occurring. Those who cannot leave find a ready channel to vent their resentment in the currents of anti-americanism and pro-communism developing in Haiti.

Anti-americanism, never virulent in Haiti, is growing both in the government sector and in the opposition. Partisans of the Duvalier regime resent the U.S. for cutting off aid from which they benefited directly, while the opposition is enraged at the insensitivity shown by the U.S. government to all the atrocities which are taking place as long as Duvalier poses as a foe of communism and respects American interests in Haiti.
As for communism, it is obvious that the present conditions in Haiti are a seedbed for leftist causes. Today the communist group is by far the best organized and the largest of all clandestine groups. Since they restrict their activities to proselytizing and make no attempt to overthrow the regime, Duvalier leaves them alone for he feels he can crush them any time he needs to and in the meantime can use them to worry the U.S. The increasing ease with which the communists gain sympathizers among neutrals in Haiti is due to anti-Duvalierism, anti-Americanism, and anti-capitalism. To them the Duvalier regime represents the last stage of capitalist decadence and corruption while, even though communism is totalitarian, it has the saving grace of having higher ideals. They are convinced that the free enterprise system is incapable of bringing about the major social restructuring which is the only salvation for Haiti. However, individualism and self-interest are so incrusted in the Haitian character that communism will have a difficult time passing from the talking to the action stage. In essence this individualism has been the bane of Haitian political life. It was shaped by the history of the country and reinforced by its social institutions.

The role of religion in Haitian society is a relatively secondary one. Nonetheless, religious activities fulfill many functions that other social institutions fail to provide.

Freedom of religion or religious indifference is a real fact of Haitian life. While most Haitians consider themselves Catholic, for the vast majority it is but a thin veneer and nearly 90 percent of the
population adhere in various degrees to vodou beliefs.

Vodou is a folk religion practiced co-laterally with Catholicism. It has its origin in African beliefs transplanted to the New World. There is an essential syncretic quality about vodou. It is a composite of African beliefs, Catholic rites, magical practices of European origin, as well as Haitian innovations. It is a cult through which the believer worships divinities to which he attributes his fortunes and misfortunes. Through the medium of a priest, divinities can be pleased or appeased by making offerings and by following certain rituals. These generally take place at services where dances and chants accompanied by drum rhythms are used to create a state of exaltation bringing the initiate closer to his gods. It goes without saying that the educated Haitian does not participate in vodou activities and beliefs, and chooses to ignore rather than condemn them. While vodou is an important aspect of Haitian culture, its importance has been magnified out of proportion to its actual role in Haitian society. Its superstitions have a tendency to retard progress but there are many more important factors inhibiting progress in Haiti other than its folk religion. It is obvious that if vodou did not serve any needs, it would not show the vitality it still manifests among the Haitian masses. As long as Christian missionaries fail to provide a form of evangelization which is more realistic to the inner needs of the masses, as long as the government fails to provide adequate medical, educational, recreational, and other social services, the Haitian masses will turn to vodou for these needs.
The history of Catholicism in Haiti explains to a great extent the relatively indifferent role played by the Catholic Church in Haitian life. Religion was little known and even less practiced during the colonial period and disappeared almost for 70 years until Haiti signed a concordat with the Vatican in 1860. The reforms came too late. The masses had become devoted to their folk religion whereas the elite had become imbued with the liberal and anti-clerical views of French philosophers. As a whole, the Catholic Church has failed to win the popular support of the Haitian people and remains to this day primarily in the hands of a foreign missionary type clergy. Much of the rampant anti-clericalism among educated Haitians stems from the foreign clergy's conservatism, their political meddling, their paternalism, and their 19th century conception of religion. The small number of Protestant missionaries have not fared much better. The general religious indifference in Haiti is not necessarily a liability. Absence of religious dogmatism makes a society more receptive to new ideas and in the case of Haiti, religious indifference would represent one less rather than one more stumbling block toward a program of planned social change.

Thus one arrives at the conclusion that Haitian society had a turbulent history, rests on a fragile ecological basis and has disturbing anarchic elements in its culture.

B. Culture and Personality

The relation of culture and personality is based on the
assumption that the personalities of the members of a society are determined to some degree by the culture they share. If they share essentially the same culture, it is assumed that they would then have certain attitudes, habits, sentiments, ideals and values in common. This means that a sort of collective personality or national character is present. The terms modal personality, basic personality structure, collective mentality have been used to express more or less the same idea. While the causal relationship between culture and national character is difficult to measure operationally, there seems to be a validity in the hypothesis that people sharing the same culture also share in common a set of traits which typifies them and identifies them to others. In the case of Haitian society, there seems to be a cluster of attitudes, beliefs, and character traits shared in common which in their combination present a picture of an entity which is identifiable as the Haitian personality or Haitian mentality. Perhaps some of the difficulties Haitians encounter in trying to solve their chronic socioeconomic malaise are due in part to the Haitian mentality. An attempt is being made here to list some of the traits observed by this writer, and which are, in his judgment, typical of Haitian society.

1. **General Remarks**

   The Haitian national character stems from the particular historical events which have shaped the Haitian nation as well as the social institutions which have emerged from the Haitian context. One striking fact is that Haitians share many of the values prevalent in Spanish
America in spite of their linguistic and ethnic uniqueness. They are more like Mexicans, for instance, than like their neighbors the Negro Jamaicans, leading us to the assumption that the Latin European cultural heritage has had more of an impact than the African one:

Many foreigners and some Haitians, with little knowledge of the history of the Haitian nation and of its mentality, think that the attachment that Haitians have to French culture is simply an imitation. They do not realize that this culture is part of the Haitian national character...

In Haiti an entity was created which is neither African nor French, but which is linked to Africa by blood and to France a little by blood also but much more so by mentality.¹

The Haitian personality is difficult to assess because of the wide divergence between what Haitians profess and what they practice. In a poll taken among students at the University of Haiti, which admittedly is not necessarily representative, but is revealing nonetheless, students listed as the three leading positive character traits of Haitians: stoicism, national pride and generosity. As negative traits they listed in order of importance: pleasure seeking, conceit, inferiority complex and lack of solidarity.²

The basic philosophy or mystique of the Haitian nation is somewhat


²The students chose the adjectives themselves. The list of negative traits ranked in order of importance were: (1) pleasure seeking; (2) conceit; (3) inferiority complex; (4) lack of solidarity; (5) exploiter of each other; (6) lack of discipline; (7) indifference; (8) lack of perseverance; (9) narrow-mindedness; and (10) superstitious.
nebulous. If one considers the American mystique as being "the Protestant ethic" then the Haitian mystique is non-utilitarian by comparison. Haitians describe their mystique as a passionate faith in the destiny of Haiti as the first free-Negro nation. This sentiment seeks its inspiration in the heroic deeds of the great heroes of national independence. This destiny has yet to be fulfilled and even Haitians admit that their nation is no model of inspiration for the new emerging African nations; nevertheless, the Haitian mystique is responsible for fostering strong nationalism and more recently negritude, i.e., the pride of being Negro. While the examples of Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henry Christophe and Alexandre Petion are no doubt inspiring since the passage of time has blurred their weaker points, they were in effect born on the crest of French culture and not exactly the product of Haitian culture. No men of their caliber have appeared since. The few outstanding men that Haitian society has produced have all had exterior cultural influence through long residency or study abroad. While no doubt there must be some potentially great men in Haiti, the cultural milieu is too limited to give them a chance to emerge. The Haitian mystique is therefore a pathetic effort to cling to the memory of the one glorious epic of the Haitian past.

2. Collective Inferiority Complex and Nationalism

Haitians who have enough education to realize that the conditions prevalent in their country are not normal, suffer from a collective inferiority complex. This inferiority complex of being a poor
backward nation and belonging to a minority race transforms itself into exaggerated pride, stubbornness, suspicion and hyper-sensitivity, and explains the sometime bizarre behavior of some Haitian officials toward foreigners. Moreover, it has translated itself into fierce nationalism, in ambivalent attitudes toward foreigners, and in negritude.

Nationalism can have both positive and negative effects. It encourages national solidarity and cooperation, and engenders a feeling of brotherhood. Haitians of all walks of life often refer to themselves as "we Haitians," and are attached to their country. Unfortunately, nationalism in Haiti is more negative than positive. It is a mask for the Haitian collective inferiority complex. There is much nationalism but there are few selfless patriots. To them, incompetent self-government is preferable at all costs to good government with a compromised sovereignty. Haitians consider themselves superior to "colonial" Puerto Ricans and "neo colonial" Jamaicans because they are sovereign. Exaggerated nationalism has turned into hollow pride and has distorted their sense of reality. So many Haitians besides Duvalier still believe that they alone could straighten out the country if they were given an opportunity. They are hypersensitive about foreign advice. Only Haitians know how to handle Haitian problems. A Haitian engineer told this writer that only a Haitian knows how to build roads in Haiti, yet there are only some 215 miles of paved roads in a country the size of Maryland. They want foreign financial aid to build the roads but no advice, for
they are a sovereign nation. Actually Haitian sovereignty has become theoretical and illusory, for education, health, commerce and trade are all in the hands of foreigners. This is why Haitians also have a complex du blanc. Blanc means both white and foreigner in creole. Haitians have ambivalent feelings toward the blanc. On one side they fear and are very suspicious of the white foreigners' intentions which might compromise their sovereignty. This a deeply rooted feeling. Yet they consciously and unconsciously admit to the superiority of the whites. The Haitian masses make no bones about it. They prefer white priests, white doctors and even white traders, infuriating Negro specialists in these branches. White foreigners in Haiti enjoy a prestige often out of keeping with their actual social background. Much of the prestige of the mulatto is derived from his resemblance to the white. Foreign people and foreign things are symbols of superiority. Imported articles, including cheap Woolworth crockery, are considered gorgeous by most, whereas hand-carved native plates and other crafts much appreciated outside Haiti are downrated by Haitians.

Negritude which appeared with the Social Revolution of 1946 came as a natural reaction to the feeling of inferiority fostered by this complex du blanc. This current of thoughts which paralleled the awakening of Africa during the same period was introduced into Haiti by the nativistic school of black intellectuals. It is a mystique of Negro consciousness, the essence of which is: "I am a Negro, I am proud to be a Negro, all Negroes are my brothers." It is an acceptance
of the African heritage instead of attempting to be assimilated by the
whiteman's civilization. It is a liberation from the feeling of Negro
inferiority. Through **negritude** the Negro affirms his equality with
the white man. **Negritude** is too new and too vague to be considered an
integral part of the Haitian mentality as is nationalism. It is
especially appreciated by members of the middle class who think they
personify Haiti. More than likely the masses give little thought to
their Negro-ness, whereas in the bourgeoisie feelings are divided. The
more progressive and younger members accept **negritude**, whereas the more
conservative consider themselves neither white nor Negro, but light
Haitians.

3. **Family Derived Values and Individualism**

As it has been mentioned the family is the basic cell of Haitian
society and many of the personality traits and elementary values
shared in common stem from early socialization. Whatever the relation-
ship between socialization and adult group character remains of course
a matter of speculation. Drawing from general observations, children
become adults who are extroverts rather than introverts. The Haitians
enjoy congeniality; they are good-natured and have friendly dispositions.
They talk, smile, and laugh a lot. They engage in much greeting and
handshaking. The Haitian people are gregarious; they are never alone
and show little concern for personal privacy. The Haitian exercises
little self-control over his emotions. He is excitable, volatile, he
laughs easily and gets angered easily. He is prone to arguments,
quarrels spring up constantly but die off just as quickly. Tantrums
and arguments generally end with a joke to release the tension. He intimidates but is seldom violent. The two cardinal rules of the strict Haitian upbringing are absolute obedience to parents and respect for elders. The former is reflected in the adult Haitian's respect for strong authority and the latter in his remarkable politeness, courtesy and affability which make North Americans seem uncouth by comparison. This politeness, however, is reserved for social equals and social superiors.

The Haitian has a strong sense of obligation to his family, relatives, and close friends, in other words to his own clique. A friendship is a real social obligation in Haiti; one expects much out of a friend and reciprocally one has many obligations. A close friend like a relative is a form of social insurance. To his clique the Haitian is remarkably generous; outside of it he has a poorly developed sense of civic and social duty. Familism has fostered one of the most striking characteristics of the Haitian personality, namely individualism.

Individualism tends to make the Haitian view the world in terms of his own ambitions. His responsibility is to himself rather than to his job, hence there is a lack of sense of duty. In personal undertakings there is a great desire to outdo others, yet competition from others is considered a threat. The sense of fair play is little developed. Contracts and promises are entered into lightly and broken as easily, debts are difficult to collect. A Haitian expects little from people outside of his own clique. This has made him cynical,
skeptical and pessimistic. The lower the class the more distrust
Haitian people have of each other. Their proverb "Ever since Africa,
Negroes have betrayed each other," has a valid raison d'être. Haitians
seem incapable of group action. Few organizations, associations or
clubs last. They spring up like mushrooms, a constitution is drawn
and debated, then division of opinion and intrigues set in, members
resign, the organization dissolves and everyone runs for the treasury.
There is a notable lack of compassion for the misfortunes of others
and animals are treated brutally. An American nurse told this writer
that in all the countries she had worked she had never seen such a
lack of compassion for the sick as she saw in Haiti. Another way
individualism reveals itself is the strong attachment to private
property from the peasant who invests his earnings into more land to
the privileged class strong desire to own their homes.

4. Traits Deriving from the Haitian Reality

The chronic economic and political insecurity has produced
several character traits typical of Haitians. Above all is the already
mentioned individualistic philosophy of "everyone out for himself."
Mounepaism (creole for "people who are for me") is a Haitian brand of
nepotism where one does favors and looks out for the interests of his
clique at the expense of others. The complex of the basket of crabs
is another Haitian euphemism describing those who, feeling threatened
by competition or motivated by envy, purposely put obstacles in the
way of a more successful person to cut him down to their own size.
Another notable trait is the autorité complex, i.e., the great admiration
for authority or power. It is literally power for its own sake. The privilege to impose one's authority over others for all to see is held above wealth. Power ostentation represents to Haitian society what conspicuous consumption represents to middle class America. Haitians respect power, admire uniforms, like titles, accept authoritarianism as normal. It is the strong winning over the weak; it is the weaker bowing to the will of the stronger. It spreads through the hierarchy of Haitian society, for everyone from the bottom to the top has his own entourage be it only his children, upon whom he can impose his will while he in turn bows to the will of those above him in regular pecking order fashion. At the top of the pinnacle accounting to God alone stands the president, the great authoritarian figure.

There is general obedience to authority which has resulted in freeing the individual from disciplining himself; therefore, the sense of individual responsibility is weak in the Haitian character.

Another complex probably deriving from economic insecurity is the bam (from creole "give me") or dependency complex. This is a form of exploitation of the more fortunate by the less fortunate and permeates the whole society from a university dean who demands a mimeograph machine from the American Embassy because "we are poor and you are rich" to the peasant child who says automatically in English "geeve me five cent" when he sees a stranger. The rule is to get something for nothing.

5. The Haitian in his Public and Private Life

In many respects the educated Haitian is a typical Latin American.
He approaches his daily problems in a theoretical rather than pragmatic way. He has a legalistic frame of reference; he likes codes and constitutions rather than meet situations extemporaneously. He likes to discuss, is argumentative and verbose. His approach is indirect; he is very subtle and ambivalent in his language; perhaps this explains his great fondness for poetry. His relations are personalized. He does not conceive of himself in a private and public role, nor does he expect it of others. He never perceives the official position but only the person behind the title. He operates through friends and relatives which, of course, fosters nepotism and favoritism. A depersonalized organization has little appeal for him. Work is considered a necessary evil and cultivating human relations at work makes it more bearable. He shows few dispositions for business. He emphasizes courtesy rather than efficiency. He has little sense of organization, gets lost in unimportant details, is impatient for quick returns and has a distaste for long range planning. He plans only for the immediate future, for the Haitian milieu is too insecure. He tends to be irresponsible and demonstrates little continuity or perseverance. This is reflected in public administration. A road is constructed but no provisions are made for maintenance; a new welfare agency is set up, then left to vegetate under financial malnutrition.

³It would be interesting to investigate the psycho-cultural factors explaining the cause of the Haitian Negro failure to succeed in business and the relative success of other ethnic groups such as the Levantines. This pattern seems to repeat itself with the Negro West Indian, American Negro, Brazilian Negro and Africans.
He has a *laissez-grainain* (creole for "let it solve itself") attitude and *passez demain* is the Haitian counterpart of the *manana* complex.

In his private life the Haitian is at his best. He is warm and vivacious. His remarkable sense of humor, his disposition for the performing arts, his imagination and expressiveness and his affability make him a host of great charm.

Many of the Haitian character traits seem to result from economic insecurity and his inferiority complex. He lives in an atmosphere fraught with distrust and is constantly obliged to manipulate people in order to protect his livelihood. Perhaps economic security would tone down much of this behavior but in the meantime, the Haitian mentality has become itself a social problem.

C. The Dilemma of Underdevelopment

Summarizing the various factors which make Haiti so underdeveloped, we conclude that historically the country never got off the ground; ecologically it suffers from mediocré resources and overpopulation; culturally it presents a picture of archaic social institutions on one side and anarchy on the other; and with respect to the mentality factor, the Haitian personality has adjusted to the climate of insecurity and by doing so has reinforced dysfunctional elements in the social system. All these factors are interdependent and revolve in a vicious circle. How does one undertake a major social restructuring? As of yet no one has a definite answer. It is believed, nevertheless, that the desire for economic well-being is a fundamental motivation for accepting
planned social change; therefore, economic institutions are the most prone to reform, thus making it possible to reverse the vicious circle and lead an underdeveloped area on the road to progress. Even though most of the problems of Haitian society can be traced directly or indirectly to economic wants, the task of economic reform is extremely complicated. Haiti is an economic enigma, an economy of diminishing return which because of the stoic nature of the Haitian masses will maintain itself until widespread famine sets in. After 160 years, Haiti still has a colonial economy for it depends on the outside world for its essential commodities in exchange for cash crops furnished by cheap labor. It has no control over the price the world pays for its tropical products, making revenues unstable from year to year. Nor is it in a position to dispute the increasing cost of the manufactured goods which it imports. Furthermore, whatever income is earned is unevenly distributed. To wit: 90 percent of exports are produced by the peasantry. In turn exports pay for imports of which no more than 10 percent are consumed by the peasants. This is essentially a parasitical situation whereby one tenth of the population, the privileged, consume nine tenths of the imports earned by the labor of the peasants representing 90 percent of the population. The "enlightened" Haitian lives at the expense of the ignorant peasant. Not only income is low but it is unstable and unevenly distributed.

Looking at the four factors of production, i.e., land, labor, capital and management, we find in Haiti a shortage of land, an unskilled labor force, no capital savings of any importance, while the
$100 million the United States has poured into Haiti since 1946 have largely gone down the drain and as far as management is concerned the few cadres in Haiti have either left the country or are leaving. Intensification of agricultural production or diversification attempts have been unsuccessful thus far because of the factors previously mentioned and also because other social institutions and attitudes have acted as powerful counterforces to maintain the status quo. The difficulties faced in attempting to reorient the Haitian economy reflect once again the seemingly hopeless dilemma faced by underdeveloped areas.

If Haiti is unable to help itself, the logical question to ask is who can help Haiti? As has been mentioned a deep nationalist pride makes it difficult for outsiders to help Haiti, even though currently Haiti is kept alive largely by the outside world. Its economy depends on foreign markets. Its school and health programs as well as occasional financial doles and hurricane rescue operations are largely due to foreign charity. A delicate question to pose is whether or not Haiti can claim sovereignty. Do a privileged six percent have the right in the name of four million inhabitants to invoke self-determination when they have proven their incompetency in handling the most basic problems of their citizens, subjected them to the most inhumane conditions and failed to check the abuse of natural resources? The fate of the Haitian masses is a problem which goes beyond national boundaries, and ultimately becomes a problem of international concern.

What will happen is a moot question. The Haitian social system
appears too exhausted and deteriorated to rejuvenate itself. The standard of living will get lower, the death rate will continue to rise, the exodus will increase. The United States might dole out from time to time some support—just enough to prolong the death throes of a nation—but eventually something will have to give. It might be a century or it might be tomorrow.

The future of Haiti is indeed dim, yet the fact that Haiti has so far survived all its crises is a phenomenon difficult to explain, thus making it unwise to predict its imminent collapse. In the meantime the country still retains to this day its natural beauty, and the people of Haiti, despite their misery, have not lost as yet their wonderful sense of humor and their capacity to laugh and sing. Anyone who has lived in their midst will never forget them.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Books


Fils-Aime, Andre (ed.). *Haitian Directory.* Place of publication and publisher not given, 1933.


**B. Journals**


C. International Agencies and Government Documents


**D. Unpublished Studies**


**E. Newspapers and Magazines**

**Haitian:**  
Le Matin  
*La Nouvelliste*  
*Les Informations Techniques et Commerciales*  
*Rond Point*

**American:**  
*Hispanic American Report*  
*Jeune Haiti* (New York)  
*Miami Herald*  
*New Republic*  
*New York Times*  
*San Juan Star*  
*Time Magazine*  
*Times Picayune* (New Orleans)
APPENDIX A

MAP AND LIST OF FIELD TRIPS
Figure 7. Map of field trips.
List of Field Trips


To: Kenscoff, Farcy by car; across morne Cabaio to Seguin and down to the south coast to Marigot on foot; by truck to Jacmel. First night spent in peasant hut in Seguin; second night in hotel in Jacmel. Return by plane from Jacmel to Port-au-Prince. Accompanied by another American and a native guide.

Field Trip #2: Dec. 28, 61- Jan. 4, 62

To: Jeremie by boat. Side trips to Anse d'Azur, Marfranc, Artiboliere, accompanied by a student. Left Jeremie by plane with stop over at Les Cayes.

Field Trip #3: April 24-May 2, 1962

To: Cap Haitien by bus, visited the Citadel with several of my students. Stayed in hotel and one night in peasant hut. By boat Le Borgne and Anse a Foleur. By horse from Anse a Foleur to St. Louis du Nord where I stayed in a military post. By truck to Port de Paix, by boat to Ile de la Tortue and by truck back to Port-au-Prince.

Field Trip #4: June 10, 62

To: Mirebalais, Lascarobas, Belladere and Dominican border, by car with another American.

Field Trip #5: July 28-Aug. 10, 62

To: Verrettes (Artibonite) by bus, stayed with relatives of one of my students; by horse to Terre Nette, Mont Matheu, Couyau, Fond-Jean-Baptiste, Goyavier, La Croix. Visited Schweitzer Hospital at Deschapelles.*

Field Trip #6: Aug. 12-18, 62

To: Cap Haitien by bus; stayed with family of a friend who

*It was rather inspiring to see the founder Dr. L. Mellon, heir to one of the great fortunes of the U. S. teaching a group of young peasants how to read.
accompanied me. Spent a day and a night at Plantation Dauphin, the remaining time in Cap Haitien.

**Field Trip #7:** Sept. 18-Oct. 20, 62

To: Aquin, Fond des Blancs, l'Asile, Vieux Bourg d'Aquin, St. Louis du Sud, Les Cayes, Camperrin, Saut Mathurine, Ducis, Grosse Cayes, as guest of Deputy of Aquin.

**Field Trip #8:** Dec. 21-24, 62

To: Cap Haitien by plane.

**Field Trip #9:** Dec. 27, 62-Jan. 2, 63

To: Mirebalais, Peligre, Maissade, Hinche, Headquarter in Hinche at the home of a student. By horse to Los Posos, Cerca la Source, Papaye.

**Field Trip #10:** March 6-10, 63

To: Jacmel, Bainet, Marigot, La Vallee, by car.

**Field Trip #11:** April 13-14, 63

To: St. Marc, Pont Sondé, Petite Riviere de l'Artibonite.

**Field Trip #12:** April 17-21, 63

To Isle of la Gonave by sail boat.

**Field Trip #13:** June 10, 63

To: Thomazeau and lake Azuey.
Roland Wingfield was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1929, and received his elementary and secondary education in France and Switzerland. Upon his return to the United States, he enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps with which he served two years in China and the Far East. After his discharge he began his undergraduate studies in 1949 at Columbia University in New York City. Two years later he transferred to the American Theatre Wing in New York, majoring in choreography.

In 1957, he interrupted a professional theatrical career in New York City to return to the academic fold. In 1958, he enrolled at Louisiana State University where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1960. The same year the writer was awarded a research assistantship in the Department of Sociology at Louisiana State University. He received the Master of Arts degree in August of 1961.

Recipient of an Inter-American Cultural Convention research grant to Haiti, the writer spent the next two years in Haiti doing field research and occupying at the same time the chair of American Civilization at the University of Haiti in Port-au-Prince.

In June, 1963, he was visiting instructor at Louisiana State University. In the fall of 1963, he began his studies toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. For the summer of 1964, he was visiting
instructor at Louisiana State University in New Orleans and in the fall was assistant-professor at the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Mayaguez, P. R. In July, 1965, the writer accepted a position as sociologist with the USAID sponsored program of Texas A&M University in Sousse, Tunisia. He is at present a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
Candidate: Roland Wingfield

Major Field: Sociology

Title of Thesis: Haiti, A Case Study of an Underdeveloped Area

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination: