

The Paul-Henri and Erika Bourguignon Photographic Archives

Introduction

This collection of photographs and related materials was prepared under a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research to be deposited in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection of The Ohio State University Libraries. The work was carried out by Erika Bourguignon and Jane Hoffelt. The photographs in this collection were taken by Paul-Henri Bourguignon in Haiti during the period May 1947 to July 1948. A few additional photographs were taken by Erika Bourguignon between August 1947 and July 1948 in the course of her ethnographic field research.

Haiti, located on the Western portion of the Island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic, is strategically located on the Windward Passage, providing maritime access from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico. In 1948, according to the U. S. Department of Commerce, Haiti, with a surface area of approximately 10,700 square miles, was estimated to have a population of 3,000,000. The capital city of Port-au-Prince had an estimated population of 125,000.

The collection concentrates on three ecological areas where research was conducted: the city of Port-au-Prince and environs, the sugar plantations of the plain of Léogane, and the mountainous area of Furcy, where corn and coffee are the principal crops. These three sites differ with regard to topography, climate, crops, economic activities, social organization, religion, architecture and more. In addition, photographs are included of various sites visited during a road trip from Port-au-Prince: first west to Miragoâne then south over the watershed to Les Cayes on the south coast (see map). The photographs are supplemented by a series of commentaries, four dealing with geographic locations, the others with topics drawing from information from several sites. Some later developments are noted parenthetically.

A second set of photographs was taken by Paul-Henri Bourguignon in Peru between August 1948 and June 1950. The collection also includes a number of Paul-Henri Bourguignon's photographs dating from a trip to Yugoslavia in 1932, primarily in Bosnia. There are also images from his travels in the course of the 1930s to other parts of Southern Europe (South of France, Corsica, Italy, and Spain).

In addition, a number of supplementary photographs, including some postcards, are provided.

The photographs were taken in daylight, using black and white film. The Haitian and Peruvian photographs were taken with a Voigtlander camera. For Haiti and Peru Bourguignon printed his own enlargements, in the case of Haiti with a view toward the publication of a book. Some enlargements have been exhibited, some have been published, and a number are to be found in private collections.

The photographs are identified in a series of databases designed by Jane Hoffelt. These are supplemented by brief commentaries, drawing, in the case of Haiti, on Erika Bourguignon's field notes. Brief bibliographies are also added.

Paul-Henri Bourguignon (1906-1988), Belgian artist and writer, came to Haiti from Belgium in the Spring of 1947 ([UH000](#), [UH001](#), [UH002](#)) at the invitation of a pre-war acquaintance, Arnil St. Rome, Haitian Consul General in Brussels in the mid-1930s ([UH246](#), [UH247](#)). In Haiti, he wrote for the Brussels daily, *Le Phare*, as well as several Haitian papers. He wrote short stories as well as the draft of a novel, photographed extensively, and became involved in the Haitian art scene (E. Bourguignon 2004).

As an artist, Bourguignon initially painted largely on site. In later years, Bourguignon used some photographs as visual reminders as he reflected on Haiti in his drawings and paintings. Peru, on the other hand, left little trace in his paintings.

Erika Eichhorn (later Bourguignon) came to Haiti to conduct anthropological dissertation research as a student of Professor M. J. Herkovits of Northwestern University, under a grant of the Carnegie Corporation and the Graduate School at Northwestern University. Commentary on the Haitian photographs is largely based on her field notes.

A note on language and orthography:

In the period when these photographs were taken, Haiti's official language was French, a language not known by the great majority of the population, who spoke Creole. The vocabulary of Creole is largely based on French but its grammar is primarily of African origin. There was no standardized spelling of Creole, although members of the French-speaking elite used personal, French derived spelling of various types. In the 1940s, Methodist Bishop H.O. McConnell and the American linguist and literacy pioneer F.C. Laubach developed a phonetic system of spelling which was used at first primarily for Bible translations. This later became the basis of a standardized phonetic system, adopted by the Government and that is used in Haitian schools. Decisions about orthography and the choice of the Creole dialect to be used as its basis were highly controversial (B. Schieffelin and R. C. Doucet, 1994).

Both French and Creole (Kreyol) spellings are used in the present texts. In 1948, schools taught Creole-speaking children in French. The difficulty of dealing with French orthography for Creole speakers is illustrated by the document provided by the drum-makers son in Furcy (see Furcy text).

For a description of Haiti in 1947-48 and its implication for the Paul Bourguignon's later work, see:

Erika Bourguignon, "Haiti and the Art of Paul-Henri Bourguignon," *Research in African Literatures* 35 no.2 (2004):173-188.

To view some of Bourguignon's art, with special reference to his Haitian works, see <http://www.paulbourguignon.com/>.

For fictional accounts of Haiti and Peru, see:

Paul Bourguignon's posthumous novel: *The Greener Grass*. Rockville, MD: Ariadne Press, 1993.

On the orthography controversy, see:

B. Schieffelin and R. C. Doucet, "The "real" Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics and Orthographic Choice," *American Ethnologist* 94:145-160.

Erika Bourguignon

Columbus, Ohio

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