

Occasional Paper N° 29

Bryant C. Freeman, Ph.D.

Series Editor

Kiran Jayaram

***The Politics of Culture
in the Mouvement Rasin
in Haiti***



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- N° 29 Kiran Jayaram, **The Politics of Culture in the *mouvman rasin* in Haiti**. 2004. Pp. xiv-120. The ideological, cultural and physical means which brought François Duvalier to power in 1957 created a process whereby the idea of the State became the metonym for all Haitian identity. In what is now called the Roots movement, some working at the grassroots level began resisting the Duvaliers and asserting a new Haitian identity for themselves. Among the several parts of the movement, people calling themselves *sanba-s* began experiencing and living according to what they considered "traditional" patterns, resulting in a new music, *mizik rasin*. An analysis of their politics of identity regarding history, music, dress, language and religion conveys a cultural critique of late Duvalierism and other contemporary social issues. \$10.00

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THE POLITICS OF CULTURE IN THE *MOUVMAN RASIN* IN HAITI

This is the twenty-ninth in a series of documents concerning the language, history, and culture of Haiti to be made available through the University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies. The *mouvman rasin*, as described by its members, uses a selective interpretation of Haitian history to trace its origins back as far as the early days of the Spanish conquest. The present study, however, focuses principally on the ideological, cultural, and physical means which brought François Duvalier to power in 1957, creating a process whereby the idea of the State became synonymous with the very identity of Haiti itself. In what is now called the Roots movement, some working at the grassroots level began resisting the Duvaliers and asserting a new Haitian identity for themselves. Among the several parts of the movement, people calling themselves *sanba-s* began experiencing and living according to what they considered “traditional” patterns, resulting in a new music, *mizik rasin*. An analysis of the *sanba-s*’ politics of identity regarding history, music, dress, language, and religion conveys a cultural critique of late Duvalierism and other contemporary social issues.

The author of the present work, Kiran Jayaram, while majoring in mathematics, began serious study of the language, history and culture of Haiti while still an undergraduate at the University of Kansas. He has subsequently won numerous awards for his work in Haitian Studies, beginning with a KU Institute of Haitian Studies research scholarship for work in Haiti in 1999, followed by grants from the Tinker Foundation, a James Pearson Fellowship, a Robert Oppenheimer Award, and a Carrol Clarke Research in Anthropology Award. He received the M.A. degree in Latin American Studies from KU in 2003. On his own initiative he organized a national conference at the University of Kansas on Haitian music, gathering the funds and bringing in experts from Haiti, Canada, as well as from various parts of the United States. The three-day meetings had an attendance of some 75 persons. He has spoken to numerous campus groups on Haiti. He is also an accomplished musician, playing the stringed bass and especially the drums; never have I heard a non-Haitian with such a mastery of intricate drum rhythms. His first-hand knowledge of Haiti includes living first in a Haitian orphanage and then with a Haitian family far-removed from the urban scene—in addition to the “deep hanging-out” with the musicians described in the present text. In addition to his first-hand acquaintance with Haiti, he has spent some time in Cuba as well as the native land of his pediatrician father born in India, and long a resident of Kansas City. He is an accomplished artist as well, having provided the illustrations for an edition of Carrié Paultre’s *Wòch nan Solèy*. Last and far from least, he has for several years taught with great success the first four semesters of the Haitian language at the University of Kansas, and this past year has been teaching the language at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

Naturally each Haitianist has his/her own view of Haiti, and it is to be expected that one does not always concur with all statements in the present text. For example, the statement that “the masses of people . . . were politically and socially marginalized due to the US Occupation and the resulting mulatto control of the country after 1934” (page 1, and reiterated page 10) appears to overlook that fact that the Mulatto control of the country became strikingly apparent beginning with the 17 October 1806 assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the regimes of Alexandre Pétion and Jean-Pierre Boyer, and becoming all the more blatant with the “governments-by-understudy” of Philippe Guerrier, Jean-Louis Pierrot, and Jean-Baptiste Riché. The few exceptions such as the 13-year reign of Henry Christophe and the 12 years of Faustin Soulouque were but temporary aberrations in the flow of Haitian history. The Mulatto hegemony was a well-established fact of Haitian political, social and economic reality well before being continued by

the 19-year first US Occupation. As for “Péralte’s crucified body” (page 10), it must be well understood, as implied later in the text (page 61), that this was simply a falsehood propagated by opposition groups taking advantage of a photo of Péralte’s body propped up against a door—though it was long so labeled, until my energetic intervention, in the Museum of the Haitian People (MUPANAH) in Port-au-Prince. To the fact that Jean-Claude Duvalier married a Mulatto (Michèle Bennett) should be added (page 13) the fact that, in spite of his rhetoric, his father François Duvalier also married a Mulatto (Simone Ovide). Also, for me, the total lack of success of the Haitian Communist Party was due essentially to its denial of religion and its opposition to private ownership of land, two elements firmly entrenched in the Haitian peasant ethos—rather than “due to its elite origin” (page 64).

These are but passing reservations, however, in a text valuable for its far-reaching insights into a segment of Haitian society not easily accessible to *blan*. The information presented here is the fruit of great fluency with the Haitian language (*pale kou rat*) extending even to *jagon* (see pages 82-83), a willingness to spend countless hours in “deep hanging-out” to gain difficult group acceptance—as well as enormous patience, allied with a true musical talent.

Bryant C. Freeman

This paper is dedicated to the *mouvman rasin* all over the world.
May the people always have the last say. All power to all the people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this paper, I have been fortunate to have so many people willing to help me. Regarding those little details that everyone needs help with, I truly got by with a little help from my friends. During the excruciatingly painful time of writing this, Isadora Del Vecchio could not have been more supportive. Thanks for the love, support, and food. Alassane Fall and Abdourahmane both helped me with issues in Arabic and French. Adrien Ngudiankama helped me with Kikongo words. I thank Barb, Judy, Brent, and Lisa who tolerated my unending questions about this and that. Thanks to Allan Hanson for taking the time while on sabbatical to talk with me about “invention of tradition.” Thanks to John Hoopes for the tips on Endnote and outline programs. For giving me tips about how to analyze my field notes and interviews, I am indebted to Jane Gibson-Carpenter. And thank you, Don Stull for working with me on research methodology and proposals. Thanks also to Elizabeth McAlister for her comments on this work. Special thanks to Caciqué Pedro Guanikéyu Torres for his speedy help in answering questions about the Taino language.

For general support, I have several recognitions to give. All of this work was possible with the generous support of the Kansas Board of Regents, and the Robert Oppenheimer Research Award, and the Institute of Haitian Studies Research Award. I thank Betsy Kuznesof at the Center for Latin American Studies for her support.

For general academic support, I thank the Institute of Latin American Studies Student Association at the University of Texas for allowing me the chance to present a part of this thesis and to use their libraries. I also thank Richard Phillips at the University of Florida for his assistance while I was in Gainesville in 2000. Thanks to the numerous teachers who let me guest lecture on parts of this thesis. I hope I didn't gab too much.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without my committee. Were it not for space constraints, I would fill up several pages with how thankful I am to have worked with Bart Dean. You gave great advice, wonderful support, and more motivation than I could use in a lifetime. To Tony Rosenthal: thanks for understanding. Thanks for so many letters of recommendation at the last minute, and for teaching me to strike a balance between teaching, writing, and having a life. To Bryant Freeman, thanks for all the opportunities you sent my way. *Chapo ba*. I give special thanks to John Janzen for working with me on this “interesting project.” I appreciate your support and knowledge of the Kongo that you shared with me.

Most importantly, to all the Haitians: Yatande, Zao, Mirey, Aboudja, Azouke, Ayizan, Matisou Legba, Lemba, Danbala Frank, Edelle, Janèt, Kebyesou (Gonayiv), Sanba Daomen, Sanba Si yo vle, Sanba Djòlkidi, Gran Chimen, Gary Seney, Lolo and the others from Boukman Eksperyans, Azor, Ti-Papi, Wawa, Iv-wòz, Bob Bovano, Patchouko, Etzer, Ayaze, Makoumbe, Richard Morse, Kebyesoudanlè (Jean-Raymond), Sanba Yamba, Jaklin, Pefa, Fanmi Villebrun, C&C, Vyèj Mirak Sodo, Manbo Inan, Frantz Solon, Radyo Carayib, Radyo Haiti Inter, and all the other *lwa*, human or otherwise that helped me. To Jean Dominique and Martha Jean-Claude whose roots will never die. And of course, I cannot forget *sa k te mennen m, kongo te mennen m*.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

To take part in the African Revolution, it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves, and of themselves.

In order to achieve real action, you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress, and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity.—Sékou Touré¹

One could replace the word “Africa” out of Touré’s 1959 speech in Rome with the name of any location in the world, and it would be equally as valid, including Haiti. Too often, people have worked in Haiti under the guise of making a better Haiti, yet primarily their actions have proven to be rooted in self-interest. This holds true for Haitian nationals as well as foreigners. For example, colonialism in Latin America was supposed to better the savage “Indians.”² However, one can only point the finger at the other for so long before critique gives way to scapegoating. At some point, the people have to stand for themselves. They must be making the choices of representation and destiny.

In Haiti, François Duvalier, the future president, began working for the masses as a doctor. His ethnological studies gave him an intimate understanding of the masses of people who were politically and socially marginalized due to the US Occupation and the resulting mulatto control of the country after 1934. Despite a low level of violence perpetuated by him before and after the election, Duvalier enjoyed some amount of popular support after elected in 1957. However, he slowly became less “concerned with and completely at one with the people”³ and focused more on his own goals. Eventually this led to a crisis of identity for the Haitian people over which the Duvaliers ruled.

So what did the oppressed Haitians do? It would be absurd to assume that all Haitians went along with the sweeping socio-political changes that occurred in the last fifteen years of the 20th

century. However, many did. The revolution against the Duvaliers was fashioned with the people, and it has been called the Roots movement by some Haitians and foreign scholars. The Haitian people came together. A farmer and a *mawoule*⁴, a poet and a priest, a businessman and a market woman, worked together as one to better Haiti. Grassroots projects grew in areas the state had neglected, and the area was vast.

The period of extreme coercion and co-optation under François Duvalier saw the modification of the mechanisms of control in order to transform the Haitian society, with goals of transforming the idea of the Haitian nation. Thus, the Haitian people were supposed to succumb to Duvalierist (authoritarian) goals and accept the new version of *a good Haitian* as being *a good Duvalierist*. With this in mind, I examined the phenomena that brought about a change from authoritarian to democratic rule. How would a population that has historically been known for authoritarian governments simultaneously end one regime while forging a both new identity and a path toward a democratic government? Furthermore, if this was a local effort with a nationwide impact, how are individuals involved forging a new identity? In this thesis, I examine these questions and the larger issue of identity as a cultural critique of society and resistance to a social order.

The second chapter of this thesis will examine the crisis of Haitian identity in light of Duvalierism and notions of resistance against the state's position. During this epoch of history, a group of people who called themselves *samba-s* began working on a revalorization of Haitian identity through popular culture. And from all these people and their work came a revolutionary song in the form of *mizik rasin*⁵. It was this song which accompanied the collective work of rebuilding a post-Duvalierist Haiti. The third chapter will contextualize and expand the notions about this movement, focusing on the musical aspects of the Roots movement. Drawing upon

Clifford Geertz for the next two chapters, I discuss identity as a cultural system.⁶ Chapter four provides a historical tapestry through which the *sanba-s* weave the history of the Roots movement and by extension, their existence. It explores several periods and explains the relevance of each in the movement. In short, it identifies which root is and is not a part of the budding democracy in Haiti. As the fourth chapter explains a *sanba-s* work in a larger history, the fifth discusses several aspects of their post-Duvalier identity. When going through these two chapters, the reader should keep in mind Hobsbawm's "invention of tradition." The final section of this work will provide insight into the importance of the Roots movement and *sanba* identity within the larger framework of anthropology.

Methods

This paper, interdisciplinary in nature, draws primarily upon history and anthropology. I felt that this approach allowed a larger historical perspective through which to view the *sanba* phenomenon. In chapter two, I drew from both primary and secondary sources located mostly at the University of Kansas. I examined documents in Haitian, French, English, and Spanish published both inside and outside of Haiti. My method involved not only surveying what was written, but also examining what words were used to convey ideas: a discourse analysis of a Foucauldian nature. With regard to music, I would have liked access to actual recordings, but limited distribution and late acquisition made this impossible. I resigned myself to examining previously published lyrical content only.

The next three chapters balance secondary sources, used for history and background, and primary sources. Primary source material comes predominantly from my collection of Haitian music and from my work in Haiti. In my fieldwork, carried out from early June to late August 2001,⁷ I divided my time between formal interviews and participation, "deep hanging out."⁸

Many of this paper's quotes come directly from my field notes or from interviews that I recorded in Haiti and transcribed upon my return to the United States. The manner in which I worked with the transcriptions combined ethnographic analytic methods put forth elsewhere.⁹ I read each interview twice to determine how to categorize sections of the text. After reading all the material, I "cut and pasted"¹⁰ sections under larger headings like "Vodou," "identity," or "history." Next, I read more "deeply," meaning that I focused on word choice and metaphors used, writing notes in the margins. I used my cultural and historical background knowledge and further library research to highlight themes for analysis.

For my participant observation, I involved myself in the lives and activities of several people in Haiti. Most of the time, I simply did what they did. If they were sitting around talking, then I participated in the discussion. If they were playing drums, I thumped along with them. If they were going to Vodou ceremonies or musical performances, I went, too. This went beyond merely joining in. People in Haiti are like people everywhere: we all have interpersonal "walls." I had to use a framework of thoughts and actions which would endear me to them, and let me "in." I drew upon Haitian proverbs and expressions when speaking with people, which implied I knew about "traditional" wisdom. I had to live the way they did, and not complain (although I didn't have anything to complain about): eat the same foods, sleep on the same straw mats or concrete floors, and ride in the same public transportation. (Perhaps the issue with which I struggled the most was the issue of "time." This only came up, however, when I had deadlines, like catching a plane.) During my time with people in the Roots movement, I would take pictures, make audio recordings, or scribble notes, in addition to normal interpersonal engagement. At the end of the day, I would type up field notes. Upon returning to the United States, I analyzed and coded them in the same manner I did my interviews.

Spelling, Plurals, and Other Issues

When dealing with orthographic issues, I followed the official spelling system of 1979¹¹ with updates suggested by Yves Déjean, Roger Desir, Bryant Freeman, and others. If any questions came up, I referred to the Freeman-Laguerre dictionary. The name of the country, Haiti, will be spelled using English orthography. A majority of the time, places within Haiti follow French or English spelling. In an appreciation of the value of Haitian, I spell specific place names in Haiti with Haitian orthography in a conscious act of linguistic renegotiation against the idea that Kreyòl is not a “real language.”

The issue of plurals of Haitian words in an English text raises certain questions. In Haitian grammar, the indefinite plural is implied (as in a category, e.g. I like dogs would be *M renmen chen*). The definite plural case involves the addition of *yo*. To a reader of English, this would be awkward, so I have followed the example of Gage Averill and used “-s” to form a plural.

Scholars and novices have used different words to describe the language spoken by all Haitians and the religion which has affected all life in Haiti. When referring to the language, I identify what is spoken by the word Kreyòl, as opposed to Haitian, Haitian Creole or Creole because no definitive English word exists. Any other word (Patois, Pidgin, Cajun) would be wrong, as would any easy correlation to languages spoken around Louisiana. Secondly, I chose to use the word Vodou, rather than Voodoo, Vodoun, Vodun or any other variant. My reasoning for the above claims stands on the following principle: if we do not have a word for it in our language, borrow it from someone else. In Haiti, they use the word *konpitè* for computer. If it works for them, it should work for us.

¹ Taken from Fanon 1963.

² The indigenous people of the Western hemisphere continue to be mistakenly called Indians as Columbus thought he was in India.

³ Duvalier 1967a.

⁴ *Mawoule* means "I will roll." This refers to the person who works far away from home, perhaps herding cattle, and then rides back home on the back of a truck loaded down. He sits on the top of the load, and rolls back and forth as the truck turns.

⁵ *Mizik rasin* translates as Roots music.

⁶ Geertz 2000.

⁷ Advisory Committee on Human Experimentation, or ACHE was the name of the University of Kansas internal review board at the time of my proposal.

⁸ Geertz 1998.

⁹ Agar 1996; Emerson 1995. I also received help on this from Bartholomew Dean, John Hoopes, and Jane Gibson-Carpenter.

¹⁰ Although I call this "cut and paste," I worked on a computer.

¹¹ Institute of Haitian Studies 1995.

CHAPTER TWO: PLOWING THE FIELD OF THE DUVALIER ERA

Twentieth-century Latin America has hosted some of the most violent regimes in all of history: General Martinez in El Salvador, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Pinochet in Chile, various military juntas in Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala, and Uruguay, and Fujimori in Peru. One of the longest, though, was headed by the Duvaliers in Haiti. From 1957 to 1986, first under François (1957-1971) and then by his son, Jean-Claude (1971-1986), the regime ran the country with iron pants¹ that infiltrated every aspect of Haitian life. The Duvaliers created a regime based on the idea of a national culture in order to transform Haiti into a new nation. Through the integration symbolically of the whole of Haitian society under the official stated ideology, the regime attempted to form a pseudo-populist front and thus, curtail any discussion outside the boundaries of the dictatorship. By installing a new self-serving power structure on a local and national level, the regime forced acceptance of its notion of Haitian identity. After Jean-Claude took office on April 22, 1971, a movement based on the opposition to the dictator and bent on reconstruction of Haitian identity grew. This movement, in combination with other factors, paved the way for the first leader of Haiti selected by the masses to act as the embodiment of the Haitian people, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. François Duvalier tried to canonize culture with his ideas of *noirisme*, a Haitian adaptation of *négritude*, and its emphasis on the African roots of Haitian identity. He imposed his idea of identity onto a population in a manner that paralleled that of Columbus in 1492. In doing this, he “zombified” the population of Haiti by replacing their culture both symbolically and physically with a new “National Culture.” Malcolm X believed that “culture is an indispensable weapon in the freedom struggle,” and it was this pre-Duvalierist weapon with which the Haitians armed themselves to combat Duvalierism.²

The majority of the research on this era focuses on the dictatorship, and fails to examine the actions of the people, the body of the country. Seemingly, Haitian history has been incorporated into a Duvalierist discussion. Michel-Rolph Trouillot gives an in-depth look at the origins and nature of the Duvalier state.³ He contends that the regime drew upon preexisting conflicts in order to pit the Haitian state against the nation in a singular manner. Rather than a simple authoritarian state, François Duvalier, through co-optation or neutralization of national institutions, created a totalitarian state.⁴ Although Trouillot's work provides great insight into issues involving the nation and shows the development of racial and social trends throughout Haitian history, like many discussions of this type, he focuses on the government rather than its relation to everyday Haitian life. Given the people's struggle to overthrow this regime, ignoring their history creates a partial truth at best. Laënnec Hurbon, a sociologist, contends that the Duvalierist state was initially a "Creole Fascism" that used noirisme to mask the symbolic, physical, and cultural violence in order to legitimize the actions of the regime.⁵ Essentially, the Duvaliers used language that embraced the masses in order to feign representation of the desires of the populace.⁶ Hurbon's work though, suffers from the same shortcomings as Trouillot's. The only person ~~who~~ has written significantly on the topic of cultural resistance to Duvalierism is ethnomusicologist Gage Averill. A key element in his writings is that African identity movements (or in this case, a "Haitian" identity movement) develop in the Americas under periods of exploitation and political struggle.⁷ These movements create cultural spaces to counter hegemonic narratives.⁸ His work fills gaps in the literature, but in general still more attention needed to be given to the Haitian people.

Theory of Resistance and the Haitian Case

A social movement, according to James Defronzo, an expert on revolutionary theory, is defined as a persistent and organized effort on the part of a relatively large number of people, either to bring about or resist social change, or to reassert traditional institutions.⁹ A revolutionary social movement strives to significantly change or completely replace existing social, economic, or political institutions. Typically, these movements use a wider range of tactics to accomplish their goal. Next in categorizing a movement is examining whether or not violence is used.¹⁰ Save for a few exceptions, the Haitian example herein is non-violent. For example, the clandestine political group Mouvman Nasyonal Patriyotik-28 Novanm (MNP-28) explained that in resistance to Duvalier, they encouraged people to come out from under the dictator through “organization of courageous force,” and not by wielding a gun. In order to build support for their non-violent position, they cite numerous failed attempts at overthrowing François Duvalier.¹¹ Finally, the anti-Duvalierist movement can be considered leftist, as there existed some goals of redistributing land, health care, and access to education¹². In summary, the people’s fight against the dictatorship can be seen as a leftist revolutionary movement that is mainly, but not strictly, non-violent.

Historically, Haitians have chosen to rise up against major affronts to their dignity. Slave rebellions occurred periodically in the eighteenth century; the biggest started in August 1791 at Bwa Kayman. At an alleged Vodou ceremony, slave leaders instructed their followers to rise up against the French. They sang songs of resistance and donned wangs¹³ and armbands of Ogoun, the spirit of war, for protection.¹⁴ This revolt led to Haitian independence in 1804. In the twentieth century, a group known as the *kakos*¹⁵, led by Charlemagne Péralte, staged an armed insurgency against the US Occupation (1915-1934) and revival of the *kòve*.¹⁶ The guerillas donned the red band of Ogoun, reminiscent of the maroons more than a century before. Their

cause was aided by the *cacos de plume*¹⁷ who wrote disparagingly of the US. The US began to squash the revolt, and killed Peralte.¹⁸ In true demonstration of culture as resistance, the *kako-s* circulated pictures of Peralte's crucified body (which resembled Jesus on the cross) to galvanize support and antagonize the US. All of these events represent symbolic action, which sociologist Per Herngren defines as an action which "has a message that is greater than the action itself."¹⁹ During the revolution, Haitians called on their ancestors in a Vodou ceremony to combat colonialism. During the first US occupation, the *kako-s* also enlisted Vodou spirits, and used Peralte's crucified image as that of their savior, based on Christian ideology. The violence was not only against the US troops, but also against a foreign presence in Haiti, like France in the 18th century.

Ideology of "Papa Doc"

Haiti, from 1957 to 1986, was ruled both ideologically and physically by the Duvaliers. Ideologically, François Duvalier attempted to end the "perverse and retrograde spirits of tenants of the old order" by leading a "mental, political, social, and economic conversion...to grow a new society."²⁰ The elder Duvalier associated with a group called the *Griots* in Haiti during the 1930s and 1940s. This group of middle-class intellectuals emphasized the importance of Haiti's blackness and African heritage, and was staunchly anti-elite. The reason for this position stemmed from the fact that the political and social elite were primarily mulatto as a consequence of the US occupation policies which favored the lighter skinned mulattos over the darker skinned population. In his *Bréviaire d'une révolution*, Duvalier wrote that his "enemies are those of the nation."²¹ Although he published this in 1967, this stance was implicit in the way he ruled. From this point until 1986, Duvalier had defined Haitian identity; i.e. to be Haitian is to support Duvalier, turning dissent into treason. The "country doctor," as he called himself, began the

laborious task of reconstructing Haitian society in agreement with “life and destiny.”²² True to his past as an ethnographer, he claimed that Haitians were a mix of Africa and Europe, but were of African mentality, and that no western tradition should be integrated into their race.²³ The word “race” implies that Duvalier regards Haitians to be displaced and slightly modified Africans. The “evolution,” not revolution of 1804 was a logical step of the Haitian people towards Duvalierism.²⁴ To produce loyalists to his doctrine, François Duvalier encouraged the construction of universities and schools of art to “conserve and augment development of national culture.”²⁵ Another key point of Duvalierist doctrine is the need to “protect, in a reconstituted reality, the institution of man, made to confer, guarantee, and preserve the essential values of our civilization of teaching and objectives.”²⁶ This included the use of spirits, i.e. Vodou, the doctrine of Christ, and “an original national Haitian culture” in order to create a collective personality.²⁷ Duvalier went so far as to replace God with himself in the “Our Father” prayer.²⁸ In 1967, on the tenth anniversary of his election, François Duvalier addressed the “citizens of [his] revolution” and claimed victory of the politics of Duvalierism.²⁹ He continues by praising the “patriotic and incessant effort at social and economic change of the Haitian person.”³⁰ At this point, he dedicated his body and soul to the “economic fight for the country...to raise the standard of our lives” and began to outline future growth projects.³¹ He attempted to be everywhere, to do everything, to be omnipresent and omniscient. A call to action also went out because “without doctrine, leaders, followers, militants...the economic revolution [wouldn’t] happen.”³² He concluded his address to the nation by embracing the entirety of the population and their common goal of love of the homeland, each other, work, beauty, truth, and goodness.³³

“Papa Doc” designated a framework around his cult of personality in order to nationalize identity and centralize authority. His doctrine of national unity attempted to represent “political

and economic democracy” and maintained that his rule was “constituted by the deep aspirations of a majority....”³⁴ However, these terms simply created a façade of populist rule for his Machiavellian ideas.

Jeanclaudism

Jean-Claude Duvalier took office the day after the death of his father. In a radio address given the day after his father’s death, “Baby Doc” claimed he had “decided to continue [his father’s] work with the same fierce energy and the same intransigence.”³⁵ Given this statement, one would expect a consistency within Duvalierism. However, this was not always the case. Certainly, for the first few years, Papa Doc’s doctrine was carried out almost without faltering by the old guard Duvalierists, namely, the widow Simone Ovide Duvalier. Jean-Claude made pronouncements praising the “people of the Haitian Nation, People of Duvalier” and contended that the smooth change in power implied that the rule by the son was “accepted by the immense majority of the Haitian people.”³⁶ Despite this, a change was coming. In speeches made during the early years of his rule, Jean-Claude emphasized the beauty of “that marvelous vehicle that is the French language for transmitting...the knowledge of man.”³⁷ This focus on European language contradicted his father’s support of the peasants and Africa; further, Jean-Claude emphasized the importance of the middle class and their values as the way to make Haiti better overall, rather than the poor and marginalized. This indicates that Jean-Claude was starting a new program. Still, the old guard kept him mostly tied to a certain path. He complimented the Volunteers of National Security (VSN), commonly called the *tonton makout (TTM)*, as a “vibrant expression of popular and national quintessence.”³⁸ Time passed, and Jean-Claude began to assert his own ideas. He disbanded the TTM, only to reform them under a different name and absorb the rest into the army. Finally, after constant wavering and despite lack of interest, Jean-

Claude declared the advent of Jeanclaudism on September 22, 1977, the twentieth anniversary of François Duvalier gaining power.

By this time, most discussion of the “National Collective” had stopped.³⁹ It was replaced with the idea of “liberalization.” Jean-Claude had been pushed into relaxing internal pressure due to external pressure by the United States. A visit to Haiti by Andrew Young, US ambassador to the UN, had Duvalier reviewing a list of political prisoners. Young was sent by President Jimmy Carter, a strong supporter of human rights. Reports had leaked to Carter that repression had been relaxed, but that “dissent is still met with imprisonment or exile.”⁴⁰ US aid to Haiti depended on the human rights situation, and as the economy was worsening, Duvalier adapted in order to keep money flowing into the country.⁴¹ Although tourism was increasing, by 1978, sixty-five percent of the budget consisted of foreign aid. This growing dependency on foreign powers again antagonized the old guard, but Jean-Claude was interested in money, whereas his father had been interested in power. Foreign aid money was pocketed rather than distributed to those in need, who were bearing the hardships of the African Swine Fever (ASF) affair, natural disasters, and a decrease in tourism after the scandal whereby being Haitian constituted a risk factor for contracting AIDS.⁴² This represented a self-distancing from the peasants, and in a larger sense, from his father’s doctrine, as François Duvalier fashioned himself closer to the rural inhabitants ideologically. One last blow came when Jean-Claude married a mulatto, Michèle Bennett. This act stood in glaring contradiction to his father’s *noiriste* ideology.

Physical Manifestations of Duvalierism

François Duvalier had wanted to create a new Haitian state based on his ideology. In order to carry this out, he created a single, Duvalierist model for national institutions and either destroyed

or co-opted the other institutions. One figure of his armed institution was that of the *tonton makout*. The *makout-s* were soldiers in Papa Doc's private army. According to Michel Laguerre, a Haitian historian in the US, the *tonton makout-s* were the center of society. They acted as spies for the regime and carried out attacks against the opposition.⁴³ Later, when they became formalized, their role changed to one of maintaining national security. At this point, the rule of law became arbitrary and personalized. Laguerre writes that the *makout-s* contact with both the central government and with the people gave them a centralized role in Haitian life as arbiters of Duvalierism.⁴⁴ Those trying armed resistance had their "legs broken and genitals pounded," while others were "stabbed, shot, kicked...dragged through the streets..." shown to Papa Doc, and then dragged some more, all courtesy of the *makout-s*.⁴⁵ Although not known for sure, such a fate probably befell Jacques Stephen Alexis, who attempted an armed overthrow in 1961. Therefore, corporal punishment was not, as a rule, hidden, and thus the terror continued to be publicized. In another example, some *makout-s* broke up the funeral of one of Duvalier's enemies and stole the body.⁴⁶ Graham Greene's novel *The Comedians* vividly portrays the horror and fear this event caused. Due to the fact that Papa Doc was a *bòkò*⁴⁷, this suggests that the man died an unnatural death and would be resurrected as a *zonbi*. For a people steeped in Vodou, the *zonbi* creates the fear of eternal work without pay, in other words, the reinstatement of slavery. Further examples involve the attacking of people with the same last name as political targets, though the two people may be unrelated. Social clubs and soccer teams were harassed as they were perceived as organizations outside the control of the regime.⁴⁸ *Makout-s* began victimizing both the young and the old; women as well as men; the elite as well as the meek; the apolitical as well as the political.⁴⁹ This tactic created a general fear in the population. One of the most grotesque displays of *makout* violence occurred after a 1964 guerrilla uprising in

Jeremi, where “the entire town was threatened by state violence. The elite paid for the actions of those youths with dozens of their lives. Infants were raped and killed for offenses against the state committed by cousins-twice-removed, or even by former neighbors.”⁵⁰

An important aspect of *makout* action lay in the fact that they were volunteers. This meant that they received little or no money. What they got in exchange for allegiance to the Duvaliers was the power to harass and take what they wanted from whomever they wanted. This option attracted many marginalized people as well as others from the middle and upper classes. This cross-class alliance kept the structure legitimized in the eyes of the people.⁵¹

Another key aspect of the *makout-s* was their apparel. They usually dressed in the blue denim, straw hat, and knapsack of *Kouzen Zaka*, the Vodou spirit of agriculture, probably chosen as a symbol ^{to} rural Haitians who call on *Zaka* to help with harvest would recognize. This connection concretized the relationship between Vodou and Duvalier, thus creating a social imaginary where all Haitians ^{who} were Duvalierists were Vodouists.⁵² François Duvalier himself donned clothes reminiscent of *Bawon Samdi*⁵³, thus conveying the idea to Haiti that he had power over life and death. Duvalier was codified even more in Vodou after his death as he appears occasionally as a spirit entitled *lwa 22-os*.⁵⁴ The Duvalierist use of Vodou did not stop there, though. As Vodou stood as one of the last national institutions, albeit an informal one, the regime acquired the services of Vodou priests. In controlling Vodou, the Duvaliers attempted to use it as a tool for submission.⁵⁵ Michel Laguerre states that Duvalier used the *oungan-s*⁵⁶ authority over the masses to ensure popularity of the regime. The *oungan-s* used Duvalierism to “control their domain, gain security over their congregation, to operate freely, to gain money as local brokers of government power.”⁵⁷ Thus, the government gained legitimacy and the locals gained power. In a telling episode, François Duvalier “invited” Vodou priests from around

Pòtoprens to the National Palace and, while dressed as *Bawon Samdi*, declared, “I am your only master,” and with that, he entered into the realm of the supernatural.⁵⁸ With the incorporation of Vodou into Duvalierism, a large part of Haitian folklore, music, and dance fell under the regime’s spell. Being an open Vodouisant became the same as claiming support for the Duvalierist regime.

Both Vodou and the *tonton makout* stretched across the country. However, the many *chèf seksyon-s*⁵⁹ represented the key physical element of Duvalierism in the provinces. *Chèf seksyon-s* were “members of the Haitian military, possibly *makout-s*, answerable not to any civil authority, but only to the local army commandant.”⁶⁰ Their official responsibilities included knowing the comings and goings of foreigners and strangers; the government’s position and doctrine; any local candidates’ activities; any work by an NGO.⁶¹ In reality, the *chèf seksyon* fulfilled his responsibilities to the state, yet surpassed these to include a general system which would “abuse the peasants, hinder their progress and organization” by a personalized rule of law.⁶² For example, if a person called a *chèf seksyon* to resolve an argument, both parties could end up in jail and receive beatings. In order to prevent this, one would have to bribe the *chèf seksyon* with over a year’s income or a percentage of his livestock.⁶³ The extortion didn’t end there. If one wanted to be buried, to be born, to cut down trees, to have a Vodou ceremony or organize a *rara* band⁶⁴, one had to pay the *chèf seksyon* a tax. All aspects of life had to be approved by the government, which the “chief” embodied.⁶⁵ Nothing was to exist outside of Duvalierism, as to be Haitian meant you supported state structure and ideology.

Here, a brief mention of the Church is merited. Traditionally, the Catholic Church in Haiti, run by a foreign clergy, has been opposed to Vodou. When Papa Doc took control and installed his pro-Vodou doctrine, the Church voiced dissent. Duvalier subsequently identified the Church

as one of the “principal ideological instruments by which a small French elite could disrupt the nation,” and so he began expelling priests.⁶⁶ Finally, after years of discussion with the Pope, François Duvalier reconciled his differences with the Church, provided that the dictator could nationalize the clergy. In 1966, the Catholic clergy were replaced with native Haitians hand-picked by Papa Doc, thus enlisting the support of the last institution in Haiti that wasn’t Duvalierist.⁶⁷

It appeared that Papa Doc had reason to decree a political victory in 1967. For a few years, Duvalier’s definition of Haitian identity was installed in or forced upon a nation. A “true” Haitian was Duvalierist. The fate awaiting those who were outside of the regime was imprisonment at *Fò Dimanch* or *Kazèn Desalin*, beatings by the *tonton makout-s* or the *chèf seksyon-s*, or living in quiet submission, accepting of any situation. In short, life in Haiti was either as a Duvalierist or as a *zonbi*.

Resistance and Popular Culture

From 1971-1975, little changed in the regime under Jean-Claude Duvalier. After that, Baby Doc’s disinterest in politics led to him losing control over the country. This allowed for a growing amount of demonstration not only against the dictatorship, but also in favor of a new Haitian identity.

More isolated attempts at overthrowing the regime by small groups occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, but more important were demonstrations by a large number of people. One key example of a physical manifestation against Duvalier occurred in May 1984. According to wire reports, a group of people was defending a pregnant woman from being beaten in Gonayiv. The police used excessive force in controlling the crowd, and a riot broke out. The incident sparked action throughout the country. Masses of angry and hungry people raided the CARE food warehouses

in Okay, Okap, Ench, as well as Gonayiv.⁶⁸ This indicated that the people needed food and that the government was not providing for the people's well being. This act was a symbol to the Duvalier government that Baby Doc's baby, his economic revolution⁶⁹, was failing.⁷⁰ An event in December of 1985, two months before Baby Doc left Haiti, highlighted demonstrations which led to the end of the regime. On December 5, Radyo Solèy was closed, accused of "disturbing the peace."⁷¹ For the twenty-six days it was closed, demonstrations flourished. In Okap, fifty thousand people marched and chanted:

Jan Klòd Divalye
Ranje kò ou
Nap dechouke ou
Nou pa pè gaz
Nou gen sitwon

Jean-Claude Duvalier
Get yourself ready
We're going to uproot you
We don't fear tear gas
We have limes (to counteract it)⁷²

This chant indicated that people no longer resigned themselves to be *zombi-s* under the regime. They were willing to do what was needed to throw off their chains as they had almost 200 years earlier.

The symbolic part of the resistance represents the majority of work against the dictatorship, due to the state's monopoly on violence. In a political vein, Haitians in exile as well as those in "inzile,"⁷³ spoke out against the state in publications. The group MNP-28 clandestinely distributed fliers attacking the government. In order to connect to the Haitian collective conscience, MNP-28 used proverbs to accentuate their points.⁷⁴ This usage of Haitian traditional wisdom created a bond between the MNP-28 and the masses, yet outside of Duvalierism. Also, included in the documents were repeated references to liberators in other repressive states in Haiti, like the *kako-s* and Péralte, Dessalines, and Boukmann.⁷⁵ This identifies the people on the side of freedom and the dictator as the "opposition."⁷⁶

Another example of symbolic resistance can be seen in the writings of Jean Leopold Dominique, Haiti's greatest journalist. In his testimonial on the role of a free press under a

dictatorship, he describes the press's function with regard to the term *mawonaj*.⁷⁷ In Haitian culture, this traditionally represents the activities of escaped slaves under French rule, yet several times since then, including during Duvalier's rule, this term has been evoked to provide a historical precedent to a justified struggle. Dominique writes in radio journalism, "The maroon language is constituted by onomatopoeias, by allusion, by weighted silences, by proverbs and sayings."⁷⁸ Thus, what was an idea about rebellion in the eighteenth century is redesignated to a contemporary context.

In a more cultural realm, symbolic action against the dictator took the form of poems and music. One of Haiti's greatest poets, Jean-Claude Martineau, wrote poems in support of the underdog, a symbol representing the Haitian people. In "*Bourik la*," the author tells of a donkey which will no longer walk when prodded by blows from its master. This is not an uncommon occurrence in the Haitian countryside, so no censorship was needed. One could infer, though, that the donkey represents the people who say "no, no, no!" to the regime. Even though this was written in the US, the poetry could be distributed in Haiti.

Musically, a form of resistance developed in response to the regime. First, a style of music called *angaje*, or "engaged" as in politically, grew in popularity with the work of Manno Charlemagne and Marco Jeanty. In these songs, like almost every political song under the Duvaliers, the composers had to use coded language to express their points.⁷⁹ Instead of naming the Duvaliers directly, artists would discuss "the conceited one...sitting on a pedestal,"⁸⁰ referring to the happy-go-lucky ways of Jean-Claude Duvalier. In their song "Pouki,"⁸¹ the artists inquire about the big tooth marks...on the back of the little fish."⁸² Here is described the exploitation of the factory workers by those who stand to profit from their labor in the "economic revolution."

Another form of cultural resistance to the Duvalier cultural domination erupted during Carnival season. According to Averill, Carnival in Haiti, or *kanaval*, is “understood in the Haitian milieu as an aesthetic form of politics.”⁸³ This represents a distinction between the Haitian *kanaval* and pre-Lenten forms in Latin America, where often times Carnival celebrations actually enforce existing power structures by perpetuating their temporary inversion of the power hierarchy. Jean-Claude enjoyed music, particularly *konpa* music, and even had his own Presidential house band that participated in *kanaval*.⁸⁴ Consequently, an increase of money flowed to support this yearly event. Despite Baby Doc’s stamp of approval, songs became increasingly more politically aligned against the government. In 1975, the prize-winning song of *kanaval* discussed the need to stop deforestation, an idea of Duvalierism. By 1985, the artists were threatening Jean-Claude by claiming “if you don’t move, I’m going to break you...I’ll eat you.”⁸⁵ Of course, the singers were addressing Mr. Toto Pawnshop, not Duvalier, as an explicit attack on Duvalier would have been censored. The reference to “Toto,” a nickname for the dictator, clues the listening audience that the song refers to Jean-Claude Duvalier. Both *angaje* and *kanaval* music relied upon clandestine distribution of cassettes in order to spread the musicians’ message. They also received help from local storeowners who would secretly record and distribute tapes.⁸⁶ The last form of resistance to the government emanated from the most unlikely of places: prison. On several occasions, prison members in *Fò Dimanch* and *Kazèn Desalin* demonstrated solidarity that then applied moral pressure on the authorities.⁸⁷ Former political prisoner Patrick Lemoine describes an interesting performance by the other prisoners as one leaped up and shouted, “Ladies and gentlemen! The Group of Hope from *Fò Dimanch* is going to perform a few pieces from their rich repertoire.”⁸⁸ The group proceeded to use bits of bone and aluminum to bang out rhythms on their cell walls and sang some traditional peasant

songs of hope.⁸⁹ In a slightly grimmer episode, the authorities failed to collect the body of a dead prisoner in his cell, despite cries of “Death!” from other prisoners. This outburst built to a cacophony of chants like “Help...we’re dying...they’re killing us...down with Duvalier...down with Jean-Claude.”⁹⁰ What these episodes suggest is that even though the prison, which represented the regime, contained the physical bodies of the prisoners, it could not contain their contempt for the dictatorship.

A New Identity from the Old Ways

The power structure of Haiti, first under François and then under Jean-Claude Duvalier, implemented an ideology that attempted to define Haitian identity in a nationalist context. By enlisting the help of a selection from many sectors of society and by giving verbal support to the Haitian masses, the idea of identity became solidified in Duvalierism and Jeanclaudism. After opposing the regime, the task in front of the people then became to reassert what it meant to be Haitian, or a revalorization of being Haitian. To this extent, musician Michel Dejean commented that a need was created for good (meaning “traditional”) Haitian music. Furthermore, he placed emphasis on the revitalization of the people’s folklore and melodies in order to become cognizant of their values.⁹¹ Fundamentally, the Haitian population, once alienated from themselves, faced a similar situation to Blacks in the United States, according to Malcolm X. Speaking to the US situation, though it applied to the situation in Haiti, the people needed to “recapture [their] heritage and...identity...to liberate [themselves].”⁹²

The first part in starting the Haitian counter-cultural revolution lay in creating organization. In the late 1970s and 1980s, small groups began to form in peasant communities. These held secret meetings to avoid repression. Cooperatives discussed self-sufficiency and democratic decision making. The idea of “*tèt ansanm*” played an important role in a state that promoted

individual responsibility to uphold Duvalierism at the expense of one's community.⁹³ Songs developed out of this movement that focused on the idea that "alone we are weak, together we are strong."⁹⁴ This same idea has been used repeatedly by current Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The spread of these groups suggests a slow growth of community outside of the Duvalier regime's control.

The second part in the counter-revolution was finding an acceptable political framework in which to operate. Time and time again, publications from Catholic churches and from politically vocal exiles proclaimed the need for adherence to the Constitution of Haiti.⁹⁵ This had a dual symbolic meaning. Firstly, it asserted the Haitian belief in the traditional rule of government, and secondly, it applied pressure on the current government to abide by the rule of law.

The third part in creating a new Haiti was emphasizing the importance of the Haitian language. Several different agents of Haitian literacy blossomed under Baby Doc. No clear explanation exists as to why literacy projects were stifled by the Duvaliers, but it is reasonable to assume that they believed illiteracy to be necessary to keep communication under state control. Several of extra-Duvalierist literacy projects were connected to radio stations. Radyo Karayib divided their program into doctrine, information and news, and Haitian language demonstrations. The first section outlined the conscientization of Haitian dignity under the Duvaliers. The second section told of what was happening in the area, and the final section primarily taught language. However, the last section also implied through presentations that poetry, theater, painting, house building, and artisanal work were also "creole" activities.⁹⁶ Radyo Solèy distributed literacy packets to areas to accompany the radio program. In this manner, one could listen and see how to read and write in the language of every Haitian. What these projects were attempting was a real elevation of *all* Haitians, not just those who subscribed to Duvalierism.

Their efforts were rewarded with the codification of the Haitian language in 1979. This meant that Haitian was a real language, no longer just a creole spoken by illiterate peasants in the provinces.

The final part in the creation of the post-Duvalierist identity involved the reappropriation of traditional Haitian cultural items. In some areas, the call of the *lanbi*, or conch shell, was used as a secret sign for a solidarity meaning.⁹⁷ This removed the shell from the African slave motif projected by the Duvaliers and gave it back to the Haitians. In the early 1970s, Haitian exiles in the United States started a movement called *kilti libète*, or “Freedom Culture.” Many of these people were those who were forced into exile due to their work with literacy projects under François Duvalier in the 1960s.⁹⁸ They acted as key players in the process of reclaiming Haitian culture. These groups used theater, dance, and music to express the message of hope for a new future through the use of Vodou and other symbols. The *nèg mawon*⁹⁹ came to embody the symbol of rebellion, not just a Duvalierist symbol of the escaped slaves.¹⁰⁰ *Kilti Libète* groups included images of the *konbit* as a community effort, and thus wrestled it away from the notion of the Duvalierist national *konbit*.¹⁰¹ In performances, groups like *Ayiti Kiltirèl* tried to “express their feelings about their status as a people.”¹⁰² Song lyrics alluded to many proverbs and banked upon the traditional wisdom within them.¹⁰³ Other songs mentioned the simple life of everyday people, like a market woman, a barefoot cowboy, or a member of a *rara* band. Here, the artists attempted no glorification or romanticizing of Haitian reality, but simply describing the life of individuals in society.

The use of traditional Haitian culture as resistance, specifically Vodou, existed in Haiti under Duvalier, too. According to the *noiriste* ideology, Vodou as a religion with its music, dance, and structure, should have been incorporated into everyday life. However, the regime used Vodou

“more to frighten, to make people, the dominant class...a part of the bourgeoisie afraid. But, it wasn't like [the regime] really supported it.”¹⁰⁴ Logically, one would think that the forms of *Vodou-Jazz* popular in the 1940s and 1950s would be emphasized by the government. Yet, most of the time, Haitians “more often than not heard songs like French songs, and disco from the United States”¹⁰⁵ as well as the *konpa* favored by Jean-Claude. So around 1977, Louis Leslie Marcelin, otherwise known as Sanba Zao, started taking his friends to the countryside to learn about Vodou beyond what Duvalier was putting forth. They visited many peristyles, like those of *Lakou Souvnans*, *Lakou Soukri*, *Lakou Badjo*, and *Lakou Dereyal*. Returning to Pòtoprens, these people, who called themselves *sanba-s*, began playing these rhythms in a different setting. Their purpose, related in retrospect, had been to establish a movement which would show appreciation to “the people who live in the countryside who lived Vodou and who took *their* culture and put it into practice” [emphasis mine].¹⁰⁶ In order to survive, this movement, the beginnings of the contemporary *mouvman rasin*, or “Roots movement,” took advantage of the Duvalierist superficial sympathy to Vodou. “When a *makout* would see you with a red or green scarf on, he would most likely think you were a Vodouisant,” and thus didn't harass the *sanba-s*, despite the counter-governmental edge to their movement.¹⁰⁷ Although these *sanba-s*' presence was for obvious reasons limited under the dictatorship, after Baby Doc left, their work would have an even greater meaning combined with developments surrounding the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

No discussion of rebellion against the Duvalier regime, and Jean-Claude specifically, would be complete without a mention of the Catholic Church's role. An 1860 Concordat in Haiti allots a special place for the Church, protecting it and allowing it to exist outside of Haitian law.¹⁰⁸ Looking ahead to 1968, a number of factors changed. The clergy, as mentioned before, had been

nationalized by François Duvalier. At this time, liberation theology began to grow in Latin America, particularly after the conference at Medellin and Vatican II. This semi-Marxist approach to Catholicism stressed the importance of each individual in society, each person's dignity.¹⁰⁹ The reason for this change in approach was a desire to adapt the Church's work to the reality of its members, rather than preach about how holy everyone should be.¹¹⁰ Although the Church's hope was to form small groups in the Church structure, the ecclesiastical base communities, in practice they acted as pockets of resistance to Duvalierism. The *ti-legliz*, or "little church" demanded "liberation of the people in order to help them open their eyes and see the root of the problem."¹¹¹ Often times, Duvalierism was seen to be that root. In some Church publications, large portions of the Haitian Constitution were reprinted in Haitian in order to explain one's rights and responsibilities.¹¹² This side of the Church was engaging the citizens of Haiti to create organized opposition to the illegalities of the state. On a symbolic level, like the *kilti libète* groups and early *rasin* groups in Haiti, the Church stated the need for a *konbit* to help in community development. Beyond that, the lower clergy¹¹³ has even been so bold as to embrace parts of Vodou because "a people who don't accept their culture [are] *zonbi-s*."¹¹⁴

Under Duvalierism, some of the clergy felt as if:

1. The people are like *zonbi-s*.
2. They need eyes to see.
3. They need ears to hear.
4. They need a mouth to speak.
5. They need hands and feet to organize themselves.¹¹⁵

This was a wake-up call to the people whereby all parts come together to serve the one body of the Haitian people. In the diaspora, some Catholic priests responded to this apparently zombified state by publishing a Marxist newspaper, stalwartly against the Duvaliers, entitled *Sèl*, meaning "only," suggesting the number of papers in Haitian Creole in the diaspora which dealt openly

with resistance. A better understanding comes, though, when the translation is given as “salt.”

In traditional Haitian wisdom, salt given to a *zonbi* leads him or her to rise up and kill his master.

Given the priests’ politics and their view on the state of the Haitian people, this seems a more accurate interpretation.

Here, it is interesting to note the role of Haitians in the diaspora, of the Haitian clergy as well as lay people, like the *kilti libète* groups. These groups’ resistance maintained the anti-Duvalierist message, and maintained a “Haitian” identity, even though they were not in the country. Thus, the Haitian “ethnoscape”¹¹⁶ grew, and with it came additional international pressure for political change. Arjun Appadurai believes these conceptually larger communities (like the Haitian one here) “appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.”¹¹⁷

The Beginning of the End

James Defronzo claims that some of the essential characteristics of a successful movement are: mass frustration and popular uprising, unifying motivations of the movement, a crisis of the state that leads to an inability to deal with internal struggle, a tolerant world context, and leaders with access to power.¹¹⁸ Throughout the 1980s, demonstrations occurred frequently¹¹⁹. For example, in 1983, Bishop Romulus of Jeremi assembled one hundred thousand people to implore the government to “stop killing and torturing people.”¹²⁰ Liberation theology, anti-Duvalierist sentiments, and a cultural renewal provided a basis for cohesion among the population. As far as a global context, two factors were key. First, President Jimmy Carter’s emphasis on human rights in Haiti affected the amount of aid being sent.¹²¹ As Jean-Claude gave importance to enriching himself through embezzlement, he lessened the overt repression which consequently created a space for resistance to grow. Secondly, the US involvement in the Iran Contra affair

and President Reagan's newly stated emphasis on democratic elections allowed protest to undermine the Duvaliers.¹²² The crisis of the state that led to Jean-Claude's exodus on February 7, 1986 requires deeper explanation, though. Economically, the country grew more in debt with each passing year. Foreign aid sent to help the poor and marginalized ended up in the pockets of the rich.¹²³ This led to increased demonstration and disorder in the nation. Politically, Duvalierism of the father had been broken by actions of Jean-Claude. First, his economic program of the revolution was failing miserably.¹²⁴ The exploitation felt by the lower classes alienated what was his father's power base.¹²⁵ Baby Doc's marriage to a mulatto alienated him from the old guard and the *noiriste* system.¹²⁶ Overall, the liberalization under Jean-Claude seemed not only to apply to the iron-pants politics of his father, but also to any sort of ideological doctrine of Duvalierism. This seemed to imply an admission of error on the part of Jean-Claude, as relaxation and liberalization would not have been needed in a unified nation. This fracture created more space for dissent. The final aspect of a successful revolt is leadership. Although the time period after Duvalier's abdication has not been examined here, the rise to power and subsequent election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990 should be understood as the leader who emerged triumphant after the fall of Duvalier, and the symbolic embodiment of the newly revalorized Haitian identity.¹²⁷ Being the first democratically elected leader in Haitian history with sixty-seven percent of the popular vote, being familiar with liberation theology (with its focus on dignity for all), and being Vodou-friendly, Aristide represents the physical assertion of the desire of the Haitian people for change and the perfect complement to the cultural assertions mentioned earlier.

In conclusion, the period from 1957 to 1986 in Haitian history presents profound questions on the nature of national identity. The *noiriste* doctrine of François Duvalier and the accompanying

social structural changes attempted a drastic transformation and redesignation of Haitian identity.

Subsequent to Papa Doc's death, a grassroots movement grew that fought both against the regime and in favor of the dignity of the Haitian people. Haitians attempted to make what Malcolm X might have prescribed, a move to "launch a cultural revolution to unbrainwash an entire people."¹²⁸ They used universal Haitian symbols and appropriated them for their cause in order to combat the hegemony of the regime. To prevail in the situation, society had to access the "bit of blood from Franswa Byasou and Boukman in [each person]."¹²⁹

¹ In Haiti, the expression *kanson fè*, or "iron pants," is equivalent to the English expression "iron fist."

² Malcolm X 1992: 56.

³ See *State Against Nation* by Trouillot.

⁴ Trouillot 1990: 174.

⁵ Hurbon 1979: 83.

⁶ Hurbon 1979: 84.

⁷ Averill 1997: 161.

⁸ Averill 1997: 162.

⁹ Defronzo 1996: 8.

¹⁰ Defronzo 1996: 8.

¹¹ MNP-28 1987: 66.

¹² Defronzo 1996: 9.

¹³ A Vodou amulet.

¹⁴ Heintz 1996: 43.

¹⁵ These should not be confused with those of the 1865 uprising.

¹⁶ The US enforced an unused Haitian law that mandated that every person had to work on road maintenance for a certain period. For those who couldn't bribe officials, this was tantamount to slavery.

¹⁷ Literally, "kakos of the pen."

¹⁸ Heintz 1996: 411-416.

¹⁹ Hermgren 1993: 111.

²⁰ F. Duvalier 1967a: 2.

²¹ F. Duvalier 1967b: n.p.

²² F. Duvalier 1967b: n.p.

²³ F. Duvalier 1967a: 22.

²⁴ F. Duvalier 1967a: 23.

²⁵ F. Duvalier 1967a: 32.

²⁶ F. Duvalier 1967a: 35.

²⁷ F. Duvalier 1967a: 36.

²⁸ Heintz 1996: 608.

²⁹ F. Duvalier 1967a: 4.

³⁰ F. Duvalier 1967a: 7.

³¹ Health, education, infrastructure, etc. This would become the foundation of Jeanclaudism in 1977.

³² F. Duvalier 1967a: 10.

³³ F. Duvalier 1967a: 12.

³⁴ Anonymous 1958: 1. During the 1957, Duvalier ran under the National Unity party.

³⁵ Lexis Nexis April 21, 1971.

³⁶ Lexis Nexis April 30, 1971. A referendum had over 99% of the population approving Jean-Claude's power.

³⁷ J-C Duvalier 1978: 272.

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- ³⁸ The VSN were the elite paramilitary force created by Papa Doc to counterbalance the army, traditionally one of the pillars of power in Haitian politics.
- ³⁹ J-C Duvalier 1979: 29. Jean-Claude used this term frequently in the early years of his rule.
- ⁴⁰ Lexis Nexis Aug 16, 1977.
- ⁴¹ Lexis Nexis Aug 16, 1977.
- ⁴² ASF was reported to exist in Haiti, so to protect US investments, all Haitian pigs were killed and replaced with lesser quality US pigs which were ill-adapted to Haitian conditions. Hurricanes and droughts ruined crop yields. The first report of causality of AIDS listed being Haitian as a risk factor for the disease, which then frightened away tourists.
- ⁴³ Laguerre 1993: 14.
- ⁴⁴ Laguerre 1993: 116.
- ⁴⁵ Heintz 1996: 569.
- ⁴⁶ Heintz 1996: 470.
- ⁴⁷ A Vodou priest who works in aggressive magic.
- ⁴⁸ Trouillot 1990: 172.
- ⁴⁹ Trouillot 1990: 166.
- ⁵⁰ Chassagne, cited in Trouillot.
- ⁵¹ Trouillot 1990: 162.
- ⁵² F. Duvalier 1967a: 26.
- ⁵³ "Baron Saturday" is the Vodou guardian of the cemetery. He has the power over life and death.
- ⁵⁴ Papa Doc regarded 22 as his lucky number.
- ⁵⁵ An old saying contends Haiti is 80% Catholic, 20% Protestant, and 100% Vodou.
- ⁵⁶ Another name for a Vodou priest.
- ⁵⁷ Laguerre 1989: 107.
- ⁵⁸ Heintz 1990: 576.
- ⁵⁹ Literally, "section chiefs."
- ⁶⁰ Tèt Kole 1995: iii.
- ⁶¹ Tèt Kole 1995: 10.
- ⁶² Tèt Kole 1995: 11.
- ⁶³ Pierre 2000.
- ⁶⁴ A popular marching and dancing musical form, usually forming during Lent.
- ⁶⁵ Tèt Kole 1995: 32.
- ⁶⁶ Nicholls 1996: 221.
- ⁶⁷ Nicholls 1996: 224.
- ⁶⁸ Lexis Nexis May 20-29, 1984. CARE is an NGO facility.
- ⁶⁹ This term was used ambiguously by the regime. From François Duvalier, we can infer the call for an improved infrastructure, an increase in the means of communication, building of a hydroelectric dam, and increasing the amount of light industry. See F. Duvalier 1967b.
- ⁷⁰ For a further examination of symbolic action, see Hergren 1993.
- ⁷¹ Greene 1993: 152.
- ⁷² Averill 1997: 159.
- ⁷³ This neologism represents those people who were in Haiti, yet unable to carry out daily activities in a manner that suited them, due to state pressure to conform.
- ⁷⁴ MNP-28 1987: 6 a-f.
- ⁷⁵ Jan Jak Desalin was the leader of the Haitian independence of 1804. Boukman was one of the leaders of the slave revolt in 1791.
- ⁷⁶ MNP-28 1987: 15 b.
- ⁷⁷ Dominique 1986: 82.
- ⁷⁸ Dominique 1986: 225.
- ⁷⁹ This phenomenon existed for generations. See *chante pwen* in Averill 1997, or Courlander.
- ⁸⁰ Averill 1997: 128.
- ⁸¹ Meaning "why?"
- ⁸² Averill 1997: 128.
- ⁸³ Averill 1997: 228.
- ⁸⁴ Interview with Bossa Combo. Cited in Averill 1997.

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- ⁸⁵ Dixie Band, cited in Averill 1997. See pages 157-158 for more details.
- ⁸⁶ Averill 1997: 159.
- ⁸⁷ Hengren 1993: n.p.
- ⁸⁸ Lemoine 1996: 150.
- ⁸⁹ Lemoine 1996: 150.
- ⁹⁰ Lemoine 1996: 159.
- ⁹¹ Cesar 1980: 14.
- ⁹² Malcolm X 1992: 54.
- ⁹³ Meaning "heads together." Conseil Nationale Cooperative 1979: n.p.
- ⁹⁴ Raymond 1972: 30.
- ⁹⁵ See Nerestant and Pierre-Charles.
- ⁹⁶ Banbou 1979: n.p. "Creole" is a mistranslation of the word *kreyòl*, which signifies what the Haitians call their language. I use "creole" here to identify cultural artifacts that bring pride to the Haitian masses, outside of the Duvalierist paradigm. See Chapter 1—Spelling and Plurals.
- ⁹⁷ Pierre 2000.
- ⁹⁸ Mentioned in Averill. For a complete description, see Fleurant.
- ⁹⁹ Meaning "maroon."
- ¹⁰⁰ Averill 1997 and 1994a.
- ¹⁰¹ *Konbit*, a traditional peasant work co-operative, was often the metaphor used by Duvalier when describing the nation. See Duvalier 1967b.
- ¹⁰² Martineau 1982: 87.
- ¹⁰³ Martineau 1982: 82.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lemba 2001.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lemba 2001.
- ¹⁰⁶ Sanba Zao 2001.
- ¹⁰⁷ Sanba Zao 2001.
- ¹⁰⁸ Greene 1993: 115.
- ¹⁰⁹ Marins 1982: 5.
- ¹¹⁰ Nerestant 1986: 2.
- ¹¹¹ Marins 1982: 32.
- ¹¹² Komision... 1977: 96-120.
- ¹¹³ The Pope and the upper clergy traditionally oppose mixing politics and religion, creating a division between them and the lower clergy.
- ¹¹⁴ Sylvestre 1980: 19.
- ¹¹⁵ Marins 1982: 29. In Haitian, the reflexive "themselves" is expressed "*tèt yo*," or their head. Thus, the beauty of the this expression reads that "they need hands and feet to organize their head."
- ¹¹⁶ Appadurai defines this as "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live...."
- ¹¹⁷ Marins 1982: 33.
- ¹¹⁸ Defronzo 1996: 12.
- ¹¹⁹ Lexis Nexis, n.p.
- ¹²⁰ Lexis Nexis May 18, 1983.
- ¹²¹ Lexis Nexis Aug 16, 1977.
- ¹²² Lexis Nexis Sept 13, 1982.
- ¹²³ Pierre 2000.
- ¹²⁴ Heint 1996: 694.
- ¹²⁵ Trouillot 1990: 214.
- ¹²⁶ Heint 1996: 675.
- ¹²⁷ Aristide was a priest in the liberation theology tradition.
- ¹²⁸ Malcolm X 1992: 54.
- ¹²⁹ Pierre 2000. Byasou and Boukman were two leaders of the Haitian Revolution.

CHAPTER THREE: ONE ROOT, MANY ROOTS

The earlier history section examined the historical field of the Duvalierist political economy, from whence the Roots Movement began to grow. At this point, I change to a more in-depth discussion of *mouvman rasin*.

Defining the Movement

My research involves the contemporary movement, which the people involved in it call *mouvman rasin*, or literally, the Roots Movement. Figuring out exactly what this was posed somewhat of a problem for me. My first exposure to anything related to this came when a twenty-something bright-eyed ebony black person with long dreadlocks, wearing a T-shirt bearing the images of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bob Marley, and Frederick Douglass, a Star of David necklace and a crucifix, visited my Haitian language class at the University of Kansas. His name, I learned after hearing it several times, was Yatande Bòkò¹. He spoke to our class about Haiti and Vodou, and then sang in a powerfully raspy voice while playing a hand drum. After talking with him outside of class and learning drum rhythms from him, I came to the understanding that the people Yatande represented played music and had some sort of connection to Vodou. He went back to Haiti, and off I went to learn more about this music.

For months I conducted research in the United States, operating under the assumption that this “Roots” entity was strictly musical. In my search for information, I ended up in Haiti at Yatande’s house. The sun in Haiti doesn’t allow for much aimless afternoon activity, so about seven people and I squatted in the one small concrete room that was the apartment. We left the door open partially. Partially to let a breeze in, and partially to keep out the masses of flies that constantly invaded. Despite the sauna-like conditions, we played drums. After an hour, a woman in her early twenties turns to me. Through the few natty locks covering her forehead, she

looks at me and asks, “Do you like the drum?” Of course, why else would I be there playing, right? “Well, which part of the drum do you like?” I was dumbstruck. The conical drum she was holding was not painted, and had only a skin with several nondescript wooden pegs hammered down to secure the skin. She must have seen confusion in my face for she followed with “Do you like the inside or the outside?” At this point, I was definitely confused. Many Haitian drum makers do not spend the time to burn out the rough inside of a drum, and those that do leave a dark, sometimes blackened wooden chamber. So to make a choice between a nondescript outside and a less than interesting inside seemed silly. Then it hit me. The “outside” of the drum was the beat, the music, the dancing and the singing. In US terms, it is the compact disc you buy at the store. The “inside” was the pulse, the meaning, the message. At that moment, I knew that there was more than met the eye. Indeed, Roots music was more than just music, political or otherwise.

So to be clear, I am defining the *mouvman rasin*, or Roots Movement, to be a social and a cultural movement that started in the 1970s in response to perceived threats to Haitian identity in response to Duvalierism and to international sources, involving various but not all groups of the Haitian population. It includes the *sanba* movement (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5) and other musicians, the people involved in grassroots projects, and the communities and groups with whom they identify. By “social” movement, I mean one that strives for a particular set of tangible goals for a community by working on a local level. As described in the last chapter, I specifically mean grassroots work that materially focused on the Haitian population as a whole and symbolically worked against the confines of Duvalierism and the hardships it perpetuated. The “cultural” movement involves the same antagonists as its social counterpart, yet works within a realm not primarily, but still feasibly linked to benefits for a

society. In calling this a cultural movement, I invoke the Gramscian idea involving the totality of culture. It is the “historically situated field of signifiers, at once material and symbolic, in which occur the dialectics of domination and resistance....”² This has primarily been seen as restricted to the realm of music, but I will show otherwise in this work. Although often times connected to a political movement, the cultural part of the Roots Movement is not expressly political.

However, as it has a rapport with “people who keep the [Vodou] traditions, and with the social situation so that, obviously, necessarily, the movement must be confrontational.”³

After explaining my research interests in the Roots Movement, physician and outspoken expert on Haiti, Paul Farmer, asked me “Which one?” as he went on to differentiate what I was studying from “the popular movement, the one that culminated in the elections of Dec 1990”.⁴ This exchange gave me confirmation that I was not imagining a movement that did not exist and also affirmed the idea that the cultural movement could be viewed outside the realm of cultural resistance. I underline the importance of the previous statement because I heed Michael Brown’s warning that “the indiscriminate use of resistance and related concepts undermines their analytical utility, at the same time skewing the project of cultural anthropology....”⁵

The Literature on the Roots Movement

Textual sources on Roots music fall into two categories. The first type comes from popular music magazines, mass media journals and websites. These sources derive a definition of “Roots” as a Vodou-influenced rock music that incorporates dance and theater into performances⁶. From my experience, the movement also incorporates other types of music with Vodou, like reggae, jazz and blues⁷. Although these articles expand the music’s general audience, they do little to explain any social intricacies.

However, one periodical from Haiti, *Bon Nouvèl*, published one article that describes the music in better detail. According to the article, this roots music is a contemporary artistic manifestation of Vodou, a religion that has been historically discouraged by both the Haitian government (except for its dubious use by François Duvalier) and Christians, both Protestants and the Catholic hierarchy.⁸ What the writer calls the “Roots Movement” has been repressed because a message promoting unity, the use of Haitian (instead of French) and equality of the sexes runs contrary to the interests of the ruling classes and the bourgeoisie.⁹ Furthermore, the elite has attempted to co-opt the movement by commercializing certain groups to promote the Roots movement’s form, rather than any message. Although this article fails to provide many details, I believe this contribution important as it shows the potential power involved in the movement through highlighting elite responses to it. Further, this is one of the few mentions of a “movement” as opposed to just music.

Gage Averill, the ethnomusicologist who has written the most on this subject, wrote several works that discuss aspects of the music.¹⁰ In “*Se kreyòl nou ye*,” Averill describes the *mizik rasin* as being “contemporaneous with the post-Duvalier era, although many of the important groups evolved in the years before Duvalier’s exile.”¹¹ In his book *Day for the Hunter, Day for the Prey...*, he adds to earlier writings on what he called *anrasinman* in his prior work.¹² He focuses on aspects of the *mizik rasin* that establish connections between Haiti, “its Afrocentric counterparts in Jamaica, Brazil, and elsewhere,” and bases his work on interviews and lyrics of the most commercially successful Roots music band, Boukman Eksperyans¹³. Averill adequately analyzes Roots music, and even adds that it “is a musical corollary to populist political movements,”¹⁴ yet I believe he downplayed what many people involved with *mizik rasin* were doing away from the music.

The Cultural Movement

One of the people who, while not a musician, associated with some of the leaders of the movement in the 1970s explained:

“It’s better to call it a cultural movement because at that time, we more often heard songs like the French songs, songs in French, and Disco from the United States.... So, in light of that, it was a mode of resistance against different Western musics which created a music of our own, which wasn’t dancing music...like a man and a woman dancing, like the way *konpa dirèk* was.”¹⁵

This points to the importance of music in determining cultural identity. Recall that around the time of the movement’s formation, *Jeanclaudisme* had established a connection with the mulatto elite (later in part due to his marriage to Michèle Bennett in 1980). Lyonel Paquin, a part of the Haitian elite by his lineage, describes these people as having unquestioningly assumed “white” values which forces them “to overemphasize their conformity to the White ideal.”¹⁶ In an era of increased foreign trade and aid, these French songs and US disco smacked of recolonization. In fact, with the increase of Brazilian music, Mexican music and Salsa, it seemed that the history of several colonial powers competing for control of Haiti was bound to repeat itself. Sanba Zao recounts that “even though the real colonists were French, the colonists were Spanish, we were the colonists, it was many *nationalities* (emphasis mine)...English....”¹⁷ Although seemingly referring to the colonial era, the inclusion of Haitians as being colonists and the word “nationalities” as opposed to nations or countries implies a different meaning. By replacing the idea of occupation by a country with occupation by something more abstract, Zao uses the common Haitian tactic of speaking in codes to make a cultural critique. This is particularly demonstrative given that he criticizes Haitians, too. In his song entitled “Loumanndja,” he addresses this issue.

Rele Loumanndja
Kolon yo pran peyi a...

Call Loumandja!
The colonists have taken the country

Men nou pran kolon pèpè¹⁸

Men nou pran nan kolon kreyòl.

The international colonists are here

The national colonists are here.¹⁹

Here again, Zao blurs the line between past and present in order to make a cultural critique. The *kolon kreyòl* refers to the mulatto elite, whereas the *kolon pèpè*²⁰ refers to the foreign music supported by the dictatorship.

A Note on the Use of Radio

In Haiti, where the literacy rate seems to waiver around fifty percent²¹, the radio plays a large role in society. Michael Dash, specialist on Haitian culture and literature, finds the use of the radio in the past thirty years particularly important. He adds “the importance of radio first became manifest in the feeble efforts at liberalization by Jean-Claude Duvalier,”²² particularly with the establishment in the late 1970s of Radio Nationale d’Haïti and Télévision Nationale d’Haïti.²³ Dash discusses historically how radio was controlled by the various power structures²⁴, as well as how it was used to question those same structures. Jean Léopold Dominique used radio to voice dissent throughout several of the stormy periods of Haitian history, from the Duvaliers and the subsequent interim government, beyond the military coup, and through the period of the current President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Unfortunately, in the era of democratic promise, he was shot dead on April 3, 2000 while entering the radio station he owned and worked at, Radio Haiti-Inter.²⁵ Rumors have it that a member of the Lavalas Party whom Dominique criticized wanted to extract revenge. Even in death, Jean Dominique shows that the power structure of Haiti has an interest in radio programming.

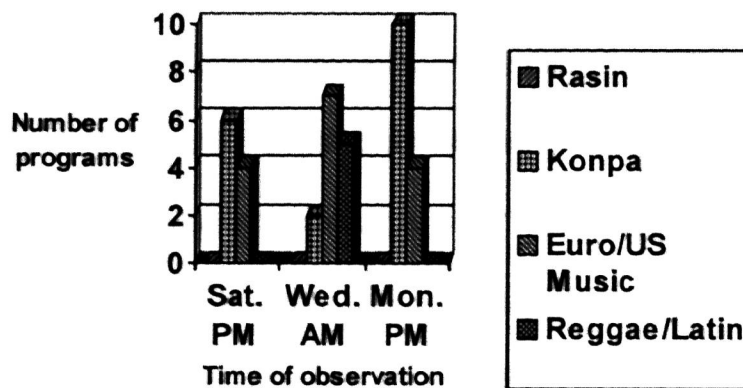
Sitting in a parlor of her family’s house in Pòtoprens, Dady, a woman who studies and teaches Vodou dance and music, talks to me about how the movement is different now versus before and after the fall of Duvalier. She says, “the radio has changed, yet still, it’s only three or four programs that play Roots stuff. Even then, they don’t play the political music, just the

Vodou music.”²⁶ In her opinion, this prevents people from raising their consciousness. Aboudja also commented on how only one or two stations play Roots music. “They more often play Haitian rap. They repeatedly hype foreign music and Haitian rap.”²⁷ While in Haiti, when unwinding after a long day, I would often turn on the radio. After several weeks of this, I recorded the following in my fieldnotes.

“It seems that besides Zao’s show, only one station plays *rasin* music, and only for 90 minutes. The rest of the time, it’s *konpa*, merengue, classical music, music from the US...or talking. Occasionally some Cuban music. What of a country, founded on Vodou and drums, that has this living in their culture today, yet does not have this reflected proportionately in their radio shows?”²⁸

With this in mind, I conducted a series of informal studies on the Roots movement and its presence on the radio.

Musical genres on Haitian radio



These were subjectively based upon my prior exposure and knowledge of Haitian music.

First, I scanned through channels, spending a few minutes doing what I call “close listening” to the programs. Next, I took notes on what style was played based upon instrumentation, language use, and song content. Later, I compared my notes on the programming to descriptions of Haitian music given by Gage Averill in various texts²⁹ in order to verify categorization. I chose to listen to these at these particular times as I felt they represented both the week and the

weekend, morning and evening. These times represent when many Haitians are at home, before or after work, or perhaps socializing. This survey admittedly has many shortcomings, but complementing it with comments from people in the Roots movement suggests certain ideas.

Examining the graph, *konpa* and musical forms from Europe and the United States (including Jazz, “classical,” and contemporary dance music) clearly stand out as being the dominant style of music played on the radio. Reggae and “Latin” music (Salsa, etc.) occasionally enjoy popularity. Although not shown on the graph, Haitian rap also gets played from time to time. However, no *rasin* music was played while I was listening. In fact, only three radio stations regularly play that music, but not the whole day. The division between the Vodou *rasin* music and the *angaje*, or politically engaged *rasin* music (the difference will be explained later) tends to occur per station. That is to say, Sanba Zao’s radio program plays both Vodou music and *angaje* music. The other stations do tend to play the more Vodou oriented music.

In analyzing this information further, I remember that Benedict Anderson wrote that due to an increase in popular democracy (not unlike what began in the late 1970s in Haiti) people started to imagine their nation through the media, and that “these impulses have been enormously reinforced, and stretch still further, in that their messages [via radio] are accessible to people who do not have to be literate in the dominant vernacular...”³⁰ So what sort of nation are people imagining with this sort of radio programming? For starters, the nation is emphasizing *konpa*. Haitians often associate this style of music with sexual or obscene language. Because of this, Haitian women often look bashful and Haitian men excited whenever the idea of *konpa* comes up. Yatande explains that “*Konpa* music is a music where people dance, dance in a sense like slow-dancing, dancing tightly intertwined, and there isn’t a message it gives to society.”³¹ To be more precise and with too many examples to cite here, the message of *konpa* actually perpetuates

the subordination of women, but it suffices to say that it does not provoke social change.

Implicit in the above description is the contrast that *rasin* music contains a message of social change and consciousness raising.

The above chart also shows that besides *konpa*, Haitians can begin to imagine the nation through the sounds of the United States and Europe. In the case of orchestral music, no lyrical message can be derived. However, as in the United States, this music comes from and furthers the idea that this music is for the wealthy elite (as automobile companies sponsor the programming, and announcements are given in French). Therefore, the division in radio audience mirrors the division in Haitian society. Other music from the United States and Europe (including Haitians singing European forms in French), culturally reinforces the foreign domination of Haiti by equating what is popular with what is not Haitian. This is not to pigeonhole Haitians or their aesthetic tastes. Rather, I add that these judgements reflect the segment of society who control the programming of radio, the small Haitian middle class, rather than the majority of the Haitian people, with whom the Roots movement identifies, who form the lower classes.

Musical Aspects

As mentioned before, Gage Averill has done the best job in describing the musical aspect of the Roots movement, that is to say, Roots music. He describes this as a “neo-traditional music” which attempts to “evoke through incorporation something of the music sound and ethos of the traditional models”³². The level of incorporation varies from group to group. At Boukman Eksperyans concerts in the summer of 2002, the group performed with multiple singers, two to four drummers of either a drum set or on Vodou drums, an electric bassist, an electric guitarist, a multi-keyboard player, and dancers. The drummers would play some Vodou rhythms. For

example, on the song “Nou la,” they are playing *double nago*³³, a *rada* rhythm from Lakou Souvnans.³⁴ Other songs, like “Ganga” are *kongo* rhythms from Lakou Soukri, outside the town of Gonayiv. Roots groups inside of Haiti, like Kanpèch, Boukan Ginen, Tokay, and Chandèl, as well as groups outside of Haiti, like Azaka (with Roots pioneer Azouke Sanon) and the Swedish group Simbi, have shared this type of instrumentation. Other groups have different instrumentation. Sanba Zao, perhaps the earliest of the Roots music pioneers, and the group Djakata have a different set up. Aboudja, another pioneer, worked on an album with Sanba Zao.³⁵ He specifies Djakata’s music “is based upon traditional rhythms” and that it’s unlike most other Roots music because “it’s voice and percussion”.³⁶ The Rock-Roots formula stands in contrast to this stripped-down version. Deciding to stay with a simpler instrumentation could well have developed due to problems with earlier Roots groups. Aboudja, talking about Group Sa, which started performing commercially in 1982, recalls that “the rhythmic sense [of some people in the group] surpassed the sense of those people playing the harmony”³⁷. He further added that both styles, with and without Western musical instrumentation, can be legitimately called Roots music.³⁸ Others aren’t quite so open with their definition of Roots music. One woman with the movement said, “a *rasin* band doesn’t need guitar or piano. Not a real *rasin* band...My [idea of a] *rasin* band is two drums, a Vodou song leader, a rattle, and everyone’s *djaye*.”³⁹ In short, this woman raised in the countryside sees the music of a Vodou ceremony as *rasin* music.

However, any Roots group should not be conceived as strictly fitting into one of the above categories. Take for example the group Foula (or later called Foula Vodoule), one of the groups, along with Sanba yo, that came out of Group Sa after 1984. Originally, Foula performed a mix of traditional Haitian music and Jazz. This was not the same as the Vodou-Jazz of the 1940s,

though. This new form of Vodou and Jazz more closely resembled what it would be like if Archie Shepp played with rural Haitian musicians. Polyrhythmic Vodou rhythms were played against aggressive saxophone playing, and double stops on the electric bass, representing the *vaksin*⁴⁰ sound, with the guitar playing both rhythmically and harmonically at once. Later, though, the group abandoned western instruments to play strictly with percussion and voice. As of 2001, Kebyèsoudanlè, leader of the group Foula, had started a new project, again using Western instruments, yet this time leaning more towards a more straight-ahead Jazz and Vodou mix.

Another group that uses various styles is Boukan Ginen. Although the group seemed to fall apart after a foiled attempt at a tour in the United States and Canada around 1996, it had gained a significant following before that. The first song on their first recording is called “Nati Kongo,” which is a remake of a song called “Zansèt nou yo” by Boukman Eksperyans⁴¹. This is not surprising because members of Boukman Eksperyans left to form the new group Boukan Ginen. This tribute represents the respect that the members of each group have for each other. The instrumentation (electric guitar, electric bass, keyboards, several vocalists, and several drummers) and the feel of the music resembles that of Boukman Eksperyans. Later on the album *Jou a Rive*, the group sings “Ede m chante,” an acapella song which resembles work by Ladysmith Black Mambazo of South Africa⁴².

Zobop⁴³, another now defunct band, used several styles, all under the rubric of *mizik rasin*. The first album, released only as an LP, was strictly traditional Vodou rhythms and singing⁴⁴. Songs were simply named after the rhythm used. Several years later, another version of the band came together and recorded the album *Vodou-Rèd*. This recording blended traditional lyrics, traditional rhythms, and traditional drums with newly politicized lyrics, musical forms like

reggae and rock, and Western instruments. The aesthetics of the group paralleled changes surrounding the 1986 ouster of Jean-Claude Duvalier in that the “need to assert the identity of [the group’s] generation” led Zobop to turn to “the ‘Racine’ movement, which meant a return to the cultural ‘roots’ of Haiti”.⁴⁵

As was mentioned briefly earlier, a division exists between types of *mizik rasin* beyond simple stylistic differences. Several music groups like Racine Figuier, Mambo Diela, and Wawa play music taken directly from or inspired by Vodou activities. For example, Racine Mapou de Azor has a song entitled “Vierge Miracles Saut D’eau⁴⁶” which Vodouists on pilgrimage to the waterfall at Sodo could be found singing. According to oral history, a female spirit appeared in a tree near the spectacular waterfalls at Sodo. Haitian Vodouisants believe this to be Ezili, a spirit associated with feminine power and healing. Catholics believe this to be the Virgin Mary. Either way, thousands of Haitians travel to Sodo every year in the week or two before July 15th to celebrate the appearance and ask for blessings, and on the way, they might sing this. Another group, RAM, released a new album entitled *Kite Yo Pale*, meaning, “let them speak.” The group’s previous recordings used Vodou drums or sounds of the *vaksin* and were sung in English. Nine of the twelve tracks on this album are traditional Haitian songs, all dealing with Vodou. Also, The third person plural invoked without a clear antecedent refers to the Vodou spirits. This understood reference to the spirits commonly occurs in Haitian speech.

Not all groups simply rearrange Vodou songs for popular consumption. Groups like Boukman Eksperyans, Boukan Ginen, and Koudjay all have songs that use traditional instruments but have new lyrics that engage the population and ask for social change. Take the song “Oganizasyon” by Foula Vodoule.

Si yo te konnen
Yo pa ta fè nou mal, o!...

If they had known
They wouldn’t have harmed us.

Woumble, peyizan
Woumble, atizan
Woumble, atis yo

Come together, peasants
Come together, artisans
Come together, artists.⁴⁷

Here, the group sings against an enemy that seems to have wronged them. Beyond that, it asks the people to join in a cross-class alliance, to organize, which implies that organization will prevent future injustices. Sanba Zao and the musical projects he has worked with consistently maintain a militant stance towards bettering society, and many of his songs are aimed at doing exactly that. Unfortunately, much of this *angaje*, or politically engaged music, downplays the traditional musical elements in their music (Sanba Zao and other exceptions aside). One person in the movement described such a band by saying she “sees them out of control, losing their roots. They play *konpa* with the music. They’re playing *konpa*.... But [the group leader] has his group, has his specific audience, his class, his people.”⁴⁸ As in the case of groups that play traditional songs, there exist many groups that play new songs of freedom and conscientization⁴⁹. I do not intend to give a long explanation and analysis of them, but rather mention them to highlight the distinctions within recorded Roots Music.

The musical side of the Roots movement lies not only in commercialized music, though. Over the years, several locations became centers for musical development in Pòtoprens. Aboudja recounted the activities when his house was a center for musical growth.

“At those meetings, guys would come and we would sit together and play the drum. We spoke about mystical things, you understand? But the important part was practicing the drum. We would learn songs, guys would learn about the drums [and about Vodou]....”⁵⁰

These activities, in the area of Bapèt Choz, became the breeding grounds for Group Sa, Sanba yo, and Foula. Another area of Pòtoprens, in the neighborhoods of Dèlma, became the base for the work of Boukman Eksperyans. More recently, the house where I first learned of the depth of the movement has become a center of work. Like a regular job (because steady work in Haiti is

nearly impossible for a Roots musician due to economic reasons, no matter how well known),

Yatande leads instructional sessions on the drums Monday through Friday.

“I work with many people [teaching drums at my house]. I don’t collect money from those I help. That’s what I teach, that’s what the rural people taught me. It’s them I’m sharing with people.... I have no problem [with the fact that I don’t get paid for this], because I found [the music] on this earth. Someone gave it to me.”⁵¹

On any given day, pioneers like Sanba Zao and members of Djakata, members of Boukman Eksperyans, Racine Mapou de Azor, other musicians, a lone anthropologist, or maybe just children from the neighborhood may show up to watch, listen, learn, and discuss.

This element of the Roots music represents outreach. Many people, including myself, who have joined in these musical “seminars” can attest that a friend first took them to these. The people involve themselves materially in the learning of songs, drums, or ideas, i.e. a sort of conscientization. Symbolically, they are learning about a culture from which Haitian society and the global community at least maintain a distance, if not openly scorn. For example, sometimes a Haitian Protestant minister (who, as all Haitian Protestants are encouraged to do, has “renounced” Vodou and all of its manifestations as devil worship) will walk through the neighborhood and politely try and get people to leave the drumming and follow him to the church, thus creating a low level of cultural tension. Although usually the situation is diffused with a clever comment by someone, the significance is clear. These physical sites act as spaces whereby cultural hegemony can be established and resisted.

Social Aspects

Aboudja commented that “when we started the [cultural] movement, it wasn’t only a question of music. Music was important as a fundamental part of the movement, but the movement had all aspects [of life] in it.” Leaving aspects affecting personal preferences aside (to be discussed

in chapter 5), another part of the cultural movement involves grassroots development projects. These projects grow ideologically out of those during the Duvalier regime. Using the word “development,” I am well aware of the multiple connotations of the word and discussions about what the word means.⁵² I use the phrase “grassroots development” in the sense of “improved well-being”⁵³ through changing the material, social, and cultural conditions of a location through locally conceived of, locally managed, and often locally funded, projects. As I contended earlier, the cultural part of the Roots Movement coincided with certain social trends. Instead of describing all of the different types of grassroots projects, I limit myself to dealing only with those run by those connected to the cultural movement.

The first project involves the area of Kenskòf, the community in the cool mountains above Pòtoprens. Several people there are involved in projects that cover many aspects of Kenskòf life. One person known as Babolo Zèmbo is a musician and also works in air traffic control, and formerly taught elementary school in Pòtoprens. Aside from his personal work, he has set up community activities for children of the area. He explains part of the reason he started this work.

“I saw that many children didn’t have after-school activities. They didn’t have any leisure activities. I am struggling so that the children can participate in activities that are educational [as well as fun].”⁵⁴

Babolo set up a summer camp in 1999, but his most recent project involves him renting out Sunday afternoons what is normally a bar. There, he charges a nominal entrance fee (not for profit) and shows movies and plays music for the younger children.

Another person in Kenskòf is Gauche. He was responsible for building the first real night club in Kenskòf. This not only serves the purpose of giving bands like his a place to play, and provides entertainment in “a very positive, mystical sense,”⁵⁵ but allows people in the movement to have another place to discuss. Beyond his personal work, he, Guy-Ramah Théodore, and

several others from the area work on reforestation. While the club is being constructed, they use the land to grow trees in pots until they are strong enough to survive on their own. Then, they plant them on the land Guy purchased, where the deforested grassy tops of mountains are beginning to show signs of erosion. The “Kensòf people,” as they are known by others, plant trees, vegetables, flowers, and small shrubs to prevent the once rich soil from slipping into the sea. They are addressing the issue of deforestation that Wawa, an older member of the movement describes as the “practice of living by wood. You use wood to make charcoal, you use wood to cook, you use wood to make bread, you use wood to do other things, too. Trees are really being cut down quickly in this country.”⁵⁶ Any agricultural products grown that aren’t used are sold, and the profits channel back into the project’s account. Further, if the local peasants help with the work, they share in the profits.

Another project started in the Bapèt Choz area and involved education. A group of people came together and organized several rural schools in the towns of Jakmèl and Leyogann. Lemba and others opened and organized schools for the people of the area as they found the Haitian educational system could not provide an adequate number of schools for the people in those places. Lemba shared that they “helped a little bit and supported the peasants, helping them create better organizational structure...in what they call microprojects.”⁵⁷ Not only did the schools stay open, but the one in Leyogann is attempting to add university courses to the primary and secondary curriculums. A few years ago, Lemba, Yatande, and others from the movement decided to create another type of project in the neighborhood where they lived. In a project called “Kata,” named for a type of Vodou drum, they set up youth activities involving dance, songs, and theater taught by members of the movement who specialized in each area. This neighborhood, Ponwouj, has been marked by some violence, but it is commonly perceived as

being a poor neighborhood, somewhat dangerous to those of the middle and upper classes.

Therefore, such organized cultural activities rarely occur in the area.

The last example included represents the best example of how the Roots movement fits together as a whole. Sanba Zao, one of the pioneers of the movement, plays a key role in a project called Sosyete pou Avansman Mòn Lopital (Society for the Advancement of Mòn Lopital--SAMO)⁵⁸. The organization, founded by Mirey and her husband Zao, the organization is “an autonomous, volunteer civic body that designs and implements social and ecological programs to better the community’s quality of life.”⁵⁹ One part of SAMO, the Bazilo School, provides subsidized education for those who cannot afford to pay for other schools and gives one to two meals a day to the children. The elementary education involves literacy in the Haitian language (French and English literacy are optional), math, arts, a course on Haitian history, and explanation of Vodou spirituality. The second part of SAMO is a free community health clinic that provides vaccinations and consultations for the area. Although some anthropologists may take issue with the use of Euro-American medical practices as neo-colonialism under the guise of “development,”⁶⁰ Mirey explains how they still respect the traditional healing practices found in Vodou. “Well, we tell the *bòkò* and *manbo-s* to send their children to us when they are sick, because it’s twice the healing power...doctor and *bòkò*....”⁶¹ She added that if a child would get sick, they would take the child, give her medicine, and send her back to the *manbo*. Then, the *manbo* would do whatever she would do, and the child would get better. Therefore, they maintain the importance of Vodou while maintaining the health of the child. A third part of SAMO is a women’s group that deals with family planning and training to prevent sexual violence. Although it is a women’s group, men are allowed to attend, not to watch over their wives, but rather so that both men and women are allowed to understand and talk about these

issues in a regulated forum. MOAC makes up the fourth part of SAMO. It organizes and sells artist and artisan works from those in the area, including clothing, paintings, jewelry, sculpture and musical instruments. Many people associated with the Roots Movement work in these realms, using materials from Haiti to create artwork that evokes symbols of Haiti. The final piece of SAMO is the musical group Djakata and its leader, Sanba Zao. This group has performed on radio shows in France, recorded many songs, and participated in cultural exchanges in the United States. The money raised by Djakata, as well as the money Zao earns from his radio show and position at the National School for the Arts, goes directly to funding the four other projects of SAMO. Zao informed me quite honestly that his family has no separate bank accounts from the projects. Their money is the project's money, which means when Zao and Mirey's organization makes money, the community has money.

SAMO represents the quintessential Roots Movement project because it covers not only the musical realm, but the cultural realm and the social realm. The full name of Djakata, which comes from the words *dye* meaning a god, and *kata*, meaning a specific drum in Haitian Vodou, is Sosyete Bazilo Djakata. Zao chose the name *Bazilo* not only for the corresponding spirit, but also for the fact that it is tied to the grassroots level, or in Haitian, *baz*. So the grassroots level group supports grassroots projects in order to immediately develop Mòn Lopital. In addition, Djakata shows to Haiti and the people of wherever else the group plays that no matter what hardships they face, working as a community will get them through it. Yet other projects, like KATA, have a similar interest in the marginalized people in Haiti. These projects work for a collective good, yet do so in a culturally effective, economically realistic, and socially acceptable manner. Whereas many projects could be criticized for ignoring one or more of the above characteristics, the Roots movement is of the people and for the people. These collectives

embody the spirit of the people that worked together to bring an end to the Duvalier government and bring about democratic elections in 1990. The people of the movement, at once separate by their access to resources and intimately linked to the poor people of Haiti, engage themselves in a struggle for a better life. The social programs enacted work to counteract the massive hardships the people feel from the ever-worsening economic crisis.

Goals of the Movement

How the movement manifests itself can be better understood if you understand the goals of the movement. In order not to misconstrue goals, I list several exchanges or comments regarding an end product, a goal of sorts, and follow this by comments and analysis. These came from different times in my fieldwork and it should be remembered that answers were given to me, and not shared with others afterwards.

Kiran: "What does the movement intend to do after all is said and done? Create a Vodou society?"

Yatande: "Well, it's not to create a Vodou society. Because you know religion is the opiate of the masses, says Marx. You see, it's to create a way of life, a way to love each other."

Mirey: "...in order to produce what we call love, unity, togetherness, solidarity, collectivity."

Gran Chimén (a drummer in Boukman Eksperyans): "We're for a revolution of consciousness.... It's work for consciousness, love, living in harmony with yourself, allowing positive vibrations to pass through you."

"It's what you say, what you think, what you do being in harmony"
--"Jou nou revolte" (The day we rose up) by Boukman Eksperyans

Mirey: "We're working together in a *konbit*⁶² because in Haiti, when you work in a *konbit*, before you know it things are finished."

Wawa: "It's the way to see whether the soil of Haiti can produce, can live again."

In discussing the first six descriptions of goals, very few concrete goals come forth. Obviously, those types of goals would presuppose a developed movement. What can be understood is that musicians, artists, and grassroots workers involved in the Roots movement are attempting a process of conscientization. This involves getting rid of old prejudices that divide rich from poor, dark skin from light skin, Christian from Vodouisant, and elite from proletariat. They are working to heal a society that has undergone a transformation from dictatorship to democracy, has seen that democracy trampled by a savage military coup with at least tacit support from the Central Intelligence Agency,⁶³ and currently suffers from an unnecessary economic embargo by the United States and other international agencies.⁶⁴ Further, these comments mirror many of the ideas put forth in President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's 1991 inaugural address, including having a place in Haiti for all by working together.⁶⁵ This explains why Zao interviews people from all walks of life on his radio show: agronomists, farmers, Vodou priests, market women, anthropologists, and musicians. They can be associated with the Roots movement, either the social aspect or the cultural aspect because "we all don't have the same trade, we all didn't learn the same stuff."⁶⁶ And although the idea is not to create a Vodou society, it is to create a society where people of whatever skill or trade work together to make a better Haiti.

Beyond these goals, certain constructs exist on how to accomplish this. Certainly Aristide has his program which includes "opening of the economy" to increased trade in hopes of bringing increased dignity and prosperity to all Haitians.⁶⁷ However, many members of the Roots movement share more ideas similar to Aristide's earlier anti-capitalist stance. Several facts point to a Marxist ideology: walking into a home and seeing quotes on the wall in chalk reading "Monopolization and appropriation of the means of production" and other references to Che Guevara and Lewis Henry Morgan; reading a pamphlet about the artwork of one of the people

and having it mention his association with the Trotskyist party in Haiti; and numerous discussions where *klas*⁶⁸ was discussed as being the root of many Haitian problems. Though Aboudja clarified this when I asked if Marxism was a part of the movement.

“When you live in a little country like Haiti that’s full of injustice, it’s obvious for young people to think about different possibilities that go against the status quo in which they’re living. At that time [under Duvalier], the left offered them possibilities...but it’s not a question of left or right. It’s a question of people.”⁶⁹

Therefore, it is not surprising that the people of the movement are identifying with “the marginalized peasant class, the class of those who go to the [Vodou temples], who are situated more in the marginalized neighborhoods. Especially the shantytowns.”⁷⁰ Identifying with the proletariat suggests a focus on the majority of the people in Haiti who until 1990 had only dreams of democracy.⁷¹ However, as a complete Marxist view of Haiti would be inappropriate as redistribution of wealth can only work in countries with significant economic capital, the people have shaped their ideas through Marxist discourse into a culturally and historically appropriate model. It is interesting to note here that goals of the Roots movement parallel the key themes of *Masters of the Dew*, the well-known novel by the founder of the Haitian Communist Party, Jacques Roumain: working together to get things done, and appreciating the value of the land in front of you.

¹ Yatande means “they will listen.” This could be understood as either prophetic in nature or as referring to spirits when he plays his music. Bòkò is a name for a Vodou healer or priest.

² Comaroff 2002: 208.

³ Lemba 2001.

⁴ Personal communication, February 2002.

⁵ Brown 1996: 730.

⁶ Anonymous 1994; Anonymous 1995; Anonymous 1998; Arthur 2000; Spencer 1994.

⁷ Jayaram 2001.

⁸ Anonymous 1994.

⁹ Anonymous 1994: 11.

¹⁰ Averill 1994; Averill 1997.

¹¹ Averill 1994: 163.

¹² Averill 1994: 160.

¹³ Boukmann was an early leader of the Haitian Revolution. He was reportedly Muslim, transferred to Haiti from Jamaica from Africa. Members of the group told me that Boukmann could be understood like Bookman

(phonetically), which meant a man of the book, in this case, being either the Qu'ran or the Bible. Eksperyans comes from the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

¹⁴ Averill 1994: 178.

¹⁵ Lemba 2001.

¹⁶ Paquin 1983: 221.

¹⁷ Sanba Zao 2001.

¹⁸ This word has an additional pejorative connotation, not obvious from the translation.

¹⁹ Djakarta 2001.

²⁰ *pèpè* means “cheap import, castoff wares” and pejoratively “second-rate” [Freeman, 1998 #26]. Zao explains this further to mean a person who acts like “another nationality...who gets into Christianity, who builds churches.”

Sanba Zao, July 2001 #21. This implicitly stands in opposition to Vodou.

²¹ UNICEF 2002.

²² Dash 2002: 86-87.

²³ Dash 2002: 87.

²⁴ By “power structure,” I mean the whole of the different institutions which control the direction of an area. This could involve the government as a political institution, corporations as economic institutions, or classes of society as social and cultural institutions.

²⁵ Associated Press April 3, 2000.

²⁶ Personal communication.

²⁷ Derencourt 2001.

²⁸ Jayaram 2001.

²⁹ Jayaram 2001; Averill 1993; Averill 1994; Averill 1994; Averill 1997.

³⁰ Anderson 2002.

³¹ Yatande 2001.

³² Averill 1994: 172.

³³ *Nou la* means We're here. *Nago* is a family of rhythms based upon a Yoruba tradition.

³⁴ See Discography, Boukman Eksperyans 1991.

³⁵ See Discography, Zao 2001.

³⁶ Derencourt 2001.

³⁷ Derencourt 2001.

³⁸ Derencourt 2001.

³⁹ *Djaye* means to go into spasms, as when one is possessed by a Vodou spirit. Edelle 2001.

⁴⁰ A bamboo instrument, similar to an Australian didgeridoo, used in the Lenten time music of *rara*.

⁴¹ *Nati* is the Haitian spelling of *Natty*, like in the Jamaican context. “*Zansèt nou yo*” means our ancestors.

⁴² *Jou a Rive* means the day has come, and “*Ede m chante*” means help me sing.

⁴³ *Zobop* means a secret society or a member of it.

⁴⁴ Although I listened to the record while in Haiti, I failed to note any citation material at the time.

⁴⁵ *Zobop* 1994, liner notes.

⁴⁶ She is called The Miraculous Virgin of Sodo by Vodouisants and called Our Lady of Mount Carmel by Catholics.

⁴⁷ Foula Vodoule 1999.

⁴⁸ Edelle 2001.

⁴⁹ This word comes from the Brazilian *conscientização* used by Paul Friere to describe the process of consciousness raising as an act of liberation of oppressed people.

⁵⁰ Derencourt 2001.

⁵¹ Yatande 2001.

⁵² Edelman 2002; Escobar 1991; Dean 2000.

⁵³ Scudder in Edelman 2002.

⁵⁴ Zèmbò 2001.

⁵⁵ Gauche 2001.

⁵⁶ Wawa 2001.

⁵⁷ Lemba 2001.

⁵⁸ *Mòn Lopital* is a mountain above Pòtoprens.

⁵⁹ SAMO 2002. The rest of the information about SAMO, unless otherwise stated, comes from this document.

⁶⁰ Notable exceptions to this are Paul Farmer, who believes that it is unfair that foreigners working in Haiti should have access to medicine while simultaneously withholding medicine from a community in need. Personal communication with author.

⁶¹ Marcellin 2001.

⁶² Usually, a community work project, similar to a barn raising.

⁶³ See Farmer 1994.

⁶⁴ See Haiti Support Group 2002.

⁶⁵ Farmer 1994: 165.

⁶⁶ Sanba Zao 2001.

⁶⁷ Aristide 1994: 10

⁶⁸ Meaning "class." Although Averill gives a discussion the wider implications of the word in Haiti, the people used the word in the Marxist materialist sense related to means of production only.

⁶⁹ Derencourt 2001.

⁷⁰ Lemba 2001. The specifics of how they identify with marginalized populations will be discussed in chapter five.

⁷¹ This phrase was taken from the film by the same name. See Demme 1987.

CHAPTER FOUR: HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

“Constructing the past is an act of self-identification.”

–Jonathan Friedman¹

In discussing what the Roots Movement is, I hesitated in putting an exact date on when it started. The reader is asked to view this as a conscious move, as opposed to negligence.

Although the contemporary cultural and social parts of the Roots Movement link themselves to the reign of Jean-Claude Duvalier, his flight from Haiti in 1986, and the election of Aristide in 1990, not one person I spoke with claimed that the movement started then. In fact, musician Wawa, who worked with a choral group performing traditional Haitian songs as a part of their repertoire in the early 1970s, bluntly stated, “This cultural movement, the Roots movement, started well before me, you understand. Much earlier, there were other people....They habitually met in the Vodou temples, in the *lakou*-s. They would practice [music]. They would worship.”²

Wawa here seems to refer to something which resembles an aspect of the contemporary cultural movement of convening at rural Vodou ceremonies. However, this occurred a long time before, according to him. Instead of referring to the epoch of the Duvaliers, this points to another time, although not any clearly identified period that one would find in a Haitian history textbook. To find out when the Roots Movement started, we must look beyond the current ethnographic moment. This shouldn't be surprising given the subject matter. *Mouvman rasin*, the Roots Movement, immediately implies a contact with something deeper, beyond the surface. To see what the people in the cultural movement are calling the beginning, we travel back to 1492.

Shortly after her husband, Caonaba, was imprisoned by the newly arrived colonists and taken to Spain, Anacaona inherited power over the Taino Arawak area of Jaragua. Presently, the island was called Ayiti or Kiskeya. According to accounts by De Las Casas, the same person who

“advised [the Spanish] to get blacks from Africa to bring [to Haiti for slavery],”³ she was a “graceful woman, prudent, creative, and authoritative.”⁴ Her ability to write poetry added to her reputation. Unfortunately, in a horrible scene, she and her troops were ordered to stand by to watch a demonstration, where they were set upon and killed. Anacaona managed to escape with several others.⁵ The people of the Roots movement commonly perceive her as putting up some degree of resistance to the Spanish.⁶ Whether or not she organized the slaughter of Spanish settlements, the contemporary Roots movement places importance on her and the nation of Tainos that she represents. Boukman Eksperyans released a carnival song in 2000 that invokes “indigenous” sound of flutes and chants (both common musical elements of the Taino). The song “honors our Native American ancestors.”⁷ The group’s interest in these sorts of traditions even compelled Lolo, the lead singer of the group, to spend time visiting reservations and sweat lodges in the United States in between dates on a tour in 2000.

The next major historical event, mentioned above, involved the changing demographics in Haiti with the decision by Bartolomeo De Las Casas to ask Carlos V to spare the “Indians” and bring the Africans to work in Santo Domingo.⁸ These Africans came from Western and Central Africa.⁹ To place this exchange in context, we must remember that people of the Roots movement “came from Africa...and were put together with indigenous people...at that time they were more called Taino.”¹⁰ The narrator couples the Africans and Tainos, yet uses the word “they” to describe the Taino, which implies larger emphasis on the African (and perhaps black as opposed to mulatto) identity.

Another stage of the Roots movement history involves slave insurrections. Heintz reports several uprisings in the 16th century, the earliest being 1522. These actions, seen from a 21st century perspective, represent the slaves’ attempts to “break the chains”¹¹ of a system which

“forced [the slaves] to eat shit...flayed them with the lash...cast them alive to be devoured by worms, or onto anthills...”¹² The leader of the first major revolt against the colonial structure involved Makandal, a one-armed slave who hailed from the same plantation where some four decades later, the full Haitian Revolution would begin. Contemporary accounts list him to be a *bòkò*, a Vodou priest and healer, from Guinea. He was reportedly of “Arab blood,” spoke Arabic, and professed Islam.¹³ He was clairvoyant, predicted the future, and claimed to be immortal.¹⁴ He preached death to all white foreigners, and usually used poison as his method of killing. Because of this, one word for poison in Haiti today is *makandal*. His forces fought against the French from 1751-1757, and when he was burnt at the stake in January 1758, a mosquito flew out from where his body was as the pyre fell into flames, perpetuating the story of his immortality.¹⁵ Frisner Augustine, part of an outgrowth of Haitian culture in the United States in the 1970s, continued Makandal’s life by performing at the first Haitian Roots Music Festival in 1995 with his drumming and dance troupe called “Troupe Makandal.”¹⁶

Which Haitian Revolution?

Between the two uprisings on the Plantation Normand de Mézy, the second commonly seen as the beginning of the Haitian Revolution, another uprising occurred. In May of 1789, members of the “Commission of St. Domingue” went to France to air grievances that the *affranchis*¹⁷ were not receiving fair treatment. Simultaneously, the *Amis des Noirs* were pushing for an end of slavery in the French colonies. The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen gave them all hope of equality under the law. After the crown set up an assembly to create a governing body in St. Domingue, the colonial assembly drew up a document. The governor general, Peyneir, determined this to be threatening independence, so he dissolved the assembly. Frustrated, Vincent Ogé decided to become “the discreet leader” the people needed to lead the

struggle for justice.¹⁸ So in October of 1790, Ogé and Chavannes led a band of 300 followers in attacks in northern Haiti. Other attacks followed by *affranchis* in the Artibonite valley and southern Haiti. The attack by Ogé and Chavannes on Cape François met with fierce opposition, so the rebels retreated towards Santo Domingo. The Spaniards quickly sent the rebels back to the French troops. Shortly thereafter, Ogé and Chavannes were “broken on the wheel,” meaning their limbs were smashed while they were tied down. After hours of enduring the pain, the French beheaded them. These events, like many others from 1492 to the present, were not included in the Roots history as articulated by the *sanba-s*.

The next chapter in the Haitian Revolution and the part recognized in the Roots movement’s history came in 1791 with the ceremony of *Bwa Kayman*. This has often been interpreted as “Alligator Woods.” However, one afternoon, while chatting with members of Boukman Eksperyans, they gave me another interpretation. *Bwa Kayman* broke into *bwa-kay-iman*¹⁹. *Bwa* meaning “woods” still holds its meaning, and *kay* takes on the meaning “house.” *Iman* could then be taken to mean from Arabic “belief,” referring to a piety in Islam. Thus *Bwa Kayman* becomes something like the “Woods of the House of Allah.” This makes sense given that slaves came from areas of Africa populated by Muslims,²⁰ and that Makandal, from the same plantation as *Bwa Kayman*, professed Islam. Further, one of the leaders of the Revolution, Boukman, was also a Muslim.²¹ What followed *Bwa Kayman* came to be known as the Haitian Revolution. This has clear significance in terms of seeing a pattern of resistance through history. Wawa explains that “it was necessary to unite all the nations that then came to make a unified decision: to fight for independence.”²² Uniting all of the people at that point meant to bring together Africans from whatever area of Africa, their children, as well as the escaped slaves and their descendents who shared themselves, both spiritually and physically with the Taino people in the

mountains, away from European control. This implies a putting aside of differences in order to fight a common enemy and gain something for all. This sentiment rings clear when comparing the Duvaliers and cultural forms from the United States as a common enemy.

After *Bwa Kayman*, uprisings continued for years. More slave revolts occurred in the North as negotiations between the different sides failed. Hundreds of slaves and maroons²³ used guerilla warfare in attacking their opposition. Hyacinthe and hundreds of loyal maroons continued to ravage Pòtoprens. To bolster confidence, Hyacinthe reportedly used Vodou-charged bulls' tails to disintegrate cannonballs and brush away bullets.²⁴ In late 1793, Commissioner Léger-Félicité Sonthonax declared the end of slavery in northern Haiti, followed shortly thereafter by the west and south of Haiti. In essence, with France at war in Europe, this gesture loosened the French claim on St. Domingue. Also in 1793, Spain and England began exploring their interests in the unsettled area of St. Domingue. Toussaint Louverture and others led the Spanish forces in hopes of creating a republic. England started taking control of the areas in the north and south. In 1794, Louverture abandoned the idea of a republic and fought under the French tricolor again. In mid-1794, Spain and France reached a peace, and the area was ceded back to the French. The maroons continued to attack randomly and return to the mountains. André Rigaud, who fought in the Battle of Savannah,²⁵ led troops to eliminate the British resistance in the South, and Toussaint marched towards Pòtoprens, leaving the British in *Mòlsennikola*. Finally, in 1798, the British agreed to leave, as long as Toussaint would leave Jamaica alone. That year, Commissioner Hédouville promoted Rigaud to the same rank as Toussaint, mulatto against black. This new civil war lasted until 1800, when Rigaud's small army fell apart, their leader fleeing to Cuba. Toussaint, self-appointed Governor-for-life, promulgated a new constitution on July 8, 1801. The war in Europe calming, France redirected

its attention at reclaiming control of St. Domingue. In June 1802, General Leclerc of France set up a meeting with Toussaint in a ploy to capture the black leader. Thus, deceit led to the imprisonment and death of the era's greatest leader. Rumors of the reinstatement of slavery in other French colonies led to rebel mobilization by Alexandre Pétion, Henry Christophe, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines. A vicious resistance (combined with yellow fever) led to the end of French control of St. Domingue.

These prior events might not have been so important had it not been for the early leadership of Toussaint Louverture (although he was not struggling for independence) and the revolutionary audacity of Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Sanba Zao describes Dessalines as “the child of a king from Africa... Toussaint Louverture was a child of a king from Dahomey... meaning he was a good *Dahomean guy* (emphasis mine).”²⁶ The importance of claiming these people as early members of the Roots movement gives class-based legitimacy when faced with overturning the repressive rule of the Duvaliers and by recognizing leaders of historical episodes where the “masses” won the war. Claiming them as descendents of African kings creates racial legitimacy for those claiming such to maintain the traditions brought over from Africa, be they political or cultural. Whether or not this is factitious²⁷ or fictitious does not matter as much as the fact that it is repeated by those in the Roots movement.²⁸ And furthermore, on January 1, 1804, Haiti became the first black country to win its independence from colonial rule and the second independent nation in the Western Hemisphere. Dessalines ordered the Declaration of Independence on that day, hoping to “have the skin of a *blanc* for parchment, his skull for inkwell, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for a pen.”²⁹ No matter how it turned out, the message was clear: Haiti was free.

Many Roots groups have claimed Bwa Kayman, Dessalines, and 1804 as important points in history. The most commercially successful Roots group is Boukman Eksperyans. In the song “*Solèy Malere*,” or “Impoverished Sun,” the group Foula Vodoule refers directly to Bwa Kayman, the year 1804, and then 1986 followed by claims that “we [the Haitian people] are climbing the ladder, we can make it, really we can.”³⁰ The listing of those dates (from the year 1998) shows when the people worked together to overcome an obstacle. At the turn of the century, Haiti is facing a primarily economic crisis, and this song shows how those of the Roots movement (and the masses by extension) “want to rebuild the [their] country.”³¹ Boukman Eksperyans also compared the same objects in their 1999 carnival song “*Pawòl Tafia*” in referring specifically to the dates and to the “colonialist witch doctor,” meaning the Duvalier regime.³²

In the same song, the group refers to another significant event: the assassination of Dessalines in 1806. One of the people of the Roots movement ties his present neighborhood to history in saying “it’s a very historic zone because it’s where they killed Dessalines.” This point represents recognition of the racial division in Haitian society and parallels Lysius Salomon’s statement in 1845, which “blamed the ‘aristocracy of color’ for Dessalines’s death”.³³

The Kakos and the US Occupation

The next episode in the Roots movement’s history is the rebellion against the US Occupation of 1915-1934. The United States took control of Haiti beginning on July 28th in order to “put men in charge...whom we can trust to handle,”³⁴ according to Woodrow Wilson. A committee organized by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in 1926 described what accompanied this taking of the reins of power and charged:

“the forcing of a new Constitution upon Haiti, twice driving out the members of the Haitian Congress because they opposed the Constitution, the use of forced labor in road-

making, and connected abuses, atrocities committed by marines and gendarmes, prison abuses, martial law, and restrictions of the press.”³⁵

The significant issue involved the road-making because forced labor without pay was tantamount to reinstating slavery. Thus, it should not surprise anyone that several times from September 1915 to October 1921, a guerilla group known as the *kakos* carried out an armed insurgence against the US marines. From 1918 to 1919, this group, led by Charlemagne Péralte, took to arms in order to “raise up the people and send the Americans home.”³⁶ Péralte and his troops led a brilliant campaign, avoiding both US land and air attacks.³⁷ The fighting ended after Péralte had been betrayed, as had another promising leader over 100 years prior, Toussaint Louverture. In order to prove that Charlemagne was dead, marines took a photograph of the corpse propped up against a door in nothing more than a rag and displayed it on All Saints’ Day.³⁸ From the position of the body, though, Péralte took on a Jesus-like image (he was almost exactly the same age at the time of death), bringing at least one historian to conclude that the United States had “crucified Charlemagne Péralte on a door.”³⁹

Turning the clock forward again to the contemporary Roots movement, Foula Vodoule entitled a song “Vodou Mawonaj 1915⁴⁰” whose title and lyrics warn against the injustices committed by the United States marines. Being that the injustices already occurred, these warnings can be interpreted as echoing sentiments in Haiti in the late 1990s that the Haitian government at the time was doing nothing more than occupying space and pocketing money.⁴¹ The use of the term *mawonaj*, referring back to the colonial epoch, implies the secret nature of the attack against the problematic government. Again, the importance of this history lies in the resistance to the neo-colonialist rule of the United States and the parallels that can be drawn both forwards and backwards in time.

One historical episode *not* brought up in my research involved the elite reaction to the Occupation. After the United States began its first occupation of Haiti, it quickly had to deal with the *kako-s* rebels. Sympathetic to the cause of the mainly black, lower-class armed resistance yet simultaneously distancing himself from the rebels, Georges Sylvain formed the *Union Patriotique*, an association the predominantly mulatto elite could fully embrace. These people wrote articles and letters to France and the United States, hoping to expose the atrocities of the US marines. However, Heintz contends that these “Cacos de plume,” or “*kako-s* of the pen,” can be dismissed as the only resort of a group neither willing nor capable of pursuing resistance beyond the salon or the print shop.”⁴² Whether or not their work impacted the global opinion of the Occupation, the Roots movement most likely fails to recognize this because of racial politics and the fact that the elite were fighting for their own self-interest, not for the good of all Haiti.

Indigénisme, Noirisme, Communism

Out of this *Union Patriotique* came both Jean Price-Mars and later Jacques Roumain. In 1927, Roumain and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin founded the briefly published *Revue Indigène*. The literary magazine “proceeded to attack the attachment of the older elites to French literature, to express pride in Haitian culture as had been urged by Price-Mars, and to embrace Haitian folkloric themes....”⁴³ In 1928, Price-Mars published his most well-known work, *Ainsi Parla l’Oncle* (Thus Spoke the Uncle). In the book, a precursor to Aimé Césaire’s work, he sets upon the task of “restoring the value of Haitian folklore in the eyes of the people,” claiming that they should not act like “coloured Frenchmen but simply Haitians.”⁴⁴ Given the tendencies of the Roots movement to focus on non-European influence, one could assume that the *indigéniste* movement of the 1920s and 1930s and resistance to the US Occupation would play a large role

in the history of the movement. However, save for a quick acknowledgement of Dr. Jean Price-Mars in an informal conversation with one of the members, specific references to this “cultural nationalism”⁴⁵ are noticeably absent from the general dialogue on the history of the Roots movement.

The *indigéniste* movement suffered from similar divisions as Haiti had after 1804. Trouillot indicates that the *indigénistes* “had no political program and regrouped intellectuals of different political persuasions, including a few socialists.”⁴⁶ Thus, when two groups of intellectuals began to interpret Price-Mars’s writing, they fell on different sides of the issues regarding the importance of color and class in conflict resolution. The black intellectuals felt the need to emphasize color in the quest for power. Some of those of Price-Mars’s group *Les Griots* tried to combine *indigénisme* and politics, including among others, doctor and ethnologist François Duvalier, coming up with *noirisme*. This group did not view religions, specifically Vodou, as the opiate of the masses, as did Marx, but rather they “have in the first place the social value of reuniting [them] in a community, making more tangible the links that join the people of the same country.”⁴⁷ This ideological trend grew during the term of President Lescot, a mulatto who worked with the Catholic Church in the Anti-Vodou campaigns around 1940 (described in the next section in detail). The combination of this trend with the tendency to emphasize the cultural importance of the Haitian people (*indigénisme*), the Pan-African movement elsewhere (*négritude*), and the black intellectual political movement (*noirisme*), led to the presidency of Dumarsais Estimé in 1946.⁴⁸

Going back to the branches of conflict resolution which grew out of the Occupation, another elite group formed under Jacques Roumain.⁴⁹ With the exception of author Jacques Alexis, all of the people involved were mulatto. These people were part of a “nationalist movement which

developed during the US Occupation...which saw the necessity to scientifically analyze their country”⁵⁰ according to Marxist principles. This was the beginning of the Haitian Communist Party (PCH). Obviously, this group felt Vodou to be a part of bourgeois mentality, and so came into conflict with the *noiristes*. Thus, the unity that Price-Mars’s writing created fell victim to the same divisions of race and class. Although the PCH persisted for decades, Heintz concludes that the Communist Party was destined to fail due to its elite origin, and I would add due to its mulatto status in a country where the overwhelming majority of the lower classes are black.

A Dark Era of History

Just after the US Occupation, a series of leaders continued to hold power who were sympathetic to US mandates. Not only did Sténio Vincent seem to be serving the US, but he did so in racial terms, appointing mulattoes in top power spots.⁵¹ But the most heinous action taken against the population came to be known as the “*rejèt*,” or anti-Vodou campaign.⁵² In 1941, the government participated in a campaign to stifle Vodou. Heintz wrote that “*ounfò-s* were raided and smashed, as were drums and other sacred objects.”⁵³ Although people often blame only the government, the Catholic Church took advantage of this opportunity to attack Vodou. Yatande Bòkò relates a personal story attached to the period:

There was a time around 1940 when people would break into your house and burn anything that had to do with Vodou. You had to have a permit to hold a Vodou ceremony. My grandmother didn’t care about what they said, and so she had her ceremony anyway. Somehow the authorities found out and arrested her. She was in jail for three days. When she came out, she died two days later. I can’t say exactly why, but it’s likely that they beat her so badly that she just died a bit later.⁵⁴

Other historical reports don’t indicate the requirement of a permit for a ceremony under Lescot, however one historian does say that US officials did have such restrictions on Vodou in the interest of modernizing Haiti.⁵⁵ A criticism of this quote could be based upon the fact that the speaker mentions 1940, when officially these campaigns began in 1941. However, the meanings

attached to the event, on personal and socio-cultural levels for the speaker, supercede the factual inconsistency with a written historical record.

Vodou-Jazz and Other Early Roots Music

The next moment in the Roots history involves Vodou-Jazz. Aboudja explains that “in the 1950s, the end of the 1940s, there was *Okès Sa-ye... Okès Kisa sa ye* (Orchestra What is that?). They played [the *petro* rhythm]. There was also Jazz Des Jeunes.”⁵⁶ According to Gage Averill, Jazz Des Jeunes, formed in 1943, included Antalcidas O. Murat, who at the time was learning about the music of Vodou, making Des Jeunes the “first popular dance band to embody a *noiriste* ideology.”⁵⁷ However, this wasn’t Roots music like the commercial Roots music of the late 20th century. Sanba Zao clarifies that “Des Jeunes did it [played Vodou music], they did it. They took instruments and harmonies and worked with them, but I took guitar and played it with the drums.”

Jazz Des Jeunes had many different sides to their group during the more than 20 years they performed, though.⁵⁸ As a part of their Cuban repertoire, they had a song called “Vamos a Guarachar.” They also performed songs of romance. Besides songs like “Triste Nuit” and “Toujours L’amour,” the group played “la Chanson d’Orpheu” from Black Orpheus. They also played Carnival songs using the Haitian traditional musics.

One of the songs “Ala kote gen fanm” draws upon the huge bank of Haitian proverbs, considered the traditional wisdom of the masses. This use of proverbs attaches the identity of the group to the lower classes by implementing popular wisdom.⁵⁹ The text for these songs demonstrates the playful sexual nature of men towards women in Haiti (and simultaneously reveals gendered hierarchies in Haiti). The group uses the *rara*⁶⁰ rhythm which further ties them semiotically to Haitian peasants.

Ala kote gen fanm, o!	Oh, where there are women,
Ala kote gen fanm pase rat, o, e!	Oh, how there're more women than rats
Men, tout kote ou pase	But, everywhere you go,
Yo toujou vle mòde ou	They always want to bite you. ⁶¹

Another song called “Tele” uses the *petro* rhythm from Vodou. The text reads from the point of view of a sick patient at home during a doctor’s house call. The doctor said not to worry because he had the illness too, to which the patient hopelessly responds by claiming that they didn’t have the same doctor. By using what Harold Courlander calls the Haitian version of “African-style song of social criticism,”⁶² the group may have been criticizing François Duvalier’s effectiveness.

In “Boumba Masa Kafou,” another Carnival song using a *petro* rhythm, presumably from the 1950s, the group uses a common metaphor in Vodou of the crossroads.

Kafou sa, kafou sa danjere	That crossroads is dangerous
Kafou, oh! Ou pa vin wè mwen.	Crossroads, oh! You don’t come see me. ⁶³

Vodou in this case links Jazz Des Jeunes to *noirisme* by Vodou elements in the rhythm and lyrical content. About four decades later, Boukman Eksperyans uses this particular image of a dangerous crossroads while referring to the political events surrounding the coup d’état in 1991.

Besides this case of borrowing from one generation of Roots music to the next, another contemporary Roots group, RAM, also played the Jazz Des Jeunes/peasant *rara* song “*Kote moun yo*” (Where are the people). This song formed a part of Des Jeunes’s “folklore” set based upon “the numerous rhythms that make up Haitian folklore.”⁶⁴ These included rhythms like *petro*, *petro-ibo*, *ibo*, *rara*, and *kontredans*.

Jazz Des Jeunes, being perhaps the best-known group of the *Vodou-Jazz* era, tied together several aspects of *noirisme* in its music. The group was praised for their “irrefutable contribution

to the development of Haitian music, their combativeness in the struggle against the ‘disdainers’ from a class of Haitians who reject folklore because of its lower class origins.”⁶⁵

In this sense, Des Jeunes and other Vodou-Jazz groups changed the realm of Haitian music. For the first time, Vodou could be heard outside of a ceremony, in a public place without any stigma attached to it. The “roots” had grown into a new space, formerly occupied by European sensibilities and styles.

Jazz Des Jeunes was not the only group playing Roots music. Aboudja reminds us that:

from a particular era, well, each era they change the name [of the music]. But Roots music in Haiti has been played since 1503....The father of Richard Morse [who plays in RAM] was named Kandjo Des Pradines. He played the song ‘Angelina’ [a traditional song in Haiti] ...Martha Jean Claude sang traditional music, too. She played Roots music. She went to Cuba, but she played Roots music.⁶⁶

Martha Jean Claude, who died in early 2002, went into exile in Cuba because of her husband’s associations in the 1950s. She still sang traditional music, but to the rich repertoire of Haitian music, she added Cuban traditional music. Her work, which spanned over four decades, can be seen in a number of recordings and a recent video.⁶⁷ Songs in both Spanish and Haitian come from the traditional canon of music, identifying her with the histories and struggles of two islands.

The cultural developments of the post-Occupation period represent the transition to Duvalierism, arriving in 1957. Rather than reiterate the context in which the contemporary Roots movement grew, it suffices to say the *noiriste* ideology which underlined Duvalierist discourse inadvertently acted as an affront to exactly what it was to extol: Haitian traditional culture and values. The response to a terrorizing and oppressive force led to the “reappearing” of the Roots movement again in the 1970s with new Roots music, socio-political organizations, and the *sanba* movement, all which brought forth the 1990 elections. In order for the cultural groups

to justify what they were doing, though, they needed a *raison d'être* which could exist under Duvalierism and the subsequent political powers. For this, they drew upon the long history of the land of Haiti to legitimate their actions.

In summary, by choosing certain historical moments, members of the Roots movement identified themselves with events or people whom they valued as a symbol of resistance. This constructed series of events related to me, what I call the “Roots movement history,” does not include events found outside of a history textbook. What is important here is that people had connected their situation with a larger tapestry of resistance in order to legitimize actions. They emphasized certain moments and downplayed others as an act of identification with a tradition of resistance.

¹ Friedman 1992: 856.

² Wawa 2001.

³ Wawa 2001.

⁴ Unknown 1999.

⁵ Unknown 1999; Verges Vidal 1947.

⁶ Lemba 2001.

⁷ Boukman Eksperyans 2000.

⁸ Heint 1996: 13.

⁹ Thornton 1998.

¹⁰ Sanba Zao 2001.

¹¹ Patchouko et Wetchenn 1999.

¹² Vastey 1814. Reprinted in Heint.

¹³ Heint, 1996: 26.

¹⁴ Heint, 1996: 26.

¹⁵ Heint 1996: 27.

¹⁶ Miscellaneous 1996.

¹⁷ Freed blacks and mulattos.

¹⁸ Barskett 1971 (originally 1818).

¹⁹ Jayaram 2001 Given that pronunciation of *ayisyen*, meaning Haitian, tends to omit a long “i” sound, it is reasonable to allow an “i” to be added.

²⁰ Thornton 1998; Reis 1993.

²¹ Jayaram 2001. See explanation of Boukman in previous chapter.

²² Wawa 2001.

²³ In Haiti, these are called *nèg mawon* (lit. “wild man”, escaped slave). Duvalier as well as anti-Duvalier forces used this motif for different reasons. The author recognizes the difference in sound between the pronounced “n” and the nasal “n.” Emphasis on the meaning supercedes that of “accuracy” of information.

²⁴ Heint 1996: 53.

²⁵ Heint 1996: 50.

²⁶ Sanba Zao 2001.

²⁷ Hobsbawm 1983: 2.

²⁸ For a similar discussion involving Dessalines and an “invention,” see Dayan 1998: 23.

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- ²⁹ Heintl 1996: 120.
- ³⁰ Foula Vodoule 1999. The liner notes list the title "*Solèy Malere*" as meaning "Impoverished Sun," however, I should clarify this as meaning "the sun of the impoverished."
- ³¹ Foula Vodoule 1999.
- ³² Boukman Eksperyans 2000.
- ³³ Dayan 1998: 27.
- ³⁴ Heintl 1996: 396.
- ³⁵ Balch 1927: 123.
- ³⁶ Michel 1996: 17.
- ³⁷ Michel 1996: 25. According to the author, had the *kako-s* been fighting today, they would be called "terrorists."
- ³⁸ Michel 1996: 40.
- ³⁹ Michel 1996: 39; Heintl 1996: 392
- ⁴⁰ *Mawonaj* can be described as guerilla tactics, either in actual warfare or in symbolic attacks.
- ⁴¹ Jayaram 2001.
- ⁴² Heintl 1996: 446.
- ⁴³ Shannon 1996: 66.
- ⁴⁴ Price-Mars 1928: 8.
- ⁴⁵ Trouillot 1990: 131.
- ⁴⁶ Trouillot 1990: 131.
- ⁴⁷ Price-Mars in Lamartinière 1976: 32.
- ⁴⁸ Trouillot 1990: 130-136.
- ⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that while in exile for revolutionary activities after the occupation, Jacques Roumain met Langston Hughes, "who in the 1930s preached communism and proletarian revolution as Haiti's ultimate solution." Heintl 1996: 496.
- ⁵⁰ Komité Inité-Lit-Inité 1984: 11.
- ⁵¹ Trouillot 1990: 133.
- ⁵² Wawa 2001.
- ⁵³ Heintl 1996: 507.
- ⁵⁴ Yatande 2001.
- ⁵⁵ Renda 2001: 213.
- ⁵⁶ Jayaram 2001.
- ⁵⁷ Averill 1997: 58.
- ⁵⁸ The information for this section comes from Beaubrun 1962. I have updated the orthography to the 1979 system. All translations here are my own.
- ⁵⁹ Kote gen fanm, fòk gen pale anpil. (Where there are women, there must be gossiping.)
- ⁶⁰ Rara is a Lenten form of music which originated in the countryside.
- ⁶¹ Beaubrun 1962.
- ⁶² Courlander 1960.
- ⁶³ Beaubrun 1962.
- ⁶⁴ Beaubrun 1962.
- ⁶⁵ Renè Beaubrun in Averill 1997: 63.
- ⁶⁶ Jayaram 2001.
- ⁶⁷ See the recording "Mujer de dos islas/Fanm de zil," or the movie with the same name.

CHAPTER 5: *SE KIYÈS MOUN SA YO YE?/WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE?*

From December of 1997 to August of 2001, I spent several months interacting with people associated with the contemporary Roots movement in Haiti. I spent the bulk of my time with people who were in musical groups and other cultural projects at various times from 1997 to the present. These people call themselves *sanba*¹, meaning “an improvisational singer at a *konbit* or with a *bann rara*” or a “writer, poet, bard.”² Sanba Zao, perhaps the first to use the word *sanba* in this way, defines it as the following:

At the time, I called the movement *mouvman sanba*, *sanba* music. Now, there is Brazilian samba. That’s the rhythm, but this is *mouvman sanba*. It’s the poet *sanba*, see? The *sanba* who sings, the peasant who works the earth, who cultivates, who plants manioc and who lives more in the countryside. So the *sanba* movement corresponds with people who live in the countryside and who practice Vodou, who take the [traditional] culture and put it into practice.³

This identification implies at least a rural context, if not a lower class one, given the stigma that middle and upper classes attach to rural life. It also groups rural Haitians into the category of Vodouisants. Wawa echoed this sentiment:

Everyone who is Haitian is a Vodouist. Any Protestant, any Catholic, any believer of XYZ, is first and foremost a Vodouist. According to their temperament, their way of life, understand? They have every right to have the *blan* beliefs, ...criticizing Vodou. But they know deep down that what they’re saying is a lie.⁴

Now, I’ve spent time in rural communities in Haiti, living and learning about life outside of the city. I could easily write a chapter or a paper on the similarities or borrowings from Vodou in rural Catholic and Protestant rituals. However, the fact remains that no matter what the rituals look like or what rhythms people play to accompany mass, the people *actually* believe they are a Catholic or Protestant. I include this comment to play the part of the rural Haitian, and not to stray from the focus on the *sanba* sense of identity based upon rural and by extension traditional life, including things like Vodou.

The new *sanba-s*, however, come from the middle class in and around the Pòtoprens area. They have taken the word *sanba* from its traditionally rural context and applied it to their current work. With this newly appropriated title, the *sanba-s* take on the role of those who sing (metaphorically and literally) while grassroots organizations “toil” over the fields of Haitian democracy and development. Why would these people choose such a word to describe their role? We must keep in mind that François Duvalier initially called himself a “simple country doctor,”⁵ and that the infamous *tonton makout-s* wore clothing representative of *Zaka*, the spirit of agriculture (a rural activity). Within this context, the *sanba-s* made another claim on Haitian traditional life, including Vodou. This negotiation of the rural/peasant image and Vodou created a symbolic power struggle between the Duvalierist government and the growing opposition/democracy. In further discussing the identity of the *sanba-s*, I will focus on aspects related to their roles, appearance, language, and religion. But before that I include a discussion of contributing ideological factors to the *sanba/Roots* movement and identity formation.

Roots Outside of the Haitian Soil

Whenever anyone mentions parallels to the *sanba/rasin* movement, the first mention, for better or for worse, goes to Rastafarians, and Bob Marley specifically. Even a singer from Boukman Eksperyans makes the comparison that “[w]hen I heard Bob Marley sometime around 1976, I decided that if he could do something like that in Jamaica, we could do that with Vodou in Haiti.”⁶ Superficially, and from an outsider’s point of view, Rastafarians and *sanba-s* look similar: they both have what in English is known as dreadlocks.⁷ Both tend to perform politically engaged music. By saying that they “were influenced a lot by Bob Marley...because Bob Marley was a bit controversial by speaking about social issues,”⁸ Lemba confirms both the

connection to Rastafarians and their influence on the *sanba-s*. Both tend to attach socio-economic meanings to what they do, and both attach a spirituality to what they do.

However, I would be doing a disservice to the *sanba-s* if I didn't clearly note how the *sanba-s* recognize the importance of Bob Marley, but vehemently oppose being called "Rastas." In fact, during my research, my key informant, who knew how I was trying to integrate myself into Haitian society in order to learn, would call me "foreigner" in response to my calling him "Rasta." This differentiation, though, should not be seen as animosity towards Rastafarians. After the afternoon drum sessions take their toll on us, we would sometimes sing Bob Marley songs.⁹ As Zao says, "I wouldn't say that I have any problem with my Jamaican brothers [the Rastas], being that we're both black, but I always remain true to myself as a Haitian."¹⁰

The *sanba-s* observe the significance of what Bob Marley has done in Jamaica and compare it with what they do in Haiti. However, few clear references are made to exactly what Marley did. Despite their ethnographic understanding of what they do in Haiti, the *sanba-s* pay respect to information they got primarily out of second-hand sources, either personal communications or books on Marley and the Rastafarians, or from the radio programming. What they identify with in Marley and the Rastafarians falls into the categories of explicitly political music¹¹ and black liberation. . They see Jamaican use of political music connected with another way of life as an effective way of making a social critique. Gage Averill wrote extensively on this aspect of 20th century popular Haitian music. The black liberation implies, like the relationships between *indigénisme/noirisme* and *négritude* before, a Pan-African connection and subsequent struggle for social justice.

This Pan-African connection came from outside Jamaica, too. In the 1970s, the *sanba-s* began learning about black struggles in the United States.¹² In an interview, Lemba explains the connection between power struggles:

Yes, the Black Power movement in the US. Regarding that, we had information, but not too much information. Because we knew the names Angela Davis, we knew of [Stokely] Carmichael, the Black Panthers [Party for Self-Defense], we had information about their work... That influenced the Roots Movement. That made it in a way a bit dangerous to the status quo.¹³

Angela Davis is a radical leftist activist, writer, and academic who now teaches at UC Santa Cruz. Stokely Carmichael (AKA Kwame Touré) was a radical leftist from the Caribbean who led the black nationalism movement in the 1960s. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was formed in the 1960s by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton originally to improve their community. It later became the name of a family of groups around the US that housed black radical activists. The black power struggle in the US also affected popular culture that reached the *sanba-s*, and Lemba explains how “it was the time of James Brown, the Supremes, groups like that, and there was a television program that was on all the time here, Soul Train.” The contacts with a radical movement and related popular culture outside of Haiti added to the ideological bent of the *sanba-s*’ identity.

Another non-Haitian element within the Roots Movement also comes from the United States. The US in the late 1960s produced a social movement not only from the brown population, but also from the pale population. The hippies and the “flower power” associated with it somehow reached Haiti. This message of peace and love also found its way into the music of the commercial Roots music, and Lolo Beaubrun specifically.¹⁴ While performing at Red Rocks in the United States, Lolo reminded the crowd of one of the messages of the Roots movement, “Love, truth, and justice. If I lose my ego, what do I lose? Nothing.”¹⁵ This idea, ignoring the

social aspects of truth and justice, follows the peaceful and almost transcendental idea that is ascribed to the hippies.

One last key part of ideological formation outside of Haiti came from the example of 19th century England. The connections that many of the *sanba-s* have or had to Karl Marx range from tacit recognition of ideology to formal membership in a political party. Several people refer to the Marxist notion of class when discussing levels of society. At this point, I won't reiterate what I included earlier. It needs mentioning though, that these people are drawing upon many different sources of Marxist discourse: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Louis Henry Morgan, Che Guevara, and Leon Trotsky. Again, I remind the reader of the movement's relationship with Marx by Aboudja's commentary:

When I happened upon this musical activity, this *practice*,...it helped me. [A Marxist idea] was a foundation. It helped me see that we didn't need to be communist to struggle [for a better life for all] in our country. The larger reality of the country allowed a person to live in accordance with it and still be able to realize some things [related to social change] within it.¹⁶

Yatande also used Vodou to connect the manner in which people live in the countryside with a Marxist construct, the redistribution of material objects. "In *daomen*, there's a song that goes "anye, anye...*kinanm ou se kinanm mwen*,"¹⁷ or what's mine is yours. This means that the way the majority of the people in Haiti lived (the peasants and lower classes) constituted a questioning of the cultural system of the upper classes (and by extension, the United States). Surprisingly, given the adaptation of Marxism, not one of the people I interviewed has heard of Antonio Gramsci or his ideas on the importance of culture in the proletarian struggle.

How do all of these influences contribute to the growth of a *sanba* identity? One's initial reaction might lean towards a transcendental Pan-African Marxism. Certainly they don't consider themselves hippies. Also, the idea of Pan-Africanism implies that the *sanba-s* connect

themselves to a larger context which forms the base of their ideological platform. Although they recognize the importance of the Black Power movement in the US and the Rastafarians in Jamaica, they are seen as parallels and influences, and not directly related to what happens in Haiti. The *sanba-s* cannot be seen as a classic Marxist, as many of them simply don't identify themselves as such. In fact, while sitting around a *lakou*, when I implied that one of them was *maksis*, he corrected me by saying he was a *toutis*.¹⁸ The best way of understanding the relationship between these other movements and the *sanba/rasin* movement is wholly Haitian. The *sanba-s* have taken things from elsewhere, recognized their value, and digested and reproduced them in a Haitian context, something like the *Manifesto Antropófago* of Brazilian modernism.

Petals of a Lotus Flower: Examining a *sanba's* identity

“Each person is searching for her identity, each person is fighting to protect their heritage....”¹⁹

Understanding the historical background, the dynamics of the Roots movement, and the ideological framework that ushered in the *sanba-s* leaves open the question of what constitutes a *sanba* and how they personally identify themselves. The above quote by Mirey Marcelin gives a partial answer to one of these questions. After examining key “power points” of *sanba* identity, I contend that the way that the *sanba-s* present themselves marks a boundary between them and those, particularly of the Haitian middle and upper classes, who believe in Euro-American ideals.

Nan lakou a/In the courtyard

Perhaps the most important element of being a *sanba* involves doing research, specifically, participant observation. This aspect created an interesting twist when carrying out my own fieldwork where I used participant observation. Certainly a *sanba* does not look down upon textbook research, however field experience in rural Haiti is preferred. Of the many types of

religious ceremonies and various rituals in traditional Haitian life, the most frequent location visited is a *lakou*, simplistically defined as a courtyard (from the French *la cour*).²⁰ Jacques Roumain defined the *lakou* as “the traditional peasant dwelling...It is a collection of *kay* or houses surrounding a central building called an *ounfò*.”²¹ Haitian sociologist Laënnec Hurbon adds that a *lakou* is “in the shape of a horseshoe, which connects about twenty ‘nuclear families’ or rather houses from which one, standing apart in the center, constitutes the *ounfò* or temple, where the patriarch resides.”²² The *ounfò* is a Vodou temple complex.

The formation of these areas, which harkens back to similar formations in central Africa, cannot be clearly understood. Janèt, assistant to the *manbo* in Lakou Badjo told me a story involving the spirit Ogoun Badagri and a runaway cow which marked the spot where Badjo grew.²³ Aboudja describes a *lakou* as “something familial *first*...a *lakou* is a place where many people have inherited land where each person has a position and responsibility. And that *lakou* has a specific ritual attached to it.”²⁴ Each ritual in Vodou has a specific rhythm attached to it, to which Sanba Zao adds “all of those rhythms, like the Africans, came from many nations, and they left us a *heritage* [my emphasis]. Because Lakou Souvnans is a Dahomean *lakou*. Lakou Soukri is a Kongo *lakou*. Lakou Badjo is a Nago (Yoruba) *lakou*.”²⁵ The work of the *sanba* is then to explore and spread this information. In doing such, they give respect to a traditional heritage and way of life. As seen earlier, the significance attached to these meanings supercedes the historical realities surrounding the establishment of these.

Researching the researchers

I will provide an example from when I accompanied several *sanba-s* to Lakou Soukri in order to demonstrate how they conduct their research.²⁶ After talking about travelling for days or weeks in advance, we decided on what day we would leave. No one really talked about how we

were going to get there, where we would stay, or what we would eat. My issue of bringing purified water seemed inconsequential to them. At no particular time, people showed up at a house in Pòtoprens where we spent time staring at the neighborhood before proceeding to the bus station. The group hopped on several different busses without exchanging contact information. The bus driver seems to take particular joy in shoving as many people as possible into the bus, and even more joy in waiting until every square inch of seat is taken before leaving. The concept of a departure time does not exist. Once moving, we long for the paved sections of roads where we do not get bounced like popcorn kernels around the bus. After several hours of inhaling dust through the windows, being lowered so that we could breathe, we arrive at the nearest town to Lakou Soukri. From here, we hitchhike or buy a ride from a sympathetic driver to Soukri.

Arriving, we cross over cactus fences and through a dirt courtyard to the thatch covered mud hut where we leave our bags. This house is owned by a *sanba* living in the US. One of the locals brings over a thatch mat big enough for two, and four of us lie down to rest on it. During the evenings, we go to the Vodou ceremony in the peristyle. While I am busy taking pictures and making field recordings, some of the *sanba* are making their own recordings. Others who have been to Soukri before, wait their turn to relieve the hired ceremony drummers of playing. Sometimes we dance in unison with the initiates. Sometimes we sing with the rest of the people. I even had my turn at playing the drums. We drink, smoke and eat if we have the money. If not, some kindly neighbor or vendor will give us a morsel. This usually lasts from 8:00 at night until 3:00 in the morning.

Whoever gets tired can retire to the house and decide whether or not to drag the mat outside to sleep or to stay inside. Throughout the night, after the ceremony has ended, the roosters begin to call out. It is not dawn, but after a few nights, the frustration of hearing them disappears and

one sleeps through the night. In the morning, we eat whatever is available. This usually means sweet coffee, and avocados with bread. If we're lucky, someone just worked a cow over, and we have milk. During the day, we bathe and eat. Sometimes we talk and tell jokes in the shade, avoiding the powerful sun. Often we sit under the *mapou* or silk ceiba tree, singing songs, playing some out-of-tune guitar, slapping on a peanut canister or a gourd for a drum. Perhaps someone in the area needs help with a task, so we help. A young anthropologist takes the opportunity to scribble away in his notebook. This is the way life is. We talk with the locals who might tell a story about the place. In the evening, the process starts over again. After a few days, we give any money we can to our hosts. Then we mirror our actions we took to get here, eventually reaching Pòtoprens.

Yatande Bòkò explains why they do what they do, and which in turn explains the prior section:

When you do research on Vodou, it's a way to learn about how to live with others, to learn like other people, to learn to make people think in another way....When you do research, it teaches you many things. It teaches you to free your mind. Because if you are shackled, and you break out of it, it can still be on your mind.²⁷

Dress

As mentioned before, *sanba-s* have a particular appearance. I use the word *dress* as opposed to *appearance* based upon the text by Fadwa El Guindi, who defines dress in a larger sense, including “not only garments and accessories but also hairstyles and cosmetics, and, like language or culinary and religious traditions, it marks...boundaries among [groups].”²⁸

During the 1970s, Sanba Zao and others began growing out their hair into what are called “dreadlocks.” However, they didn't call them that because of the association with Rastafarians, who were considered communists. Instead, they used the words *cheve simbi*, *louten*, or *zin*.²⁹ *Cheve simbi*, or the hair of Simbi, refers to a set of spirits associated with being under the water

in Haiti. Edelle explains the reason the *sanba-s* use this name and the reason she has her hair like that is “because I know I am a *simbi*. I come from below the water.”³⁰ It is commonly understood that devotees of the *simbi* spirits wear their hair accordingly. *Zin* also implies this association with tiny spirits who reside around water.³¹ The word *louten* comes from the French *lutin*, meaning a magical child. Interestingly enough, this word has taken on a negative connotation in contemporary Haitian.

The significance of the names lies in the fact that all involve a spiritual nature. By sporting a hairstyle that references spirituality or Vodou, a *sanba* identifies with a religion and way of life that was abused by François Duvalier. Furthermore, the positive messages associated with the Roots movement imply a revalorization of Vodou. Several *sanba-s* mentioned how Sanba Daomen has a picture of a 90 year-old woman from rural Haiti who has long locks of hair. She calls her hair *cheve simbi*. Although I never saw the photograph, I did find a picture of a *papalwa*, or Vodou priest, dated 1908 that depicts a man with similar hair (see Appendix). These historical roots (pun intended) need mentioning as they place the existence of this hairstyle in Haiti prior to the popularity of Bob Marley. This debunks the idea expressed by many Haitians that a *sanba* “adopted Jamaican identity and lost his Haitian identity.”³²

Clothing makes up another key aspect of a *sanba's* appearance. Mirey recounted to me when she saw her first *sanba*, who was engaged in hard manual labor for his *lakou* at the time. “He was the one who planted plantains, sweet potatoes, and manioc. When I arrived at the guy’s house, I saw him. His legs were dirty and he wore sandals made out of a spare tire. His pants were all torn up. I said, ‘He’s someone who’s not like everyone else.’”³³ Many people in the *sanba/rasin* movement walk around while wearing a handkerchief on their head. Others carry around an *alfò* or a *makout*. During some performances, members of Boukman Eksperyans

would wear blue denim shirts and rolled up pants. All of these draw upon the image of a traditional Haitian rural inhabitant or the peasant spirit of agriculture, *Azaka*. I must emphasize that these images are an “idealized” rural inhabitant, as increasingly in the Haitian countryside, denim shirts are being replaced by t-shirts donated by well-intentioned people in the US, woven bags are replaced by backpacks, and locally produced sandals are replaced by cheap plastic import shoes.³⁴

These images act as a response to the appropriation of Vodou by the Duvaliers who used it to gain complicity of the population. When a *tonton makout* wore blue denim and harassed a population, this symbolically linked violence with Vodou. A *sanba*'s positive depiction of Vodou in a public realm reasserts the value of that element of Haitian culture. Secondly, by connecting with the agricultural spirits and drawing upon popular peasant motifs, a *sanba* identifies with a population alienated by the neo-liberal economic practices of Disney and other transnational corporations. This simultaneously embodies an appeal for popular support and an assertion of support for the masses.

Language

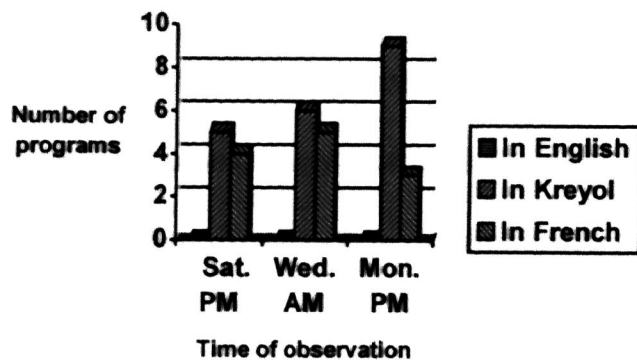
Many educators, activists, and intellectuals have identified the language issue as a focal point of tension within Haitian society. Despite the fact that the 1987 Haitian Constitution establishes that both French and Kreyòl are the country's official languages, Lyonel Paquin, member of the Haitian elite now in the US, observes that “*la grande bourgeoisie* firmly believe[s] that Creole ‘is not a language.’”³⁵ More important than whether or not this is accurate is understanding the general contempt with which the middle class (and especially the upper class) regard Kreyòl. Yatande Bòkò, a musician and cultural activist, recounted how he experienced the upper class disdain for Haitian while at a UNICEF fundraiser:

I was going to play some music. I walked up to this lady and started speaking Haitian with her. Then I saw someone else, and I spoke Haitian with him. Then I saw the organizing member of the event. He started speaking French, so I was obligated to do the same. But I asked him, if everyone here is Haitian, we're in Haiti at an event for Haitians, why are we speaking French?³⁶

To which Gran Chimèn, a musician with Boukman Eksperyans, replied that “there are some offices [in Haiti] where you can't get service if you don't speak French.”³⁷

To again draw upon the use of radio in Haiti, I include a table based upon the number of talk radio programs (political, religious, or otherwise). I conducted this in the manner described in the earlier section on Haitian radio.

Language use on Haitian radio



In examining this chart, I call the reader's attention to the correlation between the “construction of contemporary identities” with appropriation of media forms.³⁸ If as before, the content on the radio reflects the values of the middle class, then what can be made of this chart? For the most part, this graph shows how people use Kreyòl on the radio a bit more than, but not to the exclusion of, French. Further, I only heard English spoken on the radio once while in Haiti, and that was an emission from the US. The bilingual nature of radio programming parallels middle class education and values, as they “are bilingual (Creole and French).”³⁹ I would add, though, that even though someone from the middle class can speak French, those people I know speak Kreyòl most of the time. Therefore, the middle class values, seen through

the medium of radio, create the image of separate but equal use of Kreyòl and French in the construction of both Haitian identity and the imagined Haitian community.

Doing fieldwork outside of the United States, an anthropologist often faces the issue of language. Clifford Geertz wrote on how difficult it was negotiating the terrain of Arabic and Indonesian in determining “what is going on here?”⁴⁰ When I conducted my work, though, I was fortunate to have studied it at a university and had a good amount of preliminary time in the field. In explaining a *sanba*’s identification with a language, I unpack a particular event in which I found myself one evening.⁴¹

After a Boukman Eksperyans concert near the national palace, Yatande Bòkò and I walked over to hitch a ride with one of the drummers. Passing by a group of men, one yells “*Wi, blan. Blan, vin, non.*”⁴² Yatande stops and talks with him while I continue on to find our ride. Completing that, I return to get Yatande. The forty-year-old man (wearing a thick gold chain) who called out to me starts talking with me in English (through crooked yellow teeth) without hesitating to ask what language I speak. “Oh, you’re from Kansas? Country music!” This was followed by a few beer-flavored howls purporting to be Willie Nelson. I continued answering his questions in Kreyòl. After a few minutes of listening to him in English (he spent time in the US), I decided to ignore anything in English. *M pa konprann.*⁴³ He repeated something. *M pa konprann.* “Oh, don’t play that with me.” He changes to Kreyòl, though, saying in a grossly exaggerated form (probably intending on confusing me), “If I speak in Kreyòl, I’ll leave you in the dust!” Tired of his condescending ways, I replied, in well-spoken *jagon*⁴⁴, *Nongon, ougou paga kaga pègè-digi mwengen.*⁴⁵ Everyone had a laugh, recognizing that I had proven myself, so Yatande and I went on our way.

I include a brief note before I discuss the episode in depth. During a later conversation with a group of *sanba-s* about the role of language in Haiti, Yatande retold what happened. Others were impressed with how I handled myself and reached over to shake my hand in congratulations.

This episode highlights several lines of power. Firstly, the stranger addresses me as white foreigner and later speaks to me in English. Combining these facts with the gold chain he wore and his time in the US indicates a person of the middle class, as a person from the upper classes would probably speak to me in French.⁴⁶ This suggests Paquin's idea of the bourgeoisie's contempt for Kreyòl. Secondly, several *sanba-s* located an important value within my actions that night. So although they may speak English, French, Spanish, German, or Japanese, they recognize the importance of the Haitian language. For this reason, Lekòl Bazilo, run by Sanba Zao and Mirey, teaches children in the community how to read and write in Kreyòl *first*, and follow with classes in French, English, or Spanish should the children choose it. Thirdly, this identification links the *sanba-s* linguistically to the majority of the people who are monolingual Kreyòl speakers. Finally, a Boukman Eksperyans song sums up the support of this sentiment as well as further demonstrating the importance of recorded music in the *sanba/rasin* movement with the words,

<i>Ayisyen yo pito pale franse</i>	Haitians would rather speak French
<i>Ayisyen yo pito pale angle</i>	Haitians would rather speak English
<i>Ayisyen yo pito pale panyòl</i>	Haitians would rather speak Spanish
<i>olye yo pale kreyòl</i>	Instead of speaking Kreyòl. ⁴⁷

The fact that these three languages still play a role in stratification of Haitian society today harkens back to the Revolution, when colonists from each of the corresponding nations attempted to control the island. In a sense, it seems like what the sword couldn't do, the book could.

Religion

“Before 1492, we were living in harmony. Then Christopher Columbus came and began killing us. Who gave him the right? The church.”⁴⁸ --Yatande Bòkò

The colonial view of Vodou involved the same European view of the western hemisphere at the time of Columbus’s arrival: that which could be used by the Europeans was civilized, and that which needed to be changed was barbarous. For example, in 1722, Père Labat reported with horror that “the *noirs* do without scruple that which did the Philistines: they worship Dagon beside Jehovah and secretly commingle the superstitions of their old idolatry with the liturgy of Christ.”⁴⁹ That they forced the Africans into the Christian church need only be mentioned to suggest the colonial position towards anything non-Christian. This colonial idea is the same as the position taken by US missionaries in Haiti, embodied by Wallace Turnbull of the Baptist Mission in Fèmat. In the mission he runs, beside a beautiful collection of artifacts, passers-by find signs stating how Vodou is evil and is the root of all of Haiti’s problems. A handout available at the Mission explains how a person can join the Baptist community:

All but a few non-evangelical Protestants practice Vodou until a decision is reached, often after years of witness by Christian neighbors as to their own deliverance from fear, and of their joy and hope in Christ, *unencumbered by man’s inventions and superstitions*. [emphasis mine]⁵⁰

Not only does inclusion in the Baptist church mean a new faith, but it implies demonizing Vodou. Because of François Duvalier’s semiotic attachment to Vodou during his rule, including the manner in which he dressed, the era after Jean-Claude’s leaving created another war against Vodou. During the period of *dechoukaj*, or uprooting, many Haitians attacked members of the regime, often times brutally murdering people. As members of Vodou temples joined Duvalier, many Vodou leaders were attacked by anti-Duvalierist mobs.⁵¹ To many of the *sanba-s*, this represents Haitians attacking their own culture and traditions.

Vodou is the religion with which a *sanba* identifies, whether the person is a Marxist who deplores such an “opiate” or an *oungan*.⁵² I use the term “religion” in the sense of a paradigm, a way of living, a way of placing oneself in the universe, and the objects associated with it. Scholars have written that Vodou lacks uniformity⁵³, and rightfully so. There has never been a central Vodou religious leader, a central church, or official doctrine. I do not claim to give a full explanation of what Vodou is, but rather to give here a general idea of what it involves. To be clear, though, it consists of the ordering of indigenous (Taino) beliefs and practices with Catholicism and the various religions brought from central and western Africa which occurred from the arrival of the first Africans until the present day. As it derived from the slave class during colonial times, Vodou traditionally has been associated with the black, lower classes. Ceremonies involve singing, dancing, percussive music (from various types of drums), or some combination of these. Contact with the spirits through possession of an individual implies continuity and respect for ancestors. Belief in spirits associated with natural phenomena implies aspects of animism.

Another general characteristic involves divisions of rites within Vodou. The two main groups of rites are the *rada* and the *petwo*. Different authors have included *kongo* as a third family of rites which either spans both *rada* and *petwo*, or stands as a separate category.⁵⁴ This division has been perhaps one of the most misunderstood items of Vodou. An etic view of the division yielded the idea that *rada* is good and *petwo* is evil. Indeed, the representations in US popular culture draw upon the *petwo* rites in portraying Vodou, which do nothing to change this view of Vodou. François Duvalier also drew upon the *petwo* rites and spirits when constructing his regime. However, a new breed of transatlantic scholarship has begun shedding new light on this subject. Africanist Robert Thompson suggested that:

“*Rada*, being predominantly Dahomean and Yoruba, is the ‘cool’ side of vodun [sic], being associated with the achievement of peace and reconciliation. *Petro* [sic], predominantly Kongo, is the hot side, being associated with the spiritual fire of charms for healing and for attacking evil forces.”⁵⁵

The division between the two is even better understood by the emic description of André Pierre, the famous Haitian painter and Vodou priest, who labeled *rada* “civilian” and *petro* “military.”⁵⁶

I began this section by contending that *sanba-s* identify themselves with Vodou. The music they perform indicates an association with Vodou. The research they do indicates that. Their names indicate that. For example, the name Lemba comes from the “major historic cult of healing, trade, and marriage relations”⁵⁷ in 17th century Congo Basin. Other names, like Zao, come from the spirit Lemba Zawo. Sanba Zao explains that his name “is formed by three letters...which symbolize three elements which are a part of *ginen*.”⁵⁸

However, this simple identification obscures more than it clarifies. If there is a division within Vodou between peaceful and warring spirits, would a *sanba* accept all of them uncritically? No, is the short answer. They simultaneously ascribe positive values to those aspects considered savage by people with a colonist’s mentalities, and emphasize the importance of the “cool” side of Vodou.

In Haiti, beyond the direct reference to Vodou, the word *kongo* means “hick, yokel, hayseed.” This has historical roots. New sources indicate that Kongo people made up the majority of slaves coming from Africa just before the last slave ships made their way to Saint Domingue.⁵⁹ Recently arriving on the island, these people did not know the “etiquette” of slavery. Perhaps the colonists recognized this, as did other slaves, and then subsequently incorporated the general term *kongo* for someone ignorant. In the song “Zansèt nou yo” by Boukman Eksperyans (redone by Boukan Ginen and called “Nati Kongo), the group states that “[being called] *kongo* doesn’t upset me/you call me *kongo* to dismiss me/ it appears you want me to hate myself.”⁶⁰ An earlier

sanba/rasin band chose the name Foula, a word of Kongo origin meaning “breath of life.”⁶¹ In one of their songs, “Solda,” [sic] they state that “we are *nago* people, we are *kongo* people.”⁶² This action shows that *sanba-s* are reclaiming this negative idea of *kongo* (associated with *petro*) as their own, one not to be ashamed of. In reclaiming this, they embrace the importance of the “hot” side of Vodou.

The emphasis on the “cool” side of Vodou comes out in subtle ways. The first *lakou* associated with the new *sanba-s* is Souvnans, where the Dahomean rites (considered *rada*) occur. In fact, because of living and learning at Souvnans, one of them became one of the Vodou leaders there. Furthermore, in all the interviews that I conducted, the first connection to Vodou involved reference to *daomen*⁶³ or Souvnans. Other rites and rhythms were mentioned, but first came Souvnans. This identification first with West African culture and then other areas of Africa parallels the pattern of slavery mentioned earlier. Edelle leveled a critique against those people who only play Roots music for money by calling them “those that don’t know a *daomen* sound.”⁶⁴ This bit of what Gramsci would call “common sense” contains the message that the *daomen* sound is the very fundamental sound any person involved in Haitian music should know. To drive this point home, I bring up the first drum lessons a member of Foula gave me. On a thin piece of painted particle board, Jean Raymond wrote “Lesson on some *rada* rituals and rhythms, like *rada daomen* and *rada lafrik ginen*.”⁶⁵

While the *sanba-s* connect themselves with Vodou, they are keenly aware of the relations between their religion and Christianity. Yatande pointed out something to me one day while we were talking:

There’s no reason to break down what someone else believes if it’s not bothering me....Vodou doesn’t speak badly of Protestants. They let them do their thing. Never in a Vodou ceremony do you hear ‘Those bible-bangers are ruining things.’ No, but in a Protestant ceremony, you hear that Vodou is the work of the Devil.”⁶⁶

Sanba Zao added that he “doesn’t have any problem with Jesus....Now, Jesus’s life did have elements of *ginen* in it.”⁶⁷ These two comments suggest a type of open relationship. However, some *sanba-s*, drawing upon the poet side of the meaning of *sanba*, have been more critical of the Christian faith.

*Ou ap di m Bondye bon
Bondye pa m, se pyebwa yo
Bondye pa m, se van
Se solèy, se dlo yo.*

You’re telling me God is good.
My god is the trees.
My god is the wind.
It’s the sun, it’s the waters.

*Ou ap di m Bondye bon
Ou pa janm bezwen konnen
Kijan pou m manje
Kijan pou m dòmi
Si m al lekòl*

You’re telling me God is good.
[without] you ever needing to know
how I will eat
how I will sleep
Or if I go to school

*Ou ap di m Bondye bon
Kouman pou Bondye ta fè bon
Si m pa gen lasante
Bondye pa m, se moun
E se moun toutbon ki moun.*

You’re telling me God is good.
How could God be good
If I don’t have health care
My god is a human
And those who are humane are human.

*Bondye pa ou
Se Bondye blan
Se pa Bondye pa m.
Bondye pa m
Se tout moun ki gen fòs
Ak kouray
K ap ede m travay
Pou latè chanje*

Your god
is a foreign god
It’s not my god.
My god
is everyone who has the strength
and the courage
who will help me work
to make this a better place.⁶⁸

The saying *Bondye bon*, often heard in Haiti, makes reference to the traditional fatalism of the Haitian people, as well as to a Christian mindset. By attacking this phrase, the *sanba* criticizes the passive mentality for perpetuating social ills, criticizes Christianity for encouraging this, and asserts the value of nature and the human potential in Haiti.

...And?

Analyzing the *sanba-s* identity highlights several power issues. In all examples, references to Vodou and traditional life play off the class dichotomy between the middle and upper classes (outwardly Western, French-speaking, Christian) and the lower classes (outwardly traditional, Haitian-speaking, Vodouist). Using symbols of the idealized Haitian peasant flies in the face of symbols of progress, like clothing from France or the US. These objects represent foreign ideological systems, those associated with exploitation and repression. Perhaps this is why a *sanba* will more readily pick up a straw hat rather than a Yankee's cap [pun intended]. Given that the Haitian middle class enjoys the "mores and habits of the most affluent society on earth [the US],"⁶⁹ people who orient themselves otherwise are rejecting these values.

¹ From the *sanba* movement came contemporary Roots music. Some of these people follow the ideology of the new *sanba*, while others do not. The spelling *sanba* reflects the 1979 official Haitian orthography. Both Sanba Zao and Mirey Marcelin commented on how they consciously chose to not write *samba*, but rather *sanba*. This differentiation marks promoting dignity in something Haitian as well as something not Brazilian. However, both words are pronounced the same. See the appendix for a discussion of the word's possible origin.

² Freeman 1998: 501. *Konbit* means a community cooperative work effort. Bann *rara* means a *rara* band. See previous note on *rara*.

³ Sanba Zao 2001.

⁴ Wawa 2001.

⁵ Heintz 1996: 563.

⁶ Beaubrun in Averill 1997: 133.

⁷ For a good introductory explanation of Rastafarians, see Lewis 1993.

⁸ Lemba 2001.

⁹ I admit my conflation of Bob Marley with Rastafarians, as I know some people in Jamaica don't consider Marley as such.

¹⁰ Sanba Zao 2001.

¹¹ I use the terms "explicitly political" in recognition of the fact that all music takes a position on the status quo of a given society, whether by choice or by default. Examples of implicitly political music would be Britany Spears and N-sync in the US, and *konpa* groups in Haiti, like those of Nemours Jean-Baptiste and Coupé Cloué.

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- ¹² As often happens in Haiti regarding music technology, dissemination of unbiased information regarding the US often takes several years to reach Haiti.
- ¹³ Lemba 2001.
- ¹⁴ Lemba 2001 and Beaubrun in Averill 1997: 133.
- ¹⁵ Boukman Eksperyans 1999.
- ¹⁶ Derencourt 2001 Emphasis on the word “practice” distinguishes it from “theory.” This division creates the thesis and antithesis which produces the synthesis which is subsequently explained. Furthermore, it draws upon notions put forth by liberation theology.
- ¹⁷ Yatande 2001.
- ¹⁸ *Maksis* means Marxist. *Tout* in Haitian means “all.” Thus, by calling himself an “all-ist” he discounted the importance of formal ideologies and their names, -isms, and focused on the value of practice. The song “Vodou adjae” by Boukman Eksperyans echoes this sentiment. [Boukman Eksperyans 1992.]
- ¹⁹ Marcellin 2001.
- ²⁰ I will not give an exhaustive list of research possibilities here, but simply note the most common example. Others include the celebration at Sodo, various country celebrations, Carnival, rara, burials, and *konbit-s*.
- ²¹ Romain 1978: 27.
- ²² Hurbon 1972: 83.
- ²³ Janèt 2001.
- ²⁴ Derencourt 2001.
- ²⁵ Sanba Zao 2001.
- ²⁶ In this section, a “we” refers to some of the *sanba-s* and me.
- ²⁷ Yatande 2001.
- ²⁸ El Guindi, 57.
- ²⁹ Marcellin 2001.
- ³⁰ Edelle 2001.
- ³¹ Freeman 1998.
- ³² I heard this several times when discussing my research with the general public in Haiti.
- ³³ Marcellin 2001.
- ³⁴ This trend of export substitution and donation of goods to Haiti has severely undermined aspects of the Haitian economy, and created a disdain towards things produced in Haiti by Haitians, despite superior quality.
- ³⁵ Paquin 1983: 236.
- ³⁶ Jayaram 2001.
- ³⁷ Jayaram 2001 For more information on language and power, see Bébel-Gisler 1987.
- ³⁸ Ginsburg 1997: 127-128.
- ³⁹ Paquin 1983: 232
- ⁴⁰ Geertz 1995: 44-46.
- ⁴¹ I owe my use of event analysis to an article by Sally Falk Moore. See Moore 1987.
- ⁴² “Hey, whitey! Whitey, come here!” The word *blan* means foreigner or white person, however it often takes on a negative connotation in the predominantly black society of Haiti.
- ⁴³ “I don’t understand.”
- ⁴⁴ *Jagon* is a Haitian equivalent to “pig-Latin” in English.
- ⁴⁵ In normal Haitian, “*Non, ou pa ka pèdi mwen,*” or “No, you can’t lose me.”
- ⁴⁶ The role of English in the diglossic country of Haiti, where the elite traditionally spoke French, has not been studied enough for deeper analysis.
- ⁴⁷ Boukman Eksperyans 1991.
- ⁴⁸ Jayaram 2001.
- ⁴⁹ Heintz 1996: 24
- ⁵⁰ Baptist Haiti Mission n.d.
- ⁵¹ See Heintz 1996.
- ⁵² English equivalent, “Vodou priest.”
- ⁵³ See De Heusch 1989; Trouillot 1990.
- ⁵⁴ See De Heusch 1989; Deren 1953.
- ⁵⁵ Thompson 1984: 166.
- ⁵⁶ Thompson 1984: 167.
- ⁵⁷ Janzen 1982: 3.

⁵⁸ *Ginen* represents the spiritual home in Vodou, where souls go when they die. Notice the term's relation to Guinea in Africa.

⁵⁹ Thornton 1998.

⁶⁰ Boukman Eksperyans 1992. Boukan Ginen 1994.

⁶¹ Foula 1995.

⁶² Foula Vodoule 1999. Foula also is a scarf or kerchief traditionally worn by Haitian women.

⁶³ *Daomen* comes from the Dahomey nation in Africa.

⁶⁴ Edelle 2001.

⁶⁵ Jayaram 2001.

⁶⁶ Jayaram 2001.

⁶⁷ Sanba Zao 2001.

⁶⁸ Unpublished poem recited to author in August 2001.

⁶⁹ Paquin 1983: 233.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

So far in this paper, I have intentionally left out a degree of analysis of the material. This chapter complements the previous material. In this final section, I will provide a summary in order to stress the key points of the paper. Next, I will provide a critical analysis of my work in light of the larger anthropological canon, followed by concluding remarks on issues relating to my work.

The *mouvman rasin* manifested itself as a direct attack on the Duvalierist regime and as a revalorization of Haitian identity. François Duvalier had his own roots in the *indigéniste* school of literature, and later associated with the literary group *Les Griots* who followed *noiriste* ideas. After coming to power in 1957, Duvalier set upon putting into practice ideas based upon righting the injustices of historical racism in Haiti. However, the reality of his regime was as intimidating to the forces of opposition as could be imagined, and hardly as friendly to the masses as he proclaimed. He used a doctrine of national security to gain control over the Haitian elite, the Catholic church, the *chèf seksyon-s* and consequently the countryside, the army (using the *tonton makout*), and Vodou. His anti-elite/pro-Haitian masses discourse and the use of traditional Haitian symbols equated the struggle for overall social benefits with the survival of Duvalierism. With the identity of the masses consumed by this ideology, the antithesis of the regime logically manifested itself by working *against* the government and *for* a new concept of “Haitian.” Due to the state’s monopoly on violence, resistance fell within the symbolic and cultural realms. Furthermore, the building/rebuilding of a Haitian nation based itself upon aspects of the masses’ “traditional” culture.

These non-Duvalierist projects formed the foundation of the Roots movement which brought Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the National Palace in 1991. Within this larger “Roots movement” came the individual roots, the political movement leading to democratic elections being only one part of something larger. Another “root” involved grassroots projects to repair the damage done to the everyday material life of the Haitian people. A cultural “root,” which includes the *mouvman sanba*, worked to complement the social and political programs developed. This cultural movement worked to “decolonize” Haitian identity within the “scape” of popular culture, specifically music.¹ At the time when foreign music dominated the airwaves and *konpa* bands flourished, a new generation began to embrace the traditional music of Haiti. Groups like *Sanba-yo*, *Gwoup sa*, *Foula*, and *Boukman Eksperyans* implemented traditional symbols of the Haitian masses in their lyrics and music. These same people used their economic, social and cultural capital² to implement programs to benefit their community, which is the goal of the Roots movement.

In order to understand the antithetical identity which grew out of resistance to Duvalierism, I examined the history and personal identity of the *sanba-s*. The *sanba-s* claim the Roots movement to be hundreds of years old. The people in the Roots movement, specifically the *sanba-s*, see their lives as a continuation of what came before. The Taino people resisted the Spanish colonizers, and then blended with the Africans. The Africans, *nèg mawon-s*, and even the Mulattoes fought against the French, English, and Spanish to gain independence. Despite the success of the Revolution, Haitian history continued to be marked by times of coming together and resistance, betrayal and overcoming, like the assassination of Dessalines, and the rise and fall of Charlemagne Pèralte. However, some developments, *indigénisme* for example, that would initially seem to fit in to the “Roots” trends, do not. This emphasizing of certain events in

history resembles what Rolph Trouillot called “silencing the past.”³ The people involved in the production of this particular oral history use this as a part of their identity to give themselves the power of legitimate action. If a particular person, place, or event involved some amount of resistance (although not to the exclusion of other aspects), it was canonized in the Roots movement history. Hearing the complaint that “the *sanba-s* don’t have a book that outlines their chronology”⁴ suggests the importance of history, and further underlines the arguments of Rolph Trouillot regarding the types of silences in history.

A sense of identity comes from notions of an individual as well as notions of a group (gained in this case from a common history). A *sanba* firstly must know about traditional Haitian culture. For all of the people involved, this meant going to the countryside to live and learn about traditional Haitian life from the rural inhabitants, specifically in a *lakou* built around Vodou. Beyond this functional aspect of the *sanba*’s identity lies the ideological formation of a *sanba*. Many of the ideas about the *mouvman sanba* came from outside Haiti. Certainly, Rastafarians formed ideas of and about it. The *sanba-s* recognize the importance of Bob Marley and the Rastafarians because of the music and message of empowerment to the black masses, yet staunchly reject the idea of one directly imitating another. The black power movement in the United States also influenced the formation of *sanba* thought. This anti-status quo position, again with the related music, fell upon friendly ears in Haiti. Similarly, the countercultural aspects of the hippie movement in the United States, with alternate styles of dress, appealed to the *sanba-s*. Marxism also contributed to the ideological formation of many of them, but Marx himself may have disagreed with the way that some of the *sanba-s* applied his ideas to the Haitian reality. Although some of them associated with formal Marxist groups, most came to view traditional life in Haiti as providing a practical application of Marxism. Thus, a Haitian

answer solved a Haitian problem. *Sanba-s* also identify themselves through their dress, language, and religion. The use of *cheve simbi*, *louten*, or *zin*, however they are called, redesignate their “dreadlocks” from something foreign (*dyèd* in Haitian referring to Jamaicans) to something local (*simbi* spirits in Haiti). Furthermore, it connects the *sanba-s* from their lower or middle-class position in Pòtoprens with the lower-class rural Haitians. Similarly, they emphasize the importance of Kreyòl instead of that of the colonizers (French) that they learned at school. They also identify with Vodou (instead of Christianity). As suggested by their focus on the *lakou*, they are interested in a Vodou way of life. But beyond that, they are interested in learning from the Vodou religion itself. Overall, the *sanba-s* respect the value of all Vodou, especially *fran ginen*.⁵ Interestingly, they juxtapose their interest to build a better Haiti upon their interest in Vodou, and thus focus on the *rada* rites attributed to daily life, rather than focusing on the *petwo* rites attributed to more militant ways.

To sum up what has been discussed so far, the *sanba-s* represent one part of the resistance to Duvalierist and post-Duvalierist hegemony.⁶ In order to understand the *sanba-s*, one must understand where they come from. As anthropologist Jonathan Friedman wrote, “cultural realities are always produced in specific socio-historical contexts and that it is necessary to account for the processes that generate those contexts in order to account for the nature of both the practice of identity and the production of historical schemes.”⁷ Their music, dress, language, history, and religious association (not affiliation) form their identity. By their conscious choice to identify with certain cultural forms, namely those of the rural (marginalized) inhabitants and lower class (marginalized) urban dwellers, they question the dominant values of Haitian society.

Analysis

Now that the Roots movement appears in a larger Haitian context, I endeavor to place it within the larger framework of social thought. I argue here that the Roots movement and the *sanba-s* can be understood using perspectives on the “invention of tradition,” using notions of resistance, and using the concept of “ethnoscapes.”

In the introduction to the book *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm describes the title of his book as referring to “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition....[and] they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” Or in another way, an invention of tradition uses something obsolete, remote, or marginalized as a part of daily life (or at least repeatedly) for a novel purpose. He lists several examples, the royal Christmas broadcast in Britain, the Boy Scouts, and the flag ritual in US schools.⁸ Rather than playing solely with Hobsbawm’s idea, I add what Nicholas Thomas has called the “inversion of tradition.”⁹ Discussing the Fijian way of life in light of colonialism, Thomas contends that there was a “rejection of what was customary in favor of its antithesis.”¹⁰

Referring back to Haiti, we can see several examples of such inversions. First, let’s examine the issue of inversions of dress. Some *sanba-s* carry a *ralfò*, or straw bag. Some roll up their jeans or pants, and many wear colored scarves around the head. These items are commonly associated with peasant farmers who work in the fields. On one hand, they can be seen as inversions of tradition. In a country where the middle and upper classes (mainly of Pòtoprens) have focused on the idea of civilization and modernity, the rural people are marginalized and looked down upon. They are considered backward and needing direction. Therefore, when someone *chooses* to wear material deemed to be of the “country bumpkins” rather than nice

dress pants and a long sleeve button-up, they are rejecting the established order, thereby making a cultural critique. A woman ignores a Bebe purse for a straw sack. A man that uses the red satin-style handkerchief of *Ogoun* instead of a clean white cotton embroidered handkerchief marked with a cross clearly sends a message of pro-Vodou (to a Protestant or strict Catholic, meaning anti-Christian). Rolled-up pants instead of pleated and cuffed slacks show a preference to work the fields rather than schmooze in the office lounge. However, the identity to which they are representing is an *idealized* peasant. Although many rural inhabitants do wear the articles of clothing mentioned, more foreign products are being donated to Haiti and consequently finding their way to the countryside. It is not uncommon to see a farmer wearing a L.A. Lakers cap, or wearing a t-shirt from a 1987 US family reunion. So in a sense, while they are *inverting* tradition in one way, they are essentializing tradition in another.

Keeping with the subject of dress, I turn to inventions of tradition. In chapter five, I included an explanation of a *sanba*'s hairstyle, called *cheve simbi*, *louten*, or *zin*. Each *sanba* who has *cheve simbi* claims that this was the way people wore their hair in the Vodou tradition. Some claim to have a picture of a hundred-year-old woman, still alive, who never cut her hair because of her devotion to the spirit *Simbi*. People from the US would call what she sports "dreadlocks." The picture in the appendix shows a Vodou priest with short hair in such a style, and a photograph of a new *sanba*. The point of including these two "facts" was to show that *sanba-s* have "invented" their hairstyle from factitious, not fictitious origins.¹¹ Despite the sense of fabrication that the word "invention" can suggest, I emphasize that these people legitimately believe what they claim to be true. When an outsider devalues this claim because of lack of sufficient evidence (like an earlier ethnographic account, or something else written down), he exhibits ethnocentric bias which privileges the written source over the oral.¹²

A final example involving the invention/inversion of tradition comes from the use of history within the *sanba* identity. Many *sanba-s* stated that the Roots movement is not new, that each epoch of history has called it something else, but that it is the same thing. Usually associated with resistance to an oppressive structure like French colonialism or the US Occupation, this history focuses on certain events rather than others. By stating that this resistance has always been there, the people have invented a tradition of resistance. This varies from Hobsbawm's ideas because this practice is not defined, but rather qualified. In addition, the repetition definitively extends backward in time, and only suggests repetition into the future. Despite the subtle differences, the function of the invention of legitimizing remains the same between Hobsbawm and the above model.

The topic of resistance not only appears frequently in Haiti's history (according to the *sanba-s*), but it also occurs frequently, perhaps too much so, within discussions by left-leaning social scientists. In an article, anthropologist Michael Brown has asked "Why have resistance and hegemony come to monopolize the anthropological imagination?" to point to the fact that "the indiscriminate use of resistance and related concepts undermines their analytic utility."¹³ In an example, he contended that his own fascination with resistance may have narrowed his understanding of leadership of Lobatón¹⁴ in Peru by ignoring the spiritual paradigm of the indigenous followers. Having read this article before, during and after writing this, I still wrestle with whether or not I am simply forcing my own paradigm of "fight the power" on a subject, or whether I am accurately describing a phenomenon. Convinced that my mental game of hot-box will never get me to one position or the other, I will describe how I view the Roots movement and the *sanba-s* as resistance and not resistance.

From the clearest indications, much of the Roots music is confrontational, whether it is overt or covert. Gage Averill has cited numerous examples where lyrics have suggested an attack on an oppressor.¹⁵ Similarly, groups like Boukman Eksperyans have recorded a *kanaval* song every year since 1991 which involves some amount of resistance, whether against a political entity or against a social ill. A song by Sanba Zao starts “I’m on the main path, some guys laughed as they passed by where I stand. They stole the money of my country, took it and left to a foreign land.”¹⁶ This song acts as an indictment against the Duvaliers, who left with millions of dollars that belonged to Haiti, thus antagonizing the powers that be and breaking the silence of complacency. Resistance can also be seen in a *sanba*’s use of the Haitian language as opposed to French. Sanba Gran Chimen, percussionist in several Roots groups, recounted to me that while at a movie opening, after people approached a podium and gave remarks in French, he gave remarks in Haitian. This use of language questions the hegemony of French language used in formal, public settings. Resistance can also be seen in the above material on “inversion of tradition.” Rather than reiterate the same arguments, I summarize by saying the manner in which the *sanba-s* dress constitutes an act of identity as well as an act of rebellion against middle-class and upper class aesthetics.

But as Brown contends, sometimes resistance is not resistance. Earlier, I described how Duvalierism attempted to contain the nation physically and symbolically. Resistance against the regime took the form of outright attacks, strikes, and demonstrations, as well as musical and symbolic attacks. However, the second part of the “resistance” to Duvalierism acted more as a revalorization of what it meant to be Haitian. For over twenty years, to be Haitian in Haiti meant to be Duvalierist. The Catholic Church was run by Duvalierists. National security and the armed forces were under Duvalier control. While François Duvalier was alive, he acted as

supreme Vodou leader to the population. However, the Haitian people under Duvalier would not be turned into *zonbi*, or zombies. They began to organize. They formed peasant cooperatives. They had secret meetings to solve disputes. Liberation theology separated the Catholic hierarchy and put power back into the hands of non-Duvalierist Haitian priests. A new music began to sound which emphasized a Vodou community rather than a Vodou leader. Instead of viewing all of these developments as being “resistance,” they must be understood in the larger context of a democratic movement that led to the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. As they were outside of the Duvalierist revolution, they were resistance as far as the state was concerned. However, stopping there in the analysis would weaken the events in Haiti and the notion of resistance. Would anyone consider Gandhi’s work and Indian nationalism as strictly resistance, or would they recognize it as more?

The final aspect of anthropological relevance involves Arjun Appadurai’s concept of *ethnoscape*. He defines it as “the landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live.”¹⁷ His first example involves he and his wife flying to India to meet a research contact she had years before. When they arrive, they are surprised to find that the contact had left India and gone to live in Texas. Thus, the Indian community has been *detransnationalized* from the Indian subcontinent and relocated on a global scale. The Haitian parallel to this involves the *kilti libète* groups. Haitians escaped from Duvalier’s Haiti and set up communities in New York and elsewhere which acted as a base for international critique of the regime. Similarly, Sanba Zao’s musical group Djakata lives in Pòtoprens, Haiti. However, they sometimes go on tour outside of Haiti and they sell compact discs all over the hemisphere. Moreover, they have a non-profit partner agency in the United States that supplies them with money earned in the United States. These transnational activities show the flow of people, economics, and power across national

boundaries. Appadurai's second example involves the "transnational journey of ideas."¹⁸ When discussing the ideological influences of the *sanba-s*, I mentioned Marx, hippies, the black power movement in the United States, and Rastafarians from Jamaica. These ideas came to Haiti through television, radio, and print, and were accepted by the Haitians. However, items such as disco, contemporary French song, and rap came to Haiti from the above media as well as from Haitians traveling between Haiti, the United States, and France, and were rejected by the *sanba-s*. Using Benedict Anderson's ideas of "imagined communities," the *sanba-s* recognized these media as representing the imagined and transnational community of ideas from foreign influences. Consequently, they viewed the influx of these ideas and forms as a new form of colonialism. Again, Sanba Zao responded to this with a song, "Calling Loumanndja! The colonists have taken the country!"¹⁹ Exactly where the colonists have come from and which countries they have taken over is no longer clear.

Further Research?

Given the limitations of time (primarily) and space (secondarily), I was forced to limit my discussions to the above issues. In the future, other related issues could be explored, though. The Roots movement suffers from many of the same problems as other movements. Perhaps the problem most ignored in any movement involves the question of gender. Too many "revolutions" have failed to address the roles of men and women, and too often have women continued to be excluded. A good example of this outside of Haiti would be the black power movement in the United States, and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense specifically.²⁰ The Roots movement could provide insight into social movements and gender, given the Haitian saying that "everyone is a person." Beyond this, I have not mentioned the effectiveness of **any** part of the movement in bringing about change or reaching its goal. Also, further studies could

explore the relationship between Vodou's focus on the ancestors and the *sanba-s*' attachment to a larger history of the Roots movement. Another area that could be developed would be how the grassroots projects away from the *sanba-s* conceived of and related to the cultural movement. I believe the Duvalier's and what was previously called their "Creole fascism" could be analyzed more deeply through the post-colonial paradigm. Although this could possibly offend purists of post-colonial theory, I believe applying theories where they do not "naturally" belong enables deeper understanding of the theories and what is being studied. Finally, the Roots movement could be related to the concept of nationalism. It represents a cultural nationalism; however, it is devoid of claims on governmental power. In a sense, the Roots movement seeks nationalism without a nation, a concept obviously in need of more detail. Finally, more work could be conducted involving Africanisms in Haiti and viewing the *sanba* movement within an urban setting.

In conclusion, the Roots movement in Haiti stands as a testament to the Haitian people, no matter what becomes of it at this stage. It aided in overthrowing an enfeebled idea of a new Haiti by attacking its base. It has yielded culturally appropriate grassroots projects to better Haitian society. It yielded excellent music for the democratic revolution of the late 20th century. The artists and intellectuals, embodied in a *sanba*, stood at one with the urban dispossessed and the rural farmers, and fashioned a revolution which yielded their revolutionary song. *Solda peyi mwen, sanba.*²¹

¹ I use the word "decolonize" because the Duvalierist nation exerted an influence over the country which paralleled that of France before 1804. I recognize that comparing these two implies the pairing, perhaps unfairly, of unequal "violences" (slavery versus symbolic/physical pressure to conform, for example). Both claimed to be working in the interest of the country as a whole, and both sought to transform the country. This process of transformation affected the people in such a way that resistance to it corresponded to the means of state oppression.

² See Bourdieu for further description of these terms.

³ Trouillot 1995.

⁴ Sanba Zao 2001.

⁵ I do not cover the divisions between Vodou and what is known as *fran ginen*, but it suffices to say that those who respect or worship *fran ginen* are opposed to the “corruption” of Vodou by hierarchical and capitalist forces.

⁶ Hegemony here means “that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field – that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it.” Comaroff 2002, 210.

⁷ Friedman 1992: 837.

⁸ For more information on the invention of tradition, see Hobsbawm and Ranger, Jackson, Handler and Linnekin, or Hanson.

⁹ Thomas 1992.

¹⁰ Thomas 1992: 223.

¹¹ I borrowed this term from Hobsbaum. See Hobsbawm 1983.

¹² For a further discussion of truth in invention, see Hanson 1997.

¹³ Brown 1996: 729-730.

¹⁴ Guillermo Lobatón led the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) in the 1960s in Peru. He drew upon the Ashaninka for his guerrilla campaigns, and they thought he was a messiah. Lobatón was of Haitian descent.

¹⁵ Averill 1997.

¹⁶ “Nan gran chimen mwen ye, nèg yo pase ri mwen. Nèg yo vòlè lajan peyi m nan, sere l ale nan etranje.” Jayaram 2001.

¹⁷ Appadurai 1991: 192.

¹⁸ Appadurai 1991: 204.

¹⁹ Zao ak Djakarta 2001.

²⁰ See Angela Davis’s autobiography.

²¹ “The soldiers of my country [Haiti] are *samba-s*.” Foula Vodoule 1999.

APPENDIX A: SANBA'S HAIR



The above picture shows a *papalwa*, or Vodou priest from 1908 (Photograph by Colby 1908).

Below (from left to right) are pilgrims at Sodo, two *sanba-s*, and another female pilgrim.
(photograph by author)



APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION ON POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF THE WORD *SANBA*

The passing of time has obscured the origin of the word *sanba* in the Haitian context. In order to address this, I have included a brief explanation of possibilities. Being that the Haitian language consists of French, Spanish, English, indigenous (Taino and Ciboney), and various African languages, and that the word clearly did not come from Europe, I categorize the options as being either Taino or African. One scholar included *sanba* in his work on the Taino foundations of the modern Haitian language; however, he failed to include a definition¹. The Principal Chief of the Jatibonicu Taíno Tribal Nation, Caciqué Pedro Guanikéyu Torres, further explained that the name *Sanba* came from the fusion of *sanaco* (foolish) and *baba* (father), or “foolish father.”² Torres also has cited Dr. Luis Hernandez Aquino, who wrote that *Sanba* or *Zanba* is the name of a family who worked in the Royal Gold Mines of the king of Spain in Utuado, Puerto Rico in 1517³.

Another entirely different take on the origin of the word comes from the African context. Various online sources list *samba* as deriving from the West African Bantu *nsemba*, meaning a complaint or cry⁴. The same source lists *samba*, the verb, as meaning to invoke the ancestors. A final possibility for the origin of the word comes from the Congo area of Africa and has been described by Kongo expert John Janzen. The verb *kusamba*, or just *samba*, meansIn Kikongo, the word *nsaamba* means palm wine, the traditional ritual drink. A derivative of this yields the verb, *saambila*, meaning to pray. *Saanba* is also a dance whereby males and females line up in two rows facing each other, approaching and then retreating from each other. Another derivative, *masamba*, is the name of the child preceding twins (the first twin being *nzizi*, the second being *nsimba*, where the child born after the twins is called *milanchi*)⁵.

¹ Hyppolite 1989: 23

² Personal communication with Torres in May, 2002.

³ Personal communication with Torres in May, 2002. See Aquino's *Diccionario De Voces Indigenas de Puerto Rico*, 1993.

⁴ See for example, <http://www.brazilianmusic.com/samba.html> .

⁵ Personal communication with Janzen.

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