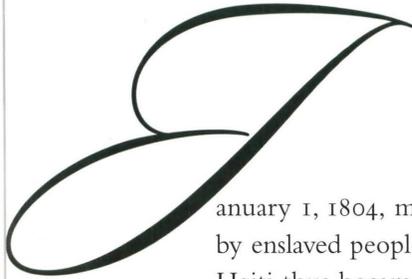




# HAITI

## Freedom and Creativity from the Mountains to the Sea

GERI BENOIT, MONIQUE CLESCA, PATRICK DELATOUR,  
OLSEN JEAN JULIEN, DIANA BAIRD N'DIAYE, AND PATRICK VILAIRE



January 1, 1804, marked a watershed in world history. For the first time, a revolution by enslaved people, who were of African descent, ended with the creation of a nation. Haiti thus became the second country in the Americas—succeeding the United States by a mere 28 years—to achieve independence. Haiti subsequently both inspired and supported other people elsewhere in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa in their quest for self-determination. And 200 years later, Haiti still calls on us to recognize the eternal value of freedom, as well as the costs of sustaining it.

*Ayti*, in the language of the indigenous Tainos, means “mountainous land.” Haitian mountains are symbols of revolt, rebellion, and resistance, as Tainos and later enslaved Africans who fled the inhumane conditions on the coastal plains sought refuge in the mountains. From there, an army led by former slaves Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines liberated the French colony of Saint-Domingue.

Haiti is surrounded by the sea except on its eastern border, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. The sea, too, is an important part of Haitians’ life: it feeds them and links them with other populations in the region. It also represents both a barrier to freedom—close to a million Africans chained in slave boats as well as European colonizers arrived in Haiti by sea—and a route to freedom, across which Haitians have traveled to nearby countries seeking refuge from economic and political troubles at home.

Haiti is indeed beset with grave problems. But Haitians’ love of freedom inspires them and nurtures their imaginations. Despite and often because of the challenges they have continued to face, Haitians create powerful artistic expressions in music, painting, crafts, sculpture, and architecture; in religion; and in language. The encounter of Taino and African cultures, along with that of European colonizers, gave birth to the dynamic Creole culture that defines Haiti today. As a result, Haiti is one of the richest nations in terms of its culture and its people. Through their voices and creations, that indefatigable and ever-resourceful spirit is what will be celebrated at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival this bicentennial year.

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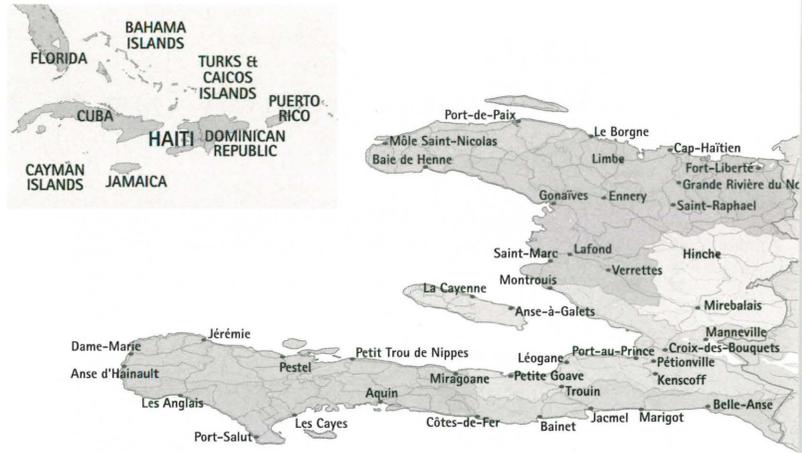
(Facing page) The Citadel Henry Christophe, built between 1805 and 1820, endures as a symbol of Haiti’s independence. *Photo by J. Blair*

## THE LAND

*Dèyè mòn gen mòn.*

*Behind mountains there are more mountains.*

Crumple a piece of paper and drop it on a table, and it will give you an idea of the terrain of Haiti: mountain ranges, plains, and coast. Five mountain ranges divide the country into three regions—northern, central, and southern; the population is concentrated in the lower elevations. Barely as large as Maryland—with about 7 million people—the country is 27,500 square kilometers in size, part of the largest Caribbean island after Cuba. Haiti used to be called the Pearl of the Antilles because of its abundant tropical forests and lush vegetation. But the land has a history of intensive exploitation. The plains were converted to sugar-cane and sisal plantations; tropical forests in the mountains have been cleared for coffee cultivation. Export of tropical trees since the colonial period, rapid population growth, increased urban demand for charcoal, unsecured land tenure, unsound agricultural

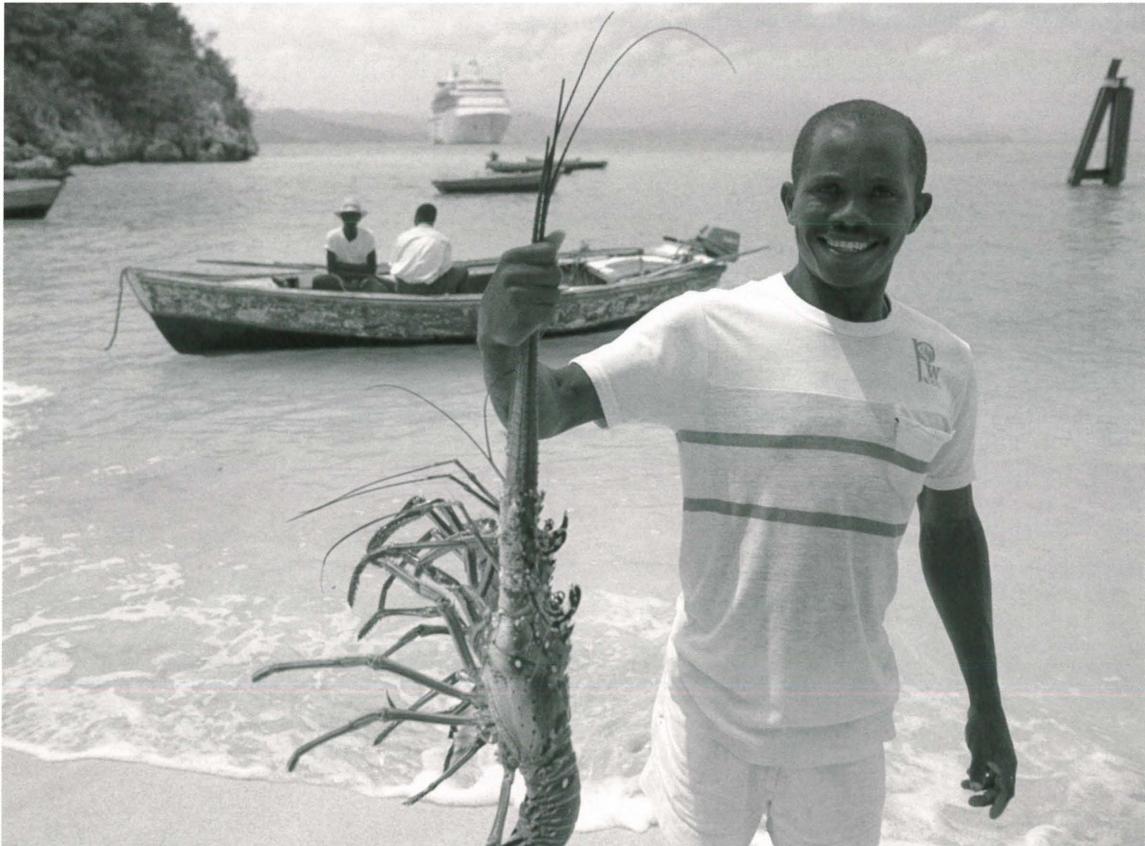


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practices, and soil erosion—Haiti's biggest export today is topsoil—are among the factors accelerating the degradation of the land. The northwest area, severely stricken by repeated droughts coupled with deforestation, is becoming a desert. Less than 2 percent of the country has tree cover.

Coastal life in Haiti is unlike that on most other islands or coastal communities. Although the sea is a source of income from fishing—and in fishing towns such as Luly people pay hom-

A fisherman displays his prize catch. Many people in Haiti depend on the sea for their livelihood. *Photo by Terje Rakke*





Three women on the road to market near the town of Milot.

Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer

age to the sea and the Vodou deities that inhabit it—Haitians living on the shore build their houses facing inland. Some have turned their backs to the sea figuratively as well, so that parts of the coastline have become polluted and clogged with refuse. Yet Haitians, whether on the island or abroad, sing affectionately of their attachment to “Haïti Chérie.” Even when they leave the land, Haiti inhabits them forever.

## A TURBULENT HISTORY

The early inhabitants of Aytì, dating from the 14th century, were the Arawak Taino. About five hundred thousand in number, the peaceful Tainos migrated from southern North America, most likely via the Lesser Antilles, and settled in Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti. They hunted and fished for food; sang, recited poetry, and danced for their leaders and gods, called *zemes*; and crafted pottery. Although their language was not written, several of their words such as *kasav*, *mabouya*, *mais*, *wowoli*, and *bayakou* survived and are commonly used to this day.

The Taino had a hereditary system of government headed by a *cacique* and divided into five states. One of the first leaders of the state of Xaragua was a woman, Anacaona, who was a high priestess and poet as well. She has become a legendary figure and role model for Haitian women. Schools and shops are

“The courage of Haitian women has a background. It didn’t begin now, no. It began with Anacaona, an Indian queen. You know Haiti was peopled by Indians before the Spanish came. There were several zones, with a king for each zone. Anacaona was the wife of one of those kings.... [W]hen the Spanish disembarked in Haiti, the Indians received them with open arms. But the Spanish wanted gold. They made the Indians do hard labor for that gold. Oh, it was brutal.... The Indians began to revolt. Anacaona’s husband was one of the kings struggling against the Spanish. Anacaona herself was a poetess and singer. But still she was supporting her husband shoulder-to-shoulder. When the Spanish killed him, Anacaona carried on the fight. She was courageous. I tell you: courageous! She rallied others to challenge the Spanish; she organized and plotted to save their land. But the Spanish had sophisticated weapons; Anacaona had none. They captured her and killed her too. From Anacaona we were born. When you take our history—the struggle against the invaders, the war of independence, and everything that came after—there were women there standing strong, right next to the men. But they’re rarely told about in history. Only their husbands—unless a woman does the telling.”

Josie, quoted in Beverly Bell, *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women’s Stories of Survival and Resistance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 1–2. Reprinted with permission.



A mural near the Presidential Palace in Port-au-Prince shows demonstrators with signs in Kreyòl. One reads, "Reconciliation without justice, no!" Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer

named after her, and she is the subject of numerous poems and songs.

Tragedy arrived with Christopher Columbus in December 1492. In his journals, he wrote that he was overwhelmed by the splendor of the bay and the sandy coastal area where he landed. He also marveled at the high mountain ranges covered with forests of apricot and mahogany trees and colorful orchids. The Tainos, little suspecting what Columbus had in mind, gave him a joyous welcome. Renaming the island Hispaniola—Little Spain—the Spanish forced the Tainos to perform hard labor digging for gold. Many Indians rebelled and fled to the mountains. But the harsh conditions, sickness, and massacres effectively exterminated the indigenous population in less than fifty years.

In 1502, to supplement the work force, the Spanish brought the first Africans in bondage to the island. When many of them also ran away and became *maroons* (fugitive slaves) in the mountains, it was the Tainos who showed them where to hide. The interaction between these two groups, rooted in resistance to slavery, resulted in significant cultural exchanges.

The French appeared in Hispaniola in the mid-16th century—pirates first, followed by farmers and other settlers and, in the 1660s, the French West Indies Corporation. The Treaty of Rijswijk, signed by Spain and France in 1697, ceded the western third of the island to the French. The French established the most rigorous slavery and plantation system and transformed Haiti, then called Saint-Domingue, into the richest French colony of the time, principally through trade in sugar but also coffee, cotton, cocoa, indigo, and precious wood. Much of the wealth of the coastal cities of France such as Nantes, Marseilles, and Bordeaux came from Haiti. Whites and people of color from Saint-Domingue, and the slaves they brought with them, also contributed enormously to the development of sugar-cane cultivation in Louisiana when it was a French territory; they later played a role in enabling the United States to make the Louisiana Purchase.

Following the French Revolution in 1789, and incited also by nationalistic sentiment expressed during Vodou ceremonies and the racism in Haitian society, slave revolts spread throughout Haiti and coalesced in 1791 into

a general slave insurrection. Toussaint Louverture assumed leadership of the long and heroic war against the French until his capture and exile in prison in France. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henry Christophe, and Alexandre Petion in a show of unity between slaves and freemen, blacks and mulattoes, continued the fight for liberty and dealt Napoleon's powerful army one of its most significant defeats. Among the French Caribbean colonies, only Haiti launched a successful slave revolution.

With independence, Haiti outlawed slavery, the first place in the Western Hemisphere to do so. In 1815 the southern part of the island became a refuge for Simon Bolívar, the liberator of most of South America; when he received supplies and troops to continue his fight against the Spanish colonizers, the Haitians made him promise in return to free all the slaves in the newly independent colonies. Haiti's example had inspired slave revolts in the United States, and, worried that

these might spread further, the European colonial powers and the United States refused to recognize Haiti's independence formally. Not until 1862, during the Civil War, did the United States reverse its position.

The post-independence period brought about a significant change in the pattern of land ownership in Haiti. The colonial plantations, characterized by large areas of monoculture, were progressively divided and subdivided into small plots and given to the dismantled revolutionary army corps for subsistence farming. Even today, although urban areas have experienced tremendous growth, a majority of the population lives and works in the agricultural sector tending those plots, which nevertheless yield less and less. Grains such as corn, millet, and rice are cultivated; in the higher mountains, the farmers produce yams, potatoes, and other vegetables; and, in the north, south, and in the Grand-Anse departments, coffee.

A Haitian farmer cutting cane. *Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer*



## KREYÒL (CREOLE)

Far from being "broken French," Kreyòl, the mother tongue of Haiti, is a full-bodied language rich in its power to convey the entire spectrum of human thought and meaning. There are many words in the Kreyòl vocabulary of French origin, but the language is African in grammatical structure and tone. Kreyòl includes words from the original Arawak and from African ancestral languages as well. Kreyòl supports robust verbal art traditions of song, storytelling, oratory, discussion, debate, and an increasingly voluminous written literature. Before independence, Kreyòl was the main language of communication among enslaved Africans. Today, it is the everyday language for the entire population, and since 1987 has been an official written language taught in schools.

Two women at a market in Pétionville.

*Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer*



Winnowing rice in L'Artibonite. *Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer*

Haiti has remained independent except for a bitterly fought occupation by the U.S. Marines from 1915 to 1934. This occupation had a number of immediate and longer-term effects. It reorganized the defense system as well as the road network and introduced large-scale manufacturing, new work schedules, and a new transportation system, including railroads. All told, it restructured the rhythm of Haitian life in less than twenty years.

The Haitian social body tried to defend and preserve its culture in the face of this set of rapid transformations. What emerged was an Indigenism movement that focused mainly on Haiti's African and Taino roots and finding new values in the country's past to reaffirm Haitian cultural identity. This Indigenism is an aspect of a larger cultural movement including painting, sculpture, music, and literature; the preservation of historic buildings and archaeological sites; systematic research on history, ethnology, linguistics, and anthropology; and the valorization of Vodou and the Kreyòl language.

In 1957, a medical doctor named François Duvalier became president following rigged elections. As an intellectual, Duvalier was part of the

Indigenism movement, but he set up one of the most ferocious dictatorships in Haiti's history. Tens of thousands of Haitians were killed, disappeared, or died in jail in their struggle for freedom. A great exodus of Haitians to the United States took place, and today, close to a million Haitians and their Haitian-American descendants live in cities such as New York, Miami, Boston, and Washington, D.C. It was also during this period that hundreds of Haitian professionals traveled to newly independent African countries to serve as civil servants and ease the transition from colonization to freedom. Duvalier was succeeded by his son, Jean-Claude. Altogether the Duvaliers ruled for 30 years.

In 1987, Haitians voted overwhelmingly for a new constitution that defines a legal framework for a transition toward democracy and economic development. The constitution establishes new mechanisms of government with greater citizen participation, guarantees more civil and individual liberties, and addresses problems related to economic development. It has not provided a basis for political stability to date, however. From the National Council of Government (CNG) that replaced Duvalier in February 1986 to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster in February 2004, Haiti has had 10 presidents. The primacy of the struggle for the presidency over one for economic development has led to mismanagement, corruption, human rights violations, uneven foreign aid flows, and an indifference to more fundamental challenges of rapid population growth, extreme poverty, and the alarming degradation of the environment.

The most recent events in Haiti show that the last 200 years of difficult historic experiences have not destroyed Haitians' creativity and their strong attachment to freedom. This extraordinary cultural potential holds the key for the realization of their dreams of democracy and human development during the 21st century.



Children play on handmade flutes.

*Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer*

## CREATIVITY, A LIVING LEGACY

The creativity at the root of Haiti's heritage has been and continues to be expressed in many ways in Haiti. In the visual and plastic arts, creativity may actually arise as the result of the distressed circumstances in which people live. Thus, very often Haitian artists and craftspeople transform and restore life to things others throw away, like old carburetors, bent cooking utensils, or empty plastic juice bottles. It is that quest for new materials and forms that liberates their creativity, and, in turn, that creativity that validates their freedom.

Craftsmanship is one of the few dynamic sectors of Haiti's economy. In the city of Jacmel, an especially vibrant and viable activity is the craft of papier-mâché. Originally used to create elaborate and breathtaking masks for the traditional Carnival, papier-mâché has become a veritable industry with artisans making mirrors, place mats, bowls, furniture, and other utilitarian as well as decorative products. Basketry and other straw work are also important commercial activities. Influenced by indigenous, African, and European traditions, products vary around the country, depending on the types of fiber that are available and the needs of consumers. Like weaving, woodcarving is an ancient art form drawing



A wall of paintings displayed on a busy street in Port-au-Prince creates an outdoor gallery for popular painters.

Photo by Patrick Vilaire

on Native, African, and European traditions. With certain species of trees such as cedar and mahogany disappearing, the supply of raw materials has dramatically decreased, but craftspeople continue to work. Carved stone frames, candlesticks, bowls, and trays are sold in craft shops. Areas that are rich in clay produce pottery.

Several forms of artistic expression that are fairly recent and make remarkable use of the imagination include the metal work that is done particularly in the Croix-des-Bouquets area, a few kilometers from Port-au-Prince; Haitian painting; and *tap-taps*. The metal pieces are carved from the sheet metal of flattened cans. This craft, known as drum art, originated with Georges Liataud, a metal smith from the region who began making crosses and other decorations for tombs in the local cemetery. Now there are a multitude of talented artists who create masterworks using this technique.

Haitian paintings are well known abroad and are sold on every street corner, even in the smaller cities. Painting traditions in Haiti are centuries old, but with the creation of the Centre d' Art in 1944, Haitian popular painting came to the world's attention. The center's founding members were painters, architects, sculptors, and writers who encouraged artists without formal academic training to exhibit their work. Inspiration for this art comes from scenes of history and everyday life, reality and dreams. Today the range of Haitian popular

painting extends to street signs, decorative objects, political graffiti, and *tap-taps*. These buses used for public transportation mostly in the Port-au-Prince area are completely transformed by popular painters who translate themes about life, women, and religion into extraordinary, moving works of art.

As Haitians invent new ways of expressing their creativity, they also must protect and preserve the tangible and intangible heritage from earlier in their history. It could help reinforce a sense of a common identity, particularly when so many divisive forces are at work in the country. The development of cultural tourism around this heritage could also bring much-needed resources to Haiti, providing long-sought economic freedom for many people.

A *tap-tap* carries visual messages through the streets of Port-au-Prince. Photo courtesy Daniel Kedar



## VODOU GERDES FLEURANT

A turning point in the Haitian saga of resistance to both physical enslavement and cultural oppression was the 1791 Bwa Kayiman Vodou ritual and political congress held near Cap François by runaway slaves (*maroons*). The gathering led to a general slave uprising, which became a war of national liberation that culminated in the proclamation of Haiti's independence on January 1, 1804. For the African captives who revolted, success was due in large measure to the cohesive force of Vodou.

Popular labeling of Vodou as "witchcraft" and "magic" has been a historical tradition among European colonialists, and Hollywood films and supermarket tabloids sustain the myths. Yet Vodou is essentially a monotheistic religion, which recognizes a single and supreme spiritual entity or God. Besides Vodou's visible cultural and ritual dimensions expressed through the arts—especially in Haitian music and dance—its teaching and belief system include social, economic, political, and practical components. Today, for example, Vodou's basic teachings are concerned with what can be done to overcome the limiting social conditions of Haiti—what to do in case of illness in a country that counts only one physician for every 23,000 people, and what to do before embarking upon major undertakings, such as marriage, business transactions, or traveling abroad. Vodou gives its adherents positive means to address these issues.

Vodou resulted from the fusion of rituals and cultural practices of a great range of African ethnic groups. In colonial Haiti, the Africans came into contact with the original inhabitants of the island, the Arawak Taino. In time, the captives would also adapt elements of indigenous ritual into their own Vodou practices. This can be observed in the Vodou practitioner's use of polished stones, considered sacred, and also in symbolic ground drawings, called *vèvé* or *seremoni*, indispensable at all rituals. The *vèvé* are also in part the legacy of certain African ethnic groups who use them in the same manner as Haitians do: Each *Iwa* has an intricate *vèvé* design that recalls its unique characteristics. (The *Iwa* are the intermediaries between humans and the realm of the spirit. As spiritual entities, the *Iwa* symbolize major forces and elements of nature—such as earth, water, air, fire, wind, and vegetation—as well as human sentiments and values, such as love, bravery, justice, and fidelity.)

Vodou pilgrims travel from across Haiti and from overseas to bathe in the sacred waters of Saut d'Eau (Sodo).

*Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer*

Haitian Vodou incorporated many aspects of Catholicism into its ritual as well. There are two main reasons for the appearance of Catholic elements in Vodou. The first was a simple matter of force: Colonial policies such as the Code Noir, or "Black Code," prepared in France in 1685, declared that "all slaves on our islands will be baptized" and that "the practice of all religion except Catholicism" would be forbidden. The second reason was appropriation: presented with images of Christian saints, the Africans readily recognized in them elements that appealed to their own sensibility. This phenomenon is known as syncretism, and its meaning is the subject of serious debate among Vodou scholars today: while some hold that Catholic practices were actually absorbed into Vodou, others contend that the Africans never accepted the European elements into their rituals and instead simply used the saints and Christian rituals as a cover to continue their own Vodou practices. Whether one accepts one interpretation or another, syncretism is a basic part of Haitian Vodou.

The Vodou ceremony consists of a series of songs and dances accompanied by the drums, offered in honor of the *Iwa*. Through possession, an important dimension of Vodou worship, both the *Iwa* and the community are affirmed. The people transcend their materiality by becoming spirits, and the spirits renew their vigor by dancing and feasting with the *chwal*, or horses, for it is said that during possession the *Iwa* rides a person like a cavalier rides a horse. Equally as important, possession is a time when the *Iwa* communicate in a tangible way with the people, who during such times receive the best possible answers to pressing questions.



What is the future of Vodou in Haiti and outside, in the diaspora? Haiti's 1987 constitution recognizes freedom of religion in Haiti and Vodou as the national religion of the Haitian people. Yet Vodou continues to endure ambivalent status in Haiti, for many attempts have been made to uproot it. While such purges have generally failed, they have the effect of casting doubt on its merit as a cultural practice. Nevertheless, during the past thirty years people have been practicing Vodou openly. The Haitian expatriate community, numbering over a million Haitians, includes many Vodou advocates, including respected artists and writers like Frankétienne and world-renowned musical groups such as Boukman Eksperyans, Boukan Ginen, RAM, and the Fugees.

With its decentralized structure, Vodou has been diffused throughout Haiti, growing and transforming to meet the needs of the people and the existential realities of the land. Thus Vodou, the rich cultural heritage of the Haitian people, far from being a form of superstition, remains the true source igniting and inspiring the country's artistic expressions. With its reverence for the ancestors, Vodou is the cement that binds family and community life in Haiti.

Adapted from the introduction to Phyllis Galembo, *Vodou: Visions and Voices of Haiti* (Ten Speed Press, 1998), with permission.

Gerdes Fleurant is an associate professor at Wellesley College.

A follower of Azaka, the patron deity of agriculture, wears Azaka's characteristic straw hat and bag at Saut d'Eau (Sodo). Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer



## Music

Some say that Haiti has been in perpetual revolution for 200 years. If so, then that revolution has a soundtrack: one that began with the rattle of the Taino *caciques*; that invokes healing and fighting spirits with the drums and chants of *rada* and *petwo* in Vodou; and that continues to express the appetite for freedom through the sly double meanings (*betiz*) in the songs of Carnival and *rara*, the cathartic dance rhythms of *konpa*, the poignant country ballads of *twoubadou*, and the compelling global edge of *mizik rasin* (roots music). Haiti has proven to be fertile ground both for revolution and, irrigated by the flow of multiple cultural influences throughout its history, for bountiful harvests of musical creativity. According to Haitian ethnomusicologist Eddy Lubin:

The music of Haiti was born out of unique and dramatic circumstances. Ten years after the arrival of the conquistadors on the island, the Spanish decided to import captive Africans. After the atrocious genocide of the first inhabitants of the island, whose numbers they decimated in their rush for gold, they had to find another population of servile laborers to make the colony profitable.

One should think that music has always been present in the hell that the island of Saint-Domingue was for captive people of the time. How could the enslaved people of the island have been able to stand their condition of dehumanization otherwise? The music that would emerge from this society certainly sprang from inextricable mixtures, landscapes of varied rhythms and colors.

The music of Haiti, Lubin remarks, is a creolized music—like so much else in Haiti it is a synthesis of Taino, African, and European music created out of often violent encounters. The *guido*—a grated gourd scraped to create sound—the conch shell, and the rattle, still used in Haitian ritual music, are reminders of the music of Haiti's original Taino settlers. Their music, infused throughout the Caribbean, found willing company in the drumming vocabularies imported from West and Central Africa and perpetuated in



A *rara* band parades through the streets of Port-au-Prince during the pre-Lenten season. Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer

the mountain enclaves where liberated Taino and African descendants (*maroons*) shared a mutual aversion to slavery and communicated ideas about the composition of the world beyond what was visible to the eye.

Specific African sources of Haitian music and dance are most recognizable in the sacred music traditions of Vodou. Several drums, rhythms, and forms of ritual dance are named after their presumed origins on the African continent—rite Congo, rite Ibo, rite Rada (Yoruba or Fon), rite Senegal.

European dance music and musical instruments reached Saint-Domingue and were transformed by African percussion and voice. The marriage of Western social dance and African movement gave birth to the *chica*, the *calinda*, and the *meringue*. Music and dance of the French and English countryside—contradance, quadrille, polka, and mazurka—were reinvented as were elite dances of the European courts such as the minuet and the waltz. These dances were learned by the captive laborers in the colony at the time of *bamboulas* or authorized weekly social dances, which the colonials saw as safety valves for the frustrations of the enslaved population. Some of these old dance and music forms forgotten today in Europe still exist in rural pockets of Haiti. These musics of European origin are strongly “Africanized,” and have been introduced into repertoires of Vodou songs and *rara* orchestras.

Much has been written about the music of *rara*. Performed in procession, *rara* music and dance share several characteristics with the music of Carnival that immediately precedes it on the religious calendar. Both involve costuming, both have strong musical and danced masquerade, and both include songs of struggle and risky social commentary. While Carnival—especially Jacmel’s event—draws participants from all social classes, including Haitian transnationals and well-to-do Haitian Americans visiting home, *rara* is considered a poor man’s (and woman’s) activity. Scholar Elizabeth McAlister has written about *rara* both as songs containing social protest (*fè pwen*) veiled in obscene or raucous composed verses (*betiz*) and as serious mystical work and dangerous battle against spiritual rivals. *Rara* music is the roots component behind what Haitians call “roots music,” *mizik rasin*, a popular form that consciously celebrates Haitian and African tradition.

Both *konpa* and *mizik rasin* also speak about politics and social issues through their lyrics. As ethnomusicologist Gage Averill has chronicled, musicians in Haiti who fall out of favor with Haitian politicians have often ended up under arrest, or even killed. *Konpa* and *mizik rasin* are transnational musics that influence and are themselves influenced by circum-Atlantic music, from American jazz to reggae, calypso/*soca*, and Afro-Cuban music.

## Architecture

Haitian architecture is one of the most significant dimensions of Haiti's cultural heritage. Before independence in 1804, the colonial administration and economy were concentrated in coastal areas, to facilitate trade. Fortifications were built to protect the coastal cities and ports; then the colonizers penetrated into the interior, constructing grand residences and slave quarters on plantations. The *maroons* in the mountains, who fought the colonial system for centuries, built their small houses of materials at hand—wood, mud, reed, and leaves. Called *kays*, these dwellings owe their form to both African and Taino traditions. The *kay* is the central element of the *lakou* (yard)—itself the center of a communal rural society—and basically serves as storage and sleeping space and as protection from evil spirits.

Independence created the conditions for an important evolution of Haitian architecture that resulted in its most striking examples, the forts. First, the need for the new nation to defend itself against the possible return of European colonizers and to organize the state led to the building of the Citadel by Henry Christophe, king of the northern part of Haiti, as well as over twenty other forts atop the highest mountains in the country, and four



new cities. People who were free and owned property could construct larger and more stable dwellings. The *lakou* became a larger space for social and commercial activities, shared by families and neighbors, with an *ounfò* (temple) where Vodou ceremonies could take place.

Haitian architects and preservationists have begun to document people's ingenious applications of vernacular architecture's principles in urban areas to cope with overpopulation, pollution, and other difficult social and economic conditions. The recycling of materials such as old tires and plastic cups for use as flowerpots, and the vitality and spontaneity of the urban version of the *lakou* seen in Haitian slums, are convincing examples that vernacular architecture will continue to influence the future built environment in Haiti.

Several generations meet at an *ounfò* at Léogane. Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer (Above) Haitian traditional building arts range from the simple to the spectacular. A country house bears decorative "gingerbread." Photo courtesy Patrick Delatour



## SPIRIT OF FREEDOM, CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

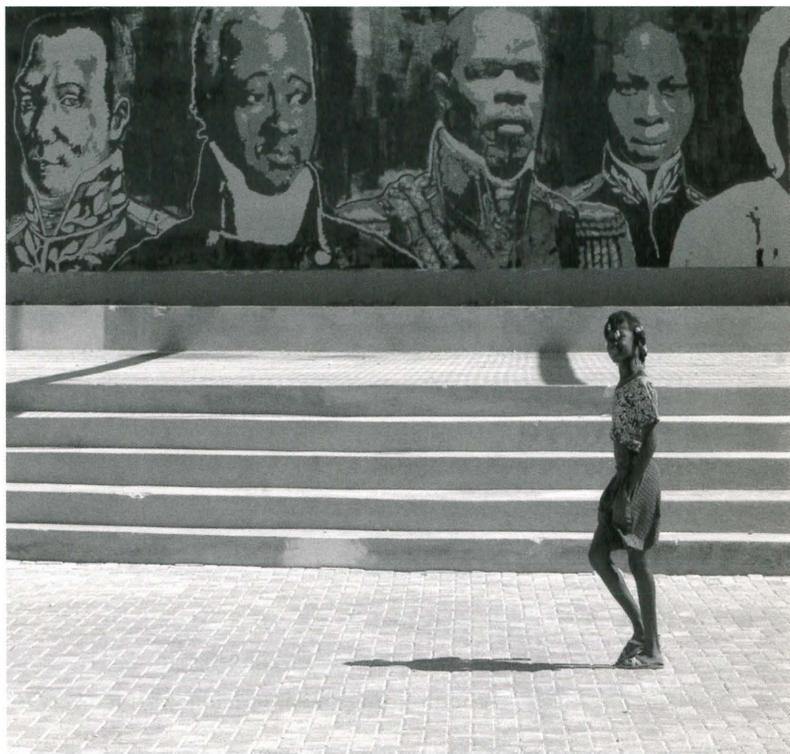
The rejection of slavery and the quest for freedom and equality have left an indelible mark on the history of Haiti, and the world. This bicentennial year of Haiti's independence—also a year UNESCO has declared the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition—is a significant crossroads for Haiti, as its people continue to search for its long-elusive dream of freedom.

*Haiti: Freedom and Creativity from the Mountains to the Sea* offers a special opportunity for the artisans and craftspeople of Haiti to showcase their culture, which is anchored in resistance to oppression, and their tradition of creativity. Festival visitors will be able to participate in the creative process while engaging in conversations with the craftspeople and observing the masters. They will contribute to the economic well-being of the people of Haiti by taking home marvelous artifacts, not only for their own enjoyment but as a gesture of solidarity.

The Festival also presents an important opportunity for Haitian Americans. Since the beginning of the massive exodus of Haitians to the United States in the 1960s, Haitians have become part of the overall American population. This Festival will help validate their culture and confirm their contribution to American life. For young Haitian Americans who do not know their ancestral home, *Haiti: Freedom and Creativity from the Mountains to the Sea* will help them understand their unique and proud heritage.

In the end, it is our hope that this program will touch the hearts of Festival visitors and leave them with a much better understanding not only of Haitians' contribution to world culture, but also of the relevancy of freedom as a value that guides a people's quest for dignity as a nation.

*Geri Benoit heads the Haiti-based commission for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and is executive director of the Institut Femmes Entrepreneurs, an NGO devoted to the economic rebuilding of Haiti. Patrick Delatour, an architect and historic preservationist, is curator of this program as well as of a Smithsonian traveling exhibition on the Citadel of Henry Christophe (a UNESCO World Heritage site). He has worked on the restoration of historic sites in Haiti for the past two decades. Patrick Vilaire, a curator of this program, is director of Haiti's Center of Ethnology. An internationally renowned sculptor, educator, and community developer, he has used his expertise in the service of bringing electricity and water to rural communities in Haiti. Diana Baird N'Diaye, Ph.D., is a Smithsonian-based folklorist/cultural anthropologist and curator of this program. She has curated several programs and exhibitions over the past 20 years on African and Caribbean expressive culture, including the exhibition and Web site "Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Culture in the Americas." Monique Clesca is a communications specialist who also writes commentaries on issues regarding culture, children, and women's rights. She recently published her first novel, La Confession. Olsen Jean Julien, Smithsonian-based*



A mural at Place Vertieres in Gonaïves commemorates leaders of the Haitian revolution. Photo courtesy Marc-Yves Regis, photographer

coordinator of the program, is an architect specialized in the use of information technologies for the documentation and exhibition of cultural heritage. He holds an M.Sc. in historic preservation.

Photographer Marc-Yves Regis, a native of Haiti, is a photojournalist with the Hartford Courant and the author of three books.

## SUGGESTED READING, LISTENING, AND VIEWING

The list of excellent print, audio, and visual materials on Haitian culture and history is very long. We have selected a few titles that reflect different aspects of the program's focus on Haiti's folklife, creativity, and the quest for freedom.

### Reading

Aid to Artisans. 2003 *Artisans of Haiti*. Photos by Chantal Regnault. Hartford: Aid to Artisans.

Armand, Stéphanie Renauld. 1990. *A Taste of Haiti: Haitian Créole Cuisine*. Haiti: Stéphanie Renauld Armand.

Averill, Gage. 1997. *A Day for the Hunter, A Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bell, Beverly. 2001. *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Danticat, Edwidge. 2002. *After the Dance: A Walk through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti*. New York: Crown Journeys.

Danticat, Edwidge, ed. 2001. *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States*. New York: Soho Press.

Fleurant, Gerdes. 1996. *Dancing Spirits: Rhythms and Rituals of Haitian Vodou, the Rada Rite*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Fouron, Georges, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2001. *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Galembo, Phyllis. *Vodou: Visions and Voices of Haiti*. 1998. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.

The Haitian Institute. 2001. *The Art and Soul of Haitian Cooking*. Kearney, NE: Morris Press.

McAlister, Elizabeth. 2002. *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### Listening

*Rhythms of Rapture: Sacred Musics of Haitian Vodou*. 1995. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Folkways CD 40464.

*Caribbean Revels: Haitian Rara and Dominican Gaga*. 1992. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Folkways CD 40402.

### Viewing

*Haiti Rising: Celebrating the First Black Republic*. 1999. DVD Compiled and directed by Robin Lloyd and Doreen Kraft. Vermont: Green Valley Media.

*The Divine Horsemen/ The Living Gods of Haiti*. 1953. Filmed by Maya Deren. Burlington, VT: Mystic Fire Video.

### Web Sites

There are several Haiti Web sites in English, Kreyòl, and French, and many compilations of Web sites on Haiti. Here again, while we could not hope to list all of them, we have listed some that are related to the program.

[www.haiti-usa.org](http://www.haiti-usa.org)

Contains information on the Haitian diaspora. Produced by the Haiti Program at Trinity College, Prof. Robert Maguire, director.

[lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/haiti/](http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/haiti/)

Contains links to several academic and cultural websites.

[www.heritagekonpa.com/links.htm](http://www.heritagekonpa.com/links.htm)

Contains compilations of links from several Haitian and Haitian-American sources, including the sites of music groups and newspapers.