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CHAPTER 1: PROFILE

Introduction

Haiti is widely known as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world.¹ The reasons for this poverty range from Haiti's economic (and diplomatic) isolation, to the dissolution of the plantation system, to the corruption of government officials.²



© Amanda Thompson
Haiti's poor

On paper, Haiti is a democratic republic with elected representatives. In practice, centuries of corrupt leaders have left the country destitute and dysfunctional.

Although taxes are high, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) from other countries provide basic services that the government does not supply.^{3, 4}

This densely populated country, with a rich and lively culture, bustles with activity.⁵ Haitians are proud of their culture and heritage as citizens of the first black republic. Because of deteriorating social and economic conditions in Haiti, a growing number of people searching for work abroad has spread Haitian culture.⁶ (Nearly 1 million Haitians live in the United States, and Creole is the second-most spoken language in Cuba.)⁷ The money these expatriates send home accounts for 20% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).⁸

Some positive changes have occurred in recent years: elections—albeit haphazard ones, a decrease in gang violence in Port-au-Prince, and agricultural and environmental improvements throughout the Artibonite and Cul-de-Sac Valleys.^{9, 10} Yet the devastation from the 2010

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

² David Geggus, "Why is Haiti so Poor?" (lecture, University of Florida Libraries, Tallahassee, 2011), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfcOIyhk9E8>

³ David Geggus, "Why is Haiti so Poor?" (lecture, University of Florida Libraries, Tallahassee, 2011), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfcOIyhk9E8>

⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., "Welfare," in *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 359, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁵ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 309.

⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

⁷ Caitlin Bell, "Haiti Calling, Calling Haiti: Understanding Information Needs and Communications Patterns Among Haitians Overseas Following the Quake of 12 January 2010," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2010, 4–5,

<http://haiti.humanitarianresponse.info/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=4AOapcw29qs%3D&tabid=149&mid=1045>

⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

⁹ Dana Hedgpeth, "U.S. Soldiers Play Vital Role in Beleaguered Haitian Shantytown," *Washington Post*, 25 January 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/24/AR2010012402585>

¹⁰ USAID, "Model Farming: A 'Winner' in Haiti," n.d., http://www.usaid.gov/stories/haiti/ss_ht_wynnfarm.html

earthquake undid some of that progress and underscored Haiti's vulnerability. The country has far to go to reverse the damage incurred through centuries of violence and neglect.

Geography

Haiti occupies the western third of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic to the east. The island, the second-largest of the Greater Antilles, is located in the northern Caribbean between the North Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, 90 km (56 mi) from Cuba.¹¹

Roughly the size of Maryland, Haiti has four mountain ranges, three extending from the island's western coast and into the Dominican Republic. At one time, these mountains were covered in dense rain forest, but subsequent centuries have brought about widespread deforestation and the accompanying soil erosion that is prevalent today.¹²



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Haitian landscape

Haiti's climate ranges from tropical to semiarid, with more precipitation falling along the northern and eastern slopes of the mountains. Rainy seasons throughout the year can last two to three months and occur twice a year in some areas.¹³ Temperatures vary slightly year round, reaching highs near 35°C (95°F) during July and August and 25°C (77°F) in the winter, rarely dropping below 20°C (68°F) in lowland areas. Temperatures in the mountains are generally cooler with frost possible at the highest altitudes. Haiti's location in the Caribbean makes it vulnerable to frequent hurricanes, particularly along the southern peninsula, during the summer and autumn (June to November).¹⁴

¹¹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 314, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 312, 314, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

Major Cities

Port-au-Prince

Established in 1742 by the French, Port-au-Prince (population 2.3 million) is the capital and largest city in Haiti, with nearly one-third of the country's population living in the city and surrounding areas.¹⁵ The capital city is located on the southeast corner of the Golfe de la Gonâve and has a natural harbor that is protected from the open seas by Gonâve Island.¹⁶



© Siri B.L. / flickr.com
Port-au-Prince

An estimated 70% of Haiti's urban population live in slums.¹⁷ Cité Soleil (population 241,000) is located northwest of Port-au-Prince's city center and has been the focus of international humanitarian efforts for many years.¹⁸ It is the largest slum in Haiti; armed gangs are prevalent and violence is common.¹⁹ Like other slums in Haiti, its location and lack of infrastructure and sanitation have made it vulnerable to cholera outbreaks and natural disasters, such as seasonal flooding.²⁰

Cap-Haïtien

On the northern coast facing the Atlantic Ocean, Cap-Haïtien is Haiti's second-largest city (population 244,600).²¹ As Haiti's first capital, the city enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and was formerly known as the "Paris of the Antilles." The slave revolts that eventually led to Haiti's independence began just outside Cap-Haïtien.²² Although it has declined in importance with the growth of Port-au-Prince to the south, Cap-Haïtien has retained much of its historic character, making its port an attractive tourist destination.²³



© Andrew Ferguson
Cap Haitien

¹⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Port-au-Prince," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Port-au-Prince>

¹⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Port-au-Prince," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Port-au-Prince>

¹⁷ United Nations Statistics Division. "Millennium Development Goals Indicators: Haiti," 2010, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>

¹⁸ Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique, "Population Totale, Population de 18 Ans et Plus," 2009, http://www.ihsi.ht/pdf/projection/POPTOTAL&MENAGDENS_ESTIM2009.pdf

¹⁹ International Crisis Group, "Post-quake Haiti: Security Depends on Resettlement and Development," June 28, 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/latin-america/haiti/B25%20Post-quake%20Haiti%20-%20Security%20Depends%20on%20Resettlement%20and%20Development.pdf>

²⁰ Asa Forsman, "A Situational Analysis of Metropolitan Port-au-Prince, Haiti," (summary report, Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2010).

²¹ City Population, "Haiti," n.d., <http://www.citypopulation.de/Haiti.html>

²² Paul Clammer et al., "Northern Haiti: Cap-Haïtien," in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 331.

²³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Cap-Haitien," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Cap-Haitien>

Gonaïves

The port city of Gonaïves (population 228,725) lies on the northeastern shore of the Golfe de la Gonâve.^{24, 25, 26}

Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti's independence in the city on 1 January 1804. A major port city and commercial center, Gonaïves exports coffee, mangoes, bananas, sugar, and wood harvested in the Artibonite Plain.²⁷ Yet in recent decades, a decline in agricultural production in the Artibonite has negatively impacted the city, leading to a high reliance on imported food.²⁸ Sitting at sea level, Gonaïves is prone to frequent and severe flooding.



© Nite_Owl / flickr.com
Port City Gonaïves

Les Cayes

On the southern peninsula, facing the Caribbean Sea, Les Cayes is another major port city (population 71,236).²⁹ Until recently, the city was isolated from the capital. Historically, it was the site of significant uprisings against Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier, who was exiled in 1986.³⁰ Les Cayes has also been the site of several riots, notably in 2008 and 2010.^{31, 32, 33} Because the city was largely unaffected by the 2010 earthquake, it became an important base for relief efforts and a haven for refugees from Port-au-Prince.³⁴

Jérémie

Jérémie (population 34,788) is remotely located on the north shore of the southern peninsula facing the Golfe de la Gonâve.³⁵ Once a bustling port town, it was known as the “City of Poets” in honor of its artistic and literary community. Today the town reflects the decades of economic hardship that have followed the closing of the port by François Duvalier, the father of Jean-Claude



© Nick Hobgood
Jérémie from the sky

²⁴ City Population, “Haiti,” n.d., <http://www.citypopulation.de/Haiti.html>

²⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

²⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

²⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

²⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

²⁹ City Population, “Haiti,” n.d., <http://www.citypopulation.de/Haiti.html>

³⁰ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

³¹ *New York Times*, “Editorial: Slaughter in Les Cayes,” 25 May 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/26/opinion/26wed3.html>

³² BBC, “Food Riots Turn Deadly in Haiti,” 5 April 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7331921.stm>

³³ BBC, “UN Probes Haiti Jail Riot Deaths,” 23 May 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10144137>

³⁴ Mary Beth Sherican and William Booth, “Haiti Relief Efforts Stifled by Chaos: Aid Agencies Struggle to Deliver Food, Deal with Quake’s Orphans,” *Washington Post*, 19 January 2010, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-21140583.html>

³⁵ City Population, “Haiti,” n.d., <http://www.citypopulation.de/Haiti.html>

Duvalier.^{36, 37, 38} In the wake of the 2010 earthquake, the town was used as a base of operations for relief efforts.^{39, 40}

Bodies of Water

Windward Passage

Haiti is separated from Cuba by a 90-km (56-mile) channel known as the Windward Passage. A major shipping lane linking the Caribbean Sea and North Atlantic Ocean, the Windward Passage is the main route used by U.S. ships traveling from the east coast to the Panama Canal.⁴¹

Golfe de la Gonâve

Between Haiti's north and south peninsulas lies the Golfe de la Gonâve. Several of Haiti's major ports are located along the shoreline. Gonâve Island rises from the center of the gulf and shelters Port-au-Prince from the open seas.⁴²



© cbertel / flickr.com
Gonâve Island houses

Rivers

Because of its mountain ranges, Haiti has numerous streams and small rivers, many of which are tributaries of larger rivers. None of these rivers and streams are easily navigable by boat, even during wet seasons when water levels run high. Many disappear during dry seasons and droughts.⁴³

At 400 km (250 mi), the Artibonite River is Haiti's longest river, forming part of its eastern border with the Dominican Republic and flowing west to the Golfe de la Gonâve. Like most of Haiti's rivers, the Artibonite is relatively shallow, usually no more than 3 m (3.3 ft) deep during the wet season. The Guayamouc, the main tributary of the Artibonite River, runs southeast 95 km (60 mi) through Haiti's central plain to the Dominican border.

³⁶ Edwidge Danticat, "Create Dangerously," *New York Times*, 8 October 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/books/review/excerpt-create-dangerously.html>

³⁷ Provenance, "City of Poets: Life and Hope in Jeremie, Haiti," 2010, <http://www.provenancecenter.com/City%20of%20Poets.htm>

³⁸ Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, "Chronological Index: Massacres Perpetuated in the 20th Century in Haiti," 27 June 2008, <http://www.massviolence.org/Massacres-perpetrated-in-the-20th-Century-in-Haiti?artpage=2>

³⁹ Paisley Dodds, "Haiti Food Convoy Attacked," *Deseret News*, 3 February 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700006705/Haiti-food-convoy-attacked.html>

⁴⁰ Provenance, "City of Poets: Life and Hope in Jeremie, Haiti," 2010, <http://www.provenancecenter.com/City%20of%20Poets.htm>

⁴¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, "Windward Passage," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

⁴² *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, "Port-au-Prince," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Port-au-Prince>

⁴³ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

Lakes

Haiti's largest lake, Étang Saumâtre, is part of a chain of salt lakes in the south of the island that includes the Dominican Republic's Lago Enriquillo. Étang Saumâtre's brackish waters support a wide variety of wildlife, including flamingos and alligators.⁴⁴ Another lake, Lac de Peligre, was formed by a dam built in the 1930s to help control flooding along the Artibonite River. During the 1970s, the dam was converted into a hydroelectric plant, but the output has been inconsistent.⁴⁵

Topographical Features

Mountains

"Dessalines," the name first chosen for the new nation after its independence in 1804, is derived from a word meaning "mountainous."⁴⁶ The island has four mountain ranges, three shared with the Dominican Republic.⁴⁷

Running along the northern peninsula to the Dominican Republic, the Massif du Nord (Northern Massif Mountains) is part of the Cordillera Central range, which accounts for nearly one-third of Hispaniola's land mass.⁴⁸ Elevations in the Massif du Nord on Haiti's side of the border reach 1,100 m (3,600 ft).^{49, 50}



© Jay Clark
Haiti's coast

Branching south and east from the Massif du Nord is the shorter range of the Montagnes Noires (Black Mountains). Elevations within this range reach about 610 m (2,000 ft). To the south is the Chaîne des Matheux (Matheux Range), which runs parallel to the Montagnes Noires until it crosses the Dominican border and becomes part of the Sierra de Neiba Range.⁵¹

The Massif de la Hotte in the west and the Massif de la Selle in the east are located on Haiti's southern peninsula and are an extension of the Sierra de Baoruco mountain chain in the

⁴⁴ *National Geographic*, "Enriquillo Wetlands: Jewel from the Sea," n.d., <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/nt/nt0903.html>

⁴⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

⁴⁶ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 309. Paul Clammer et al., "Northern Haiti: Cap-Haïtien," in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 331.

⁴⁷ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 22.

⁴⁸ Paul Clammer et al., "Hispaniola Environment: Land," in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 35.

⁴⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁵⁰ Richard A. Haggerty, ed., "Geography," in *Haiti: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1989, <http://countrystudies.us/haiti/19.htm>

⁵¹ Amy Harris, "Famous Landforms in Haiti," *USA Today*, n.d., <http://traveltips.usatoday.com/famous-landforms-haiti-59326.html>

Dominican Republic. The highest point in Haiti, Morne de la Selle, with an elevation of 2,715 m (8,900 ft) is located in Massif de la Selle.⁵²

Islands

About 12 km (7.5 mi) off the coast of Port-au-Paix in northern Haiti is Île de la Tortue (Turtle Island, or Tortuga).⁵³ Once the stronghold of French pirates and buccaneers, who used it as a base to attack Spanish ships, the island is still reportedly a haven for drug smugglers.⁵⁴ Today, 35,000 people live on the island, although infrastructure is limited.⁵⁵



© ambafrancheht / flickr.com
Île de La Tortue (Turtle Island)

Regions

Nearly two-thirds of Haiti is mountainous, meaning the habitable, farmable land in the low-lying plains is at a premium. These areas constitute Haiti's main agricultural centers and are the country's most densely populated.⁵⁶ These fertile areas include the Plaine du Nord (Northern Plain), which runs from the Massif du Nord to the Atlantic Ocean. Measuring 2,000 sq km (772 sq mi), it is Haiti's largest plain.^{57, 58}



© Nick Hobgood
Rice fields in Haiti

The Plateau Central (Central Plateau), enclosed by the Massif du Nord on the north and the Montagnes Noires on the south and west, is part of the San Juan Valley. This valley stretches across the center of the Dominican Republic and into Haiti. The Haitian part of the plateau measures 390 sq km (150 sq mi) and contains some of the country's most fertile land.⁵⁹

⁵² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁵³ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁵⁴ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, "Statement by J. Milford, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration Before the House International Relations Committee Regarding Haiti," 9 December 1997, <http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct971209.htm>

⁵⁵ Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique, "Population Totale: Population de 18 Ans et Plus," 2009, http://www.ihsi.ht/pdf/projection/POPTOTAL&MENAGDENS_ESTIM2009.pdf

⁵⁶ Robert Lee Hadden and Steven G. Minson, "The Geology of Haiti: An Annotated Bibliography of Haiti's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (annotated bibliography, Alexandria, Virginia: Army Geospatial Center, 2010), 4.

⁵⁷ Robert Lee Hadden and Steven G. Minson, "The Geology of Haiti: An Annotated Bibliography of Haiti's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (annotated bibliography, Alexandria, Virginia: Army Geospatial Center, 2010), 4.

⁵⁸ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 320.

⁵⁹ Robert Lee Hadden and Steven G. Minson, "The Geology of Haiti: An Annotated Bibliography of Haiti's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (annotated bibliography, Alexandria, Virginia: Army Geospatial Center, 2010), 4.

Sandwiched between two mountain ranges, the wedge-shaped Plaine de l'Artibonite (Artibonite Plain) is Haiti's most productive region for cultivating rice.⁶⁰ Yet in recent years damage to the Peligre Dam—a result of deforestation—has negatively affected production. The irrigation system of the valley also has been poorly maintained, making the land more vulnerable to flooding, especially in the low-lying area around Gonaïves.⁶¹

Bounded by the Chaîne des Matheux on the north and the Massif de la Hotte on the south, the Plaine du Cul-de-Sac (Cul-de-Sac Plain) is another natural valley running from the Dominican border to Port-au-Prince.⁶² It is part of a tectonic basin that also runs through the southern Dominican Republic and is the focus of much of Haiti's seismic activity—including the 2010 earthquake.^{63, 64} Like the Artibonite Valley, the Plaine du Cul-de-Sac is an intensely cultivated area and a source for many of Haiti's cash crops.⁶⁵

Important Elements of History

Arrival of Columbus

Within 25 years of Christopher Columbus' arrival on Hispaniola on 24 December 1492, the indigenous Tainos people of the island were almost extinct as a result of disease, starvation, suicide, and other acts of resistance.^{66, 67} The legacy of the Tainos has included introducing Europeans to tobacco and to words derived from their language, including “canoes,” “hammocks,” and “barbecue.”^{68, 69} By the time the Haitian revolution began in the early 1800s,

⁶⁰ USAID, “Haiti Food Security Outlook,” in *CNSA and Famine Early Warning Systems Network*, 2011, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADU881.pdf

⁶¹ Inter-American Development Bank, “Supplemental Financing for the Agricultural Intensification Program,” 5 November 2007, <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=1231835>

⁶² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁶³ Paul Mann et al., “Subaerially Exposed Holocene Coral Reef, Enriquillo Valley, Dominican Republic,” *Geological Society of American Bulletin* 95 (September 1984), 1084; see also *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Tectonic Basins and Rift Valleys,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/585476/tectonic-basins-and-rift-valleys>

⁶⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁶⁵ Amy L. Hylkema, “Haiti Soil Fertility Analysis and Crop Interpretations for Principal Crops in the Five WINNER: Watershed Zones of Intervention” (University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, May 2011), <http://soils.ifas.ufl.edu/academics/pdf/Non-Thesis%20Projects/Amy%20Hylkema.pdf>, 1, 5.

⁶⁶ Paul Clammer et al., “Hispaniola History: Columbus' New World,” in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 30.

⁶⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., “Chapter 7: Haiti: Social Structure,” in *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 328, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁶⁸ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 15.

⁶⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

more than a half million African slaves had been brought to the island to work the plantations in place of the dwindling numbers of Tainos.⁷⁰

The French Move In

The Spanish, who had originally introduced slaves to the island in 1520, later turned their attention to Incan gold in Central America, leaving Hispaniola unguarded. This allowed French and British privateers to establish a base of operation on Tortuga Island.⁷¹ Following years of pressure, the 1697 Treaty of Rijswijk between Spain and France gave France control of the western third of Hispaniola, the territory of the modern nation of Haiti.^{72, 73} Under French rule, the colony, then known as Saint Domingue, grew to be the most prosperous in the New World. By the end of the 18th century, the “Pearl of the Antilles” was producing 60% of the world’s coffee and 40% of the world’s sugar.⁷⁴



© Nick Hobgood
Sugar cane press

Struggle for Freedom and Independence

Although the colony prospered, race relations in Saint Domingue were tense.⁷⁵ Violent rebellions were common but small in scale until August 1791, when a large uprising began near Cap-Français (now Cap-Haïtien). It left 12,000 dead, 10,000 of whom were black, and resulted in the destruction of more than 1,000 plantations.^{76, 77} Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe continued fighting the French after their leader, Toussaint Louverture, was seized by French forces in June 1802 and died in prison less than a year later.^{78, 79, 80} At the time, the French were

⁷⁰ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 365,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷¹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷³ Paul Clammer et al., “Hispaniola History: Blood, Sugar, and Slaves,” in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 33.

⁷⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

⁷⁶ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷⁸ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁷⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

at war again with the British. When badly needed reinforcements failed to arrive in November 1803, the French commander fled to Jamaica. On 1 January 1804, Saint Domingue officially declared independence and was renamed Haiti.⁸¹

Post-independence Slump

After Dessalines' death in 1806, Henry Christophe and Alexander Pétion divided Haiti and ruled it as two separate kingdoms. It was reunited by Jean Pierre Boyer after their deaths in 1820 and diplomatically recognized by France in 1825.⁸² Yet diplomatic recognition came at a steep price—a 150 million franc compensation paid to France which kept Haiti deeply in debt until the middle of the 20th century.^{83, 84}



Courtesy Wikipedia
Capture of Ft Riviere 1915

Of the more than 50 people to assume leadership of Haiti since its independence, 23 were overthrown, 2 were assassinated, and 1 committed suicide. Seven have died in office, and nearly half served for one year or less. Only three democratically elected leaders in Haiti have served their full term in office.^{85, 86}

The United States Takes Control

On 28 July 1915, U.S. Marines took control of Haiti following the assassination of pro-U.S. President Guillaume Sam, whose dismembered corpse had been paraded through the streets of Port-au-Prince in response to Sam's execution of 167 political prisoners.^{87, 88} Fearing the spread of European influence in the Caribbean, President Woodrow Wilson ordered the Marines to secure the island and the newly opened Panama Canal, in which the United States had invested

⁸⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

⁸¹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁸² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁸³ David Geggus, "Why is Haiti so Poor?" (lecture, University of Florida Libraries, Tallahassee, 2011) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfcOIyhk9E8>

⁸⁴ Richard Kim, "The Nation: Haiti's Recovery, Repeated Tragedy," National Public Radio, January 2010, <http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kazu/artsmain/article/1/1338/1600724/Columns/The.Nation.Haiti%27s.Recovery..A.Repeated.Tragedy>

⁸⁵ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁸⁶ Embassy of Haiti, Washington DC, "List of Haitian Heads of State," n.d., http://www.haiti.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=114

⁸⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 367, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁸⁸ GlobalSecurity.org, "Military: Haiti 1934–1941," n.d., <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/haiti/history-12.htm>

heavily.^{89, 90} Although the U.S. occupation improved infrastructure and public health in the country, Haitians resented the interference.⁹¹

The U.S. withdrew from Haiti in 1934 at the request of the Haitian government, leaving behind a strong Haitian military trained by U.S. forces. The military was intended to be politically neutral and support democratically elected governments, but it was quickly corrupted and in time held considerable political power.^{92, 93}

The Duvalier Years

With the strong support of the Haitian military, François “Papa Doc” Duvalier rose to power in 1957 and was fraudulently reelected in 1961.⁹⁴ In 1965, the medical doctor declared himself “president for life.”⁹⁵ In the 29 years that Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude, ruled Haiti, many political opponents were killed.⁹⁶ “Papa Doc” Duvalier initially consolidated his power through bribery and intimidation and by creating the rural Volunteers for National Security, more commonly known as the *tonton makouts* (Creole for “boogymen”). This organization used deadly violence to neutralize the press, trade unions, and even the Catholic Church.⁹⁷



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Papa Doc and Baby Doc supporter

Before his death in 1971, “Papa Doc” Duvalier named his son as his successor. But Jean-Claude, or “Baby Doc,” was more interested in being a playboy than in governing the nation, and he left much of his political responsibilities to his mother.⁹⁸ Although Haitians quickly tired of his

⁸⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁹⁰ DigitalHistory.edu, “United States Becomes a World Power: Intervention in Haiti,” n.d., http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=193

⁹¹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁹² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁹³ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁹⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁹⁵ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁹⁶ BBC, “Haiti Country Profile,” 14 May 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1202772.stm

⁹⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001),

⁹⁸ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 369, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

elitism and corruption, it was not until Pope John Paul II visited Haiti in 1983—declaring “something must change here”—before Haitians took action.⁹⁹ Within two years of the Pope’s visit, intense rioting broke out in Les Cayes and spread to Port-au-Prince. Facing a lack of support from the military, Duvalier left the country on 7 February 1986.¹⁰⁰

Ongoing Challenges

Controversy has continued to plague the Haitian government. Following approval of a new, progressive constitution in 1987, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Catholic priest, became the first elected president during Haiti’s independence.^{101, 102} After only eight months on the job, Aristide was overthrown in a military coup and took refuge in the United States, prompting the U.S. to impose a trade embargo on Haiti.¹⁰³ In 1994, after international pressure forced Haiti’s military leaders to step down, Aristide resumed his presidency with the help of 20,000 U.S. troops to keep order.^{104, 105}

Although Aristide was not allowed to seek a second consecutive term in 1995, when power was peacefully transferred to René Préal, he was elected president again in 2000 amidst charges of election fraud. In 2004 civil unrest forced him to flee Haiti again.^{106, 107}

In response to widespread chaos, the United Nations established the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti to maintain order and facilitate democratic elections, which were delayed until 2006 due to kidnappings and gang activity.¹⁰⁸ Préal once again was elected president in 2006 and served out his term amidst political infighting, food riots, and natural disasters, including several major hurricanes and a 7.0 magnitude earthquake.¹⁰⁹ Currently, the president of Haiti is pop musician Michel Martelly, who was elected in 2011.¹¹⁰

⁹⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁰¹ BBC, “Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, 3 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12633115>

¹⁰² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁰³ BBC, “Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, 3 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12633115>

¹⁰⁴ BBC, “Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, 3 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12633115>

¹⁰⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹⁰⁶ BBC, “Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, 3 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12633115>

¹⁰⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹⁰⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹⁰⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹¹⁰ BBC, “Haiti Pop Star Michel Martelly Sworn in as President,” 14 May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13398689>

Government

Responding to public pressure to decentralize the government in reaction to the years of Duvalier rule, the 23rd Haitian Constitution was ratified in 1987.^{111, 112}

Based on the U.S. Constitution, Roman law, and the Napoleonic Code, the new Haitian Constitution divides government into three branches, protects civil rights, and separates the functions of the military and police force. It also makes military personnel subject to civil law, provides restrictions on arrest and detainment of citizens, and (for the first time) formally recognizes Creole as the national language of Haiti. Some of these provisions, however, have never been enforced.^{113, 114}



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Haitian President Michel Martelly

Executive Branch

The president is the head of state. He is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and can serve a second, nonconsecutive term. The president selects the prime minister from the majority party. The prime minister, who acts as the head of government, organizes the cabinet.¹¹⁵

Legislative Branch

Like the United States, Haiti has two legislative bodies: a 30-member Senate and a 99-member Chamber of Deputies. Each of Haiti's 10 departments is represented by three senators.¹¹⁶ The first-, second-, and third-place candidates in each election serve a six-year, four-year, and two-year term, respectively. Members of the Chamber of Deputies represent *arrondissements* and communes within the departments and are elected for four-year terms.¹¹⁷

Judicial Branch

Haiti's Supreme Court (Cour de Cassation) contains a president, vice president, and 10 judges, who are appointed by the president from a list of candidates presented by the Senate and other regional authorities.

Below the high court are four appeal courts, each with a president and four judges (except for the Port-au-Prince court, which has five). These courts oversee civil and criminal cases and appeals from the lower courts.

¹¹¹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹¹² John McCormick, *Comparative Politics in Transition* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2010), 571.

¹¹³ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹¹⁴ John McCormick, *Comparative Politics in Transition* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2010), 571.

¹¹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹¹⁶ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 331.

¹¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

On a local level, there are Courts of First Instance, located in major cities, and justices of the peace.¹¹⁸

Media and Communications

Publishing in Haiti is limited, partly due to interference by various government regimes, but mainly because of the low literacy rate (about 50%).^{119, 120} Most newspapers are published in French and have circulations in the low thousands.¹²¹ There are several television stations in Haiti, including one government-owned station, and some access to cable services, mostly in urban areas. Only about 1 million people have access to the internet.¹²²



© thomas Hackl
Radio Nou in Haiti

The most popular news and information medium in Haiti is radio, with more than 250 private and community stations in operation.¹²³ Supporting the Pope's call for change, the Catholic Church's Radio Soleil was instrumental in mobilizing opposition to Jean-Claude Duvalier, which led to his downfall in 1986.¹²⁴ Radio took on additional importance after the 2010 earthquake; stations not shut down by the disaster became communications bases for people seeking relatives and for aid workers disseminating information.¹²⁵

Economy

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. More than two-thirds of its people live on less than USD 2 a day, and the top 10% of society control 50% of the wealth.¹²⁶

Unemployment in Haiti is 40%, although this number does not include more than two-thirds of the population working informally.¹²⁷ Nearly 1 million Haitians live in the United States, and the

¹¹⁸ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 335.

¹¹⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹²¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹²² Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹²³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹²⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 441,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹²⁵ John Burnett, "Haitians Find Lifeline in Local Radio Station," National Public Radio, 25 January 2010,

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122948825>

¹²⁶ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 5, 26,

http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

¹²⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

money Haitian expatriates send home accounts for 20% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).^{128, 129}

Agriculture is the biggest industry in Haiti, accounting for 25% of its GDP, followed by commerce and manufacturing.^{130, 131} Although only about one-fifth of the land is suitable for cultivation, two-thirds of Haiti's workforce is engaged in farming.^{132, 133} Most farmers work on small plots of land growing subsistence crops.¹³⁴ Corn is the most popular crop for Haitian farmers. Other crops cultivated for domestic consumption include red and black beans, rice, and potatoes.¹³⁵ Haiti's main export crops are coffee, mangoes, bananas, sugar, and wood.¹³⁶



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Haitian corn farmer

Falling food production has forced Haiti to rely on imported food.¹³⁷ Yet food importation drives down food prices, making it impossible for small farmers to sell their surplus, further trapping them in a cycle of poverty.¹³⁸

In recent years, Haiti has experienced rapid urbanization as peasants leave their farms and move to cities to find employment.¹³⁹ But decades of instability have slowed the growth of industry.

¹²⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹²⁹ Caitlin Bell, "Haiti Calling, Calling Haiti: Understanding Information Needs and Communications Patterns among Haitians Overseas Following the Quake of 12 January 2010," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2010, 4–5,

<http://haiti.humanitarianresponse.info/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=4AOapcw29qs%3D&tabid=149&mid=1045>

¹³⁰ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 388,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹³¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹³² Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, 2010,

95. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹³³ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 388,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹³⁴ USAID, "New Haitian Mango Centers will Increase Production and Incomes for Thousands of Haitian Mango Farmers," 21 October 2010, <http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2010/pr101021.html>

¹³⁵ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 394,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹³⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹³⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 394,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹³⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹³⁹ Asa Forsman, "A Situational Analysis of Metropolitan Port-au-Prince: Haiti" (summary report, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Nairobi, 2010), 17–18.

Manufacturing is limited and largely focused on textiles and footwear, tobacco products, beverages (especially rum), and vetiver oil used in perfumes.¹⁴⁰

Ethnicity and Language

More than 95% of all Haitians are descended from the African slaves brought to the island to work on the plantations. Some Haitians of mixed African and French descent are considered “mulatto.” Haiti also has a small Middle Eastern population.¹⁴¹

Creole—derived from French and several West African languages—was constitutionally recognized as the official language of Haiti in 1987 and is spoken by virtually every Haitian. By comparison, French, Haiti’s first official language, is only spoken by 5–10% of the population. Traditionally, French has been the language of the elite, spoken mostly by the more educated mulatto class.^{142, 143}



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Road side book market

¹⁴⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Haiti,” 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

¹⁴¹ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 324.

¹⁴² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 339–341, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁴³ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 332.

Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Haiti is covered with dense jungle.

False

Years of timber harvesting and charcoal production have decimated most of the tree cover.

2. Haiti became the first black republic in the world.

True

The slaves of Saint Domingue won their freedom nearly 30 years before slavery was abolished in the British Empire, and 60 years before it was abolished in the United States.

3. The Artibonite River is the longest river in Haiti.

True

The Artibonite runs from the Dominican border in the east to the Golfe de la Gonave in the west. The country's only hydroelectric plant, the Peligre Dam, is located on this river.

4. Most Haitians speak French.

False

Only about 5–10% of Haitians speak French fluently. Creole, based on French and African dialects, is the language spoken by most Haitians.

5. Toussaint Louverture was the first president of Haiti.

False

Jean-Jacques Dessalines was the first president of Haiti.

CHAPTER 2: RELIGION

Overview

Although Haiti has no official religion, Roman Catholicism is given special recognition under an 1860 agreement with the Vatican that initially recognized the sovereignty of Haiti.¹⁴⁴ Approximately 80% of Haitians claim to be Roman Catholics, while another 16% identify themselves as Protestant.¹⁴⁵



© Inside Disaster / flickr.com
Inside Vodou temple

Still, Vodou is more widely practiced than any religion. It is a folk religion that grew out of a fusion of the beliefs and rituals of African slaves and Christian—particularly Catholic—beliefs and rituals. Although frequently mistaken as black magic or devil worship, Vodou is practiced in parallel with Catholicism. Protestant religions, on the other hand, are less tolerant of Vodou.^{146, 147}

Religions

Roman Catholicism

Catholicism has been practiced in Haiti since before the land officially became a French colony. In 1685, King Louis XIV of France decreed the Code Noir, which established conditions of slavery in French colonies. Among its provisions was the requirement that all slaves be taught Christianity and baptized within eight days of arriving in the colony.¹⁴⁸ Yet beyond their initial induction into Catholicism, slaves had limited contact with Catholic priests. This was partly because of their isolation on plantations and partly because of the reluctance of plantation owners to allow slaves to become too educated.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “2003 Report on International Religious Freedom: Haiti,” 18 December 2003, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24496.htm>

¹⁴⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, “Haiti,” in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

¹⁴⁶ Paul Clammer et al., “Haiti Culture: Religion,” in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008) 275.

¹⁴⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 344, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The ‘Invisible Institution’ in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25.

¹⁴⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 346, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

After Haiti declared independence in 1804, the Catholic Church largely withdrew from the country, and Catholicism as an organized religion nearly died out.¹⁵⁰ The handful of priests who remained ministered exclusively to the Haitian elite. As the Church became associated with foreign influence and elitism, the situation took on political implications.^{151, 152}



© Garrett Crawford
Catholic church

Vodou

Vodou is not an organized religion; it has no central authority or standardized theology.¹⁵³ It is a folk religion that has its roots in the tribal beliefs and practices of slaves brought to Haiti from Africa, particularly West and Central Africa.¹⁵⁴



© Breezy421 / flickr.com
Outside a Vodou temple

Common to most African religions is a belief in Bondye, the High God who created the world, but who is too exalted to bother with the daily affairs of humans. Thus, practitioners of Vodou worship the lesser gods or spirits appointed guardians of the earth. These spirits, known as *lwa* or *vodoun*, act as intermediaries between mankind and the High God. Some *lwa* are known and worshiped throughout Haiti, but others are specific to a family or region.¹⁵⁵

According to the beliefs of Vodou, ancestors are considered holy and revered as founders and custodians of traditions and laws. They can grant their descendants certain blessings, such as fertility, and act as mediators between families and the gods. It is also commonly believed that ancestors can be reincarnated within one's own family.¹⁵⁶

In Haiti, spirits of the Vodou pantheon are worshiped through song and dance and invoked through specific drum rhythms and dance steps. The high point of any Vodou ceremony is when a *lwa* selects one of the worshipers to possess, or "mount," and uses that person as a vehicle for

¹⁵⁰ David Nicholls, "Politics and Religion in Haiti," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970): 401.

¹⁵¹ David Nicholls, "Politics and Religion in Haiti," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970): 401.

¹⁵² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 346–47, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁵³ David Nicholls, "Politics and Religion in Haiti," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970): 402.

¹⁵⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7–8.

¹⁵⁵ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8–9.

¹⁵⁶ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.

speaking with the other worshipers.¹⁵⁷ Through their *chwal* (horse)—the person being possessed or “ridden”—the *lwa* can teach, heal, speak of the past, or warn about the future.^{158, 159, 160}

Vodou and Catholicism

To understand Vodou as a merging of African traditions and Catholic beliefs, it is necessary to understand something about the beliefs of both and the ways in which they are compatible.

Like Vodou, Catholicism is centered around the worship of a supreme being. Catholics revere many saints, whom they believe act as intermediaries between the worshiper and God. Many churches have small chapels or shrines where worshippers can light candles and offer prayers to a particular saint.¹⁶¹



© Our Lady of Fatima / flickr.com
Catholic church service

These beliefs resonated with the slaves’ belief in Bondye, the High God, and the *lwa* as mediators between humans and god. Haitian Vodou developed as people began to associate certain saints with particular *lwa*. For example, Ogou, the god of war, is often represented by St. James, the patron saint of Spain, who is usually depicted with a sword.¹⁶² Legba, the guardian of the crossroads, is associated with both St. Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of travelers; and St. Peter, who holds the keys to heaven.^{163, 164} Ezili Danto, a fierce goddess and mother who symbolizes independence, is sometimes represented by the Black Madonna of Czestochowa.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁷ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The ‘Invisible Institution’ in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15.

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth McAlister, “Love, Sex, and Gender Embodied: The Spirits of Haitian Vodou” (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2000), 131,

<http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=div2facpubs>

¹⁵⁹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The ‘Invisible Institution’ in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth McAlister, “Love, Sex, and Gender Embodied: The Spirits of Haitian Vodou” (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2000), 132–33,

<http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=div2facpubs>

¹⁶¹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The ‘Invisible Institution’ in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 22.

¹⁶² Elizabeth McAlister, “Love, Sex, and Gender Embodied: The Spirits of Haitian Vodou” (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2000), 136,

<http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=div2facpubs>

¹⁶³ Elizabeth McAlister, “The Rite of Baptism in Haitian Vodou” (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2001), 367, <http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=div2facpubs>

¹⁶⁴ Donald J. Cosentino, “On Looking at a Vodou Altar,” *African Arts* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1996), 68.

¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth McAlister, “Love, Sex, and Gender Embodied: The Spirits of Haitian Vodou” (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2000), 134,

<http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=div2facpubs>

It is unclear whether these substitutions were an attempt to disguise an outlawed religion or simply a logical extension of it.¹⁶⁶ Yet with the absence of Catholic authority for more than 60 years following Haiti's independence, it is probably not surprising that Vodou priests acted as a lay clergy for the former slaves; nor is it surprising that over time the two religions became fused.¹⁶⁷ Catholic saints are often invoked during Vodou ceremonies, such as baptisms and marriages. In Haiti, these ceremonies are considered as legitimate as those performed in a Catholic church, and chromolithographs, or pictures, of Catholic saints are common at Vodou altars.^{168, 169}

Religion and Government

In 1860, Haiti signed the Concordat with the Vatican, recognizing Catholicism as the nation's official religion. In return, the Vatican recognized Haiti as a sovereign country for the first time and appointed an archbishop for Port-au-Prince. The reorganization of the Catholic Church in Haiti allowed it to play a large role in secular education, although its ministrations were still primarily aimed at the urban elite.¹⁷⁰



© Mary Constance / flickr.com
St. Paul's Episcopal Church

As president from 1957 until his death in 1971, François "Papa Doc" Duvalier instigated a number of policies designed to reduce the political power of the Catholic Church in Haiti. He expelled dozens of priests and the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince from the country, under allegations that they were communists and terrorists.¹⁷¹ Yet before his death, Duvalier reconciled partially with the Church after an agreement to appoint a Haitian-born archbishop.¹⁷²

Duvalier himself was a practitioner of Vodou and gave it broad public recognition during his presidency.^{173, 174} He was strongly critical of the Catholic Church's attempts to suppress the

¹⁶⁶ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 26.

¹⁶⁷ David Nicholls, "Politics and Religion in Haiti," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970), 401.

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth McAlister, "The Rite of Baptism in Haitian Vodou" (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2001), 364, 366,

<http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=div2facpubs>

¹⁶⁹ Donald J. Cosentino, "On Looking at a Vodou Altar," *African Arts* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1996).

¹⁷⁰ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 346,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁷¹ David Nicholls, "Politics and Religion in Haiti," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970), 407–11.

¹⁷² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 347,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁷³ David Nicholls, "Politics and Religion in Haiti," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970), 414.

¹⁷⁴ BBC, "Haiti Country Profile," 14 May 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1202772.stm

religion, notably in 1941 when many Vodou shrines and sacred objects were destroyed during a campaign to stamp out the practice.¹⁷⁵

At the same time, Protestantism flourished in the country in spite of its abhorrence of Vodou. Protestant churches generally ministered in rural areas, providing education and much-needed healthcare to the poor.¹⁷⁶ Even though new members were required to destroy their Vodou fetishes at baptism, Duvalier welcomed the services of Protestants. He perceived them to be less of a political threat than the Catholics.¹⁷⁷

Liberation theology—the idea that the Church should be involved in improving the lives of the poor, not only by providing for their needs but also by becoming involved in politics—has been popular in Haiti since the 1970s. Liberation theologians saw “sin” in government policies that led to social inequalities.¹⁷⁸ The movement was heavily criticized by the Vatican and was largely subdued by the 1990s. Yet Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a strong proponent of liberation theology, was twice elected president of Haiti, in 1990 and again in 2000.^{179, 180}

Places of Worship

Christian denominations meet in houses of worship that range from cathedrals to simple, open-air chapels. The earthquake of 2010, however, damaged many of the major buildings of worship in Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area, including the Cathedral of Notre Dame and the Episcopalian Holy Trinity Cathedral.¹⁸¹

Vodou ceremonies take place in temples and are led by a *mambo*, a Vodou priestess, or a *hougan*, a Vodou priest.

Most of the ceremonies take place in the outer, public part of the temple (the peristyle), where community members pray, sing, and dance. The defining feature of a peristyle is the *poto mitan*—a central pole believed to connect the physical and spiritual worlds and also the point



© Inside Disaster / flickr.com
Praying inside Vodou temple

¹⁷⁵ David Nicholls, “Politics and Religion in Haiti,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970), 404.

¹⁷⁶ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 348,
http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

¹⁷⁷ David Nicholls, “Politics and Religion in Haiti,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 3 (1970), 412.

¹⁷⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Liberation Theology,” 2011,
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/339237/liberation-theology>

¹⁷⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Jean-Bertrand Aristide,” 2011,
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/34400/jean-bertrand-aristide>

¹⁸⁰ BBC, “Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide,” 3 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12633115>

¹⁸¹ Anita Canovas, “Destruction in Haiti Puts its Heritage at Risk,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, 4 February 2010, <http://blog.preservationnation.org/2010/02/04/destruction-in-haiti-puts-its-heritage-at-risk>

where *lwa* (spirits) enter the temple to “mount” a devotee.¹⁸² The altar is in the *hounfor*, the inner temple, where drums, flags, machetes, corn flour, and other sacred objects used in the ceremonies are kept.¹⁸³ Sometimes the *hounfor* is attached to the peristyle; at other times it is part of a home. Only the *mambo*, *hougan*, and their assistants can enter the *hounfor* during a ceremony.¹⁸⁴ Offerings are left for the *lwa* on the altar in the form of rum, perfume, money, or small luxuries that the particular *lwa* likes. Also found on the altar are earthenware jars known as *govis*, where the *lwa* reside between ceremonies. Ceremonial rattles called *asson* are placed on the altar along with *ouangas*, or special charms. Above the altar it is common to see lithographs of Catholic saints representing the *lwa*.^{185, 186}

Vodou Practices

Vodou ceremonies are complicated and vary greatly from place to place. Each family has inherited the responsibility to worship certain *lwa*, in much the same way that it inherits land. In fact, *lwa* are closely tied to the land, making it important for Haitians to maintain ownership of at least some of their family’s land.¹⁸⁷ Vodou ceremonies—which can last from a few hours to days—are carefully tailored to fit the preferences of the *lwa* being petitioned. The ceremonies usually involve the sacrifice of animals, such as chickens. A service is considered successful when a *lwa* possesses someone and accepts the worshiper’s offerings.^{188, 189, 190}

Vodou dolls are not part of Haitian Vodou practice. Many Haitians believe in zombies, which are not considered the reanimated dead. Rather, zombies are considered the spirits of the dead that have been captured through magic to work for someone, a throwback to Haiti’s days as a slave colony.¹⁹¹ Receiving the appropriate funeral rites is seen as a protection against this fate.¹⁹²

¹⁸² Nathaniel Sameul Murrell, *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 80.

¹⁸³ Hugh B. Cave, *Haiti, Highroad to Adventure* (New York: H. Holt, 1952), 176–77.

¹⁸⁴ Hugh B. Cave, *Haiti, Highroad to Adventure* (New York: H. Holt, 1952), 175.

¹⁸⁵ Hugh B. Cave, *Haiti, Highroad to Adventure* (New York: H. Holt, 1952), 177.

¹⁸⁶ Donald J. Cosentino, “On Looking at a Vodou Altar,” *African Arts* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1996).

¹⁸⁷ Ira P. Lowenthal, “Ritual Performance and Religious Experience: A Service for the Gods in Southern Haiti,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 394–95.

¹⁸⁸ Ira P. Lowenthal, “Ritual Performance and Religious Experience: A Service for the Gods in Southern Haiti,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 400.

¹⁸⁹ Ira P. Lowenthal, “Ritual Performance and Religious Experience: A Service for the Gods in Southern Haiti,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 402–03.

¹⁹⁰ Ira P. Lowenthal, “Ritual Performance and Religious Experience: A Service for the Gods in Southern Haiti,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 400.

¹⁹¹ Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 103–09.

¹⁹² Hans W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier, “The Ways and Nature of the Zombi,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 104, no. 414 (1991), 482, 486–87.

Behavior in Places of Worship

When entering a Christian church of any denomination it is best to be respectful. Speak softly, and do not take pictures without permission, especially if there is a service in progress. Haitians regard church attire seriously, and attendees are expected to wear clean, attractive clothes. For women, skirts should cover the knees. Women are not required to cover their heads in Catholic churches, although Haitian women usually do. Men should not wear hats.



© Andrew J Ferguson
Ready for church services

Chewing gum and eating are never allowed in Haitian churches. Cell phones should also be silent. It is best to refrain from entering the chancel (the area at the front of the church where priests conduct ceremonies), except as instructed during a service. Also refrain from touching any object on or around the high altar.

Attempts should not be made to enter a Vodou temple or attend a Vodou ceremony without prior approval from the priest or priestess. Likewise, do not take pictures of a Vodou ceremony without permission from the participants, who may consider photos exploitation by outsiders.¹⁹³ Most of the ceremonies are not secret but are, according to Vodou beliefs, sacred moments for communing with spirits. In smaller ceremonies, family and close friends are often the only participants.¹⁹⁴ It is possible to find guides to make arrangements for attending a ceremony, although in urban areas these may be staged for tourists and of varying authenticity.¹⁹⁵ If you do attend a Vodou ceremony, be aware that they can be long and often include animal sacrifice.¹⁹⁶ As with Christian churches, objects on altars should not be handled.¹⁹⁷

Catholic Celebrations

Because most Haitians are Catholic, all major Catholic holidays are observed as public holidays in Haiti, including Christmas, Mardi Gras (Carnival), Good Friday, Easter, and All Saints' Day (La Toussaint).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Paul Clammer et al., "Haiti Vodou: Practices & Ceremonies," in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008) 283.

¹⁹⁴ Ira P. Lowenthal, "Ritual Performance and Religious Experience: A Service for the Gods in Southern Haiti," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 398, 406.

¹⁹⁵ Shoshona Guy, "Haiti: The Struggle for Water," *Frontline World*, October 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/haiti/indexa.html>

¹⁹⁶ Ira P. Lowenthal, "Ritual Performance and Religious Experience: A Service for the Gods in Southern Haiti," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 400.

¹⁹⁷ Hugh B. Cave, *Haiti, Highroad to Adventure* (New York: H. Holt, 1952), 177.

¹⁹⁸ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 343.

Vodou Celebrations

Several major Vodou celebrations are also held throughout the year in Haiti, but they are not public holidays.

Rara

The biggest Vodou celebration is an elaborate, six-week rural festival leading up to Easter. Villagers organize *rara* bands that use bamboo trumpets, called *vaksins*, drums, and other handmade instruments to perform songs with explicit lyrics and timely political references. As Easter approaches, the bands, accompanied by elaborately dressed dancers, parade through villages on their way to nearby towns where, on Good Friday, they “battle” by exchanging “points”, or musical insults, and the occasional blow, all day and night until Easter morning.¹⁹⁹



© Alain-Christian Rara

Pilgrimages

Two large Vodou pilgrimages take place each year in northern Haiti, near Cap-Haïtien. The first, Saut d’Eau, which is basically Catholic in its observance, is a commemoration of the appearance of the Virgin Mary near the village of Ville-Bonheur. Pilgrims bathe in a sacred waterfall to spiritually cleanse themselves, and a special mass is said in the village church.²⁰⁰

The second pilgrimage, beginning on St. James’ Day on 25 July, is more overtly Vodou. According to Vodou tradition, St. James is associated with Ogou, the warrior spirit. Following celebrations near the village of Plaine du Nord, which often include mud baths, the celebrants move on to Limonade, 15 km (9 mi) southeast of Cap-Haïtien. Here for the Feast of St. Anne, participants hold ceremonies invoking Erzulie, the Vodou goddess of love.²⁰¹

All Souls’ Day

Because of its emphasis on honoring ancestors, Vodou plays a major role in the observance of All Souls’ Day, also known as *Gede*, on 1–2 November. Families dressed in black and purple congregate in cemeteries where ceremonies honoring the guardians of the dead (the *gede*) are performed.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Verna Gillis, *Rara*, produced by Verna Gillis and Gail Pellett (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1978).

²⁰⁰ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 343.

²⁰¹ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 343.

²⁰² Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 344.

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Vodou practices include voodoo dolls and human sacrifice.

False

Voodoo dolls are a folk practice more commonly found outside Haiti. Vodou does not include human sacrifice of any kind.

2. During Vodou ceremonies, Catholic saints are often invoked.

True

Catholic saints are called on during Vodou ceremonies, and pictures of them can be found at Vodou altars.

3. François “Papa Doc” Duvalier viewed Catholicism as a threat to his political power.

True

Haitian President François “Papa Doc” Duvalier instigated a number of policies to reduce the political power of the Catholic Church in Haiti, including expelling priests.

4. During Vodou ceremonies, participants may claim possession by spirits.

True

A ceremony is considered successful when a spirit manifests itself by “mounting” an initiate in order to accept offerings.

5. Rara is a Vodou celebration that takes place prior to Easter.

True

In the weeks leading up to Easter, *rara* bands of bamboo trumpets and drums parade through the streets with dancers in elaborate costumes.

CHAPTER 3: TRADITIONS

Introduction

Haitians are gregarious people, known for their love of telling jokes and enjoying a good story. Many Haitian traditions reflect the nation's roots as the world's first black republic. Because Haiti is an agrarian society with two-thirds of the population involved in farming, people rely heavily on one another in small rural communities. Even in urban areas, Haitians share a strong sense of community.²⁰³



© PWRDF / flickr.com
Girls laughing

Most people in Haiti share similar ancestry and heritage. Although regional variations in language and traditions exist, the greatest cultural differences occur between socioeconomic classes, not between geographic areas.^{204, 205}

Values and Communication Styles

Haitians rely on the government for very little. A person's place within a family group or community is important to their sense of self and security. Decisions are made through group consensus, and responsibilities are shared.²⁰⁶ Loyalty is highly valued, and rules that conflict with a family member's needs are often ignored.²⁰⁷



© Rémi Kaupp
Haitian family in Cap-Haïtien

When communicating, details are not as important as

²⁰³ Paul Clammer et al., "Haiti: Culture," in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 273.

²⁰⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 340,
http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

²⁰⁵ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 328.

²⁰⁶ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 241.

²⁰⁷ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 242.

establishing relationships.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, because the culture is so homogeneous, details are often taken for granted. For example, since everyone eats dinner at about the same time, a dinner invitation does not need to include a time or specify whether or not to bring children.²⁰⁹

Because Haitians are relationship-oriented, they tend to be indirect with people they do not know well. The stronger the relationship, the more direct the communication will be.²¹⁰ Haitians will often say “yes” when they mean “no” or say that everything is all right when it is not, if they feel that this will preserve the relationship. For an outsider trying to do business in Haiti, patience is needed.

Politeness and Etiquette

Etiquette in Haiti is similar to that in the United States. When greeting someone, it is traditional to offer a handshake. If you are a male greeting a woman for the first time, wait for her to extend her hand first. Among family and friends, an elbow touch or a brief embrace is common, but wait for the other party to initiate this kind of gesture.²¹¹



© US Marine Corps / flickr.com
Marine greets citizens

Haiti is a crowded country in which people may stand close together. Refrain from backing away; in Haiti, standing close and speaking loudly are not signs of aggression. Neither is eye contact. When introduced to someone, maintain eye contact.²¹²

Haitians are highly social; dropping in on family and friends is a common pastime. Outsiders may be considered a curiosity until Haitians determine their place in the group. In professional settings, it is helpful to use business cards that include one's job title. In social settings, displaying photos of family members can help demonstrate one's membership in a group and a shared value of family.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 243.

²⁰⁹ Julia T. Wood, *Communication Mosaics: An Introduction to the Field of Communication* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 166.

²¹⁰ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 243.

²¹¹ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 245.

²¹² Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 245.

²¹³ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 245.

To assess strangers, Haitians may ask personal questions, but it may not be appropriate for outsiders to ask Haitians about personal matters. Keep to small talk. Ask general questions about a person's family, especially if the person has family in the United States.²¹⁴

Do not ask questions about someone's occupation or income, personal health, private family matters, or Vodou. Refrain from discussing Haitian politics, the Dominican Republic, and your own personal health. And even though Haitians love jokes, do not tell an off-color joke in the presence of a woman.²¹⁵

Male/Female Interactions

Haiti is a male-dominated society, although this may not be apparent on the surface. Compared with other Latin cultures, women endure less catcalling and harassment on the streets of Haiti.²¹⁶ Under Haitian law, women can vote and work outside the home. They are also entitled to the same educational opportunities as men. Yet there is no provision that prohibits sexual harassment, which is rarely reported, and women are seldom promoted to management or supervisory positions.²¹⁷



© US Marine Corps / flickr.com
Haitian shop owner

Women generally occupy a lower social and economic status than men. This is partly due to the limitations placed on women by their traditional roles in society, which affects their access to educational opportunities. It is not unusual for men and women to have children with multiple partners, and laws governing child support are rarely enforced.²¹⁸

Although laws exist to protect women from violence and rape, these types of crimes remain widespread. Women are involved in 85% of interpersonal violence cases, and an estimated 80% of women are victims of domestic violence, including sexual abuse.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 245.

²¹⁵ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 245.

²¹⁶ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 341.

²¹⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti," in *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154509.htm>

²¹⁸ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti," in *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154509.htm>

²¹⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti," in *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154509.htm>

Dress Codes and Grooming

Haitians place a high value on cleanliness.²²⁰ Many Haitians do not have access to clean water, but they go to great lengths to keep themselves, their clothing, and their homes clean. Even in slums, where clean water is at a premium, people buy water for cleaning.²²¹

Dressing up is not something Haitians save for special occasions. They dress up for school and church, and women wear dresses or skirts every day (although this is not mandatory). Women also tend to dress modestly, wearing skirts to the knee and conservative necklines.²²²



© mediahacker / flickr.com
Cleaning the streets

Gift Giving and Social Etiquette

Gift giving is a common way to say “thank you” in Haitian society. Gifts are usually small—sometimes just cards (such as Christmas cards, which are popular). If a man gives a gift to a woman, it should be presented as a gift from his wife or sister.²²³

At private social events, gifts are not expected but are appreciated. Appropriate gifts include chocolates, special food items, and desserts. School supplies and other small gifts for the host’s children also are acceptable.²²⁴

Stay in the common area of the house, and do not wander around. Be careful about admiring any object too much; this may make the host feel pressured to offer it to you.²²⁵ In homes with hired help, it is not necessary or recommended to offer help in preparing the meal or cleaning up afterward.²²⁶



© Thomas Hackl
Haitian homes

Table etiquette in Haiti is similar to etiquette in the

²²⁰ Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, eds., *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the Worlds Cultures*, vol. 2 (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, Inc, 2004), 700.

²²¹ Shoshona Guy, “Haiti: The Struggle for Water,” *Frontline World*, October 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/haiti/indexa.html>

²²² Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 52.

²²³ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 251.

²²⁴ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 251.

²²⁵ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 250.

²²⁶ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 251.

United States and Europe, especially in high-income households: ladies sit first, fork on the left, elbows off the table, etc. Diners are expected to stay at the table for the entire meal—no bathroom breaks, so plan accordingly.²²⁷

In restaurants, the person who extended the invitation pays the bill. A woman should not buy dinner for a man unless another woman is present. Making arrangements for payment before the meal is considered especially polite. To summon a server, make eye contact.²²⁸

Because relationships are important to Haitians, business discussions should be saved until the end of the meal, or later.²²⁹

Food and Drink

In urban areas, particularly in places like Petionville, it is possible to find anything from American hamburgers and pizza to classic French cuisine, the food of the upper classes in Haiti.²³⁰

The everyday food of the average Haitian is Creole. Rice and beans are staples of Creole cooking. Meat is expensive and is consumed sparingly in lower-income areas. Common meats eaten in Haiti include fried chicken, pork, fried beef, goat, lamb, and conch meat (conches are large, snaillike mollusks with meat similar to that of other shellfish).²³¹ Sweet potatoes, plantains, manioc (a starchy root), and other vegetables grown on small plots are also central to the Haitian diet.²³² Dishes are often accompanied by a spicy sauce, such as *sòs kreyole* or *sòs ti-malice*.²³³



© Ken Bosma
Haitian cooks

²²⁷ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 250.

²²⁸ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 250.

²²⁹ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 250.

²³⁰ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 346.

²³¹ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 346–47.

²³² Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 394, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf.

²³³ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 347.

Street food is abundant and, for the most part, safe.²³⁴ Yet eating street food is not risk free and should be done with caution. Avoid any food that is not cooked thoroughly as well as raw fruits and vegetables that have not been peeled.²³⁵

Water should only be consumed from bottles. Make sure that the bottle is sealed. If ordering a drink with ice, make sure that the ice cubes are made with bottled water.²³⁶



© cbertel / flickr.com
Haiti street food vendors

Coffee is popular in Haiti and often locally produced. Clarin, an alcoholic beverage made from sugarcane, is also common, and Haiti is known for its high-quality rum. American soft drinks are widely available.²³⁷

Public Holidays

Stores and offices are usually closed on Sunday and often in the afternoon. Business hours are generally from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.²³⁸

²³⁴ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 341.

²³⁵ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 46.

²³⁶ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 347.

²³⁷ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 347.

²³⁸ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 342–43.

Most businesses will be closed on the following public holidays:²³⁹

New Year's Day/Independence Day	1 January
Ancestors' Day	2 January
Carnival/Mardi Gras	sometime in February, depending on when Easter occurs
Good Friday	Friday before Easter Sunday
Labor Day	1 May
Flag Day	18 May
Corpus Christi	sometime in June
Assumption Day	sometime in August
All Saints' Day	1 November
All Souls' Day (Gede)	2 November
Battle of Vertieres/Armed Forces Day	18 November
Discovery of Haiti Day	5 December
Christmas	25 December

Independence Day, Flag Day, and Armed Forces Day are patriotic holidays that commemorate the final defeat of the French at Vertieres and Haiti's declaration of independence. The government sometimes organizes nationwide celebrations, but families and communities usually celebrate these holidays with singing, dancing, and eating. Pumpkin soup is always served on Independence Day²⁴⁰.

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are Catholic holidays observed in Haiti with Vodou ceremonies in which people dress in purple and black and honor the dead.²⁴¹

Many other Vodou holidays and festivals are held throughout the year in Haiti, although they are not observed by the government as official holidays. Businesses may close on these days as well.²⁴²

²³⁹ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 343.

²⁴⁰ Paul Clammer et. al., "Haiti: Food & Drink," in *Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 284.

²⁴¹ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 343–44.

²⁴² Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 252.

Dos and Don'ts

Do

Do respond warmly to greetings, even if you do not know the person.²⁴³

Do make eye contact when someone is speaking to you.²⁴⁴

Do show good humor and patience in all situations.

Do carry pictures of your family and show them to people.

Do leave cutoffs and jeans with holes at home; remember to keep your appearance tidy.²⁴⁵

Do Not

Do not attend any family event without an invitation.

Do not enter a *lakou*, or family compound, without asking; yards are considered living space.

Do not chew gum, especially at the dinner table or in restaurants.²⁴⁶

Do not take pictures of people without their permission, especially if they are ill or working.²⁴⁷

Do not feel obligated to give money (or food) to people on the street.²⁴⁸

²⁴³ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 31.

²⁴⁴ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 245.

²⁴⁵ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 32.

²⁴⁶ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 250.

²⁴⁷ Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 32.

²⁴⁸ It is common for people, and especially children, to shout "Hey you, give me a dollar!" to any foreigner they see. Experience has taught them that tourists are walking ATMs, and while many of these people are genuinely in need, handing out money on the street can quickly escalate into a dangerous situation. It is recommended that you either ignore them, or politely decline with a "Not today." See Scott Doggett and Leah Gordon, *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), 31.

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Haitians place a high value on personal cleanliness.

True

Haitians will go to great lengths to find clean water for bathing and for cleaning their houses and clothes.

2. Haitians tend to place more value and pride in the government system than in their family.

False

Because they have little trust in their government and place a high value on personal relationships, Haitians will help a family member or friend, even if it means going around official channels.

3. Haitians are culturally individualistic, meaning the emphasis is on the individual and people often make decisions without any outside input.

False

Haitians are group-oriented and rarely make important decisions without seeking advice from friends and family.

4. Rice and beans are a staple in the diet of most Haitians.

True

Rice and beans are used in almost every dish. Beans are still raised in Haiti, although most rice is now imported.

5. Women enjoy a high degree of equality with men in the workplace.

False

Although women have many of the same rights as men, they rarely work in supervisory positions.

CHAPTER 4: URBAN LIFE

Introduction

More than 40% of Haitians live in urban areas, which are growing by nearly 6% annually.²⁴⁹ The Port-au-Prince metropolitan area alone accounts for approximately 25% of the total population of Haiti.²⁵⁰ It is also home to 80% of industrial, commercial, and banking facilities; 75% of civil servants; 50% of the country's hospitals; and 25% of its primary and secondary schools; it is the center for nearly two-thirds of the country's economic activity.²⁵¹



© PBS NewsHour / flickr.com
Port-au-Prince

This concentration of resources in one city leaves Haiti vulnerable to disasters, such as the 2010 earthquake.²⁵² Another consequence is the lack of resources in other cities and rural areas throughout Haiti.

Urbanization and Infrastructure

Unplanned and Planned Communities

Unplanned settlements pose the biggest problems for cities in Haiti. Peasants pour into cities from rural areas to escape poverty and find employment. Accomplishing neither, they live in makeshift shelters.²⁵³ Because this growth is not moderated by urban planning, utilities—such as water, waste removal, and electricity—are not available in the densely populated slum areas.²⁵⁴



© United Nations / flickr.com
Waiting for potable water

To the east of Port-au-Prince, the suburb of Pétionville is a world apart. Nearly everyone in this area, which was

²⁴⁹ UNICEF, "At a Glance: Haiti," 2009, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/haiti_statistics.html

²⁵⁰ Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique, "Population Totale, Population de 18 Ans et Plus," 2009, 43, http://www.ihsi.ht/pdf/projection/POPTOTAL&MENAGDENS_ESTIM2009.pdf

²⁵¹ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 43, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁵² Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 58, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁵³ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 73, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁵⁴ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 73, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

built as a retreat for Haiti's elite, has access to running water, regular electricity, and internet service.²⁵⁵ But this small group is the exception in a country in which 50% of the population live in extreme poverty.²⁵⁶

Water and Sanitation

Nearly 70% of urban Haitians have access to potable water, most of which is commercially distributed through bottled water or water trucks.²⁵⁷

Only about 24% of urban Haitians have access to adequate sanitation services. Haiti does not have wastewater treatment systems. Plumbing, where it exists, drains into septic tanks that are emptied into holes and sometimes waterways. Most toilets in Haiti are pit latrines or latrines connected to drainpipes.²⁵⁸ In places without toilets, or where toilets are inadequate, sewage runs into the street.

In Port-au-Prince, about 50% of the waste is collected by the city, compared to about 17% in other urban areas. But these services were disrupted by the 2010 earthquake, and millions of cubic meters of debris still need removal. Some private companies collect waste, although most of it is burned because of a lack of landfills.²⁵⁹

Electricity

About 83% of urban Haitians have some electricity (68% in post-earthquake Port-au-Prince), although service is available only 6–8 hours a day. In areas such as Pétionville, 95% of the people have access to electricity, with some residents owning generators. Among poorer households, access to electricity drops to about 60%.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), X, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

²⁵⁶ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 113, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁵⁷ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 66, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁵⁸ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, 2010, 52, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁵⁹ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 66, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁶⁰ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 164, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

Buildings and Housing

The style of Haiti's traditional urban architecture is similar to that in New Orleans, another former French colony. Balconies and porches, which keep buildings cool, are common architectural features.²⁶¹

Unplanned settlements account for 67% of the housing stock in cities, although they cover only 22% of the land area. Often constructed on steep slopes or in gullies, these dwellings are built with concrete slabs supported by posts and beams. This method of construction offers some protection against hurricanes, but it proved deadly during the 2010 earthquake.²⁶²



© Stephen Riley
UN housing in Petionville

Approximately 1.3 million people were left homeless after the earthquake; more than 100,000 homes were destroyed and another 208,000 damaged.²⁶³ Afterward about 1,000 temporary camps for the homeless sprang up in the earthquake zone, and, as of May 2011, more than 600,000 people were still living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps around Port-au-Prince.²⁶⁴ Conditions in the IDP camps vary greatly; some have inadequate access to water and sanitation facilities.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Frederick Mangones et. al., "Haiti Regeneration: Creating an Exemplar Community of Cottages and Townhouses" (University of San Francisco, 19 July 2010).

²⁶² Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 73.

²⁶³ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 74, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁶⁴ Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster in Haiti (CCCM Cluster), "Displacement Tracking Matrix V2.0 Update," 16 March 2011, 1, http://www.cccmhaiti.info/pdf/DTM_V2_Report_15_Mar_English%20FINAL3.pdf

²⁶⁵ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 53, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

Telecommunications

Haiti's telecommunications infrastructure is both outdated and poorly maintained.²⁶⁶ Because of the poor state of phone lines and lack of stable electricity service, few people have landline phones. About 35% of Haitians own cell phones.^{267, 268}

Internet usage in Haiti is not widespread. About 11% of Haitians have access to the internet, and only an estimated 12,000 people have internet connections in their homes.^{269, 270}



© Stephen Riley
Haitian boys with cell phone

Employment and the Economy

Unemployment rates in Haiti are officially reported at 41–45%, yet only about half of those with supposed jobs in the formal sector have regular pay and benefits.^{271, 272} More than two-thirds of the workforce is unemployed or underemployed.²⁷³ Unemployment is higher in cities (about 61%) than in rural areas. The unemployment rate has been more than 70% since the earthquake struck Port-au-Prince in 2010, affecting all sectors of the economy.²⁷⁴ Earthquake damage to facilities disrupted manufacturing and export businesses, which had been growing.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁶ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 91, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁶⁷ United Nations News Service, "UN Telecom Agency Makes Plans for Haiti's Present and Future," 3 February 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33668&Cr=haiti&Cr1>

²⁶⁸ Suzanne Choney, "Firms Scramble to Repair Haiti Wireless Service," MSNBC, 22 January 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34977823/ns/world_news-haiti/t/firms-scramble-repair-haiti-wireless-service

²⁶⁹ United Nations News Service, "UN Telecom Agency Makes Plans for Haiti's Present and Future," 3 February 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33668&Cr=haiti&Cr1>

²⁷⁰ Suzanne Choney, "Firms Scramble to Repair Haiti Wireless Service," MSNBC, 22 January 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34977823/ns/world_news-haiti/t/firms-scramble-repair-haiti-wireless-service

²⁷¹ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 97.

²⁷² Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 159, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

²⁷³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

²⁷⁴ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 23, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

²⁷⁵ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 96, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

The government is one of the largest employers in the formal sector, although it provides only about 5% of overall jobs.²⁷⁶ Informal employment, such as selling goods and services on the street, accounts for 56% of all jobs.^{277, 278} Women are well represented in this economic sector since it is traditionally their role to sell surplus produce in the markets. But many of these entrepreneurial ventures are limited by a lack of capital and profit; most produce only a few dollars a day.²⁷⁹

Child labor in the informal sector is also common. Many rural families send their children to live with urban families, exchanging unpaid domestic labor for an education. An estimated 250,000 children (known as *restaveks*) live in the Port-au-Prince area. These children, some as young as four, are often abused or neglected, and many run away. Some slum children also live on the street, even though they have families and homes. Street children survive by begging or taking any work they can find, including prostitution.^{280, 281}



© USAID / flickr.com
Learning to sew

Healthcare

Haiti does not have a national healthcare system. Many residents have little access to healthcare because of cost, and 47% of Haitians have no access to healthcare. Only 6% of Haiti's poorest women give birth in hospitals.²⁸² Half of those who need medical treatment seek care at public hospitals or public health centers. Private hospitals and clinics account for 13% of the care.²⁸³



© WELS Christian Aid / flickr.com
Hospital in Jimani

²⁷⁶ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 97, 108, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁷⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Haiti," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251961/Haiti>

²⁷⁸ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 159, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

²⁷⁹ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 113.

²⁸⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Report: Haiti," 8 April 2011, 27, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/160458.pdf>

²⁸¹ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 25.

²⁸² Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 60, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁸³ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 176, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

During the 2010 earthquake, 30 out of 49 hospitals in the disaster zone were destroyed or seriously damaged. Countrywide, 90% of the health centers and clinics were largely unaffected, although many of these facilities face shortages of staff and supplies.²⁸⁴

Education

Children in Haiti's urban centers have better access to education than those in rural settings, although urban enrollment is low. Port-au-Prince is home to 50% of all Haitian students, 90% of university students, and the majority of Haiti's schools.²⁸⁵

The Haitian constitution states that education is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 12, yet only 10% of the schools in Haiti are state-run. Most city schools are private, receive little government oversight, and require students to pay some tuition. In urban areas, an estimated 75% of Haitian children start school, but only 30–40% of them reach 7th grade, primarily because they cannot pay the tuition.²⁸⁶ Only 62% of Haitians above the age of 15 can read; illiteracy is higher among women, whose traditional roles make them more likely to drop out of school.²⁸⁷



© PBS NewsHour / flickr.com
Camp school

Markets

A few upscale supermarkets can be found in the Port-au-Prince area, but most Haitians buy fresh food at open markets, such as the *Marche de Fer* (Iron Market) in downtown Port-au-Prince. Open Monday through Saturday, the market offers a variety of foods, services, and products, including local arts and crafts.²⁸⁸ (Haiti is known for its “naïve” art and Vodou crafts, which are bought by collectors worldwide.) Customers should be aware that sellers expect good-natured haggling over prices. If you decide to make a purchase, money should be handed directly to the seller, not placed on a table or countertop.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Government of the Republic of Haiti, “Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs,” Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 60, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁸⁵ Government of the Republic of Haiti, “Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs,” Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 62–64, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁸⁶ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 5, 19.

²⁸⁷ Government of the Republic of Haiti, “Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs,” Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 62, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁸⁸ Paul Clammer et. al., *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 319.

²⁸⁹ Dean Foster, *Global Etiquette Guide to Mexico and Latin America: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 247.

The national currency is the Haitian gourde (GDE), which is tied to the U.S. dollar (USD) at a constant exchange rate of five gourdes to the dollar. Sometimes the prices at markets are listed in U.S. dollars, which some city vendors will accept. Before buying something, it is important to clarify the currency of payment.²⁹⁰

Eating Out

Port-au-Prince offers a greater variety of restaurants than other urban areas in Haiti, where foods like pizza and hamburgers are rare. In Port-au-Prince, restaurants range from upscale French establishments to small bar-restos (bars that serve food). At informal restaurants, diners may share tables with other parties. Since lunch is the main meal of the day, restaurants open early and are often closed by 9 p.m.²⁹¹



© cplbasilisk / flickr.com
Open market

Traffic and Transportation

Roads

About one-quarter of Haiti's roads are paved; of these, most need repair.²⁹² Many of the improved roads in the Port-au-Prince area sustained damage during the 2010 earthquake.²⁹³ Dirt roads are also problematic because they require repair after each rainy season.²⁹⁴ Most slums lack road systems completely.²⁹⁵



© Bread for the World / flickr.com
Damaged road

Airports

Haiti has 14 airports, but only 4 have paved runways—Cap-Haïtien, Jacmel, Les Cayes, and Port-au-Prince.²⁹⁶ Although the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince was damaged in the

²⁹⁰ Paul Clammer et. al., "Haiti Directory: Money," in *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 348.

²⁹¹ Paul Clammer et. al., "Where to Eat and Drink," *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 286.

²⁹² Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

²⁹³ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 15,

http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁹⁴ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 15,

http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁹⁵ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, 2010, 73,

http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2011,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

2010 earthquake, it reopened to commercial flights less than one month after the disaster.^{297, 298}

Traffic Laws

Traffic laws are not widely enforced in Haiti. There are few working traffic lights, and speed limits are mostly ignored. Haitians generally drive on the right and almost always signal left, regardless of their intended movement in traffic.²⁹⁹

Most streets are poorly marked and are often obstructed by animals, carts, pedestrians, earthquake debris, and broken-down cars (often fixed on site instead of being towed away). At night, people drive without headlights.³⁰⁰

Public Transportation

Although some public buses service Port-au-Prince, they are not reliable. Few Haitians own vehicles for personal use; people usually walk or take *taptaps* (enclosed trucks with benches in the back). Most *taptaps* run regular routes at irregular times (departing when full) and can be dangerous because people are often thrown from them when accidents occur.^{301, 302}



© Marshall Segal
Taptap

Taxis, although available in Haiti, should be used with caution because they are neither clearly marked nor closely regulated.³⁰³

Personal Safety and Security

Crime

Crime is rampant in urban Haiti. In any given year, roughly one in five Haitians will be the victim of a crime. Since the 2010 earthquake, the rate has jumped from 15% to 26% in Port-au-Prince. Half of all crimes involve robbery, and nearly two-thirds involve violence. Gender-based

²⁹⁷ Nathan D. Broshear, "Haiti Airport Transitions, Commercial Flights Begin," U.S. Air Force Southern Command, Public Affairs, 25 February 2010, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123191523>

²⁹⁸ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 15, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

²⁹⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti: Country Specific Information," 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

³⁰⁰ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti: Country Specific Information," 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

³⁰¹ Paul Clammer et. al., *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 355.

³⁰² Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti: Country Specific Information," 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

³⁰³ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti: Country Specific Information," 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

violence is believed to be even more widespread in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.³⁰⁴

It is estimated that at least half of all crimes go unreported. Only 5% of crimes are reported directly to the police department, which is severely understaffed and has a reputation for corruption.³⁰⁵ To help the Haitian National Police provide security, the UN stabilization mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTHA, uses nearly 9,000 soldiers and 3,000 police officers.³⁰⁶



© BBC World Service / flickr.com
Civilian prison Port-au-Prince

Natural Disasters

Major earthquakes, such as the one that hit Haiti in January of 2010, are not frequent, although small earthquakes are common throughout the Caribbean.³⁰⁷ Haiti faces a greater threat from hurricanes each year between June and November because cities are prone to flooding in low-lying areas.³⁰⁸

Political Unrest

Political unrest and public protests are not without precedent in Haiti. In 1987, widespread rioting led to “Baby Doc” Duvalier’s exit, and in 2004 protests hastened Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s departure from Haiti.³⁰⁹ In 2008, food riots broke out in some urban areas, and in the most recent elections violent protests resulted from allegations of election fraud.³¹⁰

Even celebrations like Carnival and *Rara* can become politicized and hold the potential to turn violent without warning. The U.S. State Department recommends avoiding large crowds at public events.³¹¹

Attitudes Toward Foreign Citizens

Although the Haitian attitude toward foreigners is generally positive, Haitians can be sensitive to anything that smacks of exploitation, such as photographing people in slums.³¹² The presence of

³⁰⁴ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, “Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions” (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 59–60, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁰⁵ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, “Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions” (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 61, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁰⁶ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “2010 Human Rights Report: Haiti,” 8 April 2011, 7, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154509.htm>

³⁰⁷ U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, “USGS Issues Assessment of Aftershock Hazards in Haiti,” 21 January 2010, <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=2385>

³⁰⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Haiti Consular Information Sheet,” 12 April 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

³⁰⁹ BBC, “‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier Sued for Torture in Haiti,” 19 January 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12233343>

³¹⁰ *Guardian*, “Food Riots Grip Haiti,” 9 April 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/09/11>

³¹¹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Haiti: Country Specific Information,” 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

UN troops in the country is a growing source of resentment. UN troops have been accused of using excessive force against civilians, violating human rights, and causing the cholera outbreak in 2010.³¹³ Foreign aid in general is an increasingly controversial topic among Haitians.³¹⁴

Foreigners are frequent targets of theft, especially when traveling to and from the airport. Kidnapping is another threat. Foreign women are generally safe, but they should exercise caution when traveling alone.³¹⁵

³¹² Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti: Country Specific Information," 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

³¹³ BBC, "Haiti Protester Shot Dead by UN Peacekeepers," 16 November 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-11761941>

³¹⁴ Maura R. O'Connor et. al., "Does International Aid Keep Haiti Poor?" Slate, a Division of *Washington Post*, 4 January 2011, <http://www.slate.com/id/2279858/entry/2279854/>

³¹⁵ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Haiti: Country Specific Information," 29 August 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html

Chapter 4 Assessment

1. Most city dwellers in Haiti have access to adequate sanitation services.

False

Few people in urban areas of Haiti have access to adequate sanitation services. Plumbing, where it exists, drains into septic tanks that are emptied into holes and sometimes waterways.

2. Education and healthcare are more readily available in the urban centers of Haiti.

True

About one-half of Haiti's hospitals and schools are located in the Port-au-Prince area.

3. There are never traffic problems in Haiti because so few people have cars.

False

Traffic is frequently brought to a standstill by animals, debris, or broken-down vehicles obstructing traffic.

4. Unemployment is low in Haitian cities.

False

Only about one-third of Haitians living in cities have full-time jobs with regular pay and benefits.

5. In Port-au-Prince, most Haitians buy food at open markets.

True

A few upscale supermarkets can be found in the Port-au-Prince area, but most Haitians buy fresh food at open markets.

CHAPTER 5: RURAL LIFE

Introduction

Most Haitians live in isolated rural communities where life has changed little since the nation's independence in 1804. Families live in one- or two-room houses with no electricity or running water. Few children attend school, and hospitals are practically nonexistent. After the 2010 earthquake, an estimated 500,000 Haitians left Port-au-Prince. Most returned to their rural communities, placing even more strain on already scarce resources.

Rural Haitians are among the poorest people in the world. Farmers struggle to support their families on land that is exhausted—largely because of centuries of poor resource management. Wood is the main fuel source for Haitian peasants, even though deforestation has led to widespread land erosion, which in turn has robbed the soil of its richness and wreaked havoc with irrigation systems. Farmers faced with failing farms have two choices: give up farming and move to the city or find new land to farm. Both choices place even more stress on the environment.



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Rural life

Land Distribution

Ownership

Independence eradicated the plantation system in Haiti. Although King Henry Christophe recognized the economic benefits of producing cash crops on large farms, Haitians resented any system that tied them to the land—recalling their slave past. By the 1820s, most plantations were fragmented and the production of cash crops declined severely.³¹⁶



© uusc4all / flickr.com
Haitian farmer and crops

Some of the land was divided by the government and given to former slaves. But much of it was simply claimed, initiating a convoluted system of land ownership that has become increasingly problematic. Most landowners do not have property titles, and formal surveys have not been carried out to clearly mark boundary lines.³¹⁷

³¹⁶ David Geggus, "Why is Haiti so Poor?" (lecture, University of Florida Libraries, Tallahassee, 2011)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfcOIyhk9E8>

³¹⁷ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 82.

Without titles, landowners can lose their land and have little legal recourse for recovering their land. The government can give land away without warning, or speculators can run farmers off their holdings.³¹⁸ Family disputes over inheritance also leave the legal status of land unresolved. When a landowner dies, the land is divided equally among all children. With each generation, plot size shrinks until the land can no longer support a family. In the 1990s it was estimated that the average size of a Haitian farm was less than 1 hectare (2.5 acres).³¹⁹

This system has created a high degree of fragmentation; farmers enter into complicated rental and sharecropping agreements to manage landholdings. A family might rent plots near their main holdings while renting out other plots farther away, or work as sharecroppers even if they own land.³²⁰

Land is the only real wealth most Haitian peasants possess, and during a crisis it is often mortgaged or sold to raise capital and pay debts. When farmers can no longer subsist on their land, they may sell their plots and move to the city to find work.³²¹

Land Use

Because of mountainous terrain, less than 20% of Haiti's total area is suitable for cultivation.^{322, 323} About 29% of that land is used for annual crops (such as sweet potatoes, manioc, beans, and rice), while 11% is planted with permanent crops (such as mangoes and coffee). Another 20% of the land is used for pasture; only 2–4% of the land is forested.³²⁴ Because of constant fluctuations in land ownership, farmers are not motivated to replant harvested trees.³²⁵



© treesftf / flickr.com
Land owner planting trees

³¹⁸ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 83.

³¹⁹ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 83.

³²⁰ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 82–83.

³²¹ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (University of the West Indies: 1961), 485.

³²² Amy L. Hylkema, “Haiti Soil Fertility Analysis and Crop Interpretations for Principal Crops in the Five WINNER Watershed Zones of Intervention,” (paper, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, May 2011), <http://soils.ifas.ufl.edu/academics/pdf/Non-Thesis%20Projects/Amy%20Hylkema.pdf>, 7–8.

³²³ Republic of Haiti, *Third National Report of the Republic of Haiti* (UN Convention to Combat Desertification, 2006), 3.

³²⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, “Haiti,” in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

³²⁵ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 84.

Though 80% of the country receives more than 1000mm (39 in) of annual rainfall, it falls mostly during the wet seasons, making irrigation necessary for farming in most areas. Unfortunately, poor maintenance has led to the deterioration of many public irrigation systems.³²⁶

Environmental Issues

Deforestation

Today, less than 4% of Haiti is covered by forest. Even that portion is vulnerable to deforestation, a process that began when Haiti was first colonized. Beginning with sugar production, which required wood, deforestation continued with the clearing of trees for coffee plantations. In the 19th century, Haitians used timber to pay off their debt to the French. Meanwhile, competition for land pushed subsistence farmers higher into the slopes of Haiti's mountains.³²⁷



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Deforestation

Another cause of widespread deforestation is the production of charcoal, the main fuel used by Haitians and an easy source of income for rural farmers.³²⁸ The production of charcoal is wood intensive—requiring 5–6 metric tons (5.5–6.6 tons) of wood for every 1 metric ton (1.1 ton) of charcoal. Farmers have little motivation to stop cutting down trees because charcoal production is lucrative. The industry generates USD 80 million in revenue per year and employs 150,000 people, making it a major contributor to Haiti's rural economy.³²⁹

Most of the demand for charcoal is from urban areas, such as Port-au-Prince, which consume 80% of Haiti's charcoal. Haiti's total yearly coal consumption is approximately 380,000 metric tons (418,878 tons) per year; a typical family uses 175 kg (385 lb) of charcoal per month.³³⁰

Soil Erosion

Trees and other perennials help stabilize the soil and keep it in place during heavy rains. They absorb water, helping to prevent flash floods and let water drain into streams and rivers more

³²⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Haiti," *AQUASTAT: FAO's Information System on Water and Agriculture*, (2000) http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries_regions/haiti/index.stm

³²⁷ Joel K. Bourne Jr., "Dirt Poor: Haiti Has Lost its Soil and the Means to Feed Itself," *National Geographic*, September 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2008/09/soil/bourne-text>

³²⁸ Glenn R. Smucker et al., "Environmental Vulnerability in Haiti: Findings and Recommendations," U.S. Forest Service and USAID, April 2007, 101, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Haiti_Final.pdf

³²⁹ Glenn R. Smucker et al., "Environmental Vulnerability in Haiti: Findings and Recommendations," U.S. Forest Service and USAID, April 2007, 101–102, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Haiti_Final.pdf

³³⁰ Glenn R. Smucker et al., "Environmental Vulnerability in Haiti: Findings and Recommendations," U.S. Forest Service and USAID, April 2007, 101–102, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Haiti_Final.pdf

slowly.³³¹ But farming on the high slopes and widespread deforestation have created devastating levels of erosion, washing away nearly 37 million metric tons (41 million T) of soil every year and creating desertlike conditions in some places.³³² Agricultural production has slowed with the disappearance of rich top soil.³³³

Some of this displaced soil ends up as river silt that blocks the regular flow of water. Silting up of the Peligre Dam has affected its ability to control water levels on the Artibonite River and, consequently, the irrigation systems connected to it. This leads to occasional flooding when the dam releases too much water. The problem is exacerbated downstream as farmers disrupt the process by digging ditches to connect their property to the irrigation system. Debris—usually washed into the system during floods—has also blocked canals and drains.³³⁴



© Todd Huffman
Fighting erosion

Flooding

Haitian valleys are vulnerable to flooding. In places where water cannot be absorbed into the soil, runoff makes water levels rise quickly and leads to flash flooding.³³⁵ Flash floods are especially dangerous during hurricane season. In 2004, Haiti was hit by two hurricanes, each killing more than 2,500 people.³³⁶

³³¹ Glenn R. Smucker et al., “Environmental Vulnerability in Haiti: Findings and Recommendations,” U.S. Forest Service and USAID, April 2007, 78, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Haiti_Final.pdf

³³² Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 84.

³³³ Joel K. Bourne Jr., “Dirt Poor: Haiti Has Lost its Soil and the Means to Feed Itself,” *National Geographic*, September 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2008/09/soil/bourne-text>

³³⁴ Inter-American Development Bank, “Supplemental Financing for the Agricultural Intensification Program,” 5 November 2007, 2–3, <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=1231835>

³³⁵ Glenn R. Smucker et al., “Environmental Vulnerability in Haiti: Findings and Recommendations,” U.S. Forest Service and USAID, April 2007, ii, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Haiti_Final.pdf

³³⁶ Terry F. Buss and Adam Gardner, *Haiti in the Balance: Why Foreign Aid Has Failed and What We Can Do about It*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2008), 13.

Rural Economy

Although most rural Haitians are considered subsistence farmers, they are highly interdependent on one another and the markets where they trade. Farmers keep only about half of what they raise, converting the rest of their output into cash to purchase household items or pay expenses. Yet farmers do not always raise enough food to live on. They often purchase locally grown and imported food from the markets.³³⁷ Livestock are viewed as

savings accounts: the animals can be slaughtered and sold when cash is needed.³³⁸ Farmers with neither produce nor animals to sell produce handmade items such as candles or rope, or they cut down trees to make charcoal for easy cash.³³⁹



© dan lundmark / flickr.com
Rural home

Employment

In rural Haiti, the distinction between the formal and informal job sectors breaks down. Statistically, most people lack formal jobs, but 72% of the Haitian people work in agriculture. Employment in commerce related to rural markets constitutes 17% of jobs. Only a handful of low-level bureaucrats, merchants, and professionals make up the formal job sector of the average Haitian village.³⁴⁰

In reality, unemployment is virtually nonexistent in rural Haiti. Hard work is highly valued, and each family member is expected to contribute to the household economy. When farmers are unable to make a living off their land, they commonly migrate to urban areas, which offer the best, albeit low, prospects for employment.³⁴¹

Division of Labor

Although men are traditionally the providers and preside over the household, women are the center of the family's financial well-being. Men's primary responsibilities are to work in the fields and manage the farm. Women work in the fields as well, but they also run the household,

³³⁷ Timothy T. Schwartz, *Fewer Men, More Babies: Sex, Family, and Fertility in Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 69–70.

³³⁸ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo: Fafo, 2007), 27.

³³⁹ Tim Collie, "We Know That This is Destroying the Land, But Charcoal is What Keeps Us Alive," *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 7 December 2003, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/sfl-haiti2dec07,0,731957.story>

³⁴⁰ Government of the Republic of Haiti, "Haiti Earthquake PDNA: Assessment of Damage, Losses, General and Sectoral Needs," Annex to Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Port-au-Prince, March 2010, 97, http://www.refondation.ht/resources/PDNA_Working_Document.pdf

³⁴¹ Glenn R. Smucker et al., "Environmental Vulnerability in Haiti: Findings and Recommendations," U.S. Forest Service and USAID, April 2007, 17, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Haiti_Final.pdf

care for the children, and prepare meals. Selling goods is also women's work, and women travel great distances to take produce to markets.^{342, 343}

Children work from a young age. Girls of 8 or 9 travel to the market with their mothers, and by 11 they are sent on their own to make family purchases. By 13 girls can handle all household responsibilities, freeing up their mothers for other economic activities. Boys of about the same age work in the fields with their fathers and may even be hired out to work groups.³⁴⁴

Markets

There are about 300 rural markets in Haiti.³⁴⁵ Market days are usually Tuesday or Wednesday, although sellers arrive the day before to claim a spot and remain until their goods have been sold. Almost all vendors are women selling homemade items, including rum, baskets, saddles, sleeping mats, wooden furniture, firewood, and kindling.³⁴⁶



© Thomas Hackl
Rural market

The markets are the main source of revenue for local governments, which charge for space and tax the animals brought into the marketplace as beasts of burden or for slaughter.³⁴⁷

To avoid paying taxes, farmers will sometimes sell their goods to a traveling *vendeuse*, a woman who purchases produce and goods as she travels from market to market.³⁴⁸ These women travel from small markets to urban markets, where they sell what they have accumulated; they purchase imported goods, such as flour, rice, used clothing, shoes, dishes, utensils, and tools, to sell on the journey back.³⁴⁹ The *vendeuses*, sometimes called “Madam Sarahs,” are often older women who

³⁴² Paul Clammer et. al., *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 273.

³⁴³ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” *Antropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 80.

³⁴⁴ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” *Antropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 93.

³⁴⁵ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 81.

³⁴⁶ Timothy T. Schwartz, *Fewer Men, More Babies: Sex, Family, and Fertility in Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 69.

³⁴⁷ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 81.

³⁴⁸ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 81.

³⁴⁹ Sidney W. Mintz, “Remembering Haiti: Lessons from the Field,” *Boston Review*, March/April 2010, <http://bostonreview.net/BR35.2/mintz.php>

are free from household duties. Successful *vendeuses* attain a degree of economic and social independence from their husbands.³⁵⁰

Transportation and Infrastructure

In rural Haiti, most roads are unpaved and motorized traffic is sparse.³⁵¹ Although some buses link villages, most people walk from place to place.³⁵² It is common to see women and girls walking along roads with large bundles or jugs balanced on their heads.

Few people in rural Haiti have running water and electricity in their homes. On average, 23% have access to piped water and 29% have electricity. As in urban areas, a great disparity exists between the wealthy minority and the poor majority in rural Haiti. Among the wealthy, nearly 80% have electricity and 48% have access to piped water, compared to 8% and 13%, respectively, for the poorest Haitian farmers.³⁵³



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Carrying water home

Village Life

Settlement Patterns

Rural Haitians traditionally live outside villages in scattered settlements (*lakou*) consisting of 5–12 dwellings, usually shared by members of an extended family.³⁵⁴ Men are expected to provide a house, furniture, and a garden plot for their wives, often in the same *lakou* with the husband's parents. The creation of pooled labor and resources via the *lakou* system has allowed relatives to help one another raise children and crops. But in the last 50 years, *lakou* settlements have declined because of



© waterdotorg / flickr.com
Outhouse

³⁵⁰ Timothy T. Schwartz, "Children are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children," *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 98.

³⁵¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

³⁵² Paul Clammer et al., *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 353.

³⁵³ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 164, 169, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁵⁴ Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, *A Haiti Anthology: Libete* (London: Latin America Research and Action Bureau Ltd, 1999), 80.

high rates of poverty, land disputes among relatives, and increased migration to urban areas, leaving fewer men available for field labor.³⁵⁵

The typical rural house, made from interwoven poles secured with twigs, has two rooms, one for dining and the other for sleeping and storage. Cooking takes place in a separate structure. Most rural homes have no electricity, running water, or plumbing. Latrines are outside, usually behind the house, and are often just a hole in the ground. Yards are part of a family's private living space and are "fenced" with cactus, poison oak, or other plants that discourage trespassing.³⁵⁶

Villages are administrative centers for local governments, planned and settled by the French during the colonial era. Villages also have hospitals, health clinics, schools, churches, and markets. Village dwellers are considered elite because they usually have government ties or jobs that require education and skill. Villagers are 10 times more likely than those living in *lakous* to have electricity and 4 times more likely to have running water.³⁵⁷

Local Leadership

Although every village has a mayor and a justice of the peace, the only government officials Haitians usually interact with are tax collectors. Haitians are more likely to belong to community councils than to political parties.³⁵⁸ These councils, are an outgrowth of those mandated by François Duvalier in the 1960s to undertake community projects, such as clearing footpaths for soldiers. They have since evolved and proliferated with the encouragement of the Catholic Church and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs).³⁵⁹ Members of these peasant groups (*gwoupman peyizan*) view democracy and development as interrelated and often organize around a particular issue, sometimes in cooperation with an NGO. Women and young adults are encouraged to take leadership roles in the councils.³⁶⁰



© treesftt / flickr.com
Meeting with community leaders

³⁵⁵ Yanique M. Edmond et al., "The Lakou System: A Cultural, Ecological Analysis of Mothering in Rural Haiti," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 20.

³⁵⁶ Timothy T. Schwartz, *Fewer Men, More Babies: Sex, Family, and Fertility in Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 67.

³⁵⁷ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 164, 169, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁵⁸ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 133, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁵⁹ Jennie Marcellle Smith, *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 148.

³⁶⁰ Jennie Marcellle Smith, *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 141.

Farmers also organize themselves. With the decline of the *lakou* as a source of communal labor, work organizations called *atribisyons* and *sosyetes* have filled the vacuum. An *atribisyon* is a rotating, community-based, labor-exchange group that mimics the *lakou* system. Men can belong to more than one *atribisyon*, and *atribisyons* sometimes hire themselves out for paid labor. They are headed by a chief and several officers and meet once a week.³⁶¹

Sosyetes are larger, formal organizations that function much like unions, although membership is exclusive. Benefits include shared labor; a portion of the *sosyete*'s profits; and assistance with healthcare, funerals, and conflict resolution. *Sosyetes*, which also sponsor community processions and annual celebrations, are male-dominated organizations with a complex leadership structure in which almost every member has a title or a specific role. They are headed by a president and presided over by a governor who calls and leads meetings, with generals to handle administration and lead processions.³⁶²

Healthcare

Because healthcare resources are concentrated in urban areas, few hospitals exist outside cities. An estimated 70% of healthcare services in rural Haiti are provided through clinics sponsored by NGOs.³⁶³ Since many Haitians believe that malicious sorcery or the displeasure of the *lwa* (spirits) can cause illness, “leaf doctors” (traditional healers) are frequently consulted by rural Haitians along with *mambos* (Vodou priestesses) and *hougans* (Vodou priests).³⁶⁴



© HelpAge / flickr.com
Nurses give health care advice

Education

Although Haitians recognize the high value of literacy, only 50% of rural children receive a basic education.³⁶⁵ Lack of access to schools and poverty are usually the reasons for low enrollment.

Most schools in Haiti were established by foreign NGOs, local organizations, or vigilante educators. But staffing these schools with qualified teachers and providing learning materials is a

³⁶¹ Jennie Marcelle Smith, *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 95–98, 115.

³⁶² Jennie Marcelle Smith, *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 106, 113.

³⁶³ Terry F. Buss and Adam Gardner, *Haiti in the Balance: Why Foreign Aid Has Failed and What We Can Do about It* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2008), 12.

³⁶⁴ *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures*, vol 2, eds. Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, Inc, 2004) 701.

³⁶⁵ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 5, 19.

constant struggle. Many schools are in churches or people's yards, and most teach only the first four grades.³⁶⁶

A school within walking distance does not guarantee access to education. During the rainy seasons, impassable roads can block children from attending a school. Or, if a local school is full, parents might have to make boarding arrangements with other families and send their children to schools farther away.³⁶⁷

Public schools, which are not free, require the yearly tuition up front. Payment does not always coincide with harvest, leaving some parents short on cash.³⁶⁸ Students who pay monthly can end up in a vicious cycle of repeating grades if they are unable to pay tuition; they are forced to drop out before taking the exams required to progress to the next grade.³⁶⁹

The more siblings a child has, the less likely he or she is to attend school.³⁷⁰ Parents sometimes concentrate their resources on sending one or two children to school. The hope is that the educated children will find work and help support the family.³⁷¹ Half of all Haitians rely on remittances from absent family members.³⁷²

Only 10% of rural Haitians progress to seventh grade, but, because of the poor quality of instruction, this does not guarantee literacy.³⁷³ Access to vocational training is limited for rural Haitians as well: most schools are in cities and have strict admission requirements.³⁷⁴

Security and Safety

Crime

Crime is low in rural areas, although a fair amount of domestic violence occurs. Women are as likely to be perpetrators as victims.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁶ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 14.

³⁶⁷ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 17–18.

³⁶⁸ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 28.

³⁶⁹ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 29.

³⁷⁰ Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 180, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁷¹ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 6, 26.

³⁷² Dominique Zephyr and Abby Cordova, "Haiti in Distress: The Impact of the 2010 Earthquake on Citizen Lives and Perceptions" (study, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, March 2011), 24, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/2010-Haiti-in-Distress-English.pdf>

³⁷³ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 18–19.

³⁷⁴ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 13.

Borders

Although there are checkpoints along Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic, much of the border, as well as more than 1,600 km (1,000 mi) of Haiti's shoreline, is unpatrolled.³⁷⁶

Trafficking

Because of its strategic location and unsecured borders, Haiti has long been a major transit country for cocaine, marijuana, and heroin en route from South America and the Caribbean to the United States.^{377, 378} Large shipments of drugs are brought into Haiti by speedboat, by air drops, or by the use of secret landing strips.^{379, 380}

³⁷⁵ Timothy Schwartz, "Gender in Haiti: The Case of Polygyny," *Open Salon*, 30 April 2011, http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2011/04/30/polygyny_in_haiti

³⁷⁶ Chris Hawley, "Haiti Drug Trafficking Likely to Rise in Quake Aftermath," *USA Today*, 29 February 2010, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2010-02-09-haiti-drug-trafficking_N.htm

³⁷⁷ GlobalSecurity.org, "Haiti: Drug Trafficking," 8 February 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/haiti/drugs.htm>

³⁷⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti: Transnational Issues: Illicit Drugs," in *The World Factbook*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

³⁷⁹ Charles Arthur, *Haiti: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture* (New York: Interlink, 2002), 39.

³⁸⁰ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, "Statement by J. Milford, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration Before the House International Relations Committee Regarding Haiti," 9 December 1997, <http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct971209.htm>

Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Rural Haitians have little contact with government officials.

True

Most government resources are concentrated in urban areas. Except for tax collectors and low-level bureaucrats, rural Haitians have little involvement with government officials.

2. Women are not allowed to work outside the home.

False

It is the woman's role to sell a family's goods in the markets. This gives some women, such as *vendeuses*, the opportunity to gain financial independence from their husbands.

3. Farmers are usually able to support their families by farming their own land.

False

Several conditions, including exhausted soil, deforestation, and small farm size, make it difficult for farmers to make a living off their own land.

4. Rural children have access to the same educational opportunities as urban children.

False

Children must often travel long distances to attend schools, and parents often cannot afford to send all their children to school or keep children in school.

5. Farming on the high slopes has led to great amounts of erosion.

True

Competition for land has driven Haitians farther and farther up the sides of mountains to farm. However, farming on steep slopes contributes to erosion.

CHAPTER 6: FAMILY LIFE

Typical Family Structure

Applying the African proverb that “it takes a village to raise a child,” extended Haitian families have traditionally lived in compounds called *lakou*, where related children are raised and cared for by adults who share labor, resources, and responsibilities.^{381, 382}

Although instability, famine, and economic hardship have eroded the traditional *lakou*, life for most Haitians still centers on the family. Many rural Haitians continue to live near extended family, and those who migrate send remittances home.^{383, 384} Haitians living overseas still consult family members about important decisions.³⁸⁵



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Haitian family

Yet migration to Haitian cities and beyond has separated many Haitians from their family support system. Two-parent nuclear families are uncommon in most places, and 70% of rural Haitian households are headed by women.³⁸⁶

Male-Female Interactions

Haitians have a relaxed attitude about sex, viewing it as a natural part of life. Far from a taboo subject, it is discussed openly: extremely explicit songs and dances are hallmarks of Carnival and *Rara* celebrations.³⁸⁷ But Haitians view male and female sexuality differently, and this attitude defines courtship and marriage roles.

Men are expected to be sexually aggressive—to pursue and seduce women. From a young age boys are taught that celibacy is unnatural and will lead to insanity, illness,



© Rémi Kaupp
Haitian family, nine daughters

³⁸¹ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 483.

³⁸² Yanique M. Edmond et al., “The Lakou System: A Cultural, Ecological Analysis of Mothering in Rural Haiti,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 20.

³⁸³ Yanique M. Edmond et al., “The Lakou System: A Cultural, Ecological Analysis of Mothering in Rural Haiti,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 26.

³⁸⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., “Social Structure,” in *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 328, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

³⁸⁵ Lygia O. Holcomb et al., “Haitian Americans: Implications for Nursing Care,” *Journal of Community Health Nursing* 13, no. 4 (1996): 256.

³⁸⁶ Yanique M. Edmond et al., “The Lakou System: A Cultural, Ecological Analysis of Mothering in Rural Haiti,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 20.

³⁸⁷ M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006), 48–50.

and even death.³⁸⁸ But sex is something they must work for.³⁸⁹ Women, for their part, are expected to play hard to get. For women sex is not about pleasure; it is a commodity they can use to better their position, socially and economically.³⁹⁰

Although there are no specific prohibitions against premarital sex, promiscuity—at least in girls—is frowned on.³⁹¹ For women, sex implies a commitment on the part of the man; children born out of wedlock are entitled to be supported by their fathers. For a man, one of the worst insults is “vakabon” or “freeloader,” meaning that the man has slept with a woman but reneged on his promises.³⁹²

Married Life, Divorce, and Birth

Marriage

Traditions of courtship and marriage remain strong in rural Haiti, where many families still live close together. If a man is interested in a woman, he is expected to present himself and make the marriage proposal to her family; the proposal then must be approved by her family.³⁹³

Because most men cannot afford a wedding, formal marriages in Haiti are rare. Instead, couples enter into a common-law marriage called a *plasaj*, usually with the intent of marrying later. These unions are as stable as traditional marriages and children born of them are considered legitimate.³⁹⁴



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Mother and her garden

Before a man marries, he has to build (or in urban areas, buy) and furnish a house for his wife. In rural areas he must also provide a garden plot so that his wife can grow crops to sell at markets. This arrangement provides a pension plan for the man, who expects to be supported by his wife and children when he retires.³⁹⁵ If a man cannot pay for a house, a woman may choose to use her own money to expedite the process.³⁹⁶

³⁸⁸ Timothy T. Schwartz, *Fewer Men, More Babies: Sex, Family, and Fertility in Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 57.

³⁸⁹ M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006), 49.

³⁹⁰ M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006), 50.

³⁹¹ Timothy T. Schwartz, *Fewer Men, More Babies: Sex, Family, and Fertility in Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 59.

³⁹² Timothy Schwartz, “Gender in Haiti: The Case of Polygyny,” *Open Salon*, 30 April 2011, http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2011/04/30/polygyny_in_haiti

³⁹³ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 499.

³⁹⁴ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 504.

³⁹⁵ Timothy Schwartz, “Gender in Haiti: The Case of Polygyny,” *Open Salon*, 30 April 2011, http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2011/04/30/polygyny_in_haiti

³⁹⁶ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 500.

A man might have multiple sex partners outside marriage, but polygamy is rare because many men cannot afford more than one wife.^{397, 398, 399} By comparison, once a woman has entered into an arrangement with a man, she is expected to be monogamous for as long as he provides for her. If a woman is caught being unfaithful, she could lose her house and custody of the children. But she is free to look elsewhere for support if a man does not fulfill his obligations.⁴⁰⁰

Divorce

Divorce is not common in Haiti, partly because marriage itself is rare and partly because court costs are high. Men are reluctant to divorce because, unless the wife has been unfaithful, she retains the house and custody of the children, whom he is still expected to support. If a man can afford it, he may take a second wife or simply enter into an informal arrangement with another woman.⁴⁰¹

Birth

In Haitian culture, adulthood begins with the birth of a first child.⁴⁰² Girls in their teens are encouraged to start having children. By age 19, 30% of Haitian females have had a child or are pregnant.⁴⁰³ The average Haitian woman will give birth 3–5 times during her lifetime.⁴⁰⁴

Although most Haitian women seek some prenatal care, most births take place in the home without the aid of a doctor or health professional. The infant mortality rate is nearly 60 per 1,000 births, 10 times higher than in the United States.⁴⁰⁵



© United Nations / flickr.com
Haitian mother and child

Only about 18% of Haitian women use modern birth control methods.⁴⁰⁶ Contraceptives are viewed with skepticism and, even where available, are infrequently used.⁴⁰⁷ This is partly

³⁹⁷ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., “Gender Roles and Marriage,” in *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 338,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

³⁹⁸ Ju Yon Kang, “Hidden Epidemic: Violence Against Women in Haiti” (honors thesis, Duke University, 2011), 74.

³⁹⁹ M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006), 50.

⁴⁰⁰ Timothy Schwartz, “Gender in Haiti: The Case of Polygyny,” *Open Salon*, 30 April 2011,

http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2011/04/30/polygyny_in_haiti

⁴⁰¹ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 509.

⁴⁰² M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006), 52.

⁴⁰³ M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006), 48.

⁴⁰⁴ United States Agency for International Development, “Haiti: Country Health Statistical Report,” November 2008,

http://www.hopeforhaiti.com/pdfs/statistic_report.pdf

⁴⁰⁵ United States Agency for International Development, “Haiti: Country Health Statistical Report,” November 2008,

http://www.hopeforhaiti.com/pdfs/statistic_report.pdf

⁴⁰⁶ United States Agency for International Development, “Haiti: Country Health Statistical Report,” November 2008, http://www.hopeforhaiti.com/pdfs/statistic_report.pdf

because contraceptive devices, especially condoms, are associated with disease.⁴⁰⁸ Haitians mainly avoid birth control because they want children.⁴⁰⁹

Haitian women sometimes say they are suffering from *perdisyon*, a mystical form of pregnancy in which the growth of the fetus is supposedly arrested for up to five years. *Perdisyon* is thought to be the result of sorcery or an angry *lwa* (spirit). Women seek treatment from *mambos* (Vodou priestesses), *hougans* (Vodou priests), and “leaf doctors” (traditional healers) to free the fetus from the spell.⁴¹⁰

Anthropologists speculate that the phenomenon is a way for women to deal with infertility in a culture that respects mothers. It is also a convenient cover for adultery. If a woman “in *perdisyon*” gives birth during a husband’s long absence, the child is considered his. The children always belong to the woman’s partner when *perdisyon* began, and the men almost always accept the children as their own.^{411, 412}

Generational Roles

Children

Children are highly valued in Haitian culture. Often the first question a stranger hears is “How many children do you have?” To Haitians, an illegitimate child or a child by an unsuitable partner is better than no children.⁴¹³

Haitians value children in part because they are considered assets instead of liabilities. By age 7 or 8, most children carry out regular household duties, such as fetching water or tending livestock. Girls accompany their mothers to markets to learn the business and occasionally oversee sales.



© ElMarto / flickr.com
Haitian kids

⁴⁰⁷ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 74–75.

⁴⁰⁸ Timothy T. Schwartz, *Fewer Men, More Babies: Sex, Family, and Fertility in Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 49.

⁴⁰⁹ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 73–75.

⁴¹⁰ Gerald F. Murray, “The Phantom Child in Haitian Voodoo: A Folk-Religious Model of Uterine Life,” in *African Creative Expressions of the Divine*, eds. K. Davis and E. Farajaje-Jones (Boston: Harvard School of Divinity, 1991), 14–15.

⁴¹¹ Gerald F. Murray, “The Phantom Child in Haitian Voodoo: A Folk-Religious Model of Uterine Life,” in *African Creative Expressions of the Divine*, eds. K. Davis and E. Farajaje-Jones (Boston: Harvard School of Divinity, 1991), 17–18.

⁴¹² Timothy Schwartz, “Gender in Haiti: The Case of Polygyny,” *Open Salon*, 30 April 2011, http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2011/04/30/polygyny_in_haiti

⁴¹³ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 71–72.

Parents are strict, and corporal punishment is normal.⁴¹⁴ Although Haitians may not seem overly affectionate, they are extremely protective, preferring children to stay close to home as protection against sorcery and bad magic.⁴¹⁵

Children commonly live with relatives for a variety of reasons, such as a widowed mother or older relatives needing additional help.⁴¹⁶ *Restaveks*—children who live with another family if their own cannot support them—perform household labor for an education.⁴¹⁷ Children may also board with another family to attend a school beyond walking distance from their home.⁴¹⁸

Adolescents

By the time girls are teenagers, they assume many household duties, which allows mothers to pursue outside economic activities. For this reason, girls are highly valued and remain at home until they are married or pledged.^{419, 420} If a girl who lives at home becomes pregnant, it is not unusual for her parents to adopt the child.



© waterdotorg / flickr.com
Girls doing laundry

When boys reach adolescence, they work on family land or are hired out for wages.⁴²¹ Unemployment and poverty force most young men to delay marriage.⁴²² They are more likely than their female counterparts to emigrate in search of work.⁴²³

The Elderly

The elderly are traditionally respected and cared for by their families. For a child, it is an honor to be chosen to take care of an aging parent, who usually comes to live with him or her.⁴²⁴ But

⁴¹⁴ Lygia O. Holcomb et al., “Haitian Americans: Implications for Nursing Care,” *Journal of Community Health Nursing* 13, no. 4 (1996): 255.

⁴¹⁵ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4, (1991): 489.

⁴¹⁶ Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4, (1991): 488.

⁴¹⁷ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 83–84.

⁴¹⁸ Henriette Lunde, *Youth and Education in Haiti: Disincentives, Vulnerabilities and Constraints* (Oslo, Norway: Fafo, 2007), 29.

⁴¹⁹ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 94.

⁴²⁰ Timothy Schwartz, “Gender in Haiti: The Case of Polygyny,” *Open Salon*, 30 April 2011, http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2011/04/30/polygyny_in_haiti

⁴²¹ Timothy T. Schwartz, “Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children,” in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 93.

⁴²² Remy Bastien, “Haitian Rural Family Organization,” *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 504.

⁴²³ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., “Social Structure,” in *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 328,

http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁴²⁴ Lygia O. Holcomb et al., “Haitian Americans: Implications for Nursing Care,” *Journal of Community Health Nursing* 13, no. 4 (1996): 255.

the elderly are increasingly vulnerable as migration, disease, and natural disasters scatter families, separating elders from family members who would normally care for them.⁴²⁵

At birth, a Haitian's life expectancy is 62 years; only 4% of Haitians live past age 65.⁴²⁶ Haiti does not have a social security system or state-sponsored healthcare, so elderly people without family rely on community support or seek care in one of Haiti's few nursing homes.⁴²⁷

Family Social Events

Baptism

Haitian babies are often baptized in a church or Vodou ceremony within a few months of birth. Because so many children are born at home, baptism in a Catholic church—even if the parents have already performed a Vodou ceremony—is often the easiest way to obtain a birth certificate for the child.⁴²⁸

Marriage

Haitians celebrate marriages in the typical way—with a great deal of food, music, and dancing among family and friends. Couples often delay marriage until their children are grown because it is expensive.⁴²⁹ Most marry for social prestige instead of religious conviction. Protestants are more likely to get married, and Protestant churches offer free weddings to encourage young couples to marry.⁴³⁰



© Vanessa Bertozzi
Used wedding dresses at market

Funeral Rites

Funeral rites and burial arrangements are often elaborate and expensive for the family. Haitians have a strong belief in the afterlife and view death as part of the progression of the soul. After the death of a loved one, family and friends gather for nine days of mourning.⁴³¹ Then a funeral takes place, usually in a church, followed by a procession—often accompanied by a band—to the

⁴²⁵ William Booth, "Old and Poor in Haiti Suffer Mightily After the Quake," *The Washington Post*, 13 March 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/12/AR2010031202050.html>

⁴²⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Haiti: People," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

⁴²⁷ William Booth, "Old and Poor in Haiti Suffer Mightily After the Quake," *The Washington Post*, 13 March 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/12/AR2010031202050.html>

⁴²⁸ Elizabeth McAlister, "The Rite of Baptism in Haitian Vodou," (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2001), 364, <http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=div2facpubs&sei-redir=1#search=%22Rite%20Baptism%20Haitian%20Vodou%22>

⁴²⁹ Timothy T. Schwartz, "Children Are the Wealth of the Poor: Pronatalism and the Economic Utility of Children," in *Anthropological Perspectives on Economic Development*, eds. Norbert Dannhaeuser and Cynthia Werner (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2003), 68.

⁴³⁰ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., "Gender Roles and Marriage," in *Country Studies: Dominican Republic and Haiti*, 3rd ed., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 338, http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/Dominican%20Republic%20and%20Haiti%20Study_1.pdf

⁴³¹ Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 264.

family burial ground, where the body is placed in an elaborate tomb.⁴³² Black and white are colors of mourning in Haiti.

If the deceased person practiced Vodou, a Vodou priest or priestess may perform a ceremony after death to release the dead person's *lwa* (spirit).⁴³³ Because Haitians believe that a recently deceased person's soul can be turned into a "zombie" and forced to work for a sorcerer, certain rites are performed to prevent this spiritual enslavement.⁴³⁴ A second ceremony is held a year and a day after death to bring the soul back to earth, where it continues on its journey in the afterlife.⁴³⁵ Another belief is that the spirits of family members have the power to influence the lives of all future generations.⁴³⁶



© US Air Force / flickr.com
Cemetery in Port-au-Prince

Naming Conventions

Women take their husbands' last names upon marriage. Even women in common-law unions take their husbands' surnames and are called "madam" (the title of a married woman). Children are entitled to take their father's last name, regardless of his relationship with their mother.⁴³⁷

⁴³² Paul Clammer et al., *Lonely Planet: Dominican Republic & Haiti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2008), 298.

⁴³³ Alfred Metraux, "The Concept of the Soul in Haitian Vodou," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 2 (Spring 1946): 90.

⁴³⁴ Hans-W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier, "The Ways and Nature of the Zombi," in *The Journal of American Folklore* 104, no. 414 (1991): 482, 486–487.

⁴³⁵ Elizabeth McAlister, "The Rite of Baptism in Haitian Vodou," (paper, Division II Faculty Publications, Wesleyan University, 2001), 363,

<http://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=div2facpubs&sei->

⁴³⁶ Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 264.

⁴³⁷ Remy Bastien, "Haitian Rural Family Organization," *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1991): 504.

Chapter 6 Assessment

1. Haitians prefer to marry before they have children.

False

Marriage is rare in Haiti because it is expensive. Instead, couples live together and raise children in common-law unions, with the intent of marrying later.

2. *Perdisyon* is a “magically arrested” pregnancy believed to last up to five years.

True

Because having children is important to Haitians, *perdisyon* is often used as an explanation for infertility. Women seek treatment from “leaf doctors” (traditional healers) and *mambos* and *hougans* (Vodou priestesses and priests).

3. Women are not allowed to leave their husbands or partners under any circumstances.

False

A woman is only expected to be faithful to a man who fulfills his obligations as a provider.

4. Children are seen as economic assets to a family.

True

Young children carry out regular household duties, and girls go to markets with their mothers to learn the business of selling.

5. Haitian babies are often baptized in a church or Vodou ceremony.

True

Most newborns are baptized within a few months in a church or Vodou ceremony. Baptism in a Catholic church secures a birth certificate for babies born at home.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. The word “Haiti” is derived from a word meaning “mountainous.”
True / False
2. Newspapers are the most widely used news source in Haiti.
True / False
3. Haiti was administered by the United States following President Guillaume Sam.
True / False
4. Dozens of democratically elected presidents have served a full term in office in Haiti.
True / False
5. Under French rule, Haiti, then known as Saint Domingue, became the most prosperous colony in the New World.
True / False
6. Vodou has been recognized as the official religion of Haiti since the country gained independence.
True / False
7. Liberation theology has been popular in Haiti since the 1970s.
True / False
8. It is acceptable to touch items on a Christian or Vodou religious altar.
True / False
9. In 1685 French colonial law required all slaves to be baptized in the Catholic Church.
True / False
10. Vodou has roots in Central and West Africa.
True / False
11. Haitians do not like talking to strangers.
True / False
12. The average Haitian eats meat with every meal.
True / False

13. Women tend to dress modestly, wearing skirts to the knee and conservative necklines.

True / False

14. Haitians consider it rude to make eye contact with someone who is speaking to them.

True / False

15. Haiti's Independence Day is 1 January.

True / False

16. Port-au-Prince is Haiti's largest city and economic hub.

True / False

17. *Taptaps* are a safe and reliable way to get around the cities in Haiti.

True / False

18. Most Haitians work in rubber factories.

True / False

19. Major earthquakes frequently threaten Haiti.

True / False

20. Roughly one in five Haitians will be the victim of a crime in any given year.

True / False

21. Land in Haiti is passed strictly from father to son.

True / False

22. There are few hospitals in rural Haiti.

True / False

23. Rural markets are the main source of revenue for local governments.

True / False

24. Drug traffickers use secret landing strips in Haiti to transport drugs from South America and the Caribbean to the United States.

True / False

25. *Sosyetes* are formal work organizations that offer members many benefits.

True / False

26. Polygamy is common in Haiti.

True / False

27. Birth control is not widely used in Haiti.

True / False

28. Men are typically sexually aggressive toward women.

True / False

29. Children only take their father's last name if their parents are legally married.

True / False

30. Funeral rites in Haiti are elaborate and expensive.

True / False

FURTHER READING

Books

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