The Emancipated Empire: Faustin I Soulouque and the Origins of the Second Haitian Empire, 1847-1859

Emmanuel Lachaud

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Abstract

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Emmanuel Lachaud

2021

Historians of postemancipation will recognize the questions that drive my dissertation, “The Emancipated Empire: Faustin I Soulouque and the Origins of the Second Haitian Empire, 1847-1859.” Among other things I am interested in examining the process by which Haitians, elite, urban, and rural in the late 1840s rejected the political legitimacy of republicanism and forged a common sense of nationhood that befitted what they felt were new circumstances—hence their conviction that the time was ripe for a sweeping symbolic change to empire and monarchy. This line of inquiry follows a long succession of theoretical explanations on the Atlantic phenomenon of emancipation and the rise of post-slavery nation-states in the mid-nineteenth century. For the Haitian case specifically, I have asked: how did post-slavery populations negotiate their definitions of freedom and how did the state set out to construct a sense of legitimacy in light of the limits placed on freedom? While the second Haitian empire eventually fell into a continuation of the socioeconomic divide, in its origin’s empire provided a sense of popular sovereignty and legitimacy by integrating a symbolic sense of freedom that united highly differentiated social factions and bridged the regional networks of authority. My research not only provides an excavation of the second Haitian empire’s origins, but also provides new information about the history of sociopolitics and postslavery state-formation. Emphasizing the subjective nature of society and national politics, I see it as an ongoing practice, one in which powerful actors project an inevitably self-serving discourse meant to manipulate
political supporters, who themselves deployed their own notions of participation and fairness through daily interactions.

My dissertation begins by establishing the sociopolitical history of political legitimacy and freedom in mid-century Haiti, charting structural changes that took place after the Haitian Revolution up until the political crisis of the mid-1840s. Next, I reread the moment of 1848-1849 to investigate the origins Soulouque’s base of power in the capital and in the Southern and Western departments. I find that whereas the events have been typified as riots and massacres—specifically in the form of peasant and urban color violence—these rebellions had roots in larger arguments about the nature of postslavery freedom and the rejection of Haiti’s ruling class republicanism. President Faustin Soulouque was able to create a sense of political legitimacy through the cooption of collective aggression and turn two major black publics, *Piquets* and *Zinglins*, into tools for the consolidation of power. Then, I look to the 1849 apparition of *La Vierge* to reconstruct the spiritual landscape of power and religious legitimacy. While Haiti’s many overlapping and interplayed spiritualisms gave way to numerous parallel hierarchies and semi-autonomous governmentalities, Soulouque’s most successful bid for emperor came from his ability to openly acknowledge and utilize them to affirm spiritual and moral legitimacy. Finally, I look to the Coronation of 1852 and I follow how as Emperor, political theatre in the form of grandiose ritual and performative monarchy, reflected persistent practices in the ontology of Haitian cultural legitimacy. Haitian monarchy refracted symbols of Afro-power politics reflected a close paternalism of Haiti’s founders, and built upon idioms of black male aspirations.
The Emancipated Empire:
Faustin I Soulouque and the Origins of the Second Haitian Empire, 1847-1859

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of
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By
Emmanuel Lachaud

Dissertation Directors: Stuart B. Schwartz and Anne Eller

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FOR MARIE-CLAUDE LACHAUD,
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On the evening of August 24th, 1849, a large gathering of supporters of the President Faustin Soulouque in Port-au-Prince presented two petitions addressed to the Chamber of Representatives. One was formed from an assortment of citizens who had collected signatures from the 20th to the 24th—some under the possible duress and threat of repression. This petition proclaimed, “the Haitian people, jealous to conserve intact the sacred principals of their liberty and of their independence conquered by the most glorious price of their blood” raised their voices in sanctioning a new “glorious era.” The second petition was from “the people and the army” and signed from civil and military functionaries from most branches of the administration and by the garrison of the capital, led by commandant General Vil-de-Lubin. At the crowd’s urging, the petitions were presented demanding the imposition of current President Soulouque with the title of Emperor. The petitions were immediately adopted by the House floor.

Fascinatingly, that same day public inscriptions were placed along the main roads of the capital which read, “Vox populi vox dei”, Latin for, the voice of the people is the voice of God. At the start of the 26th storefronts were closed; the streets of Champs de Mars were covered in bouquets and garlanded in palms and tinsels of national colors. Multitudes of troops, Port-au-Prince elites, and people awaited by the Senate house for the results of deliberations. At 10:50am a 101-cannon salvo sounded announcing a long procession to the church of Port-au-Prince. There, the president of the Senate, Alphonse Larochel, presented President Soulouque with the title and

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1 The events described and quotations are all from Le Moniteur haïtien, September 1, 1849. This was language that harkened directly back to The Haitian Declaration of Independence: “And you, precious men, intrepid generals, who, without concern for your own pain… have done nothing if you do not give the nations a terrible, but just example of the vengeance that must be wrought by a people proud to have recovered its liberty and jealous to maintain it.”
proclaimed him now Emperor Faustin I Soulouque “by the grace of God and virtue of the
Constitution of Haiti” at the clamorous reclamation of a massive throng of supporters.² Haiti, the
‘black republic,’ was now an empire, all without losing its constitution, its Senate, or the
Chamber of Representatives.³

In this bloodless spectacle Soulouque declared upon receiving his senate nomination: “I
agree, with a sentiment of profound recognition, the voice emitting from the nation of which we
are the organs.”⁴ In concurrence with the signs that appeared around the capital, this
performative rhetoric was orchestrated in the political language of democratic ethic as well as
divine recognition. What made this nomination legitimate was its evocation of the people’s
“voice,” which, in accordance with the signs and the “grace of God,” was the “organ” of the
nation. Each piece— from the petitioning from the “people” and the senate, to the vox populi vox
dei signs, to the senatorial deliberation process—ungirded the new state’s sense of popular
political legitimacy. Yet, this was part of a long bloody drama of political theatre starting over a
year before in early 1848: as Soulouque’s subaltern allies leveled the Southern and West elite
and petit bourgeoisie classes, Soulouque became the heroic figure, and the gwo nèg⁵, that
represented the triumph over republicanism. The republic had brought “the unhappy state of the
country,” Larochel explained, and as a consequence the newly crowned Emperor, “with the aid
of the most high,” arrived to consolidate this new voice of the people as the national ethic.⁶

Consolidating this view in a proclamation following his nomination, Soulouque asserted that he
had become a “slave of the nation which confers to me its destinies,” arguing that that he, and

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³ Le Moniteur haïtien, September 1, 1849.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Kreyòl for big man. For more see Chap. 4’s discussion on the performance of popular monarchy and black
masculinity.
⁶ Ibid.
empire, would maintain “peace,” “order,” and “harmony with the new order of things.” That is, with and without awareness of their political implications and without disbanding the moniker of popular representation or the orthodox Christianity that undergirded the nation-state’s moral identity, the acts of Soulouque himself, demonstrated that empire offered a concept of community that long existed within the Haitian state.

The historiographical portrait of the second empire and the state’s role in domination has been painted through a veil of pessimism: often, it has been portrayed solely as a decade of tyranny and stagnancy. This dissertation, however, offers an illustration of the second Haitian empire that goes beyond the simplistic structural explanations of recurrent conflict that have too often been the foundational framework to mid-century studies. Indeed, the second empire was not a wholly new sum of sociopolitics; it was steeped in a continuity of Haitian culture, not taking for granted a range of customs, needs, and definitions of the postslavery populace. At the same time, the second Haitian empire broke with the legacy of over four decades of republicanism that first developed in Haiti’s South under Alexandre Pétion (1807-1818) and continued under President Jean Pierre Boyer (1818-1842). For the first time since the final years of the revolutionary period, there was a multi-class, integrative, hegemonic movement that had been imposed by radical subalterns even as it was sanctioned and regulated by a state of domination and repression. Traditional accounts of the period have tended to obscure these mass mobilizations or, following the consolidation of state power in 1848-1849, to paint them uniformly as Soulouque’s own statecraft and claim to authority. However, there was an almost constant undercurrent of local and regional mobilization, socio-politically resistant in its makeup and collective in its political strategy.

7 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, September 1, 1849.
Of the obstacles that would face this second and third generation of Haitians who hoped to live free of the injustice of slavery and white colonial domination, few scholars have seen republicanism itself as an obstacle. However, I would argue that the question of republicanism and its limitations in postslavery were central to the creation of not only Haiti’s second empire, but the creation of the modern Haitian state. The years 1843-1847 amounted to a political crisis not seen since the immediate aftermath of independence: the nation was on the verge of peasant revolution in the South and West; it was under the constant threat of Northern succession from St. Marc to Cap-Haïtien; the declaration of independence of Santo Domingo came with it the loss of two-thirds of the island; and it experienced four successive Presidencies in the short span of four years. Finally, in the wake of collective violence and state destruction of 1848-1849, this alliance of the dispossessed and the remaining black elite petitioned for the creation of a throne nearly as much as Faustin Soulouque saw the need to marshal the mobilization of popular sentiment in order to protect his power. The appearance, and subsequent rumors of the appearance at the sacred Vodou site of Saut d’Eau, of La Vierge donning regal garb all but confirmed this within the cultural atmosphere seeking symbols of redemption from the oppressions of republicanism. This political consensus was not top-down but ingrained in the discourse of the interests of alternative means of sociopolitical legitimacy that was ground from the bottom-up.

This beckons another question: How did freedom, a notion typically associated with the establishment of democratic and republican values, equate to empire to the post-slavery peoples of Haiti? The question of “what is freedom?” in a post-slavery world surrounded by a landscape

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8 Though fundamental to the development of the second Haitian Empire and to the political crisis of 1843-1847, this dissertation will not deeply delve into the plethora of diplomatic and domestic interactivity between the two states.
of uneven abolition wholly frames this dissertation. The emancipated people of zones such as Haiti, Jamaica, Colombia, the United States, Cuba, and Brazil struggled with the meanings of democracy, citizenship, and state in the face of racism and post-slavery labor regimes. Even as slavery was abolished, passports, corporal punishment, anti-squatting, and penal systems were established to keep the new peasantries and poor in place. As we shall see in this chapter, for the Haitian state, President Boyer’s use of the Code Rural of 1826 and Code Pénal of 1825 was an exclusive and coercive means to defend the status quo and the 1840s amounted to ruling class standoff against the subaltern majority. Empire, more so than Soulouque, reflected the referendum declared on the program of Boyer and his predecessors: Soulouque is a refraction of the period where “freedom” was not attached to democracy or the notions of equal rights from Europe and America. Afterall, these were still slave holding powers. Only a strong, regal, paternal leadership closer to the spirit of the Revolution could defend the liberties fought and lost over the course of post-independence.


Historian Murdo J. MacLeod was one of the few scholars to directly challenge the typical conceptions of historical analysis and offer a revision of the regime. It was obvious to MacLeod that *prima facie* reigns the historically accepted version of Soulouque: "even a cursory examination of the record reveals some possible new interpretations".\textsuperscript{12} For MacLeod, it was important to understand why Haiti had produced several figures—most notably Dessalines, Soulouque, and Francois Duvalier—who were all quickly passed over as barbaric by the international and national community, regardless of whether their predecessors were similar or not. This project moves away from such a functional approach at understanding the second black emperor’s role in Haitian and Atlantic history as one of simple continuity: these “black majesties” were not part of some divine plan; they each emerged at particular junctures of postslavery, postcolonialism, nation-building, and incredibly unique antecedents which were situations purely *sui generis*.\textsuperscript{13} Yet, it does maintain, that contrary to liberal beliefs, the “raison d’etre” did not have to displace the earlier art of governing through principles borrowed from traditional virtues of divine law, custom, and justice, nor did they have to abandon the sociopolitical ties to popular national identity to secure popular consent. In fact, they depended on those preexisting system to give legitimacy to their authority at times when illegitimacy reigned.

Thus, this dissertation argues that empire was the product of far-reaching sociopolitical origins and consequences: Haitians of all classes and creeds were important agents in its making. The origins where not simply a return to Haiti’s first empire under Emperor Jean Jacques Dessalines or Christophe’s Northern monarchy; Haiti’s second empire was the result of long-

\textsuperscript{12} Murdo J. MacLeod, “The Soulouque Regime in Haiti, 1847-1859: A Reevaluation”, *Caribbean Studies* 10, no. 3 (1970), 36.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
lasting transformations of political legitimacy, political participation, and specifically Haitian ethos. This work is situated in relation to two bodies of scholarship: 1) the revision and excavation of Haitian national history of the nineteenth century, and 2) the relationship between conceptions of freedom, collective post-emancipation politics, and popular sovereignty in the hemispheric Atlantic. As I will explain, much of the existing literature on Haiti’s mid-century years was produced by foreigners through racist conceptualization or by Historians of the later 19th century who saw Soulouque as an example of anti-democratic despotism. The bulk of these works saw the second empire as a farcical imaginary of black self-rule, an “ultra-african” noiriste dream, and most of all, a failure of the democratic aspirations of the free world. They failed to take into account that, “empires rather than nations were the leading form of polity” from 1763-1914. Furthermore, contrary to ideas of the march of republican liberalism, the hemisphere’s nation-building was an experiment in what Hilda Sabato describes as the fundamental innovation of Latin American politics in the nineteenth century: “the revolutionary decision of adopting popular sovereignty as the founding principle of the polity and as the only source of legitimate power.”

After staking out my position relative to the existing literature, this introduction will devote itself to the abbreviated history of the post-independence period. There already exists a vast scholarship on the founding peoples and their entanglements with building a free black nation in the Antillean sea. I, instead, focus on the socioeconomic and political movements that formulated the guerre of opposing definitions of freedom, from the postrevolutionary era to the political crisis that dominated the period before Soulouque was elected President in March of

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1847. The existing inequalities of land ownership, property rights, and control of labor and the various stances on what the nature of freedom between the ruling classes and the largely agrarian world were adopted over time by numerous political actors. Lastly, I will summarize the chapters of the project and its varying stances on political legitimacy in the era of state illegitimacy.

THE “COMEDY OF ERRORS”: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LEGACIES AND CONCERNS

Conventional Haitian historiographical narratives—one which can be extended to many Latin American states—have had an inclination for top-down national histories that, through the psychoanalysis of heads-of-state or the discourse of political economy, present Haiti’s history as a set of autocratic national leaders and the coups against them. The story of Soulouque is a classic example of the phrase, “decades of instability,” a conceptual periodization of time from the end of Boyer’s regime in 1843 to the beginning of U.S. Occupation in 1915. It is generally presented that when President Jean-Baptiste Riché died suddenly on Feb. 27, 1847, the mulâtre\textsuperscript{16} hegemony of the Senate came to an absolute stalemate with the election of either General Alphonse Souffrant or General Jean Paul. Either would split the House and threaten civil war.\textsuperscript{17}

The various elite groups of the Haitian Senate, led by Beaubrun and Celingy Ardouin, agreed after prolonged discussion, that the old affranchis black head of the presidential guard, Soulouque, who was generally liked, but lacking in political aspiration, appeased both sides. Born in Petit Goâve in 1788 as a slave, a camp-de-aide in the Revolution years, a passive participant in nascent Haitian political life, and commonly described as ignorant and dull,

\textsuperscript{16} In using the terms “mulâtre” and “noir”, I do not mean here to reproduce the taxonomies of racial difference which, as Marlene Daut rightly reminds us, were key instruments in French colonial rule. Rather, I employ these categories to highlight the powerful ways in which they persisted in Haitian discourse and structured the ideologies of leaders such as Soulouque. See Marlene Daut, \textit{Tropics of Haiti} (: Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

\textsuperscript{17} After an eight-hour stalemate, Minister of the Interior Celigny Ardouin, Beaubrun’s brother, passed a note to Beaubrun, then president of the Senate. The note contained the name of the Soulouque, Ardouin presented the choice to the Senate which unanimously agreed. Justin Bouzon, Études historiques sur la présidence de Faustin Soulouque (1847-1849) (Paris, 1894), 14.
Soulouque was elected the new president at the age of 65. Apocryphal stories speak of both Soulouque’s disbelief and his initial reluctance to accept the post, but after assurance that this was no joke, he quickly assumed the position of lackey for the mulâtre hegemony.\(^{18}\)

Within a year, Soulouque turned against his masters, and with a mass of poor black paramilitary supporters known as the Zinglins, attacked, imprisoned, and massacred the mulâtre elite in Port-au-Prince on April 16\(^{th}\), 1848. Soulouque became suspicious, and his suspicions went beyond the mulâtres, extending to any group that he felt opposed him. Eventually, through his mania of power, Soulouque declared himself Emperor on August 26, 1849, and that same year produced an Imperial constitution, formally announcing his tyranny at home and in the eyes of the world. Soulouque's supposed megalomania went further: ignoring his people and promoting despotism, he engaged in a series of foolish invasions of the Dominican Republic, depleted national coffers, and brought Haiti back to Vodou, and, thus, barbarism. His defeat is at the hands of a fierce nationalist with democratic-republican intentions: Fabre Nicholas Geffrard, restorer of the republic. Thus, by sheer mistake and tyrannical undertakings, Soulouque somehow rose and fell from power. It is perceived as an “especially remarkable” moment “because it was produced entirely by accident” and because “it was Soulouque who ultimately played the real joke on those who had chosen him.”\(^{19}\)

This phenomenon of the “comedy of color” that so commonly terms the mulâtre oligarchs’ “foolish” mistake has amused historians but has rarely led to deep analysis or investigation.\(^{20}\) In regard to the second Haitian empire, Soulouque’s psycho-analytical

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vilification takes a principal place in the strategies of Atlantic denigration during the mid-nineteenth century. In this exact way, the second Emperor of Haiti also serves as a stand-in for Haiti’s historiographical issues. Part of the continuity of this predominant interpretation of the nineteenth century Latin America is to see a failure of constitutional republicanism or liberal democracy in terms of the inability of newly birthed states to break with authoritarian pasts or for peasants and popular forces to appropriately conform to democracy. This has been challenged by views predicated on the distinct reality that centralized forms of government and systems of electoral control, dominated by ruling elites, were the main factors that prevented evolution of liberal regimes into competitive democracy. Arguments have also been made that liberalism, the defining political ethos of the nineteenth century, proved to be “capacious”, and “its inherently expanding character generated or allowed for ideological conflict.” This is a work which assumes a position that what undergirded popular sovereignty in Haiti’s empire was not simply political ideology. It assumes that the new states of the Americas before independence did not possess some given set of values, interests, and political assumptions that geared towards liberty and equality according to Euro-American ethics. Rather, I believe that for a post-slavery black nation such as Haiti, the notion of “freedom” was embedded within what made monarchy legitimate from below; these cultural components existed and were experienced long before the presidents and Emperors of the mid-century and they did not cease to exist because of politics at the top.

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It is Haiti’s historical particularisms—its “exceptionalism” of revolution in 1791 and dictatorship in 1957—that has kept Haitian studies from making major theoretical leaps into these “decades of instability.” These two long legacies have kept the historiographical story of postcolonial failure and repressive dictatorship more familiar than it should be. The tendency to skip in-depth and appropriate understanding of the time-period or to see one as steady a line to the next, is a dangerous part of the historiographical discourse. From the founding myth of the Black Republic to a narrative of unsought and incomplete democracy, these issues begin with our radical conceptualization of the Haitian Revolution. Chris Bongie has also contended North Atlantic scholarship’s “disappointing vista” of Haiti’s early nineteenth century, arguing that what came after the Haitian Revolution was not simply a transformative rupture or a “fall” from grace; rather, the “transformative expectations raised by the ‘idea of 1804’” are a “[frustrating], yet productively ambiguous continuation of the revolting project,” not some perfect ideal of radical enlightenment ideology. This has inspired considerable shifts in recent scholarship which contest the myths of a singularly idealistic “utopian” Haitian Revolution: even as an affirmation of anti-colonial identity, as a Afro-Atlantic origins of resistance, and a radical approach to appellations of Liberté and Egalité, scholars have taken up the task of answering questions regarding post-independence state formation and political life, and, to a similar extent, the

23 Borrowing from Trouillot, Haitian exceptionalism is the myth that Haiti’s “uniqueness” escapes analysis and comparison to modern universal narratives. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The Odd and the Ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean, and the World” Cimarron 2, no. 3 (1990): 3–12.

24 Here I am referring to the repositioning of the Haitian Revolution and Enlightenment in the early “Haitian Turn” that developed from the works of Nick Nesbitt and Laurent Dubois in the mid-2000s. The authors both suggested that the Haitian experience, rooted in the claim of natural rights and self-sovereignty, was the most radical redefinition of liberty and equality. While these works have influenced numerous monographs regarding the Haitian Revolution and subsequent events as ways to reread and expand Enlightenment through the Afro-Atlantic, since the early 2010s, many of the monographs mentioned later in this paper make efforts to break away from the mold of reason and democracy. Chris Bongie, “Introduction” in Baron de Vastey, The Colonial System Unveiled (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 2, 3; Nick Nesbitt, "The Idea of 1804," Yale French Studies, no. 107 (2005): 6–38; and Laurent Dubois, "An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the Intellectual History of the French Atlantic," Social History 31, no. 1 (2006): 1-14.
meaning of freedom as defined by postslavery communities who fought for their own definitions of freedom.25

Yet, there is a critique that goes beyond ‘the idea of 1804’: The North Atlantic history of Haiti’s state-making process is often defined by the terms and implications of contemporary political need. In other words, academic romanticization is collapsed onto the concepts of resistance, democracy, nation, failure, success, and black power. Thus, if the Haitian Revolution is seen as the clearest engagement with enlightenment values and democracy, the end story is the failure of successive Haitian leaders to observe these values in their successive governments. Similarly, if the Revolution signifies slave uprising and the victory of on the ground forces to determine their own liberties, then the failure lies within the state to compromise with these new freedoms. On the other hand, if the Revolution signified the rise of Black Atlantic consciousness and Afro-American resistance, then the symbol of armed black men and women fighting colonialism is a success, but a success with diminishing returns as the nineteenth-century progresses. Likewise, if the Revolution is seen as an act of grand maroonage, of defying and resisting the colonial system, one might see an inherent success in two centuries of small peasant landholding, subsistence farming, and resistance to the plantation, but one that has been supplanted by external market forces and neocolonialism.

This is not to say that these histories and perspectives are false. I believe historical relativism remains an ontological reality and for many Haiti’s contributions are not only complex, but their meanings are also contradictory. Haiti was the world’s only slave revolution to establish a black polity in the Western hemisphere that forced the entire Atlantic to reckon with black nationhood by any standards, let alone those of the “Age of Revolutions” or the struggle for human rights and equality. The story of 1804 as a story of achievement is undeniable. Yet, as historians debated the high drama of Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henry Christophe, and Alexandre Pétion, they lapsed into ignorance of the state’s colonial elite origins: state administration, like its colonial predecessors, was purposely designed to curb the excess of popular freedoms gained by the newly freed affranchis, not to advance them. These “avengers of the new world,” sprouted from a state that developed around a plantation system which crumbled while the colonial institutions remained fairly intact. And while they indeed declared sovereignty and liberté upon the defeat and, later, the eradication of their colonial master, from the nascent beginnings, a majority of the population was excluded from the ranks of political activity in even the least liberal democratic sense. This contradiction—not by any means specific to the Haitian example—is in essence a stranglehold on approaches to Haitian history, where imagined historical traditions of resistance and hegemony do not meet the perceived should be and could be of our historical hopes.

Presumptions about Haiti’s nineteenth century are also impacted by the twentieth century focus on the twenty-nine-year dictatorship of the Duvalier family (1957-1986), and to a lesser, but importantly formative extent, the nineteen years of U.S. Occupation (1915-1934). From this historical starting point, historians were critical of the essentialisms assumed from the presence of black strongmen as marking the future landscape of Duvalierist dictatorship. From within these texts, Haiti’s nineteenth century becomes a march forward to inevitable doom and destruction. This essentialism has cast tensions and upheavals of the period as a sign of the process of chaos-followed-by-dictatorship. Color and colorism in the nineteenth century become a structural explanation for the twentieth century’s colorism. This means that when looking back upon Haitian history to understand Duvalier’s exclusionary acts and repressions, one reads for distinctions in authoritarianisms in the form of “president-for-life”, the assertion of politics as a repressive force, and the construction of noiriste and mulâtriste ideology to consolidate power. This paradigm contributes to an ever-present myth that there was an inevitable downfall for Haiti, one that portrays Haiti’s historical trajectory as rise and fall: from the Revolution to a felicitously timed self-destruction at the turn of the twentieth century prior to U.S. Occupation.

Soulouque, more than not, has been used to reinforce these teleological clichés which have dominated nineteenth-century studies of Haiti: he is a tyrant, brutal and black, who is an example of the predatory state and the chaotic racial strife that engulfs the island deep into the twentieth century.27 When Soulouque has come to the surface he is “particularly vilified,

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27The polemic of 1804 and twentieth century authoritarianism has led to Historians characterizing the mid-century period through this quite negative polemic and failure and chaos. James Leyburn, one the prominent early American historians of Haiti in a grotesque misrepresentation of Haitian political history summarized the entirety of seventy-two years as “decades of instability.” In Robert and Nancy Heinl’s much-read tome on Haitian history, Written in Blood (1979), the exact period of Soulouque’s reign is named “Darkness Descends: 1843-1858.” One study by Laënnec Hurbon described Soulouque’s reign as “twelve years of tyranny,” as well as “the greatest disaster the country experienced in the nineteenth century.” James Graham Leyburn, The Haitian People, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 89; Robert Deds Heinl, Nancy Gordon Heinl, and Michael Heinl, “Darkness Descends: 1843-1858” in
dismissed as a buffoon and made the target of scathing parody.”28 Notably, David Nicholls’s prolific text on Haitian national history, From Dessalines to Duvalier attributed contemporary problems to the fundamental issue of cultural racism that began in the fragile alliance of ancien and nouveau libres. Still an indispensable work on the history of the island, the main critique that can be said is of Nicholls’s facile reading of the Haitian past: Haitian history is seen through the lens of Francois Duvalier’s repressive anti-mulâtre, anti-communist authoritarian fascism and, thus, the lens of Haiti’s early color division, marking Haiti’s inevitable descent towards color violence and Duvalier. Furthermore, Nicholls reifies a notion formulated by the works of Haitian historian, Justin Bouzon, who abhorred the thought of monarchy, as well as, Spenser St. John, who conceived of Geffrard as Haiti’s final democratic hope.29 Nicholls periodizes the years 1820-1867 as one lump of the growing color question and the “disturbed period” of Empire as a “reassertion of black power” in which black leaders “took advantage” of political confrontations to promote their own interests.30 This perpetuates the sense of a period in which cataclysmic noir-on-mulâtre violence (and vice versa) reigned, bubbling over from Boyer to Soulouque (who is only given a single page) to Geffrard, who reestablishes mulatto ascendancy and republicanism.

Historians have had a long legacy of difficulties writing about uncompromising black leaders whose ferocity, iron fists, and stories of excess and abandon became legendary.

29 For Nicholls this begins in the 1840s which saw the production of a number of intellectual texts that laid foundations for the ongoing rivalry between “mulatriste” and “noiriste” Haiti, each with their own heroes and villains. What he calls the ‘mulatto legend of the past’ was a version of Haitian history that aimed “to encourage Haitians to unite under the leadership of the most patriotic, civilized and technically qualified group in the country, to legitimate the mulâtre ascendancy in the social and economic field, and to lend weight to their claim to guide and control developments in the political sphere Nicholls, From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 88-89.
30 Nicholls, From Dessalines to Duvalier, 67.
Dessalines, until the past three decades, was banalized for Toussaint Louverture, whose heroic narrative fit Atlantic desires for enlightened pathos. For some time, similar arguments were deferred to King Henry Christophe’s reign. But by contrast, Michel Hector, Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, and Laurent Dubois have all interpreted the North Haitian regime as “another way of constructing the nation-state” and have sought to reintegrate it into the long-term political, economic, and social transformations in the nineteenth century. Yet, Soulouque has yet to have a full monograph, and we have yet to usurp the view that unlike Dessalines and Christophe—both notable founding fathers—that Soulouque was not as spirited as Emperor Dessalines or as intellectually creative as King Christophe. Still my objective is not to redeem Faustin I Soulouque. It is to show how historical appreciations of the regime have remained in a vortex, repeating the same cycle of arguments of authoritarianism. The proceeding chapters do not attempt to understand the neuroses of Emperor Soulouque or the second Haitian empire through his sole leadership. Rather, this study seeks to reconceptualize the Second Empire as a postsalvery state that had dynamic actors with ties to sociopolitical conceptions of freedom, actors who navigated society, class, and color through negotiation, coercion, and resistance, and for whom political legitimacy was determined by a culture that provided a firm basis for the Haitian Revolution as much as responses and reactions to the states that followed. Soulouque is but a refraction of the demands of factions of elites, rebellious peasants, and insurgent urbanites, and the origins of his reign mirrored the radical calls for change and a “new era.”

31 What we know is that in Haiti, Gaétan Mentor is currently working on a biography of Faustin Soulouque. His addition to the historiography will be invaluable with his connections to the Haitian Mason Order and close relationship with other Haitian historians and documents.
Haiti did not begin as a republic. Nor was republicanism the only path. Haiti’s emergence in a basin of slavery, was not only ambiguous; it was precarious. By 1847, Haiti had undergone a series of political transformations. The experimentation of black nationhood would lead to numerous articulations of self-rule: Jean-Jacques Dessalines would declare Haiti an empire in 1805, challenging Napoleon’s own title; following the period of Dessalines’s assassination in 1806 and an interim constitutional government, Henry Christophe would go on to establish a monarchy in the North in 1811 as a way to claim sovereignty against any French return; and Alexandre Pétion would establish a republic in the South. This does not account for the separate maroon state of Jean-Baptiste Perrier, better known as Goman, in the West Province from 1807 to 1819, nor the succession of Andre Rigaud from Pétion’s republic in 1810-1811. Sweeping transformations descended from Jean-Pierre Boyer’s republican regime as it was the first time the entirety of Hispaniola was a single state.

The mistake onlookers of Haiti make, is to conceive of the experimentation of statehood as having finally arrived with Boyer’s republicanism. One can argue that Haiti’s statehood was well disputed into the nineteenth century—not unlike the United States and the Civil War (1861-1865) or French tensions between democratic and monarchical governments. This is the main

importance of a hemispheric scope of Haiti’s empire: empire, absolutism, moralistic authoritarianism, and caudillismo were as much part of grand experimentation of popular sovereignty and collective political imagination as republicanism, liberalism, and democracy. Marcela Echeverri’s important research illustrates that, in regard to the Hispanic political traditions, “notions of rights and freedom” were not “exclusively circumscribed to liberal, republican, or Enlightenment thought and institutions”: they existed as part of colonial society, where indigenous peoples and slaves engaged with rights as part of the “Hispanic discourse on justice”, and were embedded deeply within monarchical political culture and legalities. Royal legalism and codification such as Iberian La Siete Partidas and French Code Noir extended the notions of freedom, natural rights, and claims-making in colonial settings far before the revolutionary period. Similarly, although the Age of Revolution has been defined through democratic liberalism, they were located within emerging states that differed strongly on the role of people in politics and society and republicanism offered little in the way of rural masses.

The content of this public debate offers testimony to the way empire, in Haiti and elsewhere, can be permeated by different traditions of political thought. Much like our contemporary political experience, traces of liberalism, republicanism, conservatism, and positivism can easily be discovered in each of these ideological languages.

34 Marcela Echeverri, “Presentation: Monarchy, Empire, and Popular Politics in the Atlantic Age of Revolutions” October 28-29, 2016 at Yale University, funded by STARACO, Université de Nantes, Yale’s MacMillan Center’s Kempf Fund, and Yale’s Department of History.
Histories approaching the second Haitian empire through the telos of “democratization” would fail to understand that monarchism in the Atlantic was not unique. Where there were not kings, aristocracy prevailed even within republicanism and until 1914, Europe was not only “heavily agrarian and nobilitarian,” it was also monarchic. Nation-states, had few successes in Europe—where they were not themselves imperial—and the Americas, but Africa and Asia were dominated by empires. Brazil had been ruled by the Portuguese imperial house directly since 1822, and Dom Pedro II (1831-1889) would not be deposed until the end of the nineteenth century. Mexico had a brief dalliance with monarchy, as former Spanish loyalist turned independence leader Agustín de Iturbide ruled as Emperor Agustín I (1821-1823), only to be overthrown, not so much by the question of monarchy as the issues posed by a deeply divided state. Mexico would return to empire through the pressures of French intervention in 1861 and the installation of Emperor Maximillien I (1864-1867). France underwent the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830), and under Charles X (1824-1830), fell to the July Monarchy of Louis Philippe (1830-1848). After a brief period of republicanism from 1848-1852, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte II, went from president to Emperor, reigning the Second French Empire until 1870. Constitutional monarchies such as Britain’s and Queen Isabel II of Spain’s represented victory over 18th century absolutism. Lithographs of Henrique III of Kongo (1840-1857) and King Ghezo of Dahomey circled the 1840s as the British attempted to restrict the slave trade. Of

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course, news of Tsar Alexander I and imperial Russia were well distributed in the print journalism with his defeat of Napoleon. Haiti, with its own legacies in empire and monarchy fit readily into this schema of monarchical statehood.

The fate of monarchical populism and the making of the second Haitian empire lies at major crossroads of Atlantic modernity and its profound conceptual reconfigurations: emancipation, second slavery, and the end of the Age of Revolutions in the Atlantic. “Emancipation,” considers not only the historical factors of slavery’s end, but also how subsequent freedoms, or denials of freedom contributed to contemporary ideas about liberty and equality. In this project, the legacies of post-emancipation and the discussions of freedom which emerged in the aftermath of slavery-maintained systems of coercive labor, whether by law or by social mechanisms, creating uneven distributions of political, social, and economic power. Though there was a weakening of the slave system starting with the Haitian Revolution and followed by general emancipation in all British colonies in 1834 and French and Dutch Colonies in 1848, postslavery contended with these harsh legacies well into the nineteenth-century.

Simultaneously, the term “second slavery,” identifies the set of historical events and tendencies, especially of the Industrial Revolution and Western Europe’s international hegemony, that led the global market from the 1780s-1880s. A growing decrease in the international prices of industrialized and agricultural products and an increase in the consumption of certain products, such as coffee, cotton, and sugar contributed to a strengthening of the slave system in the U.S.


South, Cuba, Brazil and Puerto Rico. This is opposed to the more common view that chattel slavery was, in one way or another, an archaic institution, incompatible with modernity, that was condemned to extinction after the advent of industrial capitalism, modern political regimes, and liberal ideologies. Even as the region underwent the flux of geoeconomic shifts and the transition from slave labor to free labor and peasantry, the Caribbean remained a center of imperial conflicts and schemes.

The analytical key to understanding this historical relationship within the second Haitian empire is that one must read the visions of statehood projected by empire with a deep scrutiny, understanding the pressure of emancipation demands in a basin still surrounded by slavery. As military confrontations between the two regimes of Christophe and Pétion ceased after 1812, the continuing political divergences and struggle for international recognition opened a discursive battlefield, in particular in the charged atmosphere of the French menaces before the 1825 French indemnity under Boyer. The tensions of monarchism, republicanism, and autocracy alongside the popular deference to Emperor Dessalines, never escape the Haitian political logic. No tendency better demonstrates this than the reality that up until the Liberal Constitution of 1843, a majority of the republic’s existence surrounded “presidency-for-life” terms in which leadership was inherited. Born as a slave, Soulouque lived through revolution, civil war, and republican and monarchical despotism through the lens of a black affranchis who worked his way through the ranks of the military. One can imagine that Soulouque understood popular aspirations and how to appeal to them extremely well. If we divorce this sense of political experimentation from the adaptability of political imagination to the developments of

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government by popular will, we remain glued to a pervasive narrative, that all these periods were simply chaos, reinforcing the telos of the liberal democratic ethic.

**THE RACIALIZED ARCHIVE: METHODOLOGY**

A central and formative narrative at the heart of the Caribbean’s Atlantic modernity is the story of the colonized and the metropole. Framed through the narrative of decadence and alleged ‘evils’, the archive regarding the second Haitian empire is often obscured by a version of Soulouque fabricated by foreign witnesses and imperial narratives. Further frustration arises from a historical consensus in the primary and secondary literature which pushes a history that confines the nation to a historical process of cannibalism—not unlike the stories told about Soulouque. It is as if the forces of white order looked for some kind of catharsis to purge and encourage white fears of black self-rule in response to its mere existence. The task of the historian in this situation is to wrestle with the archive and the wide-reaching language of racial imperialism and ideological constructions of inferiority and moral pathology. Virtually all narratives worked through the hegemonic task inextricably interwoven with the mission of civilization and progress, from pro-Soulouquists and apologists such as British consul George F. Ussher, Wesleyan Minister Mark Baker Bird, or French Travelogue Paul Dhormys. This included Haiti’s own domestic narratives, from Haitian print journalism to historian Thomas Madiou, who published his first *Histoire d’Haïti* in 1847. Therefore, to unearth the alternative narrative within the constrained space of historical records dominated by voices of the state, the foreigner, and the literate, I not only performed considerable archival research, I privileged a

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methodology that grapples with the crucial questions raised by a lack of subaltern voices and actions as well as the power of demonizing voices.45

One of the most avowed critics of the regime was the French consul-general Maxime Raybaud writing under the pseudonym of Gustave d’Alaux. After writing several pieces and essays on Haiti in the French journal, La Revue des Deux Mondes, Raybaud compiled several expanded articles and published L’Empereur Soulouque et son empire (1856), a vitriolic exposé of the regime. Maxime Raybaud, painted the Haitian Emperor as an extravagant despot obsessed with absolute power who masterminded his rise to faux empire, spreading the false claim that Soulouque’s first crown was made of cardboard. Raybaud was by no means unique in deriding Haiti. Marlene Daut has contended that the events of the Haitian Revolution were “incessantly narrated in a particularly ‘racialized’ way” throughout the nineteenth century. Alternatively, former British consul to Haiti, Spenser St. John, who published Hayti; or, The Black Republic (1864), is remembered in the Atlantic as a particularly influential racist nineteenth century narrative which extended the dissemination of Haitian stereotypes already in circulation. He ridiculed Soulouque as a “very ignorant man,” an eccentric imitator of European monarchs and a violent tyrant who contributed to the “waste of the public finances”, while espousing Geffrard as a Republican savior.46 Writing on “global” stereotypes of Haiti, Michael J. Dash has argued that St. John’s work defined Haiti for Atlantic readers of traveling narratives through “sensational” and “gory” episodes which appealed to “the repressed Victorian imagination.”47 If Vodou, and

45 In particular here, are the issues of the racist diatribes of Maxime Raybaud, French Consul in Port-au-Prince, Spenser St. John, British Consul, and Edward Bathurst, English Vice consul of Cap-Haïtien. I cite Raybaud, Bathurst, Spenser St. John as evidence, while reading thoroughly through the archival, printed world that surrounded them. Though they offered abrasively racist and determinedly negative perspectives on events, placed against the apologists, and the state control print journalism, they together offer a deeper story.
therefore Haiti, could be shown as a sinkhole of all decent civilizationist value, then they were permitted to go on believing in the “civilizing mission” of Europe’s subsequent African and Asian colonial ventures. Consequently, Soulouque’s reign is emblematic of how negative judgements from contemporaries impacted later historiographical interpretations of the period. In comparison, Haitian historian Justin Bouzon, electing to write his entire work, *Études historiques sur la présidence de Faustin Soulouque (1847-1849)*, solely about Soulouque’s two-year presidency, treated the monarchy as the most illegitimate form of the Haitian state in his final pages: “One day it went to sleep republican. The next day it awoke a monarchy.”

Imagining the switch to empire as an immediate pilfering of the natural republican order, Bouzon still viewed it as a national responsibility to parse the truths of Soulouque’s presidency, asking, “Is it not the duty of a Haitian to study this epoch and to separate history from legend?”

Though Bouzon’s work was an utter and complete condemnation of the second imperial regime, I do equally believe it is a historian’s task to glean that truth from these moments of fiction. Therefore, this dissertation reads everyday documents not only with a historian’s eye for empirical content but also with an eye for their reflections on the sociopolitical life that ungirded the legitimacy of empire. These archives can teach us more than conceptions of white imperial voices. By cross referencing rhetoric, perspectives, and fragments, my methodology demonstrates how popular articulations of freedom were readily animated against racial capitalism within the nineteenth-century Atlantic. Definitions of freedom could be imaginatively remade from within, as well as counter to liberal democratic ethic. From this fragmentary historical perspective, the shifts in the archival narrative can yield more insight into subtle realities that breakthrough institutional tropisms. By investigating in detail, the political actors

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48 Bouzon, *Études historiques*, 151.
49 Ibid., xi.
who appear in the print and their trajectories, many elements of popular coalitions emerge. For example, the Zinglins that emerged in the 1847 are rarely referenced as Zinglins or past the Soulouque period for that matter. Rather, by those frightened onlookers, they are referred to as the poor, the ragged, the rabble, and the marketplace mob. When we consider the urban agitation from the marketplace women and the mobs that accompanied President Boyer’s fall in 1842, the connective tissue of networks of *madam saras* and *marchandes* in the marketplace that brought together the Zinglins in 1847, and the reappearance of the “mob” and “spy system” in Sylvain Salnave’s 1865 and 1867 insurrections, we can conclude, that whether by name or by passing reference, urban networks of marketplace agitators and poor remained central to popular politics going forward. Thus, while subaltern involvement has often been heavily skewed in the official archive, it is often necessary to uncover, what James C. Scott has defined as, “hidden transcripts” and the critiques of power embedded within these institutional articulations of the Haitian past.

Unlike these mid-century Atlantic audiences, we do not have to readily believe racialized claims as evidence. Hidden within the nebulous of hearsay and denigration, we can parse out the truth from a web of perceptions. The methodology for such textual explication both “echoes and evokes” subaltern as well as ruling class perceptions in a culture where social networks of resistance would have been interpreted as “chaos.” For me, this has meant the need to closely read texts with a distinct understanding of Haitian *weltanschauung* and of Haitian statehood as part of a repertoire of practices where ritual, performance, song, dance, and gesture contrast the enduring material of the archive. In this case I draw on the distinctions of cultural and vernacular

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51 To see a full explanation of the “hidden transcript” see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), x-xiii.

repertoire collective action which included informal and formal politics, rumors and hearsay, and violence and myth, all part of the great sphere of sociopolitics.

**Black Nationhood, Black Republic, Black Empire**

There is perhaps no piece of evidence that most appropriately documents the crisis of political legitimacy after the 1843 Liberal Revolution than the popular song *Rivière*. The song, attributed to a Port-au-Prince lawyer and supporter of Boyer by Maxime Raybaud and simultaneously attributed to *Piquets* by popular musicologist, Harold Courlander, is a vivid example of popular means of moving information, keeping history, and practicing everyday protest. The song was picked up again in the 1850s by French chargé d’affaires J.B. Prax who in the process of writing his unfinished manuscript, *Ahiti: Études sur la civilisation des noirs*, collected numerous popular songs of the 1850s. The complex song, full of references to political events as well as heroic figures and actors, recounts the short-lived presidency of Charles Rivière Hérard and the turbulent year of 1844. We get the sense of popular anger directed at Rivière, who led the Southern liberals into the Revolution of 1843 only to resort to military rule as well as the pervasive personal rivalries and unbridled individualism in politics throughout the 19th century period:

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53 Jean B. Prax, *Ahiti: Etudes sur la civilisation des Noirs* (unpublished manuscript, dated 1857), 316-20, Mémoires et documents Haïti 1) 1857 (Prax), 23MD/1, Archives diplomatiques, Ministère des affaires étrangères (AMAE), La Courneuve, France. The song I analyze here is all transcribed in Creole and translated into French in Prax’s manuscript. All English translations are Kate Hodgson’s and my own; Prax’s French translations have been omitted for reasons of space.

The song ridicules Rivière for having *zyé verron*, an implication of his duplicity and his inability to see the future, and for believing he has *carte blanche* and the freedom to do whatever he likes.

Hérard Dumesle, arguably the founder of the Liberal Revolution, is presented as a *tafia*-drinker.
who prefers military rule to constitutionalism. *Piquets* from Les Cayes and Dominicans in the East rise up, and the whole nation is overturned as political actors Alex Dupuy, General Lazzare, Honoré Féry, Gélin Hyppolite, and more are called upon to answer to Rivière’s march into the Dominican Republic yet deny him at this critical moment of political rupture. These politicians do not care about the nation’s state of affairs even as *pays-là chaviré*; they care about themselves.

Maxime Raybaud described this song as “newspaper in rhyme”, noting how quickly the tune spread through the whole country and credited the Rivière itself as the final straw that brought down the 1843-1844 interim government. The song reveals not only, “the political power a song can wield,” but also how quickly routes of information spread outside of print journalism.\(^5\) It similarly demonstrates the false narrative that literacy was a barrier to political action. Indeed, even as reading publics remained stagnantly limited, the possibility of political dialogue, independent of intellectual connection and government sinecures, was a readily accessible thread of hearsay, rumor, song, and *blag*.\(^6\) The two monarchical references—"*Li té crouer li té roi*... *li di comm roi Henry*”—point to Rivière’s pride and the absurdity of his aspirations, noting that his political allies are neither respected republican leaders nor is he a fierce king, regardless of what he may seem to believe he is. Notably, we should consider the notion of legacy in the final lines regarding these political actors and their lineage to the nation’s founder’s legitimacy: “*Comment zot vous oublié (Ter)/ Toussaint, Dessalin, Christophe et Boyer?*” As the final stroke of the Liberal Revolution’s illegitimacy, they are told they have forgotten the patriarchs of the Haitian nation. In the end, President Rivière has turned out not to

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\(^6\) Kréyol for “jokes.”
be the radical break with the misery of the past; nor has he turned out to be the heroic figure that the people sought. It demonstrates the limitations of republicanism and liberal democracy in the postslavery landscape; in many ways republicanism in the first half of the century gradually lost its credibility and the development of political opposition and political support grew against the facile factionalism of the authors of the Liberal Revolution of 1843. That the song continued to function as a popular tune well into the 1850s when Prax heard it, should characterize the longevity of the issue of republican illegitimacy.

As was the case in the nineteenth century Atlantic world, education and journalism became the instrument of the educated and civic minded to express their views, to influence others, and to entertain, dominating the narrative of nation-building projects ideas of “progress” and “civilization.” Despite the low levels of literacy in mid-nineteenth century Haiti, newspapers Le Moniteur haitien and Feuille du Commerce had a permanent reading public, and such news was dispersed by word of mouth and by marketplace announcements.57 But songs such as Rivière, popular dances, the marketplace, self-organized social institutions, and popular kinship networks illustrate a Haitian people correlated in cumulative and interlacing streams of objects and ideas. They expressed their vision as participants of the New World and made sense of their independent black nation-state. These cross-cutting institutions that tied communities together were part of a society that was more than a combination of mismatched political pieces that erupted from colonial revolution. Social relations formed a cohesive network of informal and formal publics in which symbols and language of vernacular power borrowed from Africa, Europe, Christianity, Vodou, and colonial institutions and were remade as national institutions.

What empire did was enter into this complex and constantly evolving dialogue with a preexisting symbology and visual expression of legitimacy, prophetic and mythological sanctity, and social prestige and capital. In order to explore the multiple visions of imperial state in Haiti’s second imperial phase, it is essential to locate the origins of Haiti’s second empire as a watershed moment in state formation. A sophisticated conversation between Haitian people’s political, religious, and historical thought and the novelties of monarchy brought to their imaginations the conception a legitimate politic. Here, I shall discuss the structural web that led to the second empire. Empire was contingent upon the individual workings of intermediaries, but the social system that led to the arguments of freedom and determined political legitimacy were far more part of the continuity of Haiti’s nation-building process. The governmentality of royalism and monarchical ideology emerged powerfully in the independence era, alongside notions of liberty, racial equality, and citizenship and at no point were the parallel hierarchies of subaltern lives wholly adverse to these developments. Importantly, I should add, though empire was seen as legitimate in its populist origins, it was a symbolic refitting, not a structural one. It presented itself as a “nouvel epoch” but only sought to justify what was built into a system that squeezed the peasantry dry, where the productivity of rural mass was “seized by the alliance of rulers and merchants and transferred abroad.” Contrary to Bouzon’s claim, Soulouque merely changed the name of the game, not the game itself.

58 Here I use the Foucaudian governmentality as an analytical category that seeks to identify these different styles of thought, their conditions of formation, the principles and knowledges that they borrow from and generate, the practices that they consist of, how they are carried out, their contestations and alliances with other arts of governing. From such a perspective, it becomes apparent that each formulation of an art of governing embodies, explicitly or implicitly, an answer to the following questions: Who or what is to be governed? Why should they be governed? How should they be governed? To what ends should they be governed? See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, ed. By Michel Senellart, trans. By Graham Burchell (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

**CODE RURAL AND THE COUNTERPLANTATION SYSTEM**

In his seminal *Black Reconstruction* (1935) W.E. B. Du Bois, in regard to post-reconstruction in United States African-American life, described the period as one where, “The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.”

Despite the Reconstruction period’s separation from the Haitian Revolution by more than half a century, the process by which notions of freedom and equality were stifled for second class citizenship parallel to the Haitian historical experience. But how was freedom driven back into the shadow of bondage? How was it that the emancipated men and women of the momentous Haitian Revolution “moved back again toward slavery” after decades “in the sun”? Regardless of whether this process was seamless in other moments of postemancipation in the Americas, it was certainly a protractive affair in Haiti’s national history. The process was never simple, and certainly, never complete in Haiti. But we can say it was a dual process: first, the *classe dirigeant* abandoned the rural countryside and peasantry through social rejection, naturalizing the image of the Haitian peasant as backwards and simultaneously looking outwards to justify black sovereignty; second, through legal codification engendered within the *Code Rurale* of 1826 and the *Code Penal* of 1825 which effectively reversed the relationship between state, land, and labor that had existed in Haiti since the end of the revolutionary period, codifying a deep and penetrative inequality.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued that within this system of contrary visions of freedom and independence, “the Haitian state and the Haitian nation were launched in opposite

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directions.” Elite, often urban and large landowners, sought control over production, making efforts to show to the Atlantic that they were not savages, defending the ideals of liberty, and espousing the values of Eura-centric “civilization.” Cultivateurs, paysans, small propriétaires on the other hand, in the mountains and hills were the producers, a reconstituted peasantry with strong African and post-slavery cultures, who sought self-autonomy en masse and viewed progress as local and communal. As Haiti inherited the institutions and structures of Saint-Domingue—the colonial administration and plantocracy economy—the result of this divide over the meaning of freedom and sovereignty was the immediate development of a ruling class elite that assumed state power and the eventual collapse of sugar industry and plantation economy. Two opposite rapports of nation and state solidified over the course of Haiti’s national development: on one hand an elite, French-speaking, catholic, and literate focused solely on the exploitation of the majority and on the other hand a Kreyol-speaking, Vodou and Folk Catholic, illiterate multitude of paysans focused extensively on the rejection of the elite and the market.

The agriculture that concerned the ruling elite following the Revolution was large-scale plantation export agriculture, or caporalisme agraire (agrarian authoritarianism), which required the compulsion of rural laborers to become cultivateurs portionnaires (sharecroppers). However, elite visions which imagined Euro-American state models where freedom meant labor and the maintenance of an export economy contrasted with ex-slaves and their descendants who envisioned freedom as autonomy, land, and social equality. In the immediate post-independence period, constitutions, legal codes, and ordinances institutionalized the principles of Toussaint Louverture’s authoritarian agrarian policies and labor arrangements. To avoid that agriculture

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“suffer even the slightest amount,” Louverture curtailed the freedom of ex-slaves in his 1801 Constitution, reorganizing the colony’s former slaves into *cultivateurs* whose new liberty and freedom did not include rights to land, a constitutional right to leave the plantations, and gave them just one-quarter of the crops they produced.\(^64\) Dessalines, like his predecessor Toussaint and like Christophe who followed him, privileged agriculture as the first and foremost protected institution of the nation. Article 21 of the 1805 constitution and article 49 of the 1807 constitution both define agriculture as “the first, the most noble, and most useful of arts,” granting it special honor and protection.\(^65\)

Even as the political situation diverged into Northern kingdom and Southern republic, this asymmetrical power relationship emerged as a steady state approach to rurality. Henry Christophe’s military kingdom forcibly imposed *Code Henry* of 1812, essentially a continuation of *caporalisme agraire*, mandating timed contracts, disputations to be settled in front of a *juge-de-paix* (invariably a landowner), and once a contract was made, a cultivator could not leave the owner’s property.\(^66\) Pétion’s republic in the South attempted to preserve the large estates, trying numerous methods such as distribute the land attached to a Toussaint-like code in the West and trying to raise the field worker’s shares from one-quarter to one-half. In the West, both failed in the face of desertion and the autonomous claims of veterans and soldiers who had already parceled the land amongst themselves. Unable to support a plantation system without force—


which would threaten the fragile legitimacy of largely *mulâtre* leaders and black peasants—the Southern Republic produced a radical land reform in two decrees from 1809 and 1814, giving land to veterans of the wars of independence.\(^{67}\) Even as the best properties were turned over to other elites, the land reform earned Pétion the paternalist nickname, *Papa bon kè*,\(^{68}\) amongst the *affranchis*.

With Pétion’s death in 1818 and ascendance of Jean-Pierre Boyer to republican presidency, the North was fell back under Southern grasp in 1820. In 1822, Boyer marched into Santo Domingo, unifying the island, and once again abolishing slavery in Santo Domingo.\(^{69}\) In 1825, Boyer accepted an indemnity with France in exchange for recognition of Haiti’s status as a nation—an offer delivered by French warships—in spite of its immense unpopularity with the island as a whole. Convinced that Pétion’s laissez-faire policy was an economic failure and looking to pay the debts for the indemnity, Boyer wrote a new set of agricultural laws designed to remedy the gradual collapse of the plantation system.\(^{70}\) *Code Rural*, issued on May 1, 1826, outlined the most comprehensive and detailed plan for economic revitalization and firmly curtailed the freedoms that had been in play since the revolutionary period. The dominating principle was the Haitian’s “obligation” to work the soil. As early twentieth century Haitian historian, Antoine Michel, contended that, “the *Code Rural* of 1826 is the most capital, the most unpardonable of errors or crimes of Boyer”, criticizing the Code for producing stagnant inequality that led to rural resistance of the 1840s.\(^{71}\) *Code Rural* was a return to the legal

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\(^{68}\) Kreyól for papa good heart.

\(^{69}\) Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 60-76, 93-97.


servitude of the ex-slave. In attempting to reinstate the plantocracy system through the Code, Boyer reduced the peasantry to what amounted to a slave status, providing large amounts of cheap, immobile labor. While building on its former predecessors, the code also borrowed from the Jamaica slave code and looked forward to the black codes that effectively turned over Reconstruction in the U.S. South. On pain of imprisonment and forced labor its article 45 declared:

“[T]hose who are not employed in the civil service, or called upon for the military service; those who do not exercise a licensed profession; those who are not working artisans; or employed as servants; those who are not employed in felling timber for exportation; in fine, those who cannot justify their means of existence, shall cultivate the soil.”

Workers were to be tied to an owner for two to nine years and could not travel without a permit or authorization of the juge-de-paix (art. 4, 60). It fixed the hours of labor and banned public assemblies (art. 30). Vagrants were to be arrested and sent to forced labor (art. 177).

Propriétaires had their own domain over anyone in the cultivateurs status, and any cultivator who provoked a “movement” of any kind, by word or deed, could be tried for “disturbing public order.” This bonded future generations to all discretion in the hands of the juge-de-paix and the police rurale commanded by a chef-de-section. Cultivateur thus became a socioeconomic status that implied not just lack of economic agency and physical immobility; cut off from urban “civilization,” the cultivators came to be known as moun bwa (wood people), moun mon (mountain people), and moun andeyo (outside people). In short, they formed a peasantry which Haitian elites regarded as the “other:” backwards, lacking political agency and intelligence, and associated with vodou. Stigmatized as listless, lazy masses, the cultivators were infantilized as

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74 Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 96.
children who needed to be disciplined by a paternal hand and remained unprepared for participatory democracy. In and out, the *Code* supplants any rights of cultivators and legalized in totality the plantation mentality as the state.

This was slavery by another name, and it functioned as a tool of elite economic domination, both from the urban ports where commercialism relied on the goods of the masses and in regional networks where the *juge-de-paix* and *chef-de-section* acquired the power to live off local enforcement: “A small fraction of Haiti’s population lived off the majority, collecting fees—with the help of the rural *chef de section*—for the sale, travel, and butchering of animals, and even for the cutting of the trees.”75 An appropriate investigation of the midlevel politics involves an understanding of the extent to which these regional strongmen organized levies, labor, and services from residents in their areas, dominating the governance of individual *arrondissements*, and the customshouses where the state collected revenue. With the combination of *Code Penal*, which we shall return to in chapter 3, enforcing decrees fell to regional figures who assumed local dominance, amassed armed power, and notoriously abused their authority.

The *Code* was a sweeping redaction on the rights of autonomy and the liberties won in the post-independent years. Yet some things the *Code* could not account for. Rural Haitians did not passively accept serfdom. Peasants responded to the efforts to establish and sustain the plantocracy complex and large scale properties with a complex mixture of resistance, negotiation, and navigation, retaining local control over cultural self-definition, small-scale export production, and settling for small-plots of subsistence living.76 This was a cash-crop economy with a cash-poor society and rural life was largely subsistence living in areas where

peasants managed to gain semi-autonomy living off plantains, fruits, manioc, and fowl chickens. While it succeeded in establishing a systematic marginalization, the Code failed terribly at controlling the movement of rural populations. Beaubrun Ardouin records a well-known saying, “Vous signé nom moi, mais vous pas signé pieds moi” meaning, “you can sign my name, but you can’t sign my feet.” The phrase implies that while the businessmen, landowners, and the state could legalize contracts and create laws to determine people’s lives, they largely had no control over people’s physical choices. No matter the proliferation of codes, decrees, ordinances, and legal prescriptions that challenged local social rules were aggressively transgressed. This culture of post-slavery resistance formed the crux of public political protest for the vast majority of mid-century Haiti. Rather than regulating these Haitian subalterns as “primitive rebels” or their responses as “archaic” modes of rebellion, what developed was a long-lasting oppositional culture dedicated to the resistance of the draconic legal measures, to the rejection of the visions of the republican elites that formulated them, and to achieving goals that in their eyes were worth fighting for, even if they failed the litmus test of democracy or the Age of Revolutions.

Likewise, Code Rurale could not account for a kind of cultural permeability in the sociopolitical structure that was inseparable from local, regional, and moral legitimacy. The

78 Mimi Sheller, Democracy After Slavery, 100.
79 Here I am refereeing to older anthropological arguments regarding the nature of peasant rebellion, coined under the terms “primitive rebels” or archaic; despite the differences among theorists corresponding to their disciplinary idioms and empirical referents, the shared identity of the peasant rebel—lands of kinship, culture, and communal economy—do remain important, thought the academy has gone a long way to move from definitions that regulate Peasants to the past. Eric Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959); Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); James C. Scott, Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Florencia Mallon, Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); and Mimi Sheller, Democracy After Slavery.
ambiguous positions of regional leaders and religious figureheads, who like the subaltern forces were inclined to follow their beliefs and self-interests, relied not only on their state authority, but also on direct patronage, social loyalties, and personal power politics. The rigors of law were often tempered by tolerance, generosity, or power-brokering. Labor relations remained coercive and close as these regional strongmen were often the landowners and commercial centers of local life, but it was also dominated by reciprocity and charisma. The history told by these traditions often defy our need to understand and identify; but, for Haitian traditions, a word, a person, or even a story “can be double, two-sided, and duplicitous,” and the ougans and mambos, kombites, rural urban intermediaries such as marchandes and madam saras, regional generals and chef-de-section all operated within a set of beliefs and conditions determine less by the Code and more by the situational realities.80 State making from the early national period to the late 19th century can be understood through the Haitian phrase that developed to mark the ethos of a multitude of Haitians from all classes: “constitution sé papié, bayonet sé fer” (Constitutions are paper; bayonets are iron).81 States were not legitimized by top-down laws; they were legitimized by actions and the threat of action.

In the end, Boyer’s ideal of panoptical state control fit poorly with Haitian reality. The system invited resistance in both rural and urban areas that foiled attempts to enforce certain aspects of the Code. The Haitian peasantry, being far from the disorganized, lazy, unwilling children they were made out to be, fled plantations, took up marronage in the mountains, or simply ignored the law. Many peasants managed to acquire their own land and thus avoid work on the big estates. Small-scale coffee production, mahogany and logwood, and even competitive crops like cotton all became the chief counter-plantation staples. Because coffee required much

81 Sheller, Democracy After Slavery, 69.
less land, labor, and equipment to produce and could be sold in small quantities to coffee export merchants, it allowed smaller farmers an attractive alternative to the exploitative large-scale economy. Other peasants chose to eke out a living on small subsistence plots.

To the majority of Haitians freedom within this structure, was a way of skirting the system of prohibitions and sometimes these became altogether new rituals and networks. A notable example of the capacity for both spiritual and practical self-realized autonomy were the secret sosyétés that reflected self-governing authorities and theologies of the freed. Functioning as both spirits, organizations, and loosely constructed “family,” these social networks demonstrate that, as mambo Dòwoti Désir has stated, “Vodou acknowledges space and it’s elements manifest themselves practically in the real world.” The Bizango, Chanpwel, and Zobop espíritos highlight the ambiguities of a world drawn from the height of death in the last days of Saint-Domingue, all while they are silent and submerged within the national history. Zobop and Bizango spirits, and the Chanpwel (also written as San pwèl) are branded as horrific secretive sects and spirits who revolve around the process of zombification, the use of human remains, and most notably in the nineteenth century, cannibalism. These ‘malicious spirits’ and ‘monsters’ are “the remnants of an institution that turned human beings into things” and their uses plenty in an ethos that accounts for regeneration, reinterpretation, and vengeance. In fact the Bizango, Zobop, and Chanpwel all operate as sects emerging from the Petwo nachon (nation) of Vodou, reflecting “the slaves’ rage against the cruelty of their masters” as well as the diversity in “the distinctions between personae and functions of Íwas.”

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analogous to a Vodou sect, these organizations, Mambo Chita Tann has argued, are “a sort of parallel justice system” which developed “to make sure order was kept by enforcing laws” in the absence of the state or when the police and army “[at worst was] utterly corrupt and incapable of being trusted.” Indeed, spirituality was at the root of collective freedom and triumph over colonialism represented a spiritual war that was won, but never over in a world of white domination.

This was not abstract dogma; their existence reflects the socioeconomic conditions and the theological beliefs of a people formed from resistance. As one ougan has stated about their roles and importance: “without them Haiti cannot budge… they must advance with the country.” Often we have seen them as informal social institutions that were part of the connective tissue of popular and peasant organizing systems. But these secret organs of the community of ex-slaves, shifted and transformed with the challenges the nation faced. Any work interested in the adaptive story of the paysan and the counterplantation system must see labor and theology as intricately linked as these sosyétés and their spiritual counterparts carried the traditions of the maroon and rebel slave, embedding themselves deeply within the structures of political and state power as well as running counter to the state. Their prowess is well noted amongst the oral history of Vodousans, and by understanding the multivalent fragmentations and spiritual conflations and contradictions, we might come to better understand state formation in

85 Mambo Chita Tann, Haitian Vodou, 71.
86 Hougan Fidel Pharisien, “Vini konnen wol Chapwel, Bizango, ak Zobop,” in Koze vodou ak limye sou labib https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4xtt5kzzPk&t=198s&ab_channel=Pharisienfidelkozevodouaklimyesoulabib
87 The Bizango and Bizango Macaya, two separate, but attached organizations, operate as defenders of the traditions with the Bizango Macaya rejecting all Westernizations as the nèg gwo bwa (man of the great forest), remaining elusive for the purposes of protection. Chanpwel, denoted by their red and black motifs, is said to be the spiritual defense force of the nation, Fidel Pharisien even comparing it to the FBI or CIA. The Chanpwel’s attachments to the army, indeed, the state is largely unknown to academics, even though the red and black of Haiti’s flags or Duvalier’s tonton makoutes gives us an indication of how deeply embedded they were. Chanpwel and Bizango acted as militant agents of defense, sounding the lambi at times of threat but also having their own forms of passports, coded language, and self-policing all empowered by their Petwo origins which accounts for the djabs (devils) and spirits of more violent, erratic dispositions.
the nineteenth-century at a popular level. However, scholars should note that their elusiveness is purposeful, and there are secrets buried within this vision of freedom that are not meant to be known.

**THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF 1843-1847**

As much as this dissertation explores the moment of rupture in the 1840s-1850s, the fall of republicanism did not begin with the numerous political movements which made the political crisis of 1843-1847, but rather it was the devastating earthquake of 1842 that was the catalyst. The immediate period after the 1843 fall of Boyer’s regime was marked by political instability. The fragile alliances of *ancien libres, nouveau libres*, North, South, and West, were held together primarily by the army. The political crisis began in 1842 with a destructive earthquake which crippled Boyer’s stagnant hold over power and it did not end until the declaration of Empire in August 1849. In that time the nation would see four President rise and fall: Charles Rivière-Hérard (April 1843-February 1844), Phillipe Guerrier (May 1844-April 1845), Jean-Louis Piérot (April 1845-March 1856), and Jean-Baptiste Riché (March 1846-February 1847). Though we have typically classified this period as one of *politique de doublure*, in which a *mulâtre* dominated government used black heads of state to appease the black populations, I believe that scholarship is revaluating this period as one of regional and political diversity.88 As we shall see, this moment continued a conflation of peasant versus urban as well as monarchical versus republican attitudes and penetrated deep into the decade.

As Haitian society grew and a new generation came into political adulthood, Boyer’s regime cracked down on the growing class of liberals who demanded democratic reforms.89

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88 I point here especially to Chelsea Stieber’s work, in which evaluating rhetoric and published literature within Haiti’s public sphere, sees the constant battle between monarchism and republicanism. See “Beyond the Bourgeoisie Public Sphere” in Stieber, *Haiti’s Paper War*, 11-16.

89 Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 112-120.
From the Southern city Les Cayes, Hérard Dumesle created the Société des droits de l’homme et du citoyen, in late 1842 and, on March 13th, a revolution from the Praslin plantation led by Charles Rivière Hérard, Dumesle’s cousin, officially ousted President Boyer from his twenty-two-year long reign. Their anti-Boyer manifesto released from Les Cayes on September 1st, 1842, the *Praslin Manifeste*, maintained that the wrongs of the Haitian state were the 1816 Constitution. The Liberals claimed it full of “the imprudent dispositions of our social pact” and the neglect of the “people,” and promised racial equality and democracy. They overturned the 1816 constitution and “presidency-for-life” for four-year terms and a parliamentary system which privileged civil authority over executive and military power, enforcing trial by jury, citizen elections, and legislative and executive checks. To complete their symbolic victory, harkening to the French Revolution, they renamed Port-au-Prince Port-Républicain, indicating their stance as an alternative to Boyer’s autocracy.

Promises made by the southern Liberals of 1843 failed with the series of crises that erupted over the course of 1843-1844. While their approach took a bold stance against Boyer’s entrenched autocratic republicanism, in practice the group of *Rivièristes* quickly gave way to factionalism and regionalism in determining the constitutional reformation of the nation. They were careful to subsume and render neutral the thorny issues of color, class, and postemancipation demands in their inventory of attributes necessary to continue the status quo. While the *Praslin Manifeste* had maintained that agriculture was one of the sources of “happiness” and that “servility” had befallen the Haitian people, they did little to satisfy the

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peasantry in their Liberal Revolution of 1843. Hérard Dumesle, himself was fearful of a popular uprising: he recommended that “no cultivators be introduced into the ranks of the national guard,” only landowners and their sons. By September 1843, as far as Jérémié, rumors spread of discord between newly elected General Lazarre, Hérard Dumesle, and Northern electors.

That same month officials from the Eastern portion of the island were denied representation in the constitutional reforms. As Anne Eller observes, Santo Domingo’s lines were equally as contested as Haiti’s political factions as liberal, separatists, and “ambitious military figures of varying allegiances” littered the political sphere. Some hoped for earnest constitutional transformation with the Liberal Revolution and its proposed reforms and looked to a less autocratic state that considered the two territories as equals. Even as Haitian and Dominican reformers tried to maintain island unification, strong opposition came from the white landholders and church. Since Boyer’s march into Santo Domingo, land reforms took over church lands and split former plantations and made progressive changes in allowing black and mix-raced people into positions of power. In addition, strong opposition to the French indemnity—and the rapid inflation from the overprinting of money that accompanied it—and to the restrictive measures of Code Rural cut across class and regional lines. When La Trinitaria—activists Juan Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Ramón Mella—

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92 Ibid. 119.
94 Honoré Féry to Madame Féry, September 11, 1843 in Tableau D’Union Conjugale, ou Correspondance entre Mr. Féry et son Epouse, Bibliothèque National d’Haïti (BNH) (Kingston: Imprimerie De H. Roberts, 1852), 104-107.
95 Eller, We Dream Together, 24.
revolted in January 1844, they sought independent republicanism. Yet from very early on, conservative Provisional Junta members Tomás Bobadilla and Pedro Santana, who emerged as the dominant military caudillo opposite of the Trinitarians, explored the option of annexation to France. Their recourse was to submit voluntarily to the rule of a colonizing power that would protect them from their territorial neighbor. Furthermore, La Trinitaria were not popularly received amongst ex-slaves, especially when the white Dominican elite sent Duarte into exile for his liberal policies and declared the nation separate from Haiti. Word spread among the black and mix-raced Dominican population and, formerly enslaved under Santiago Basora rebelled against the elite separatists.

When Santo Domingo revolted in January of 1844, contrary to their revolutionary rhetoric, President Rivière returned to the politics of the bayonet and launched an invasion, while his cousin, Dumesle ruled without the Senate or House in Port-au-Prince. Amid these conflicts, primary elections in Les Cayes split between Edouard Grandchamp’s mulâtre-led camp and Lysius Salomon jeune’s noir camp. When Edouard’s election led to a mulâtre dominated municipal body, under the leadership of the black land-owning Salomon family from Les Cayes, black elites turned against the provisional government in the primary elections. It also became clear that the elite ideology of racial equality did not represent the reality experienced by black habitants. On June 22, 1843 Salomon and members of his family led seventy men who petitioned against the “misfortunes of color that prejudice seeks to attract to our country.”

Though initial attempts to address grievances were civil and enacted through public means,

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Rivière’s response unlike the provisional government’s was to send or Salomon’s arrest who, in turn, rallied the paysans and *cultivateurs* around the habitation of Castel père to the sounds of the *lambi.* On march through Santo Domingo, Rivière ordered for his arrest, sparking a short-term repression of the black elite and opening a new wave of insurgency from the peasantry, whom now reevaluated the terms and concessions of the Liberal constitution.

The liberal agenda formulated by the urban literati and rural elite was entirely rejected in 1844 by peasants in the South and West. Louis Jean-Jacques Acaau emerged as the principal leader of the popular movement known as the *Piquet* Rebellion of 1844 and within a week *Piquets* controlled Aquin to Petit-Goâve. A lieutenant of the *gendarmerie*, a military body which according to Boyer’s *Code Rural* of 1826 equaled the rural police, he was close to the daily lives of peasants, *cultivateur parcellaires* (tenant farmers), and small landowners. Acaau used informal symbols of power: dressing like a peasant laborer, calling peasant congregations with the sound of *lambi*, and surrounding himself with familiar Catholic and Vodou iconography and figures. Highly likely, Acaau appealed to the informal and formal politics of the social institutions outside of the urban landscape. Acaau’s movement maintained respect for “the Constitution, Rights, Equality, [and] Liberty” while decrying elite class and color control and made several demands: for the class-dominated regime to give up its power over landownership, for “eventuality of national education,” and for “the reduction in the price of foreign merchandise and augmentation in the value of their crops in the interest of the “unhappy innocents.”

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fervor in Frère Joseph and the Virgin Mary—*cultivateurs* and agriculturalists of the southern and western provinces formed an oppositional movement that questioned the state on an economic, political, and social level, demanding the rights to education, land redistribution, and the elimination of custom house taxes on their export goods. The mobilization of the *Piquets* in 1844, without a doubt, constitutes the first expression of the mass mobilization of radical liberative aspiration in the history of the political and social struggles after independence.

After the crisis of 1843-1844 awarded the old *Boyeriste* party supporters’ the return of legislative power, political authority in Port-au-Prince was accredited in the constitution to the legislative branches where the old elites and powerful *mulâtre* families retained the power to make policy.\(^{101}\) But this power brokering body was not as influential from the capital. As Rivière was ousted in February of 1844, the provisional government faced the reality that Northern secessionism was led by former monarchist, General Jean-Louis Pierrot former Baron de Valière in Christophe’s kingdom and brother-in-law to Queen Marie-Louise. The declaration of northern secession in defense of the humiliated “Capois elite” addressed” the long history of northern silencing and alienation”, proclaiming they “were tired of being the plaything of an unprincipled government” and “that Boyer, called upon in 1820 to join us, stole our treasury, our arsenal, and in return, bequeathed us with division in society and corruption in our politics.”\(^{102}\) The Provisional Government of Port-au-Prince was forced to elect Phillipe Guerrier of St. Marc, former comte de Mirebalais and duc de l’Avancé, as a way to appease the North as well as the

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\(^{101}\) Phillipe Guerrier’s election in 1844 was followed by the creation of the Council of State, which was filled with mulatto elites such as the Ardouin brothers, and which replaced both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Essentially this was the Southern oligarchy opposite the Northern military elite. Léger, *Haiti: Her History and Her Detractors*, 194-198.

\(^{102}\) Taken from Chelsea Stieber, *Haiti’s Paper War*, 156-157.
black peasant insurgency in the South. Yet, Guerrier died in office a little under a year later at the age of 87, and Pierrot stepped in to fill the gap.

After Pierrot’s critical decision to attempt another invasion of Santo Domingo was met with another revolt from St. Marc. He was replaced by Boyeriste Jean-Baptiste Riché who stamped out Acaau’s final resistance and made great efforts to return to the status quo. Boyeristes and a few Rivièristes still controlled the senate, establishing the Constitution of 1846 which returned to “presidency-for-life” while allowing the legislative chambers to create laws. Made up of the most notable names in Haiti’s mid-19th century such as Céline Ardouin, Beaubrun Ardouin, J. Paul, Larochelle, David Troy, Joseph Elie, Alex Dupuy, and M. Détré these men were the grand politiciens, the commercial bourgeois, landowners, liberals, and for the most part mulâtres. Most of these men comprised a presidential cabinet that had remained unchanged since the departure of Rivière in 1844.103

What made this ruling class blind, however, was their conception of power as only the urban bourgeoisie and rural landowning elite; the fear of popular uprisings sparked by cultivateurs and habitants continued.104 For example, from March 1847 until late May 1847, the legislature focused on redrawing commune and district lines for lands “intended for cultivation,” consolidating the urban and rural divisions that sharply divided the nation’s rural and urban publics.105 In addition, the legislature frequently discussed laws concerning the rural police and naming new juge-de-paix.106 Regarding the “servility” of the masses, agricultural celebrations of May declared the three years (1844-1847) of agricultural stagnancy caused by “deplorable

[103] Céline Ardouin was the Secretary of the State of Agriculture and Interior; Beaubrun Ardouin was Céline’s older brother, writer, diplomat, and politician; David Troy, Treasurer of State; Joseph Elie and Alex Dupuy were respectively both Secretary of the State of Finances, Commerce and External Relations. Moïse, Constitution et Luttes de Pouvoir en Haïti, 177.


[105] Le Moniteur haïtien, May 1, 1847. See also Le Moniteur haïtien, May 1, 1847 to May 29, 1847.

[106] Le Moniteur haïtien, May 29, 1847.
events”, promising that the government would “hasten to take advantage of the peace” and that “good workers” would have protections while “those who indulged in vagrancy, laziness and bad passions” would have “the vigilance of authority to behold them.”

The sensation that the Republic had narrowly avoided destruction was universal. If not the Rivière, then we might take note of the feelings in the Chamber of Representatives in their discussions of Riché’s outstanding 45,000 gourde debts after his death and the debates about whether the state should pay them. Representative Armand, complaining that two properties worth 30,000 gourdes had already been given to Riché’s family, considered the President’s contributions, stating: “He took the reins of the affairs, after a government without principles, in the middle of men demoralized, the North at discordance with West, the South torn by factions, the bandits, the civil war which destroyed the country; [and] Acaau, like the hydra with 100 heads.” In the same chamber meeting representative Lamarre, in favor of financing the debts, described the situation of 1843-1847 as a “society delivered to all horrors of anarchy, all existences compromised!,” while representative Appollon, in favor of a partial payment, similarly claimed, “He put an end to the misfortune which the southern department had to groan, by making the insurrection which had been disastrous to the nation disappear.”

Thus, the National assembly’s election of Faustin Soulouque on March 1st, 1847, came during a harrowing time; the immediate consequences from the 1843-1847 period for the Haitian state were well known and both popular and ruling class forces were well aware of the fragility Haiti preformed its balancing act on. Yet, the death of President Riché in February of 1847 made possible a new political aperture that the Piquets and popular classes of Port-au-Prince had

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107 Le Moniteur Haïtien, May 8, 1847.
108 Le Moniteur haïtien, May 15, 1847.
109 Ibid.
endeavored to bring about since 1844. As we shall see, this procession of social and ideological
diffusion, factional politicking, and conflict formed a basis of illegitimacy which allowed the
second Haitian empire to emerge as a symbolic success of the tenets of stability, vengeance,
divinity, and, most of all, freedom.

OVERVIEW

Writing on September 14th, American commercial agent and later chargé d’affaires to
Haiti George F. Usher observed: “This imperial government cannot continue for any great length
of time… expenses must increase with an imperial court whereas under their former form of
government these people found it very difficult to meet their current expenses.” Yet by
December of 1849, Usher addressed the U.S. Secretary of state, “Since I had the honor to address
you on the 30th of October political affairs here have remained rather tranquil.” Much like
most of the onlooking observers of the White Atlantic—France, Spain, the U.S., Usher did not
anticipate that empire could actually exercise the authority to take the nation on a different path,
and much to his surprise, a form of stability settled. But Usher would not have looked to the
sociopolitical reasons for this tranquility. In this work I aim to broaden investigation of the
sociopolitical formation of the Haitian nation-state, by examining the origins and intricacies of
the popular movement, national mentalities, spiritual relations, and the political theatre of the
second empire’s politics. I argue that an overarching process of empire emerged not only from a
process of mass mobilization, cooption, and repression but also a dynamic, diverse, and complex
relationship between Emperor, regional leadership, semiautonomous social institutions, diverse
spiritual beliefs, and popular monarchism.

110 Usher to John M. Clayton, Secretary of State, Port-au-Prince, September 14, 1849, National Archives at Orchard
Park, MD (NACP).
111 Ussher to Clayton, Port-au-Prince, December 8, 1849, NACP.
The understudied day of April 16th, 1848 is marked by historical narratives as a ‘massacre,’ ‘riot,’ and an instance of color violence between noirs and mulâtres. A number of assumptions underlie April 16th as an example of Emperor Soulouque’s tyranny, obsession with power, and his promotion of color violence. Likewise, historiographical texts, favoring structuralist explanations which divorce personalistic and regional ideologies from politics, continue to use this example as a historical shorthand for Haiti’s inability to self-rule in these “decades of instability.” Using accounts of eyewitnesses as well as state issued decrees, my second chapter, “Haiti’s 1848: Revolutionary Aspirations and State Coercion in the Journée of April 16th, 1848”, establishes that through complex factionalism, regionalism, independent regional leaders and the power of rumor, black publics and popular actors constructed their own senses of freedom. Collective violence in this era should thus be understood not as the abnormal condition of a marginal part of the world but rather as “deeply embedded” within the modern republican tradition, which Latin America helped pioneer. What was portrayed as a series of color-based massacres, was in fact a series of revolts by Zinglins (poor urbanites) and Piquets (southern militant peasants) whose demands encapsulated violence against the entrenched elite class, mulâtre or noir. This same collective violence and anger allowed Soulouque and his regime to project an inevitably self-serving discourse that placed him as the embodiment of popular expectations and desires, co-opting subaltern notions of radical political participation and political legitimacy through violent interactions of his own.

“Between La Vierge and the Lwas: Popular Spiritualism, Religious Nationalism, and Legitimacy, 1847-1852” addresses the large gap between the study of Haiti’s spiritual ethos and its relationship to national politics in the nineteenth century. This chapter’s focus is on the

112 Sabato, _The Republics of the New World_, 189
appearance of the Marian icon *Notre Dame de l’Assomption* in July 1849 and the co-option of Haiti’s popular spiritualism that propelled Soulouque from President to Emperor by August of the same year. I argue that the violence of 1848 alone could not drive Haiti to empire. Rather, it was with distinct cultural knowledge that Soulouque’s regime placed emperorship in a divinely ordained political legitimacy that responded to religious developments since the inception of the nation-state. Soulouque’s reign emphasized the conflations of Vodou-Catholicism that had been ingrained in popular belief during colonialism, the numerous parallel spiritualisms of pre-Vatican Concordat Haiti, and the imagery of their power in a way that had not really been present at the state level since the Haitian Revolution and Dessalines. This section retraces the links between spiritual revivalism in the 1840s, spiritual leadership, as well as how they were subsumed under the umbrella of empire. Building on the previous chapter, I demonstrate how Soulouque tapped into popular forms of sovereignty, such as rumor, as well as popular religious expression through symbols and icons, by orchestrating spiritual projects which appealed directly to Haitians’ notions of vernacular freedom, moral authority, and state legitimacy. By recognizing and utilizing the Catholic-Vodou dynamic and popular forms of legitimacy, the role of emperor could be dually seen as not just head-of-state, but head-of-church, without formal officialization.

Empire both responded and appealed to the cultural legacy of post-slavery and the articulation of national and popular sovereignty. Thus, “*Mon Épée, Mon Patrie, Mon Dieu*”: Monarchical Pomp, Black Nationalism, and Soulouque’s Coronation of 1852” concerns the performative forms of imperial domination of the second Haitian empire. Namely, I do not see the state as an abstraction, divorced from daily interactions. Rather, the notion of empire was built on a rapport of fictive kinship that made authoritarian paternalism central to the repertoire of domination. In a social space where elite and popular divides made institutions, Big manism
drove popular tool against the established republicanism. The second empire was a continual and ongoing monarchical performance of popular and elite idioms of black masculinity and paternalism. In focusing on the lithographs produced in 1854 of the Coronation of 1852, I utilize the records of art, law, and newspapers to analyze successive national metaphors that evoked performative monarchy and political theatre. Empire accentuated a militant Haitian nationalism—already synonymous with black male interests, black male aspirations, and black male politics—that centered on the narrative of Haiti’s *gwo nég* (“big man”) founding fathers. Within the schema of Emperor as father and nation as children, empire—no matter how punitive and militant—could offer redemption rather than the pathology of nineteenth century liberalism which rejected many Haitians.

Haiti’s second empire was anything but silent. Yet, the Atlantic world responded with discursive disavowal and historical condemnation, arguing Haiti’s inability to self-rule, of the empire’s ‘barbarism’, and Haitian’s lack of ‘civilization’. The robust literature on the Age of Revolutions has done little to reconcile the reality that neither emancipation nor independence were *de facto* victories in the name of liberal democracy or against coercive labor systems. By insisting on the internal tensions at play in Haiti’s post-independence, my work on mid-century Haiti aims to reposition the nation as a vital critique on the field’s conceptions of freedom and success and to undermine historical justifications of Eurocentric and American Imperialism. For Haitians who put their faith in Soulouque, freedom was not corrupt republicanism, but the reification of the historical symbols of revolutionary black—a story historians miss when historical accounts are taken for granted.
CHAPTER II: HAITI’S 1848: REVOLUTIONARY ASPIRATIONS AND STATE COERCION IN THE JOURNÉE OF APRIL 16TH, 1848

On the afternoon of Sunday, April 16th, 1848 around 2 p.m. a primarily mulâtre rally of soldiers of the garde nationale entered the vicinity of the Palais Nationale in Port-au-Prince. The early morning military parades that typically accompanied Sundays had passed by very quietly, but by 3 p.m. the alarms rang and cannon fire from the guns of Fort Alexandre in the hills of Kenscoff sounded, ordering civil and military functionaries to assemble in the Palais Nationale courtyard. As tensions rose between the various factions present, shots were fired in the direction of the palace and President Faustin Soulouque, hitting public officials and military officers. The mulâtre soldiers regrouped at Place-Valière that afternoon, where they searched for passages out of the city or for ammunition, crying “Vive le President—Vive la Constitution de 1846!” However, they were confronted by a larger force of the garde presidentielle, primarily noir, and were commanded to disperse. The garde presidentielle fired on the garde nationale and in the subsequent violence various factions and individuals took the chance to make a spectacle of killing petit mulâtres and political enemies. Prisoners—both mulâtre and noir—were executed. Though conflict in Port-au-Prince began as rivalry between two military factions of color, the conflict spread into the nearby countryside as the sound of lambi, conch shells used by the maroons, harkened the cultivateurs of the surrounding plains to arm themselves in a conflict expressed as a battle between gens de bien and the sans aveu—that is, those with and those without. News of these events then triggered Piquets, already armed in their own uprising in the
South, who began targeting *grande propriéteres* and *gens de biens*, in an effort to exact retribution in what was now a class conflict.\(^{113}\)

The *journée* of April 16th, 1848, often termed a “color riot” or “massacre,” was a three-day uprising in which groups of dispossessed urbanites and black militia attacked affluent residents and businesses of *mulâtres* and other elites.\(^{114}\) Aside from the wars of independence and Dessalines’s 1804 massacre of the French inhabitants, April 16\(^{th}\), 1848 is possibly the single worst instance of collective color violence in Haiti until the 20\(^{th}\) century under the Duvalier regimes. The attack—carried out by soldiers, armed peasants, and para-militia forces—destroyed commercial sectors and led to the looting of large properties held at that time by the wealthiest in Haiti. In place of putting down the unrest, Soulouque’s response was a steely and exultant declaration on June 27\(^{th}\), 1848 to the armed masses, whom he now referred to as the “people” and the “army.” In a swift shift of political discourse, those who were attacked by the *Zinglins* and the *Piquets* were now “a perverse minority” who “was plotting to overthrow our institutions and decimate our families.”\(^{115}\) By May, Soulouque ventured to the affluent Southern cities and added his sword to the collective retribution of thousands of peasants. However, 1848 did not


\(^{114}\) I use the word *journée* (French for day) to refer to April 16\(^{th}\), 1848 in order to move away from concepts of “massacre” and “riot.” Violence typically accompanied the eighteenth and nineteenth century world of revolution, rebellion, and insurgency as it did during the French and Haitian Revolutions and their numerous *journées*. Nomenclature such as “massacre” popularize by contemporary detractors of Haiti make seeing liberatory aspirations in Haiti’s popular uprisings into projects of archaic violence rather than arguments for freedom. See St. John, *Hayti or, The Black Republic*, 182 for use of the term “massacre.”

\(^{115}\) “Proclamation au people et L’armée”, Attachment to Ussher to Palmerston, June 27, 1848, *TNA* FO 35/34; *Le Moniteur Haïtien*, July 8, 1848; quoted in Harold to Fredrick Douglass and Martin R. Delany, July 2, 1848, http://frederickdouglass.infoset.io.
end in April with a simple “perverse minority.” The estimated numbers of deaths are unknown, but the large exodus of the *mulâtre* and *noir* elite and numerous Haitian and foreign witnesses corroborate on the nature of the violence and systematic exile. In the end, hundreds were killed and thousands more left for Europe and the surrounding isles over the course of the repression of 1848 to 1849.\(^{116}\)

The irony, here, was that as Haitians strove for their own economic and political freedom in 1848, they bought into Soulouque’s sphere of influence and, thus, into a program of state violence, and eventually, by August 1849, a program of empire. But what made empire more legitimate than republicanism in 1849? In this chapter I argue that close examination of the *journée* of April 16\(^{th}\), 1848 and the turbulent events of the 1848-1849 period demonstrate the links between postslavery demands, struggles against inequality, and the basis of political legitimacy in the imperial project. I believe that contrary to the portrayal of the dichotomies of repressive state against nation, embattled *mulâtres* versus *noirs*, and subaltern freedom against oppressive hegemony, the Haiti’s 1848 suggests a much greater complexity of social and political forces. In this moment, the relationship concerning the formation of subaltern struggle was intricately connected to state consolidation. Certainly, Haiti’s path to empire was not simply decided by singular actors or monolithic dichotomies, though each had its place within mid-century Haiti’s sociopolitical developments. But what lies at the heart of the origins of the second empire was a whole system of relations surrounding the questions of what freedom meant

\(^{116}\) We do not have official numbers for the amount killed or those who went into exile. Matthew Smith’s work elaborates on the rate of arrivals according to Jamaican newspapers. See Matthew Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, and Exile: Haiti and Jamaica after Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 86-89 and Footnote 51 on 342. For correspondence in reference to “insurrection” and political refugees in Jamaica see also Governor Charles Edward Grey to Palmerston, *TNA CO 137/296 - 137/299.*
to differing factions and regions and what would make the state politically legitimate in the eyes of these various groups.

For the emancipated underclass—composed of the “not haves”: the tenant farmer, the market woman, the unable to work, and the dispossessed—the promises of liberal democracy were oppression rewritten as law. Likewise, the lawmakers and landowners were noticeably and visibly drawn in a class line that replicated colonial colorism. Thus 1848’s Zinglins and Piquets were more than “social bandits” whose byproduct was collective aggression; likewise, rebellion as simply altruistic resistance does not go far enough to notice that acts of rebelliousness are linked to forces of top-down reaction. Contrarily, Haiti’s leaders were not all-powerful authoritarians; they were forced to respond to, were hindered by, and reacted to the movements of numerous regional actors as well as the peasant and urban masses, both elite and poor. Equally important, executives and elites were not simply at the whim of the counter-plantation complex that characterizes the rural masses resistance to postcolonial plantocracy. When elite visions of the nation were rejected, rights were curtailed through legal and physical repression. When subalterns objected through protest, whether pacifist or violent, regional actors could fix their own personal agendas onto their resistance. This is not to say that there were no altruistic actors in Haiti. In this chapter, however, I wish to deemphasize the singular role of centralized states in popular struggles and definitions of freedom and in turn highlight the roles of intermediary actors and factions, the shared sense of freedom within rural and urban actors, and how political legitimacy could be gained by seizing upon general will. Peter H. Smith called to attention to the

117 Scholarship has evolved greatly since the publication of Eric Hobsbawm’s *Primitive Rebels* and what was once the dominate narrative of “social banditry” in peasant rebellion studies. Our notions of heroic yet Caribbean studies have yet to properly evade the pitfall of the armed protest, the riot, the massacre, and the rowdy. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: WW Norton, 1959).
fact that popular conceptions of dictatorial legitimacy “reveal important shifts in the base of power for authoritarian regimes… through a comprehension of charisma and caudillismo.”¹¹⁸ In examining how Haiti’s 1848 held such a drastic level of collective aggression, historians can reconcile how popular self-assertion at times produced violence which could be turned into a weapon of the state. It was this same hostile rejection of the elite class and their standards of putative republicanism—precisely the elite’s rejection of peasant citizenship—that produced an authoritarian empire.

Though not considered a candidate, Haiti’s 1848, like Europe’s 1848, reflected a broader upsurge of Atlantic aspirations and rising self-confidence that black publics like the Piquets and Zinglins both expressed and encouraged. One Wesleyan missionary witnessing April 16th recorded the journée as “a general conflict, of which we had heard for a long time prophetically.”¹¹⁹ Yet, the events of 1848 are swept under the terminology of the “riot” and the “massacre,” enshrining the journée in the narrative of chaos, violence, and illegitimacy that dominates the Haitian nineteenth century. Generally, nineteenth and twentieth century historians have seen the events of 1848 as composed by the “mad despot” Soulouque, who in his bid for ultimate power constructed a plot to destroy his enemies.¹²⁰ Therefore to excavate the actual events, this reconstruction of 1848-1849 is garnered from logs kept by foreign consuls, hastily scrawled orders, testimonies from foreigners, Haitian print journalism, and the disparate language of numerous arrêtés, ordre du jours, and proclamations. This work also looks deeply into the whispers of rumor and word of mouth within these correspondences and papers. I read

¹¹⁹ Bird, The Black Man, 289.
¹²⁰ This work will not delve deeply into the problematic historiography on the second Haitian empire. Murdo MacLeod’s work already suggests that even a cursory glance of the history reveals racist and incalculable assumptions of the period. Murdo J. MacLeod, “The Souloque Regime in Haiti, A Reevaluation,” Caribbean Studies 10, no. 3 (October 1970): 35-48.
against the grain of published and foreign accounts to capture some reality of the networks and informal institutions of mid-century Haiti. While eye-witness testimony from those on the ground may be impossible to obtain, the amount of information available about this episode is eloquent and combative to say the least.

As a whole this chapter argues that the referendum on republicanism was contingent on the behavior of individuals, rumor, and knowledge of the sociopolitical landscape. The first two sections will explore the role of regional leaders, factions, and informal information networks, each having played a more significant role than any single individual in transforming the liberative aspirations on the ground into a tool for top-down violence. In the second section, I argue that the dispossessed Zinglins and rebellious Piquets were not passive weapons of authoritarianism. Rather, they seized upon the language of freedom and through acts of public aggression and violence challenged the constraints on their liberty. Violence undergirded the Haitian Revolution, the political system it built, and it certainly defined the coercive labor systems which maintained status quo. Collective violence—agrarian or urban—was indicative of the extent to which broadened ideas of nation, citizen, and state were imposed by popular forces at conflict with a resistant hegemony of petit bourgeois and landed gentry. Freedom in 1804 was not a generously awarded gift from above; neither was freedom in post-slavery. Lastly, I excavate how Faustin Soulouque co-opted the rhetoric and acts of violence formed by the revolting masses to eliminate his own competition in regional strongmen and give his rule the air of political legitimacy. This was not an extension of any form of suffrage or any significant land redistribution that usurped the structural order, but by way of symbolic representation and a sweeping campaign to personally cajole Piquet, Zinglins, and regional factions across the country to reject republicanism. By the end of the year, Piquets and Zinglins chanted “Vive la
President! Vive la Constitution!” even though the presidency and the constitution were long abandoned.

The Underpinnings of Haiti’s 1848

Generally, Haiti’s nineteenth century has often been characterized as one of “historical irony”, failing to live up to the promises of liberty, equality and fraternity or falling prone to the continuity of colonial institutions of race and color. On one hand, Haiti’s nineteenth century is historicized as a march of authoritarian leaders who feast on the state treasury, mastermind anti-democratic coups, employ the bayonet as their sole sense of legitimacy, and who are eventually uninstalled by another chef. On the other hand, Haiti’s nineteenth century is studied through the lens of color conflict of mulâtre against noir in which colorism dominates the actions and reactions of the two separate factions until the development of the Duvalier regime in the twentieth century. Finally, the third and most recent development within the historicization of Haiti’s nineteenth century, has been the notion of Haiti’s existence as an act of grand marronage of the post-slavery publics, in which Haiti’s rural population, retaining forms of African expertise and maroon sense of resistance and self-autonomy, toppled the plantation system through mass flight and refusal to engage in large crop production, ultimately succeeding against the underhanded state. I do not seek to disprove any of these analyses, but rather, this section

122 For works that characterize Haiti’s history as a march towards dictatorship and anti-democratic systems of government see: James G. Leyburn, The Haitian People, 4th ed. (Lawrence: Institute of Haitian Studies, University of Kansas, 2004) and Robert Fatton Jr., The Roots of Haitian Despotism (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007)
124 The interpretation of the Haitian nation state as the product and continuity of “sociogenic marronage” and “sovereign marronage”, that is the concept of flight from slavery as fundamental to the refashioning of sociopolitics and conceptions of freedom, as ingrained within national conscious. Neil Roberts, Freedom as Marronage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Carolyn Fick, The Making Haiti: Saint Domingue Revolution from Below
speaks to the complex interplay of power and resistance in Haiti’s sociopolitical sphere. All too often these archetypal analyses prevent an effective interrogation of noir versus mulâtre, urban versus rural, and the haves versus the have-nots with the limitations of a state where strong individual figures contended with strategies of executive and popular aspirations and political affinities.

As a conflict, 1848’s demands went beyond a singular issue; it was part of the larger Atlantic debate over the meanings of citizenship, statehood, and freedom in a world still steeped in slavery. Twentieth century historicization has distorted the complexity of the moment by grounding forward color, often the grounding of nineteenth century narratives, where President Soulouque is motivated by his “suspicion and hatred of the mulattoes.” Yet color was a tool by which elite groups battled, first, for political hegemony, and second, for economic exploitation of the nation. It was neither particular to anti-liberal leaders such as Soulouque nor specific to the Haitian context. Such historicization has also asserted that 1848 was mastered by Soulouque’s own lust, claiming, “suddenly… he reversed what had been mistaken for docile inactivity”, or that “he took vigorous steps to eliminate actual or potential opponents.” This comes from a general assumption that served as a point of departure for structural and functional analysis in twentieth century historiography: whenever Haiti’s subalterns organized action, it must be due to prominent state actors. This often is compounded with an argument about peasantry’s inability to democratize as portrayed by the terminology of riots and insurrection. Yet, differing political ideologies of postslavery flourished in the face of state disfunction and elite’s inability to

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126 Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 91-92; Nicolls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 82.
consolidate the sociopolitical landscape to claim their own demands about freedom, often against those same elites.

**REGIONALISM AND FACTIONALISM IN 1847-1848**

The concrete catalyst in the unfolding drama of 1848 was the sociopolitical landscape dominated by regionalism and factionalism. Though executive powers have remained the foremost historicized individuals, neither Presidents nor Emperors were the law of the land. Importantly, their existence did not supersede the authority of local, regional, natural, or divine law and leadership. Presidential whims and interests, in fact, when not accompanied by a militant campaign of loyal supporters carried little authoritative weight beyond the capital and those regional leaders with allegiance to the President. Additionally, leaders and elites did not have foresight to anticipate the demands and movements of people, information, and political thoughts. Regional leaders, fractious factions, and leaders vied for influence over disparate publics, often managing to eke out a survival strategy. Popular mobilization against the state relied on locality and regional demands. Thus, while the *Piquets* demands regarded land and labor in their rural lives, *Zinglins*, closer to the capital, had demands more visibly met by urban life, such as the replacement of the *mulâtre* civil servants they interacted with on a daily level.

As we have seen, *Piquets*, the liberal republicans, conservative *Boyeristes*, and the old monarchical Northern elite formed their own factions in the mid-1840s. Soulouque’s election to Presidency was not meant to shake the system; Soulouque was meant to emulate Jean-Baptiste Riché’s espousal of *Boyerisme*. The presidential cabinet went unchanged from Riché’s presidency. Outside of the capital, military strongmen and charismatic peasant leaders continued to control regional stability. This is testament to the reality that, though Haiti had won its national independence in 1804, the experiment of the world’s only black emancipated state was
in constant flux. As Desemvar Delorme stated in regard to his experiences as a youth in 1840s, “agitations had become the normal state of the republic.”\textsuperscript{127} Regions were separated by mountains, landscapes, and labor schemes alongside legacies of revolution. The state’s stability depended on “favorable sociopolitical conditions as well as the personality of the president.”\textsuperscript{128} Though parties were built of leaders and their ideologies, ruling was a balancing act of power amongst differing interest groups and regions.

Soldiers and officers often switched loyalties between competing regimes and the possibility of defection and collusion limited Port-au-Prince’s ability to govern simply by force.\textsuperscript{129} From the very beginning, political legitimacy was colored by the legacy of regional figures. Regional leaders were opportunistic contenders for power and claims for political legitimacy. They engaged in exploitation and inequality, while also maintaining their legitimacy as springboards for popular claims-making. In another sense, regional leaders served as political entrepreneurs, “creating new connections between previously unconnected social sites” and linking “distinct groups and networks.”\textsuperscript{130} As Anne Eller has presented in dealing with regional leaders in the Dominican-Haitian borderlands in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, “for residents experiencing hard times, [regional] authority was Manichean but also very close.”\textsuperscript{131} Thus, it is not fair to say a strict colorism ruled Haitian political thought. Rather a color ideology was critical to the regional and factional groups who were also cut along lines of class, rural/urban, and regional histories. The main contenders for dominance were not simply a new ‘black elite’ that held firmly to ideas of political equilibrium against a *mulâtre* elite. In fact, dominance was not only

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\textsuperscript{128}Moïse, *Constitution et Luttes de Pouvoir en Haïti*, 175.
\textsuperscript{129}Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation*, 153.
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geographically specific; symbols of color and authority triangulated between overarching regimes in Port-au-Prince, local regional leaders, and popular demands at the hands of subalterns themselves. In the case of the late 1840s, the state was divided into several factions, and these, in turn, played out against the background of a more general fear of colorism.

What rocked Port-au-Prince in late 1847 was the development of a collectively aggressive *noirisme* that used the language of color to animate class-based claims. *Noirisme*, in the political milieu of post-1844, was a complex idea, intimately bound in class politics (*se mulate, se noir*) and popular social affiliations. August Maximillien, better known as General Similien, replaced Soulouque as the head of the *garde presidentielle* and was an ardent *noiriste* who played a critical role in, first, controlling the presidential guard, and, secondly, in bringing together a network of the underclass under a new political identity known as the *Zinglins*. A charismatic officer with a strong sense of individualism, Similien had a key hatred for *Boyeristes* and *Rivièristes* and encouraged popular antipathies towards *mulâtre* hegemony emerging as an influential contender to the regime. Those he recruited were not the typical urban literati but a loosely connected web of the urban dispossessed and disenfranchised: street vendors, *madam saras* (travelling market women), *marchandes* (local market women), and urban unemployed and under-employed. The *Zinglins* were Similien’s eyes and ears on the ground. The *Zinglins* exerted consistent popular pressure to revise the 1846 Constitution to reintroduce the preeminence of the presidency without the *mulâtre*-dominated Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. Bands of

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133 *Zinglin* or *zenglen* is the Kreyól word for sharp pieces of glass usually found on the street or for hedging walls and fences. In the 1840’s it seems this representation was brought into play as the *Zinglins* formed a sort of secret police around Soulouque early years. The *Zinglins* later on became a model for François Duvalier’s *tonton makouts*, though the connection is understudied. After Jean-Claude Duvalier went into exile, *zenglendo* referred to criminals recruited from groups ranging from the marginal social strata found in working-class districts to police officers, usually acting at night in civilian clothes with official weapons. See also “Makouts: Anselme Remy, Patrick Elie, Ben Dupuy”, *Roundtable Discussion Radio Haiti* (May 11, 2011), https://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/AA/00/07/57/20/00001/RL10059-RR-1040_01.mp3, 27:49-29:30.
Zinglins in Port-au-Prince were a cause for concern as they grew to a height of collective legitimacy for many of the poor of the city and operated as a paramilitary guard. They would assemble outside of the palace with various demands voiced directly to the President, ignoring the mulâtre-controlled House and Senate. The public spaces of the marketplace and the palace courtyard became a political space apart from the backdoor dealings of the senate.

Foreign consuls were not outside of being watched. British consul George Ussher was openly warned “not to meddle [in] their quarrel with the mulattoes.”  

Ussher described the atmosphere as being one of high suspicion and threat: “There exists a system of espionage which places the most respectable and unoffending citizens at the mercy of any low ruffian where denunciation is readily listened to.”  

He described the Zinglins as “the most disposed of the blacks,” often terming them the “rabble” and taking time to address his growing concerns about the “rabble who are speculating upon public confusion.”  

By early July 1848, Ussher described the Zinglins as “keep[ing] up active propaganda” in the neighboring mountains and plains, armed with clubs, “search societies,” “watchhounds,” “signals,” and “a readiness to act at a moment’s notice.”  

French consul Maxime Raybaud joined in their condemnation, often terming them as an “ultra-african” party, describing them as “a crowd of hideous scoundrels in rags” and “the bands of wretches who besieged the iron gratings” of the palais nationale.  

However, the Zinglins were no mere “rabble.” Rather, they were a loose and flexible organization of collective dissent which was fostered around anti-elite sentiments. Raybaud specified that the neighborhoods of Morne-á-Tuf and Bel-Air—egregiously poor and close to the grounds of the

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134 Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
135 Of course, by “respectable” Ussher was referring to the educated commercialists, merchants, and men of political stature, men he came in close contact with often. Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
136 Ussher dispatch to Admiral Sir France Austen, Port-au-Prince, April 10, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
137 Ussher to Palmerston, July 7, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35.34.
138 D’Alaux, Souloque et son empire, 105, 107, 244-247.
national palace—were particularly hostile, as they demanded that mulâtres be excluded from public employment and that the red of the Haitian flag, the symbol of the sang-mélé, be removed from the flag. The Zinglins grew to such heights that when they addressed the President on the Champs de Mars to dismiss his cabinet on April 9th, 1848, all of the cabinets’ members, possibly fearing the incursion that could be brought on them, immediately resigned the same day, leaving Soulouque to fill the spaces.

Though Acaau was killed in 1846 by President Riché’s forces, the legacy of class conscious Piquetistes factions did not fade out. The cities and towns of the South—Les Cayes, Jacmel, Aquin, Cavallion, and Miragoâne—were strongholds of liberal opposition and wealthy families. The mantle was taken up by other regional strongmen, who emerged as leaders prepared to carry out the tasks of anti-elitist sentiment. An ordre du jour regarding the state of the Southern province declared in March of 1848 that “one lone man, the Captain Pierre Noir, has tried to trouble the public tranquility.” Pierre Noir, known as “a brigand philosopher,” is an example of a regional leader who, under the banner of Piquetisme, carried out attacks on local elites and merchants entirely under his own set of rules and laws. In 1847, an English frigate threatened to bombard the city of Les Cayes if reparation was refused for an offense to an officer from one of Pierre Noir’s Piquets. His reply, according to Raybaud, was “You wish to burn down the city?—On which side will you begin—so that I can go to work on the other? The business will be quicker done.” Pierre Noir was not the only Southern regional leader with a strong following agenda. Jean Claude, one of the original Piquet leaders remained closely tied to

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139 Ibid., 130.
140 This amounted to a cabinet of three noirs and one mulâtre for the first time in the history of Haitian presidencies. “Proclamation,” extract from Justin Bouzon, Études historiques, 171-172; Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34; D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 131; Proclamation in Le Moniteur, July 8, 1848.
141 Le Moniteur Haïtien, Mars 18, 1848.
142 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 160.
143 Ibid.
the *Piquets* around the Les Cayes area. Another band was led by Jean Denis, a “notorious robber”, and Voltaire Castor, an escapee from prison Boyer’s imprisonment and a friend of Acaau. These are, of course, simply the names we have that have passed into the record of observers.

Northern regional leaders took a completely different approach. In a situation where civic institutions were fought and lost in 1843-1845, military rule and landownership inherited from the monarchy of Henri Christophe (1811-1820) remained the chief means of control. Effectively disconnected from Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien functioned as a place for powerful players. In the 1870s and ’80s, the north emerged as the primary contender for the presidency against the south, but in the 1840s, northern sentiment was that of secession. Equipped with a swollen army composed of regional strongmen who determined the political direction of the country with little regard for the contentious ideological struggle in the south and west, secession was a constant issue. In 1847, shortly after the election of Soulouque, three officers, named as Santy, Sanon, and Jacques Coquerre, attempted to start a revolt from the St. Marc garrison in the name of secession. Though they were caught quickly and executed on May 26th, the sentiments did not end there. Dieu Donné Bobo, known as General Bobo, and, later, Prince de Bobo, was the general Commander-in-Chief of the North. Bobo’s profile matches that of other regional leaders in the Americas and underscores how these regions should be understood: “not through a lens of absence of a capital city control but through the existence of other sovereignties, on their

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144 Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *The Breached Citadel* (Boulder: Westview, 1990), 70.
146 One should not fail to connect this to St. Marc’s history of Northern revolt, first against Henri Christophe in 1820 and then, in the middle of the political crisis of 1843-1847 as Phillipe Guerrier was installed and Pierrot deposed. Justin Bouzon, *Études historiques*, 23; Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, and Exile*, 69; Stieber, *Haiti’s Paper War*, 156-158.
147 Bouzon, *Études Historique*, 22.
terms."¹⁴⁸ Much older than Soulouque, Bobo had a strong legitimacy in the north that began long before 1842. Already a former general of the north, he was arrested in 1842, but released as jails emptied in 1843 and contended with Pierrot during his term as President from Limbé only 20 miles from Cap-Haïtien.¹⁴⁹ According to Edward Bathurst, the disgraced British consul of Cap-Haïtien, Bobo had notoriously plundered the treasury on multiple occasions and his command extended beyond the city of Cap-Haïtien.¹⁵⁰

CONTINGENCY

In 1848, Thomas Madiou published volumes II and III of his Histoire d’Haïti. An astute observer of Haitian society and especially the history of the Haitian Revolution, he privileged the plight and struggle of the nouveau libres over that of the primarily mulâtre ancien libres. A prominent mulâtre himself, Madiou, in hindsight, observed the situation with a tense regard to the developments of what he saw as a battle of “caste” between the Garde Nationale and the palace troops.¹⁵¹ Though Madiou lived the wider consequences of the colorism of 1848 as well as the post 1848 European landscape, he failed to see the broader relationship between the two troops. This was a battle of political ideologies, organized around the polarity of colorism constructed by and for leftover institutions of colonialism. The color dichotomy did a disservice to the complexities of both noir and mulâtre, but, nonetheless, was a polarity to which Haitians of both colors and political sides were compelled to respond. And in the response, people, both

¹⁴⁹ Jean B. Prax, Ahiti: Etudes sur la civilisation des Noirs (unpublished manuscript, dated 1857), 316, Mémoires et documents Haïti 1) 1857 (Prax), 23MD/1, Archives diplomatiques, Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, France, 301, 357 ; Madiou, Histoire d’Haïti, vol 8, 352.
individual and collective, argued out the terms and conditions under which *noirs* could survive—or even advance—in the basin surrounded by the forces of slavery.

The *journée* of April 16th, 1848 began when three factions collided: the *Zinglins*, the *garde nationale*, and the *garde présidentielle*. It was already unusual for the mulâtre *garde nationale* and the black *garde présidentielle* to meet, though it was also unusual for civilian demonstrations to occur on Sundays after the military parade. Port-au-Prince was suddenly aroused by the firing of the alarm guns alerting ministers, general officers, and troops to assemble at the palace. As Senator Celigny Ardouin—arguably the most spirited *Boyeriste* leader of the cabinet—was accused of conspiracy, “a man in the crowd levelled a musket at him.”

However, what arose was a cry that the President was shot. The presidential guard fired a rally towards the palace, killing and wounding some 17-18 people. A scene of confusion ensued and quickly the *Zinglin* violence directed at the *mulâtres* turned into a *noir* versus *mulâtre* battle. What erupted within the next few months was the uncontrollable and unbridled rejection of the traditional elite. In the state of emergency that followed, panic and popular fury led to violence as homes, stores, and warehouses were invaded, and class conflict mixed with colorism.

How and why did this city-wide case of unadulterated vernacular aggression occur? As with all such moments, its significance can only be discovered by diving into the river of historical experiences. Taking from Jeremy Popkins’s work on individuals, specific choices, personalities, and the “highly contingent” moments of the early Haitian Revolution, I suggest that prior to the actual *journée* of April 16, 1848, there was no inevitable outcome. The terror

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152 Word of mouth also spread that Ardouin considered Soulouque to be an *ignorant*, a condescending term that not only remarked on his education and character, but also his class. Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA FO 35/34*; D’Alaux, *Soulouque et son empire*, 141; Madiou, *Autobiographie*, 24.
that began in the April 1848 uprising has generally been claimed to be Soulouque’s principal undertaking. Yet evidence demonstrates that no plan could have anticipated the course of 1848-1849 nor could it have stymied the rise of popular sentiments. Whether planned or unplanned, events were contingent on the engagement of the people on the ground, numerous contending factions, and the spread of information very much out of the control of central state machinations. Rather, it has to do with the structure of ties between regional civil actors and local factions, and the intervening role of charismatic figures.

**Telediol and Black Publics**

Louis Dauphnet, writing after the initial violence in the July 8th, 1848 publication of *Le Moniteur haitien* professed that “official journalism” would “make the world hear the sacramental expression of a new organ of the people.” Yet, only days before the chaos and fighting that began on April 16th, the same Louis Dauphnet went from door to door calling for a reform of Haiti’s print journalists, which he claimed were dominated by the “petit mulâtres.” Shortly thereafter, *Le Moniteur* was suspended for the duration of three months. The implications of Dauphnet’s door-to-door visits shed light on a legacy more far-reaching than print journalism. Haiti’s 1848 was fundamentally established by word-of-mouth and rumor, and much like the Dauphnet incident, informal networks of news played a significant part of politics on the ground. Newspapers and pamphlets were undoubtedly used to fight opposition and promote political leaders and their programs. But as word spread by *telediol*, that is by word-of-mouth, people developed their own responses to and for the challenges of Haiti’s

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155 Louis Dauphnet was at that time the editor of *Le Moniteur*, July 8, 1848.
157 Shortly, after, Thomas Madiou became the editor of *Le Moniteur* and strict control over news publications was to be central to the regime. The plethora of papers that populated Haiti’s republic diminished even though 6 official heads of state presses were knighted alongside Thomas Madiou, who was made into a baron. Madiou, *Autobiographie*, 27.
republicanism. The sound of the *lambi*, the quotidian words of *madam sara*, and the marketplace were spaces where information travelled on undercurrents that were just as affective than proclamations, *arrêtes*, and *ordre du jours*. This was part of a repertoire of collective action that filled the sociopolitical landscape, in which protest became “general rather than specific, flexible rather than rigid, and indirect rather than direct.”

Rumor pervaded the political and social landscape. Rumors that the seat of the presidency was cursed abounded in 1847 after Riche’s death. Confirmed as a heart attack while making his way back to the capital in April 1847, the death of the former President was nonetheless ascribed to numerous causes. One version of oral history prescribes his death from Spanish Fly during a meeting with his mistress. J. B. Prax records later impressions which claimed that he was poisoned at the hands of a *mulâtresse* named Masonette, or that mulattoes poisoned him. As James Scott has stated in regards to resistance, “the power to gossip is more democratically distributed than power, property, and income, and certainly, than the freedom to speak openly.” Similarly, rumors are, in Ann Stoler’s words, a “key form of cultural knowledge” diagnostic of what is realistically conceivable, thus “blurring the boundaries between events witnessed” and those envisioned, occupying a liminal space between performed brutality and the potentiality for it. Whether or not a *mulâtresse* had been part of any plot mattered less than the existence of the rumor that a female *mulâtre* was plotting the murder of the *noir* President. Such

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158 The word likely from the Greek root prefix tele, in telegraph and telephone, and the Kreyòl word *diol*, meaning mouth or jaw.
161 Prax, *Ahiti*, 23MD/1, Archives diplomatiques, Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, France 336
a rumor reveals the growing hatred and passionate distrust within vernacular thought which envisioned a persistent mulâtre conspiracy.

During the month of August 1847, tensions mounted as the majority of the classe dirigeante accompanied Soulouque north to quell sentiments of succession, leaving Port-au-Prince in the hands of Minister Jean Élie (Treasurer General), David Troy (Minister of the Interior), and General Similien. Similien and Senator Troy came to blows in the ensuing month. Rumors that David Troy, the Boyeriste treasurer, was stockpiling weapons and that General Similien was planning a coup both circulated in August 1847. These rumors reached such an extent that Senator Joseph Courtois, editor of the Feuille du Commerce, published a virulent article on August 29th regarding Similien and the Zinglins. When the designs of Similien were exposed in La Feuille du Commerce, Soulouque returned to find the city in an uproar. Noiristes, Zinglins, and the presidentielle guard came to Similien’s side, accusing Monsieur J. Courtois, the French-educated mulatto editor of La Feuille of being a petit mulâtre bringing up strife.164 Despite the lack of literacy amongst the urban poor, the article generated major consequences amongst the publics of Port-au-Prince. Word spread that David Troy had called Soulouque an ignorant.165 While Courtois’s arrest was met with opposition by senators and elites alike, the black military and Zinglins soon overran the streets of the capital; Courtois yielded to the pleading of fellow senators and La Feuille du Commerce was shut down for the duration. In a similar example, rumors of re-enslavement in the neighboring Dominican Republic prompted collective resistance in 1863 which “articulated an alternative conception of the semi-recent

164 Justin Bouzon, Études historiques, 17-58 ; Moïse, Constitution et luttes de pouvoir, 180-183.
165 It is also clear that David Troy had his own plot as he was harboring arms. Madiou, Autobiographie, 24. See also “piece No. 4 in Justin Bouzon, Études historiques, 164-166.
Dominican past and a prognostication of the immediate future.”⁶⁶ Talk of breaking Courtois out was becoming popular, until a rumor began to circulate that all the blacks of East and West of the city had been given ten cartridges and told to assail the city at the sound of the cannons. Panic ensued, and mulatto families rushed to the consuls to gain protection.⁶⁷

Rumor, gossip, and telediol did not only define potentiality and communicate hopes and fears; they formed the crux of popular language in regard to collective ideas of freedom and living conditions. As Stephan Palmié understands it, rumors, or the revision and reuse of them, demonstrate “individual autonomy and inviolability while predicting those very conceptions of impersonal—and fundamentally amoral—market forces.”⁶⁸ Political leaders, state officials, merchants, and the literate publics saw citizenship as fueled by labor, market relations, unity, and moral obligation. However, for on the ground Haitians, emancipation meant personal independence and public belonging. The important urban-employed and market women took the opportunity to reshape the meanings of their commercial activities and local interactions by developing their own understandings, making vernacular citizenship “a decidedly public affair” debated in the streets, at the marketplaces, in workplaces, and plazas alike.⁶⁹ In the immediacy of the events on the afternoon of April 16th, rumors that Soulouque was shot in the national palace “rapidly spread,” inciting initial panic.⁷⁰ Reports of the “assassination of the President” spread throughout the city and in response to pervasive rumors that mulâtres were being killed, some hundreds of mulâtres assembled with arms in a show of self-protection and possible

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⁶⁷ D’Alaux, *Soulouque et son empire*, 118.
⁷⁰ Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
insurrection. Each rumor locates itself in a body of political understanding often voided from the official transcripts or recorded as hearsay or unofficial news to observers and foreign eyes. However, the crafting of any histories which limit the importance of rumor in the face of barely coded civilizationist language will miss the fundamentally vernacular power of *telediol*.

**MYTH OF THE MASTERMIND**

Therefore, was the *journée* all Faustin Soulouque’s plan? The evidence is contradictory and yet revealing. We cannot disconnect Soulouque from the plot, and yet, we cannot imagine the intention was to create chaos. The myth and speculation of Soulouque’s master plan is seemingly accounted for in the historiography. Yet, within the empty margins of the scathing pamphlet of Edward Bathurst, the short-term *consul d’affaires* of Cap-Haïtien, Ussher refuted the declarations that it was Soulouque’s ploy. Regarding April 16, 1848 Ussher attached several notes on separate pieces of paper: “There is no proof whatever that Soulouque was implicated in what took place at the Palace.” Ussher, however, in his official dispatches to the Lord Viscount remarked that “from the moment the affair commenced, all the horses were unbridled and all the gates shut.” Raybaud, believing it was Soulouque and Similien’s ploy, remarked that guns were already loaded, contrary to custom. This was certainly evidence of a plan, but also seems to point to factions with more immediate control of the palace gates such as the *Garde Presidentielle*. Furthermore, according to Ussher, Soulouque’s own wife, Adelina, was looking out of the windows of the palace and Soulouque himself, “endeavoring at great personal risk to stop the slaughter,” was slightly wounded in the forehead by a splinter. Understanding

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171 Harold to Fredrick Douglass and Martin R. Delany, July 2, 1848.
172 Handwritten side note to Attachment in Consular Dispatches, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35.43, 33.
173 Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
175 Handwritten side note to attachment in Consular Dispatches, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35.43, 33; Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
the contingency of such events is vital because, in Haiti’s history, the reach and reciprocal formation of ideologies, identities, and revolutionary thought on the ground is often ignored for a psychological narrative of national leaders. The events of 1848-1849 are callously seen as part of the inevitable rise of another Haitian tyrant who—according to contemporary news and later historians—was motivated either by “anger,” “ignorance,” or a “cheerless mood.” Likewise, later historiography continued this, terming the journée a “riot,” a “mysterious event,” and a beginning to a “reign of terror,” unable to see the significance beyond the violence.

What we know is that Soulouque wished to put into place counterweights against the ruling classes of Port-au-Prince and remove them from power, specifically his cabinet which had now all resigned. Senator Damien Delva, the new minister of justice, sent word to consuls Ussher and Raybaud directly before events, stating “whatever might be the events that would take place, myself and all foreigners might feel assured of his protection.” We know that Soulouque had a personal distaste of Ardouin. On the afternoon itself, Celigny Ardouin was reproached by President Soulouque for conspiring against him and was ordered to be disarmed and taken to prison, before he was shot by someone in the crowd. This personal enmity fed the factional conflict that preexisted the 1840s which Wesleyan Pastor Mark Baker Bird remarked upon: “[a] party feeling of every kind, relating to class and politics, which had now long agitated the nation, on this memorable day broke forth.” Soulouque certainly wasted no time in controlling the narrative and justifying all conduct against elites and mulâtres. He announced to the people and the army in the aftermath of the three days of bloodshed in Port-au-Prince that “a

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176 Léger, Haiti, 201.
177 Léger, Haiti, 201; Bird, The Black Man, 226; Ussher to Palmerston, November 2, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
178 Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince TNA FO 35/34; D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 141.
179 Ibid.
new era arises for the Republic…freed from the various obstacles and heterogenous elements which hindered its onward march.”\textsuperscript{181}

What speaks volumes is the reality that during the crisis in Port-au-Prince both ministers Dufresne and Delva—respectively mulâtre and noir, but equally elite—sent their families to the British consulate for protection during the crisis.\textsuperscript{182} Even as ministers, neither could ensure the safety of their own families in the confusion that followed. In another example, as grand propriétaires abandoned the few large estates left, one proprietor outside of the capital was nearly murdered on his way back despite General Bellegarde’s assurance of his safety.\textsuperscript{183} This was not a perfectly orchestrated top-down repression; these leaders had little to no control over the marches of these embattled black publics that largely operated outside of state authority. In addition, color was less a direct issue than an overarching perspective on the class arguments. In the end, both noirs and mulâtres lay dead, harkening back to the chief tenant of the Piquet rebellion of 1844: those who were rich were the mulâtres and those who were poor were noirs, regardless of skin. In linking 1848 more completely to the political realities of mid-century Haiti, historians can disrupt the simplistic definition of the period as defined by the recurrent narrative of the corrupt megalomaniac. Instead, the origins of the second Haitian Empire can be interpreted as a political entity nurtured in the stagnancy of the decades after the Haitian Revolution, with a firm understanding of Haitian politics on the ground and at the top.

\textbf{1848’S POTENTIAL FOR REVOLUTION}

On March 8, Piquets presented themselves in front of Les Cayes demanding the dismissal of General Dugué Zamor, commander-in-chief of the South, with cries of \textit{Vive le President}

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\textsuperscript{181} Harold to Fredrick Douglass and Martin R. Delany, July 2, 1848.  
\textsuperscript{182} Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince \textit{TNA FO 35/34}.  
\textsuperscript{183} Ussher to Palmerston, August 6, 1848, Port-au-Prince \textit{TNA FO 35/34}.  
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Zamor had been one of the original *Piquet* leaders in 1844 but under the return of the Boyeristes had been given a position in the state to acquiesce black *habitants*. Zamor’s legitimacy as a peasant leader quickly eroded, as he represented the most commercially dominated region, full of elite *mulâtre* holdings. The *Piquets* returned in April, armed and accusing Zamor of treason against the government. When the militia from three communes of Aquin rose to defend Zamor on April 9th—also in the name of the President—the *Piquets’* demands escalated from expulsion to potential insurgency. Though a delegation of senate representatives declared Les Cayes “tranquil” in early April, the 19th—3 days after the *journée*—marks the moment these demands shifted from protests and the deposition of Zamor to potential revolution as the *Piquets* sacked the city of Les Cayes.

But who were the *Piquets* rebelling against with cries of *Vive le President*? It is clear that the Haitian peasantry identified their opponents in class as well as color. Their aggression was a hybrid of peasant/proletarian aims that one historian has characterized as a war between “those with everything and those with nothing.” In this case, the collective anger was not towards the state itself, but the system which held the traditional elite in power. During the summer of 1848, the *Piquet* revolts in Les Cayes, Jacmel, Jérémie, and elsewhere added themselves to the insurgency, incited by news that Port-au-Prince was in revolt. The *Piquets* took on new meanings of solidarity. Writing from Port-au-Prince, Ussher stated, “the *Piquets*… tell the same story as their brethren here [the *Zinglins* ]… that plunder had been promised to them.”

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184 According to Raybaud, the *Piquets* were encouraged by Soulouque’s choice of frère Joseph, the piquet religious leader, to be part of his entourage. Moïse, *Constitution et luttes de pouvoir*, 185; “Ordre Du Jour” in *Le Moniteur haïtien* March 18, 1848; D’Alaux, *Soulouque et son empire*, 139-140.
185 Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *The Breached Citadel*, 70.
186 D’Alaux, *Soulouque et son empire*, 139-140.
187 *Le Moniteur Haïtien*, April 1, 1848.
189 Ussher to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35.34.
what occurred was the chaining together of a rural popular uprising and an urban episode of collective violence by the rapid flow of news into and from the unstable Southern province where peasant political agency and vernacular aggression turned into a wave of collective violence against the Haitian elite, *noir* and *mulâtre*.

In this section I reread the _Piquets_ and _Zinglins_ as active citizens—over their respective terms in the archives as “rabble” or “bandits”—engaged in a battle to define their own meanings of freedom through protest and, in the end, violence. “Freedom,” according to Thomas Holt, “was neither natural nor indigenous, but a historically particular and socially constructed phenomenon.”\(^{190}\) Freedom was interpreted by postcolonial governments as the pursuit of material interests and a transformation under the “liberal democratic ethic” that would produce motivated, industrious, and reliable workers. Planters, on the other hand, wanted full control over cheap emancipated labor to sustain plantations in the immediate aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. Freed people moved off plantations and bought their own land or squatted, establishing themselves as “not just free laborers but a free people.”\(^{191}\) Collective resistance to this system took the form of flight, communalism, and a variety of forms of noncooperation with planters. In the Southern highlands and Western peninsula—with a historically strong sector of small holdings, tenant farming, and a dominant urban commercial history—rural subsistence farming represented a victory against the elites’ visions of plantation economy. The battle was neither easy nor ever fully complete and, in effect, the elite stunted the peasantry, and the peasantry stunted the elite from their immediate desires.\(^{192}\) However, in the 1840s, the southern peasants and the urban poor class recognized what was at stake: the former sought to destroy the

\(^{191}\) Ibid., 176.
\(^{192}\) For more see Jean Casimir, *La culture opprimée* (Delmas, Haïti: Lakay, 2001); Mimi Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*, 89-110; Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation*. 
social relations determined by elite economic visions and the urban poor flung themselves into a heated revolution.

But where is this potential revolution in the historiography? Are the peasant political ideologies of Haiti’s 1848 lost in the silences of the victor’s history? Do they not earn the title Black Jacobins? What explains the narrative of political apathy and extraordinary violence? Why did Haiti and its subsequent history escape the conventional, teleological narrative of liberal-democratic politics? Why is 1848 not a case for a revolution? Michel-Rolph Trouillot notes that hegemonic efforts to resolve contradictions lead to gaps and telling silences in dominant narratives and stories.193 For these nineteenth century subalterns, often made into an amorphous agent of chaos in the archive, rioting, plantation burning, and urban assaults take a pejorative backseat to organized marches, mass petitions, and protest journalism. Perhaps, this narrative is sustained by the reality that in 1848, Piquet and Zinglin popular mobilization was neither democratic, nor egalitarian in nature. Rather, it was “improvised and reactive,” much like the independence that preceded it in the Caribbean and Latin America.194 Haitianist David Nichols claimed that Haitian peasant resistance following the Haitian Revolution cannot be characterized as revolutionary but “reformist…even conservative.”195 However, as a response to the liberal paradigm of power and a republic dominated by merchants, revolution and rebellion ran counter to the definition to include forms of statehood that infringed upon the same freedoms liberals claimed to offer.

193 For discussion of silences in hegemonic narratives see Michel Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).
VIOLENCE AND FREEDOM

April 16th arose in a year of profound changes across the Atlantic. Liberal, reformist, democratic, and republican revolution broke out across Europe. General emancipation came to the French and Dutch Caribbean with their revolutions. Teleological norms—found in fatalist narratives of color prejudice and the inability to self-rule—have made Haiti’s 1848 invisible, in spite of its momentous recalibrations to the political systems. The Liberal Revolution had little to offer the “black socialists,” as French consul Maxime Raybaud named the Piquets.196 Four years of noir presidencies amounted to nothing: there was no redistribution, no shift in their treatment as a productive base, nor in social relationship between elite urbanites and big landowners. All the demands of the Piquets in 1844—demands which had nearly torn the state into pieces—were quietly derailed. Between 1844 and 1848, these amounted to bitter, yet pacified struggles against the stagnancy of the mulâtre-led senate. The resurgence of the Piquetiste struggle in 1848 came from a different context. This time, contrary to the situations formed by the Boyer Government and the Liberal Revolution, peasants’ demands were not simply directed towards the central economic and political power of the state, but towards social relations.

Thus, revolutionary aspirations did not disappear from this new generation of subalterns. Like their maroon forebears, popular mobilization in Haiti revolved around “the counterculture of colonial modernity” primarily emerging out of the “slave experience,” an experience formed around their labor.197 For Haitians, the effects were not so much profound as they were part of a long continuity of post-slavery claims-making. A tradition of marronage and semi-autonomy

196 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 115.
went hand in hand in the mountainous valleys and thickly forested woodlands that could not easily be turned over to large scale profit. Johnhenry Gonzalez has remarked that class conflict in early Haiti “often expressed itself through struggles between the state and the masses concerning the enforcement and evasion of taxes.”\textsuperscript{198} But by the late 1840s, claims espoused a more aggressive cry. Celucien Joseph contends that the idea of black freedom to the maroon descendants “meant ownership of land and cultivation of that land” alongside “the extermination of their oppressors.”\textsuperscript{199} In this case, vernacular politics were grounded in the politics of freedom as autonomy, equity, and a Fanonian catharsis. While foreign markets embodied the obsessions of the elite, subalterns held fast to their own conceptions of freedom, embracing the sentiments of antislavery and emancipation inherited from the Haitian Revolution, taking great pride in celebrating national holidays and traditions as much as destroying the class that subjugated them.

Mimi Sheller has examined how Haiti’s \textit{Piquet} Rebellion of 1844, Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion of 1867, and the “black publics” formed in the aftermath of their respective emancipations “developed a shared radical vision of democracy based on the post-slavery ideology of freedom.” Sheller offers a way to shift our understandings of democracy and rights from the white Atlantic models: the reconstituted peasantries of these post-emancipation societies were political actors who actively resisted coercive labor regimes, created long-lasting oppositional cultures, and often joined in public political protest. In regards to postslavery labor arrangements and rigid class distinction, O. Nigel Bolland has also asserted that the relationship between the ownership of land and freedom point to “the need to look beyond liberal notions of freedom and its association with the bourgeoisie marketplace.”\textsuperscript{200} In Haitian and Jamaican cases,

\textsuperscript{198} Gonzalez, \textit{Maroon Nation}, 199.  
\textsuperscript{199} Joseph, \textit{Haitian Modernity and Liberative Interruptions}, 63.  
\textsuperscript{200} O. Nigel Bolland, \textit{The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean} (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), 95.
some of the most prominent actors in protest or challenges to authorities were medium-sized landholders who were part of the peasant class yet paid taxes, met property qualifications to vote, and participated in local government. For the 1848 Piquets and Zinglins, two post-slavery publics sharpened and broadened by their incessant conflicts against domination and persecution, operating outside of elite labor schemes and state interference was part of daily survival.\(^{201}\)

However, more than often, the public protest of peasants sacking plantation houses, refusing to work, and rejecting elite social norms through force was constituted as illegitimate. Thus, though the Piquets came with cries of “Vive le President,” their brand of political agency was commonly interpreted as lawless brigandism by official news and foreign accounts. Even though their collective aggression pushed the hardest for “political participation and equality accompanied by an explicit critique of white racial domination and market capitalism that built the institution of slavery,” they are left on the side of the archives as renegades rather than radicals.\(^{202}\) When the news of the Piquet demonstration was still spread in mid-March, an ordre du jour in Le Moniteur about the state of the Southern province read “a party of citizens… protest[ed] against the administration of [Dugué Zamor]… on the morning of the 8\(^{th}\) of this month… who they accused of treason towards the government.”\(^{203}\) According to Ussher, “the insurgents left the town without committing any acts of violence” after singing a Te Deum, one of the national anthems, and receiving rations from the authorities.\(^{204}\) Le Moniteur, on April 1\(^{st}\), 1848, published a government delegation composed of southern representatives from Les Cayes addressed the Piquets as “fellow citizens” using a democratic means of political address.


\(^{202}\) Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 5.

\(^{203}\) “Ordre du Jour” in *Le Moniteur haïtien*, March 18, 1848. See also “Piece No. 7” in Justin Bouzon, *Études historiques*, 170-171.

\(^{204}\) Ussher to Palmerston, April 5, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
mobilizing in a public gathering. Yet by mid-April they were considered “an insurrection of an alarming character” and “a body of lawless characters amounting to about 300 men armed with pikes.” The failure was not in the Piquets at this conjuncture, but in the failure to coherently acknowledge Piquetisme as a valid reaction and critique of the landowner-merchant dominated state.

In the capital, the surge of urban vernacular politics had their own underpinnings in a rich tradition of the marketplace. There women, drawing upon the most marginal of social constituencies, led daily market interactions and dictated the spread of news. Even before the network of Zinglins, the important madam saras, marchandes, and their allies took the opportunity to reshape the meanings of their commercial activities and local interactions by developing their own understandings of “public rights and freedom.” Madiou reports that on March 12, 1843, toward the end of the Liberal Revolution, Boyer’s national guard was stopped by a multitude of women from Morne-à-Turf who assailed them with curses. Women in nearby Léogane, “while singing”, dragged into the town two cannon from fort Ça-Ira and fired shots into Boyer’s troops. That same month, mothers of those killed in Léogane assembled at the Palace grounds bitterly reproaching the president and his government.

These embattled women did not vanish in between 1843-1848. Popular mobilization in the ousting of Boyer in the capital and in the South raised hopes of the oppressed struggling for rights they never had. It was on April 9, 1848, only after news of the insurrection in d’Aquin reached Port-au-Prince, that a congregation of Zinglin leaders met at the palais national, pressing

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205 Le Moniteur haïtien, April 1, 1848.
206 Ussher to Palmerston, April 5, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
Soulouque for three things: the establishment of the 1816 constitution which dictated presidency-for-life, the dismissal of his cabinet, and the removal of the “abusive title” of secretaries for ministers. The cabinet immediately resigned and were replaced by ministers before the end of the week. Rumor circulated that the following Sunday some demonstration was to take place after the typical military parade. The struggle to realize freedom in their everyday lives in the decades following emancipation and the constraint of landlessness and export agriculture gave new meanings to their new legal status, and they forged lives free of control in spite of landlessness.

**MAKING FREEDOM**

April 16th’s events in Port-au-Prince prompted renewed agitation in the south and radicalized demands. A peace stabilized at the end of the 19th in Aux Cayes—but on the 22nd Piquets sacked and plundered several houses belonging to prominent mulâtres. They attacked commercial warehouses, distilleries, and plundered foreign-owned businesses and merchandise. Official complaints from British subjects in Port-au-Prince and Aux Cayes show that mercantile establishments were heavily targeted. Another official complaint from Aux Cayes describes the revival of disorder and destruction that began upon the arrival of the President: a British subject was robbed of all the clothes on his persons and all of his private property, leaving his shop and home to be pillaged. Natasha Lightfoot suggests that struggles against post-emancipation forms of domination did not need to be “valiant and unified subaltern struggles”

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211 Usshér to Palmerston, April 30, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
212 Usshér to Palmerston, October 2, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
213 British Subjects of Aux Cayes claimed the destruction was valued at 8,089.51 pounds. The distillery owner, James B. Button, claimed 5210 pounds. More claims were put forth for an additional sum of 2,000. “British subjects of Aux Cayes”, Attachment to Ussher to Palmerston, 2 October 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
such as demonstrations, enfranchisement, or peaceful marches. Violence was a direct action in a society where politics were not a collaborative conversation.

Pan-cathartic violence and looting played a pivotal role in the expression of urban and rural demands. As Eller states about the island in the 1850-60s, “a submerged wave of popular politics burgeoned in the rural areas and towns.” For the Piquets and the Zinglins this was driven by a vernacular anti-elitism as much as by impatient radicalism. They saw their collective actions as co-authored, terming each other “brothers” and “brethren.” When Piquets demanded that each of them be given five carreaux of land “in full production” and houses for their officers in the city at Cavillion, leaders of the Zinglins heard this news and renewed their demands. In addition to the deposition of all mulâtre functionaries and the removal of red from the Flag, they wished for the pillaging of mulâtre-owned stores houses, the confiscation of nearly all their homes, and mass exile. Perhaps the most enlightening point Lightfoot gives us is that land, always seen as the primary constraint in Caribbean post-slavery societies, did not prevent the newly emancipated from creating diverse ways to define freedom from quotidian acts of survival to uprisings. At Les Cayes, in lieu of land, marchandes “conveyed all their goods to the foreign houses” and took up quarters. In another Les Cayes case, a Senator Daublas, “a highly respectable and inoffensive mulattoe merchant” was tried by a Piquet-led military commission, condemned, and shot without a trial or evidence before any orders could arrive from the President. As Zinglin leaders “complain[ed] openly of their lagging behind their brethren in the South,” demands for equal distribution of property surged and the persecution of wealthy classes

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216 D’Alaux, *Souloque et son empire*, 166.
217 Ussher to Palmerston, July 7, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.
remained consistent. Zinglins began to add to their demands the repudiation of the financial treaty with France and the expulsion of French and English agents. Les Cayes was one of the major victories of the 1848 Piquet movement and in its wake radical violence and resistance to the rural system intensified. Following Les Cayes, the Piquet leader Jean Claude met the anti-Piquet forces of Aquin and defeated them at Cavillion. There they executed nearly 200 prisoners under no orders but their own. In the plains outside of Port-au-Prince, groups of armed peasants surrounded the capital ready to plunder the city. In the arrondissement of Jacmel, Piquets assembled in the mountains by their own accord to sack the settlement, though they were defeated on the 31st of May. As Soulouque made his tour of the south, leaving Aux Cayes on the 28th of June for Jacmel and Jérémie, peasants proceeded to sack Grande L’Anse and other towns. These were not random acts of armed subaltern violence. Piquets and Zinglins took up arms on their own and exhibited their demands by destroying and seizing the means of elite domination. The collective violence within these actions did not cease to be a way of creating, defending, and challenging systems of governmental and social exploitation. Violence was not an expression of primitive aggression or evidence of an innate propensity of the peasant and underclass to violence. It was a highly structured response to and, haven from, the anarchy of poverty and oppression. In this sense, as Antoinette Burton states, “‘terror’ here… was revolution by another name. 

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218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.; D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 166.
220 Ussher to Palmerston, July 7, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TN4 FO 35/34.
PEACE, WAR, AND CO-OPTION

On April 23rd, three days after the end of the Port-au-Prince massacres, Soulouque left at the head of the army to pacify the South. In an address to the city of Aquin of April 17th, Soulouque gave the anti-Piquet forces an ultimatum on the bridge of Miragoâne: “I am on the bridge at the head of the forces of the Republic… One word, one sign, and you will cease to exist.” From April until August, Soulouque met with Piquet forces and legitimized his authority over the potential revolutionary peasants by organizing the systematic silencing, exile, and imprisonment of the southern and western elite. When Soulouque arrived in Jérémie after three months of campaigning, he declared plans for “peace” through “perpetual war.” He promised that his “sword shall never be returned to the scabbard, as long as there shall be left one of these perjurers to strike, who conspire the ruin of the country.” With these words and an arduous Southern campaign, Soulouque consolidated the subaltern plight into his own, remaking the symbols of freedom into a “perpetual war” that encapsulated collective aggression and the national well-being. He effectively portrayed his enemies as embattled minorities working to prevent the concerted actions of the masses and the President. Soulouque played simultaneously on the hopes, fears, and frustrations of factions that were insurgent, turning their liberatory aggression into a state populism. His actions and his charged rhetoric engendered the sense of national liberation and some form of restoration of nationhood to the urban and rural insurgents if they pledged their arms to him.

In this section I explore the events following the journée of April 16th and Soulouque’s subsequent attentiveness to popular conceptions of power, legitimacy, and freedom. Florencia Mallon has explored “how universal ideals met contradictory realities” within the continual

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222 Le Moniteur haïtien, July 8, 1848.
223 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 174-175.
224 Ibid.
process of nation formation, noting that while coalition-building and cross-class alliances were fundamental, hegemony was crucial. Soulouque’s political domination, according to Mallon, was the outcome of both the people’s consent and the repression that was justified by their collective feelings. There were two important dimensions to Soulouque’s politics which allowed him to rule with the double face of noiriste autocrat and a populist port-parole of the peasant and urban massed: (1) the co-option and remaking of symbols of popular mobilization through military executions and privileges and (2) the deliberate speech and spectacle of terror towards opposing regional leaders and traditional elites. With the use of these exclusionary politics, he did not have to promise redistribution. Instead, he dramatized his fight and the rejection of the typical elite. Reshaping the meaning of the insurrection and redefining the duties of citizenship was Soulouque’s most sweeping bid in the wake of the 1840s: a vision of solidarity with the oppressed and one of the most moving expressions of broadening state sympathies that undergirded the trends of the 1840s.

**Coercion of Popular Mobilization**

Already by June of 1848, the National Guard marched hand in hand with the Zinglins in Port-au-Prince. There is little evidence regarding what on the ground conversations sounded like, but from the period of April to July, Ussher commented on the “rabble” and “blacks, most noted for their hatred of the mulattoes”—that is Zinglins—encouraged by Soulouque’s actions in the South to “make every sort of unreasonable and wicked demand.” Even before Soulouque’s journey to the south and west, Soulouque entertained Zinglin gatherings, and Zinglin leaders mixed with his entourage. Thus, his position in Port-au-Prince, though proxied through Similien

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226 Ussher to Palmerston, June 4, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
factional control and the garde *presidentielle*, was well established. Even while the President marched away from the capital, in the month of May there were no major disturbances in the capital as troops were supported by “the rabble of the town.”\(^{228}\) It was during this time that popular mobilization in Port-au-Prince and the South became inextricably attached to military procedures, as Soulouque travelled constantly under the pretext of southern revolt. He made his presence visible to the differing Southern and Western *arrondissements*, first, by written proclamation and rhetoric, then, by military presence. The *Piquets*’ and the *Zinglins*’ radical sentiments took on a new symbolism of becoming part of the national order. This was, as Mimi Sheller notes, “not the triumph of blacks over mulattoes, but the triumph of statist autocracy over the potentially radically democratic alliance.”\(^{229}\)

The earliest movements were in the rhetoric of *ordre du jours*, proclamations, and *arrêtés* where President Soulouque began to lean on state authority and legitimize his position with the use of the language of collective aggression. The proclamation of April 15th condemned anti-*Piquet* forces at Aquin—though they were at the moment still pro-Soulouque—with allegations that “[St. Surin Pyrrham and colonel Louis Jacques] have chosen Aquin for their criminal rebellion.”\(^{230}\) The following morning, possibly before the afternoon violence an *arrêté* declared Aquin in the state of rebellion.\(^{231}\) Considering how information travelled by *telediol*, such formal news must have integrated informal talk of President and *Piquet* allegiance, enacting upon spaces dominated by subalterns aimed counter to previous power relations. Another example is the proclamation of April 17\(^{th}\) which claimed the *Zinglins* and *Piquets* as “the people and the armée

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\(^{228}\) Ussher to Palmerston, June 4, 1848, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/34.

\(^{229}\) Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 138.

\(^{230}\) *Le Moniteur haïtien*, July 8, 1848.

\(^{231}\) Ibid.
“indignés” against a conspiracy.232 Significantly, Zinglins and Piquets, rarely mentioned in the official pages of the newspapers, were now readily evoked as part of the nation. The importance was not only in the explicit thanking of these informal networks, but also in the articulation of inclusion for these two black publics.

In this period, Soulouque sought to overcome Acaau’s legacy in the south; he was not content with being the heir of the charismatic peasant leader. In the end, he enacted a series of political deals, encouraging mass mobilization, setting up military repressions, and made marked institutional changes. Instead of crushing the popular uprisings, he bestowed military ranks to the leaders of the Piquets, spreading money and rations to the insurgents, encouraging their zeal against the elite.233 At Aquin, where Piquet forces crushed their opposition, Soulouque released an arrêté on May 9th from Les Cayes which declared the arrondissment to have reentered the state of order.234 The same day, his rhetoric regarding Cavallion drew on the imagery of Piquet aggression as he declared that the “insurgents” had already “fallen under the glaive of the law” of the Piquets whom he termed “citizens” and “soldiers.”235

After Soulouque used the Piquets to level the bourgeoisie commercial classes in Les Cayes, he installed Jean Claude, the prominent Piquet who defeated the counter-insurgency at Aquin, as chief of the south and, later, duke of the influential southern city.236 Jean Denis and Voltaire Castor, also Piquet leaders, were named duke of Aquin and count of Ile-à-Vache respectively.237 Under the influence of Soulouque, the armed peasants became the garde.

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232 Ibid.
233 Ussher to Palmerston, June 4, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
234 Le Moniteur haïtien, July 8, 1848.
235 Ibid.
236 Ordonnance portant nomination des ministres, 22 September 1849, Haiti (empire), laws, statues, etc. 1849-1858, Port-au-Prince, Digital Library of the Caribbean; Prax, Ahiti, 23MD/1, Archives diplomatiques, Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, France, 339.
237 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 248.
nationale, and the longstanding public reciprocity built from the Piquets was transformed into a paternalistic alliance between President and the masses. Piquets began to call themselves the garde nationale and were referred to as “government troops” while the Zinglins in the capital referred to themselves as “the people.”  

The developments in this alliance were not simply a gradual process. They were reactive and the intensity of subaltern claims demanded that the President directly contend with each region personally. As early as April 27th, in an ordre du jour directed to the Piquet forces at Miragoâne, Soulouque’s heavily violent rhetoric (“be without mercy”) had to be curbed by an admonishment to have “respect for the properties… this is your mot d’ordre.” In one letter Consul Ussher states “[Soulouque] finds it no easy matter to satisfy the demands of his friends the Piquets, who tell the same story as their brethren here [in Port-au-Prince].” For the Piquets, the granting of land to supporters, the removal of land from his enemies, and, later, the designation of bureaucratic appointments through nobility demonstrated the potential for the redivision of social capital. It did not, however, reflect a fundamental change in the economics, and early in the Southern tour, Piquets made explicit demands for land.

Similar to 1843’s Liberals, Soulouque expressed the same elite fear of a full-scale black peasant uprising. However, he navigated popular aspirations differently and attempted to assert control over the bellicose Piquets, obstreperous peasantry, and radical urban subalterns. The President forwent any deals with the Piquets but did not condemn them. According to Raybaud, “while refusing to surrender the property of the mulattoes to the Piquets, he abandoned their proprietors to them.” When Piquets killed Senator Daublas in Les Cayes, Soulouque punished

238 Ussher to Palmerston, June 4, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34; D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 164  
239 Le Moniteur, July 8, 1848.  
240 Ussher to Palmerston, June 4, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.  
241 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 169 ; Le Moniteur haitien, July 8, 1848.
them by not executing more convicts, instead sentencing them to hard labor.242 It was clear the Piquets could pose a threat to future stability and so he struggled to reign them in, urging the “Garde Nationale” to return to their cultivation in an ordre du jour on May 6th as he purged Les Cayes: “You have shown yourselves worthy of the country! Peace now established, return to your firesides, and give yourselves up to your noble and useful labors, and repose after your fatigues.”243 At the same time, a second ordre du jour from May 6th also conspicuously praised the loyalty of garde nationale while urging the “proper authorities” to disperse any disruption and encourage a return to work.244 Thus, while Soulouque praised the peasant insurgents for their violence, he refused redistribution, censuring these projects for a return to the ill-defined labor system of Code Rurale.

Soulouque’s second response, in order to construct an image of legitimacy, was to seize and master the narrative of popular aggression with the marketplace execution, the military commission, and the public accusation. The military commission became a way of showing that law could perform popular and public justice and a way of portraying himself as a herald of the end of political conflict. Raybaud writes, “the law gave him military commissions… It was a means of testing his officers, especially when the accused were of their friends.”245 Raybaud assertion was correct, in that, the routinely ordered military commissions, operating outside of civil law, sowed doubt about the integrity of leaders that were not Soulouque himself. In turn, the threat of the military commission placed a surveillant eye on contesting influential leaders and routine denunciations kept collective aggression in his favor while satisfying at least part of loyal regional leaders’ own desire for influence and power. As an act of state accusation of

242 Ibid., 163.
243 Ibid.
244 Le Moniteur haïtien, July 8, 1848.
245 Ibid., 175.
wrongdoing by other citizens, the denunciation, by explicitly calling for punishment of a citizen by the proper authorities, invoked state interest in the public body. As arrêtés and ordre du jours were typically to be read out loud in public spaces such as marketplaces, they were public indictments of an “enemy of the people” and represented a collective outcasting of individuals against the nation.

These spectacles of state authority were, however, not only meant to terrify remaining generals and elites; they executed the vernacular demands of aggression. The court martial replaced collective violence on the streets and placed the authority over violence chiefly in the hands of the forces led by Soulouque. It is not a coincidence nor an accident that the public marketplace became a place for military executions in Port-au-Prince. The marketplace was an informal political space where the disenfranchised gathered with no restrictions. Sydney Mintz has described Haiti as a society with almost no functioning formal institutions outside the system of public markets. These spaces were quotidian, accessible, and commanded widespread networks of news and public affairs. The use of public spaces placed Soulouque’s authority closer to the ground like his meetings with Zinglins in his palace courtyards. Spenser St. John recounts a story of “an old beggar-woman” who on being refused alms from some officers “ran under the Emperor’s window and began to shout, ‘Emperor they are conspiring against you!’” While it was an attempt to ridicule Soulouque’s suspicions, it nonetheless, demonstrates the relations between the close proximity and personal power Soulouque accumulated as a charismatic figure. Furthermore, it meant his use of the Piquets and Zinglins did not constitute a

246 Wyke to Palmerston, August 6, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35/34.
248 St. John, Hayti Or, The Black Republic, 291.
wholesale measure of national unity; reactions that suited particular moments. In this case, it shows us that though military support was crucial to the larger political aims, even the military was subject to exclusion.

As acts of exclusion and repression performed at the order of the President accumulated, the distinctions between popular victories and state victories collapsed. On the 27th of June, at 10 am President Soulouque addressed the chamber of representatives: there was now “order, peace, and public security, thanks to the efforts of my government.”249 Neither the Piquets, Zinglins, nor the military were included in this address. Yet, Soulouque did not fail to proclaim, “Property was secured, and order was enforced.”250 In terms like these gave the President a temporary supremacy in the public eyes, where he appeared to become all powerful. As liberal opposition was curbed through execution or exile, the citizens of Jérémie produced a petition which denounced the “traitors” who worked “to overturn the established order and replace it with anarchy and civil war,” professing their support for the new order of things under Soulouque. When Soulouque returned to the capital on August 15th, he was received by Te Deum, arches of palm, and numerous supporters, Zinglins, and those who wished to acquiesce his consolidated rule. He had pacified the Piquets and Zinglins by using their aggression, derailing what was nearly full-scale revolution, and, in turn, used the threat of their anger against any future enemies. As Delorme stated in his reflections on the post-1848 period, “a silence reigned everywhere,” and this silence reigned for nearly ten years.251

249 Le Moniteur, July 8, 1848.
250 Ibid.
251 Delorme, Réflexions diverse sur Haïti, 20.
**CONSPIRACY AND PUNISHMENT**

The predominant narrative of color conflict around the events of April 16, 1848 deeply construes historical narratives which cast Soulouque’s movements as solely a caste war. In reality, Soulouque employed numerous mulatto elites such as Vil-de-Lubin as général-de-brigade of Port-au-Prince and Dufresne, Duc de Tiburon as foreign minister of marine et guerre. His real targets were those whom he deemed political threats and those whom he could scapegoat to lay the foundations for a bridge between the new elite that surrounded him and the popular masses. Andre Télémaque had been made the replacement of Dugué Zamor, but by July, Télémaque and his staff were tried and executed in Jacmel by Soulouque for his attempt to stop the Piquets from plundering Les Cayes in April. In this example, Télémaque and his fellow prisoners were tried on the charge of preventing government troops—that is, Piquets—from entering Les Cayes on the 19th of April and then acquitted by a civil commission. But when the Piquet forces expressed their dissatisfaction with the verdict, President Soulouque ordered a second military trial. The elimination of other regional leaders worked well with collective demands in Port-au-Prince and in the South. Soulouque could legitimize himself against the backdrop of the failures of republicanism between then end of Boyer’s rule and 1847 as a figure who was concerned with popular political aspirations rather than the politics of the privileged elite.

A crucial moment in this turn was the publication of the arrêté of June 27th, 1848 which dubbed the events of Port-au-Prince of April 16th morally just and deemed the counter-uprising of Aquin an insurrection. The arrêté named thirty-five men, largely grands politiciens and

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mulâtres, forfeited their property to the state, and exiled their families.\textsuperscript{253} The decree morally justified the Piquets’ and Zinglins’ responses, declaring the individuals named guilty of threatening the nation and inciting civil war. Revoking the citizenship and the property of the elite was a principal way in which the President demonstrated his commitment to validating popular claims. This is significant because Anne Eller reveals that the dominant narratives of caudillismo fail to represent relationships between popular claims of freedom and state-making in the mid-century. Rather than state legitimacy simply by way of the caudillo’s fear and force, the decentralized and distant state relied on “land patronage,” “reciprocity,” the “mythogenic appeal” of party leaders, and the language of “moral preservation.”\textsuperscript{254} There was a give and take, and Soulouque, left with little to give amid the political instability, coerced popular power by giving them executions. Rumors abounded that regional leaders who took the side of elites like General Bellegarde in Port-au-Prince were at the head of a list of “proscribe persons” to be presented to Soulouque upon his return.\textsuperscript{255} On July 22\textsuperscript{nd} David Troy, the prominent liberal who was found with a cache of guns earlier in the year, was executed by order of the President; those who seemingly did not have enough blame were said to be Dominican sympathizers.\textsuperscript{256} By the time Soulouque reached the West department and Jérémie, the peasantry came to him with their demands against nearly all the landowners of the region. Though many were forewarned and had fled to Jamaica, Soulouque had the remainder imprisoned. Five were found guilty and shot as a show of his commitment to local habitant demands.

\textsuperscript{253} This list included the Bergeauds brothers, Adolphe Boisrond Canal, Balthazar Inginac, Auguste Elie, and Alexis Dupuy all future or past prominent members of the ruling class. Arrêté, June 27, 1848, L’imprimerie nationale, Attachment to Ussher to Palmerston, July 7, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35.34; Le Moniteur, July 8, 1848.

\textsuperscript{254} Ussher to Palmerston, July 7, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35.34.

\textsuperscript{255} Ussher to Palmerston, June 4, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35.34.

\textsuperscript{256} Ussher to Palmerston, August 6, 1848, Port-au-Prince, TNA FO 35.34; D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 178 ; Moïse, Constitutions et luttes de pouvoir, 190.
Soulouque, however, was not swept up in the short-term success of the Haitian political machine and he was intensely aware of its perils and the growth of his enemies. The capping of positions of power extended beyond the traditional elite. When he returned to Port-au-Prince, he executed Pierre Noire, thereby eliminating the head of the extreme wing of the southern black peasantry. He, then, skillfully removed the Zinglins’ leaders from influential positions of power and replaced them with moderate blacks. It was clear that Soulouque understood the use of the army, but he distrusted powerful generals, even though he was not without firm supporting officers. The use of court martials effectively silenced military dissidents while making examples out of his enemies. In April 1849, Soulouque arrested General Similien, whose control of the customs houses since the President’s departure in 1848 and his leadership of the Zinglins had made him rich and influential, enlisting the aid of Captain-Generals Bellegarde and Dessalines.

This strategy also extended to moments of benevolence and mercy. When six men were condemned to death for conspiracy in the President’s absence from Port-au-Prince, they were pardoned en route to the execution block some 20 miles from the capital. As soon as the act of mercy became known, the populace of the city crowded the streets praising Soulouque. In another case, three men condemned to death at Las Cahobas received a presidential pardon on 1st September, causing feverous chants of “Vive Soulouque!” in the capital.257 One American reported that “the news spread like wildfire, and gave birth to a general rejoicing as loud in its manifestation as almost the entire population flocked to the portal of St. Joseph’s.”258 Ultimately, these worked to produce an image that Soulouque, unlike his predecessors, was listening to the people.

257 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 183-184.
258 Harold to Fredrick Douglass and Martin R. Delany, October 27, 1848.
Soulouque’s return from the campaign on the 20th of August was marked by triumphal arches, decorated boughs, and flowers.\textsuperscript{259} The capital’s houses were to be illuminated for three nights and families who’d had members exiled, executed, or murdered were, according to Raybaud, “distinguished above all others, for the garlands of palms, and wreaths of leaves.”\textsuperscript{260} The terror established Soulouque as the sole competitor for regional supremacy and by 1849 he was well on the way to establishing presidency-for-life. Yet, Haiti remained unchanged. The lands and property distributed were fundamentally to Soulouque’s own allies, and redistribution never seems to have been part of the conversation. Even as Soulouque reformed electoral laws in November 1848, articles 2, 3, 4, and 6 stipulated that legislative appointees’ eligibility came from either “property,” “industry,” “public employment,” or “the garde nationale,” remaining tied to either rural or urban ownership of land or equally valued holdings.\textsuperscript{261} But by this time, the repression of elites was no longer based on peasant and poor urban demands; instead, the black publics who supported Soulouque were concerned about challenges to his rule from any class or faction. This was a case in which subalterns, confronting the obstacles of entrenched racism and class oppression at every turn, took the tempting invitation of a populist autocrat to face the formidable challenges of liberal republicanism.

While these challenges brought President Soulouque’s authoritarianism political legitimacy in 1848, many of these factors that lie at the origin of Haiti’s second empire, were how the empire maintained an element of success. On the 20th of March at 1:45 pm, Minister Jean-Baptiste de Francisque, duke de Limbé, instrumental in orchestrating the imperial education law which extended education to the rural countryside, was placed before a military firing squad,

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{260} D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 180.
\textsuperscript{261} Nau, Maurice and Nemours Telhomme, Législation Électorale : Recueil contenant le Lois et Actes relatifs aux Assemblées Electorales, 1817-1930 (Port-au-Prince, 1930), 24-25.
and shot on the basis of conspiracy. The conspiracy of 1851 was termed a republican plot under lieutenant bombardier Chevalier Cadet that would, as Le Moniteur printed, “upset society from top to bottom.”\textsuperscript{262} The paper declared that a pamphlet of incendiary ideas had been found which read, “the land must belong not to the owner, but to the one who cultivates it; or the laborer who works for others, and [the one who] receives his wages, must [sic] be the master of the product of his labor.”\textsuperscript{263} Chevalier Cadet, the owner of the pamphlet, denounced Eugéne Sannon, an employee of the customshouse of Port-au-Prince. Immediately, arrested, and imprisoned, Sannon claimed the pamphlet was dictated to him by “baron de Cazeau”, most likely a Zinglin leader from St. Marc. A military commission was formed, and from January 26\textsuperscript{th} to the end of February seven more names were brought forth that produced a list of conspirators that went all the way to the top: Brutus Adam, propriétaire in Port-au-Prince; Guerrier Lazarre, sergeant general in the garde impériale; Cinna Baptiste; Joseph de Lamothe, commandant of the police of Gonaïves; Charles de Francisque, head of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} regiment of Gonaïves; Frédéric elder, post office master of Gonaïves; and, finally, Jean-Baptiste de Francisque.\textsuperscript{264} The acte de accusation, first, connected the plot to the executed General Similien, and, secondly, made clear that Cazeau convinced Sannon to create copies of the pamphlet and to distribute to the “socialists” in Cap-Haïtien for Northern succession. All the accused were sentenced to public execution despite appealing for revision against the condemnation. However, military law, which was, in fact, law by way of the Emperor’s word, held no such appeals as part of the collective jurisprudence.

\textsuperscript{262} Le Moniteur haitien, March 29, 1851.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{264} This military tribunal featured well known imperial figures such as Chevalier Louis Stanislas Bernadotte d’Ulysse, imperial sculptor; Baron de Dessalines, the juge-de-paix of the capital; the chief of the capital police, Pétens Liautaud; and the Comte of Crête-a-Pierrot, Mr. de Fils-Aimé.
Such political theatre drew upon the legibility of the post-1848 landscape: republicanisms destruction was recent and any return to hegemony of the old elite was met with public violence. The reality is, however, that there was no republican conspiracy. In the pages of Madiou’s autobiography, the influential historian and then, editor of Le Moniteur, lamented the death of his friend Francisque. According to Madiou, it was General Delva, the imperial chancellor, who began to spread rumors that Minister Francisque was plotting a republican coup enlisting a young Zinglin deputy, Cazeau. Delva, through numerous meetings, had convinced the Baron de Cazeau to implicate Francisque in a plot that would get the Minister killed.265 Both Delva and Francisque were noir elites who sought to overturn the previous hegemony of mulâtre republicanism, but they were of differing camps, with personal enmities, and Emperor Soulouque’s decision may have had less to do with a master plot than it had to do with his own insecurities. Furthermore, Raybaud claimed other members accused were members of Similien’s Zinglins.266 Yet, the execution of numerous high level Zinglins in a republican conspiracy did not deter the faction as a whole. Zinglins continued to protect the throne, even keeping close watch of the northern regional commander, Bobo, knowing about the potential of succession.267 The reality of Haiti’s empire was that in its origins the system functioned as symbolic of the demands of Haiti’s subalterns, where all power simply confided within the paternal monarch who personally attended to their demands. Yet, personalities, factionalism, and regionalism were part of a greater continuity in state approaches to power and repression. Political legitimacy remained contingent and regional informal networks continued to define their own freedoms.

265 For more on the 1851 conspiracy see D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 245-246; Madiou, Autobiographie, 24-27; Le Moniteur haïtien, March 29, 1851; and Feuille Du Commerce, April 6, 1851.
266 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 245-246.
267 In 1851, Soulouque ordered Bobo to the capital, and Bobo instead fled. D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 244.
CONCLUSION

The journée of April 16th, 1848 inaugurated a period of political repression directed at the Haitian elite and dramatized the growing tension between the claims of emancipatory freedom and the desires of the Haitian ruling classes to constrain the masses through the state. Had the sleeping sword of revolution awakened? Were the followers of Soulouque, like under Acaau and the armée souffrante, wielding cosmic class justice? If so, it was not how Haiti’s elite imagined revolutionary politics. Edmond Paul, writing in the late nineteenth century from his perspective as a leader of the Partí Liberal against the rule of Lysius Salomon (1880-1888)—the same Salomon that was Soulouque’s Minister of Finances—wrote that Acaau and Soulouque, as emperor, were both “abortive and monstrous products of popular thrill.”268 To Edmond Paul, born in 1837, living the reality of popular will, collective violence, and “the terrible crisis of a nation,” “la lumière intellectuelle” of educated liberals was the only path away from rule by the masses.269 Soulouque and April 16th came to represent the potential terror of Haitian populism to Haiti’s éclairé and the historiography has often reflected this historical tendency.

Soulouque was far from an anomaly in the Haitian nation-state. The reverberations of the presidency allied with the insurgency lingered for years, providing Presidents with platforms to political ascendency. From 1848 and on, Haitian state officials increasingly sought recruits from the urban poor and armed peasantries.270 However, aside from the revolutionary wars, Soulouque’s presidency and his imperial project were the first to utilize the peasantry and poor to such an effect, which was still in the mid-19th century largely unrecognized as anything other

269 Edmond Paul’s father, fought directly under Soulouque until April 16, 1848, Ibid. 34-35, 59, 92.
270 They were known as Piquets in the south but by the late 1860s Cacos, emerged primarily from the north. While Piquets as a collective identity diminished over the course of the later 19th century. Cacos remained a contentious challenge to authoritarian centralization until the invasion of the U.S. in 1917 and their eventual defeat in the early 1920s.
than an inferior and distant cousin to mature forms of political engagement. The actions and political projects of black peasants and other subalterns decisively shaped the processes and outcomes of nation-state formation during these periods of rupture. The insurgency and terror were indices of the popular power, both symbolic and real. This was to have a wave of effects on future presidencies as they contended with *Piquets* in the south, the poor in Port-au-Prince, and finally *Cacos* in the North. These presidents, like Soulouque, also came to utilize peasantries and urban masses as part of push-and-pull factors, reflecting the history of post-slavery demands.

We might agree that can be agreed upon: once April 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1848 Soulouque designed his leadership to weaken, co-opt, and utilize popular forces to consolidate and legitimize state authority. With each moment of mass mobilization, Soulouque concomitant reforms and fiery rhetoric aimed to translate the vernacular politics into a political platform. The enemies of people’s freedom became the state’s enemies. The capacity of a ruler to appropriate even the most refractory figures of resistance never ceases to awe, but we should remember that the process is never complete. Soulouque meant different things to different people, and the various meanings were by no means compatible. Each campaign and their specific objectives heightened the political consciousness of Haitians and intensified their identification against elite Haitian society.
CHAPTER III: BETWEEN *LA VIERGE* AND THE *LWAS*: POPULAR SPIRITUALISM, RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM, AND LEGITIMACY IN HAITI’S SECOND EMPIRE, 1847-1859

In early July 1849, two months before Haiti turned into an empire, rumors circulated that a miraculous apparition had been seen on the top of a palm tree on the road of Champs de Mars in Port-au-Prince. Soon thereafter, a “dried palm leaf”, portraying the image of *La Vierge* (the Virgin) holding baby Jesus, was brought to the President Soulouque’s palace, and examined by a “*mystificateur,*”271 who confirmed the sighting as a miracle. Soulouque’s *mystificateur* interpreted the sign as the Holy Virgin in an imperial *manteau* (coat) and a crown on her head.272 While the clergy, Abbey Cessens of Port-au-Prince and Abbey Pisano of Pétionville, argued over the validity and politics of recognizing such an monumental event, another apparition of *La Vierge* appeared on July 16th, 1849 right outside of Mirebalais, near the small village of Ville Bonheur.273 This time the rumors spread that the Mother of God appeared with a scepter in hand near Saut-d’Eau, a site long held as sacred within the Vodou and folk traditions of prerevolutionary Haiti. For believers in the power of *La Vierge* to orchestrate great events, the news was a sign of proof: the imperial coats, crowns, and scepters all pointed to monarchy. For the Vodousan, the miracle at Saut-d’Eau was an affirmation of the great power of the *lwas* which ruled Haiti since before its revolutionary inception in 1804. All the same, for President Faustin Soulouque the rumors of apparitions proved to be the most successful, if not, significant bid for

271 No definition exists for what the role *mystificateur* (mystifier) would have been. As the term seems to denote, a mystic or mystifier, can only be assumed to be a person with knowledge in the divinities and divination. This particular *mystificateur* seems to have sold Soulouque amulets which did not work, and therefore owed Soulouque something in return. Adolphe Cabon, *Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haiti, de la révolution au concordat, 1789-1860* (Port-au-Prince, 1933), 403-408.
272 Ibid., 406.
273 Ibid., 407.
political legitimacy in the aftermath of the political crisis which enveloped the nation for the previous five years.

The relationship between Haiti’s spiritual belief system and its government was not a by-product of post-emancipated empire, but, rather, at the center of its legitimacy, structure, and efforts at nation-building. In the wake of the violence of April 16th, 1848, which consolidated Soulouque’s power, and his failed 1849 invasion of the Dominican Republic, Soulouque found an opportunity to use the widespread attraction of the Marian icon Notre Dame de l’Assomption as a point of political legitimacy. With the appearance of these spectacles, the divinely organized apparitions rebaptized the nation in a Marian symbol, substituting the secular republic with the newly ordained black empire. The Haitian state—rank with the tensions of regional, class, and color strife that deemed the state illegitimate from 1842-1848—was recast along the lines of the affiliations of popular spirituality amongst the Haitian peasantry and poor alike. He utilized the rumors that the Holy Virgin had appeared in a palm tree in Port-au-Prince to disperse word that his ascension to emperor, indeed, Haiti’s accession to empire, was divinely sanctioned. The mystificateur’s interpretations—most likely forced by Soulouque—were the start to a series of calculated moves to control the narrative regarding the legitimacy of the Haitian state. By word of mouth, or telediol274, news disseminated that Soulouque was chosen by God to become emperor and by August 25th, 1849 Soulouque was offered the imperial crown by petitions and crowds in Port-au-Prince. The following day, he was declared emperor at the Cathedral of Notre Dame de l’Assomption in Port-au-Prince and by 1852 Soulouque could frame his ascension to

274 Here as in 1848 (discussed in Chapter 2), news through telediol were a central mechanic to the dissemination of news “on the ground” and in the rural areas of the North, West, and South departments.
divine right at the legislative assembly as “the religious consecration of the supreme dignity which was given to me by the nation.”

Contrary to Benedict Anderson’s statement that “the dawn of nationalism is the dusk of religion”, the Haitian nation-state was constructed with religion at the center. If print capitalism functioned as a “key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity” which formed the imagined community that made up a nation, the networks of rumor and news of La Vierge functioned as national discourse for the Haitian imagined community in the face of a lack of literacy. The strength of religion within Haiti’s context gave character to its national identity. Counter to the enlightenment and revolutionary period that settled on the destruction of legitimacy in the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynasties, Soulouque’s imperial nationalism relied squarely on the “social fantasy” of divinely ordained legitimacy, ultimately a vernacular myth of the state.

A central aspect of the “social fantasy” of popular will and legitimacy is how Soulouque tapped into a different form of political symbolism, drawing on the symbols of popular spiritualism and rejecting spiritualisms qualified as malignant to social order—that is, spiritualisms that contended with his power. As we shall see Soulouque’s appeal to the cult of national patron saints was not only popular, but decisively political in a political economy where peasant political mobilization was tied to popular belief systems. He recognized popular spiritual belief while simultaneously upholding the power of Catholicism at the national level. This had less to do with Soulouque own charismatic ability to coerce Haitian men and women into his sphere of influence, than with the existing religious landscape that undergirded Haitian elite and

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275 Le Moniteur haïtien, April 17, 1852.
277 Ibid., 52
populist nationalism and independence. Borrowing from Terry Rey’s discussion on “charisma” is a useful framework for the analysis of Soulouque’s co-option of populist spiritual belief.²⁷⁸ Rey’s examination of Romaine Rivière, a charismatic landowner Romaine-la-Prophetesse who developed a large following outside of Leogane when he announced that he was the godson of Virgin Mary and that he received messages from La Vierge herself, demonstrates the complex and fractional relationship between religious imagination and the structures’ direct interactions in these differing regions. The reality that the “relations that become established between religious agencies…controls the form interactions may take,” can lead us to conclude that Soulouque’s charisma, then, emerged from his ability to cultivate messages pre-existent in the religious and political interests of believers and their collectively organized informal institutions.²⁷⁹ Whereas sustained state attacks on Vodou and folk religious practices, especially that of familial rituals and private practices, would threaten state legitimacy on the ground in the South and West, Soulouque’s embrace and push of such practices legitimized and secured the government’s longevity.

The cluster of meanings attributed to the state in a context in which, signs, prophecies, and rumor provided a language for conceptualizing absolute power within a larger-than-life—more importantly, larger than his mundane political competitors—magico-military emperor rather than a president. This is a context in which politics occurred backstage away from the archives: narratives of Haiti’s complex Vodou-Christian episteme were largely hidden away from the official records of newspapers, laws, and literature, except to blame Vodou and promote

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 126.
Christianity across the lines of barbarism and civilization. Despite this, contemporary accounts and newspapers could not hide the extent to which popular spiritualities dominated the post-emancipated nation. The development of Soulouque’s co-option of collective popular spiritualism regarding, what Lauren Derby states as the “cultural logic governing statecraft”, demonstrates that the second Haitian Empire’s contraire approach to legal practices can be regarded not simply as a top-down apparatus of control, but rather as a sight of negotiation in which subaltern groups exerted pressure of their own. The government could occupy the place of state power and the symbol of leadership, where it exists, and to an extent place itself in the paternalistic role of organized force. Yet the sacred, where authority is constituted out the hands of the secular, or where, in the absence of formal authority was concentrated in the hand of local moral authority, remained out of state control. As Micial Neréstant has argued in regard to the Duvalier regime, “religion, far from being a source of resistance against the dictatorial regime, was [here] an instrument of the established power.” Vodou, especially aforementioned colonial Vodou, has been credited, both by contemporary observers and by modern historians, with strong potential for liberative inspiration and unification. Yet, for witnesses of the second Haitian Empire, Emperor Faustin I Soulouque represented a liminal state of Christianity and Vodou when Vodou reigned freely in the 19th century and escaped persecution. This is evidence of popular spiritualism as not only defined by its nature of resistance, but as an arena where hegemonic forces could appropriate cultural representations as an extension of state power. To

understand the emergence of a second Emperor who was ordained by La Vierge, but represented the height of Vodou to contemporaries, we must begin at the crossroads of not only Vodou, but the entirety of religious imagination that undergirded faith in a new political system.

Consequently, this work, first, seeks to understand how a permeation of Vodou, folk Catholicism, and the sixty-year history of schism with the Vatican contributed to an informal institution of religion. The nascent Haitian state relied on the previous tenants of colonialism: Orthodox Catholicism and Freemasonry were essential bases of institutional organization for the ruling class. At the same time, the vernacular spiritualities of Vodou and folk Christianity were never ignored as they formed around a society in which organized peasant publics and power relations on the ground operated largely outside of state control. Secondly, this work illuminates the period of 1844-1847, when a religious revival of Vodou and folk Catholicism, burst onto the scene, culminating into a redefinition in Haiti’s South and West for the peasantry. The distinctive articulation of freedom in of Jean-Jacques Acaau’s armée souffrante was on one level a political rebellion against the entrenched rural marginalization of the Boyer’s regime and the promised liberal democracy of the Revolution of 1843. On the other level, it was the opening to a post-emancipated spiritual reconstitution as they articulated themselves with both Catholic and Vodou traditions counter to not only entrenched elite, but also other traditions of Vodou portrayed “as obstacles to regeneration and potential threats to public order”. Third, as a divinely ordained emperor, Soulouque began his own campaign of using these vernacular beliefs to orchestrate imperial legitimacy that responded to these articulations of spiritualism. Contrary to narratives

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which tend to portray Vodou as solely resistant to state power, Soulouque, a syncretist at heart, used all the religious resources available to him by constructing the church of *Notre Dame du Mont Carmel* near Saut d’Eau, the most popular Vodou site associated with Damballah, meshing his own image to that of the Vodou pantheon and the Virgin Mary. Lastly, this chapter places the empire’s sporadic anti-Protestantism and staunch Catholicism in relative comparison with other Latin American states, where national struggles intertwined religious ethos and politics as a basis of political legitimacy. While the second Haitian empire may have been an effective representation of Haiti’s specific religious discourses, the nationalization and mobilization of religious imagination to secure general was a strategy touted by numerous states in the mid-century hemisphere.

For the emancipated, the project and advantages of liberty contributed to a polymorphous and disparate set of beliefs, gods, and divinity which was not solely reserved for transformations within Vodou and Catholicism. Indeed, the entire state was transformed by postslavery spiritualisms. As Joan Dayan has stated, “for them, the God, saints, and devils of the French dogma, never fully accessible, were accommodated by being remade on Haitian soil.”284 Thus, if ex-slave emperors such as Jean Jacques Dessalines could become divine *lwas* or the virgin could be made to speak to the poor through the mouths of the peasants of the *armée souffrante*, then a divine justification for empire could be made. Hence, the development of Soulouque’s use of Marianism casts light on the complex links between the invisible powers and ontologies of religious imagination acting upon the physical territories of state legitimacy and nationalism.

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Religious Transformations in Haiti Before 1848:

In Haiti, Christianity and Vodou have constantly been stronger than or akin to politics on the ground.\textsuperscript{285} Therefore, harkening to Cuban cultural theorist Antonio Benítez-Rojo, we cannot study the Caribbean without understanding the syncretic systems of belief within the “historiographical, social-scientific, and political science models.” Numerous sociopolitical studies neglect or fetishize Vodou and religious belief in the Antillean ethos, evoking observers’ fascination with the “paganism of the west,” instead led by the “once-again-visible mirages of social and economic progress” that sideline vernacular politics.\textsuperscript{286} Haiti’s emancipation and its anticolonialism were born out of spiritual motivations as much as political ones. Consequently, this section addresses the historical emergence and relevance of the subaltern worldview of Haitian religious ethos to understand Soulouque’s actions in relation to the history of Haiti’s religious imagination. As a complex set of ritual practices and beliefs among the descendants of highly heterogeneous populations of enslaved Africans, the distinctive Afro-Atlantic theology of freedom was implanted into the nation-state from its inception.

Addressing assumptions and anachronisms in the face of lopsided archival documentation is difficult because these beliefs are a narrative of culturally dynamic and complicated arrangements of “coercion, negotiation, transformation, and human movement.”\textsuperscript{287} Therefore, the Eurocentric travelogue and the conscientious foreign consul did not write to reconstruct the metanarrative of popular beliefs. Instead, most second-hand accounts of Haitian subaltern spiritualism permeated through foreign descriptions of cannibalism, snake-cults, human

sacrifices, and apostasy. Ruling class elites, likewise, did not profess their more questionable beliefs on paper, describing them as corruptions of Roman Catholicism and malicious sets of rituals and beliefs. Instead, it was more commonplace for international eyes to witness—and, often, exaggerate—Soulouque’s “fear of fetishes,” perusing well-known ougans and mambos for advice. One such story, apocryphal, but not necessarily untrue, takes place in March 1847, at his inauguration, where President Soulouque refused to sit in the ceremonial seat of honor. In fact, he refused to live in the palace at all. The rumor that abounded was that the presidential seat had been cursed by the ougan of Boyer; no president after Boyer would sit for more than a year.288

Such observations made by Maxime Raybaud, were routine examinations made by white Europeans who viewed the monarchy of Soulouque as “ultra-african.”289

Even if this story were mere rumor, there is a truth to be parsed out. For the newly elected Soulouque, his cabinet, and the Haitian people, the fact that March 1847 was nearly the anniversary of Riché’s election to presidency was a potent reminder of the short succession of the presidencies. According the Raybaud, Soulouque had his wife investigate the matter at the hands of a famed mambo (vodou priestess) and dug up an ouanga—a doll buried under the palace gardens. Additionally, numerous other stories incur that Emperor Soulouque and numerous high officials were not only “notorious” believers but “high priests” themselves.290 The ouanga was planted so that every successor of Boyer was condemned to “never reach his thirteenth month in power.”291 Could Soulouque have heard of these rumors and planned to counter them? Could he have understood the rumors as part and parcel of political logic which plagued the four previous presidencies?

288 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 89.
289 Ibid.
290 St. John, Hayti Or, The Black Republic, 183.
291 Ibid., 91.
The theatre of the ouangas and its destruction formed part of a crucial spectacle of quotidian Haitian public and private life. In fact, according to the Code Pénal of 1835, sortilèges and their makers were a concern of the law and police.\textsuperscript{292} This fear, indeed, the promise, of sortilèges pervaded Haitian life. As the French J. B. Prax, the consul d’affaires of Gonaïves (1852-1858) who learned Kreyòl to record his observations about Haitian’s superstitions summarized: “[in Haiti] dreams, revenants, and sortilèges occupy a great space in intellectual and moral order.”\textsuperscript{293} For the experience of popular imagination, the direct interaction and claim of power of an ouanga underneath the national palace gardens, would not only prove Soulouque’s spiritual belief, but also demonstrate his swift counteractivity. We will trace some of the major social transformations in the popular spirituality of Haiti which both undermined traditional oligarchy of the ruling class and supported resistance to the encroachments of urban commercial interests. This demonstrates that the mythos of Soulouque was driven in part by his control of the Marian apparition, but in a larger part by the legacies of the unique Afro-Atlantic spirituality that had developed since the slave trade, through the Haitian Revolution, and through the period of the post-independence.

\textit{Haitian Spiritual Publics During the Schism}

\textsuperscript{292} Milo Rigaud speaks of the moral hierarchy between various Vodou rites. Although there are no “evil” lwa, only cool or aggressive, spiritual works done with the “right-hand” are “good”, signifying protection, blessing, and adherence to the specific ethical codes of social conventions. Works done with the left-hand, are “bad”, signifying the breaking of taboos and abandonment of the socially accepted set of morality. Similarly, a Boko is a “sorcerer” who works with both hands or the left hand (predominantly men), Alfred Métraux likewise clarifies that ougans who work with both hands are consider suspicious. It should be noted that, while the Western paradigm engages within a strict separation of “good” and “evil”, the Vodou episteme accounts for both as one whole where a mambo, ougan, and boko preforming the task ultimately understands they play a role within a grand vision. See Mambo Chita Tann, \textit{Haitian Vodou}, 61-62; Milo Rigaud, \textit{Secrets of Voodoo}, trans. by Robert B. Cross (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1953), 161; Karen McCarthy Brown, \textit{Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 403; and Alfred Métraux, \textit{Voodoo in Haiti} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 267.\textsuperscript{293} J.B. Prax, \textit{Ahiti: Études dur la civilisation des Noirs} (1857), 23MD/1, Archives diplomatiques, Ministère français des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve, Aubervilliers, France, 632.
Haiti’s independence in 1804 was followed by a decades-long political, cultural, and economic isolation, both internationally and domestically. The Vatican cut off all relations to the island. The clergy, who had never had a strong presence even before the revolution, “lost virtually all influence” until a concordat signed at Rome finally ended the schism in 1860.\textsuperscript{294} The historical documentation we have points to a continued process of an appropriation and reworking of rituals, texts and objects drawn from Roman Catholicism—yet in the relative absence of regular priests and missionaries from Rome. The importance here lies in the roles spiritual publics played in the schismatic period, where Christianity, Vodou, Freemasonry, and popular peasant organizations became tools and institutions built for sustaining Afro-Atlantic connections and theologies. Even in the absence of distinct blood ties (the product of the Middle Passage), Afro-descendants formulated overlapping and interconnected communities, often developing spiritual categories which offered broader adoptive, corporate, and intellectual incorporation where “natal kinship was often the by-product”, rather than the central bond.\textsuperscript{295} These spiritual publics became fundamental to the dynamics of newly born Haiti, reflecting the divergent social divide which separated the nation into urban commercialists and landowning agrarians versus the socially rejected peasant rural class.

Consequently, in the early national period, masses cherished the complex philosophical, religious, and ritual tenets of a cosmology dominated by African retentions and creolized Catholicism only to be treated with hostility. The elite professed an exclusive adherence to orthodoxy, in Christianity and in values, but shared beliefs rooted in African-derived nationalism. Subsequent governments decreed laws against \textit{sortilèges} (roughly translated as


sorceries) and crimes of spiritual nature while they enshrined Roman Catholicism as a matter of orthodoxy. Boyer’s regime (1818-1843) was one of increased stigmatization and isolation of the rural and urban divide where Vodou and folk religious practices prospered in the countryside and orthodoxy existed within the confines of the larger commercial cities. For urbanites living in commercial port cities with access to education, print journalism, foreign merchants, and international business, the countryside—largely filled with illiterate tenant farmers, debt peonage, and independent small-scale farmers—was a separate nation within the nation with different culture, no education, and, importantly, a different religion. Mimi Sheller’s concept of the “black public” is useful in understanding the post-colonial development of subaltern networks of spiritual and political communication “that enable socially distant interlocutors to link positions, identities and projects in pursuit of influence over issues of common concern.”

Schism from the Catholic church not only contributed to the rapid polarization between religious thought between the urban educated elite and rural and poor, but also the formation of numerous black publics both in the rural and urban areas which subsidized new political and spiritual imaginations, one which developed through and to aspirations of post-emancipation’s new strictures.

While the absence of formal ties between Rome and Haiti reinforced the political isolation in the post-colonial years, for those strictly Vodousans, the end of the Haitian Revolution and exclusion from the Catholic church “displaced Catholicism as a veil,” and Vodou flourished in the aftermath of the Revolution within these black publics. However, to say that

296 Toussaint Louverture officialized Roman Catholicism as the state religion in his Constitution of 1801, even though he was presumed to have attended the ceremony at Bois Caiman. Dessalines’s Constitution of 1805 declared no official state religion and after his death in 1806 his image was gradually transformed into a loa in his own right. Exceptions existed within the schema. Henry Christophe’s kingdom is said to have allowed Vodou practices as long as it was pure Rada. Jean L Comhaire, "The Haitian Schism: 1804-1860", Anthropological Quarterly 29, no. 1 (1956): 9.

297 Sheller, Democracy After Slavery, 11.
Vodou alone flourished, is to ignore that Vodou was a disparate set of beliefs and relationships connected to places (the *hounfort* and *lakou*), origins (*Rada* and *Petwo*), and people (local *ougans* and *mambos*, individual *seviteurs*, different *nachons*). Rather than simply Vodou alone, spiritual black publics flourished out of traditions that were as diverse as the assortments of African-born and creole born *affranchis*. Regionalism as well as regional leaders would have divided traditions and practices, while *sosyétés* and *cofradia*-like fraternities, *companîjes*, would have organized them into localized ritual projects. Especially as the counter-plantation society took hold where large sugar estates in the South and West were parceled to small peasant landholdings that supported more subsistence-based crops, social networks of autonomous religious practices and beliefs organized sacred values and attachments to familial landholdings.

Presented with the opportunity of freedom, emancipated peoples produced their own parallel hierarchies, self-government, and social rules. The *lakou* system, in which land was collectively owned by all the family members and dispersed amongst the family’s children, was an African derived organizational unit that formed a local public of its own. Serge Larose’s work on the *lakou* demonstrates that the *lakou* of Léogane remained built around the *démembre*, a special part of the family land which functions as a repository of family spirits, with its own cemetery and trees. The extended spiritual families of *seviteurs* (those who serve the *lwas*) were organized around the *hounfort* and the *lakou*. *Hounfôrs* were Vodou temples which served as centers of community ritual and were huddled into regional networks. Sometimes they centered around the *lakou*’s groups of clustered houses. Largely out the hands of the Haitian state and counter to elite attempts to reassert a plantation economy these profound developments in the Haitian peasantry should be not only connected to the rhizomatic web of popular spirituality

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298 Serge Larose, “The Haitian Lakou, Land, Family and Ritual,” *Marks, AF Y Romer, RA (comps.) Family and Kinship in Middle America and the Caribbean* (1975), 490-492.
and the conflation of Catholic-vodou beliefs, they also underly how peasant popular spirituality was connected to peasant politics at local and regional levels.

The backbone of black peasant self-autonomy was in the organization of the *kombite*, the *sosyété*, and the *compagnie*. *Kombites* were cooperative worker crews which arranged themselves by family and shared the labor in cultivating by taking turns at tilling one set of land collectively at a time. Accompanied by *tambou* (drums), singing, and *clairin* (distilled rum), *kombite* style organization was central to peasant organization as they operated outside of the state structure, the monetary system, and in ancestral solidarity. *Kombites* at times elected their own work leaders, often called presidents. From the *kombite* there were formed *compagnies*, organized along the lines of African origins and costume traditions. *Compagnies* were more organized fraternities with elaborate symbolic systems of membership and office-holding, often tied to African ethnic affiliations and preserving cultures of dance and drum. Each *compagnie*, as portrayed by French proponent of emancipation Victor Schoelcher, “had its name, its flag, and a king” and acted within both festive roles and leadership in annual Carnival.299 An even more tightly knit organization was the *sosyété*, which Schoelcher described as “a permanent organization with regular sometimes day-to-day obligations.”300 Some were formed out of *kombites* but took more responsibility than the tilling of the land, as Sheller notes, in effect, combining “labour cooperatives, religious congregations, and social welfare organizations” into

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300 Ibid, 118.
This particular black relationship to spirituality-land-labor forcefully challenged the structural order assembled by elite visions of the state and nation.

If the backbone of peasant social mechanics were collective sociopolitical organizations steeped in spiritual traditions in the form of kombites and the lakou, then hierarchical religious leadership spearheaded these black publics. Referring to the ougan as "magico-religious leaders of our rural population of the north and southwest," Jean Price-Mars wrote, "these leaders are constrained by the ceremonies of initiation to a life of austerity which bespeaks the great moral authority which they enjoy." Though neither always as “austere” nor as “altruistic” as Price-Mars claims, the moral authority held by ougan and mambo was the center of legitimacy in rural and regional life. For example, the boko, or sorcerer, within this language of spirituality, carried with him the powers of the left-handed more socially unacceptable vodou rites. Therefore, even though the basis of the lakou system is the spirit of communal sharing or exchange and agricultural production at the family level for subsistence living, trade, and independence, the organization of the lakou, the kombite, and the hounfort was not egalitarian or anarchic as numerous foreign eyes depicted them. Hierarchy was consolidated within moral authority and around the power of the lakou patriarchs—and at times matriarchs—and those with spiritual power. An example is Soulouque’s own personal mambo, Mademoiselle Maximeme, a coffee farmer who led a congregation of “blacks and mulâtres, girls and boys, old and young, married,

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302 “The process of land nurturing was a deliberate act of subjectivity, as was a belief system in African Cosmology.” Celucien L. Joseph, Haitian Modernity and Liberative Interruptions, 63.

303 Here, we might also refer to the reality of regionalism as ougans and mambos operated differently, each with their own hierarchical bounds of spiritual authority. Jean Price-Mars, Le Sentiment et le Phénomène Religieux chez les Nègres de Saint-Domingue, (Port-au-Prince, 1928), 130.
placé, or divorced” for twenty years in the Port-au-Prince region.304 In this moral economy, authority was given to those whose spiritual charisma was the greatest and, in turn, those leaders had to embody the signs and symbols to continue wielding this authority. Much like the Haitian Revolution, these were not classless divisions of power, but actual reflections of power in the world. Thus, while the Haitian rural systems can be romanticized, functioning outside of law, governed by local forms of moral authority, and where forms of free association, economic cooperation, and peasant mobilization were fundamental, they were not wholly indicative of challenging the dominant order.

While Vodou crystallized both its religious habitus of quotidian life and its religious capital, the Catholic tradition, as the overarching official religion, continued to increase after the schism from the church in 1804.305 After independence, the Church was no longer a property owner; issues of patronage, church taxes, separate ecclesiastical courts, and church property ceased to be a route of church privilege or revenue. However, though the state severed its colonial connection to the church, the Haitian church continued to occupy a central position in the Haitian nation-state. Sol Serrano has argued that though revolution in Chile chipped away at church privileges, the liberal authors of republicanism built ideas of individual freedom on Catholicism.306 Similarly, in Haiti’s schismatic period, Catholicism lent itself to strengthening both republican and monarchical ideology and, as well shall see, all Haitian political leaders sought Vatican recognition as a basis of international legitimacy.

304 Prax, Ahiti, 638.
For the period of schism, Catholicism functioned under a fractured and apostate clergy, a majority of whom were rejected foreigners (French and Spanish especially), exiled or self-anointed; and by the mid-century they were the only priests to be found. The apostate clergy, while small and ineffective in the countryside, did have significant wide-reaching effects. An official circular printed in 1844 by the minister de cultes et instruction publique described a vast majority of priests as “men who come instead to encourage vices rather than their annihilation; men who have had more thirst of riches than of winning souls to God.” According to Prax, the priest of Gonaïves stated after one affair with a Haitian couple, “cila la li bon, c’est largent bondié” (This here is good, it is God’s money). As Wesleyan F. Eldin stated, “the priests live, in reality, in a profound religious indifference and often even keep a mischievous life.” In this sense, the orthodoxy promoted by the urban elite classes was practically nonexistent in a majority of Haitian’s daily lives. Instead, spiritual leadership of the Catholic church was in the hands of individuals who—like ougars and mambos—engaged in the push and pull of local beliefs and moral systems. They collected revenue by exercising punitive taxes and alliances with local elites and larger landholding habitants. Prax included a copy of a ticket for priestly practices: ten gourdes to address God, three gourdes for abandoned souls, those who died at sea, in war, in fire, on the great road and all in purgatory. Considering the average yearly salary of a typical Haitian soldier might amount to forty-two gourdes and that a significant sector of the male populace were soldiers, this price tag for redemption was a substantial fee.

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307 Bird, L’Independence haïtienne, 207.
308 Prax, J.B., Ahiti, 613.
309 F. Eldin, Haïti, treize ans de séjour aux antilles (Toulouse: Société des Livres Religieux, 1878), 68.
310 Prax, J. B., Ahiti, 614.
311 Prax, J. B., Ahiti, 404.
With a daily lack of direct contact with the Church, Roman Catholic institutions, rites, formulas, ritual roles, imagery, objects, and, most importantly, their interpretations, Haiti’s spiritual beliefs were collapsed into the everyday performances of life. The predisposition to borrow and assemble went beyond Vodou and into popular spiritual imagination en masse. This is important because Soulouque’s reign lies at the center of a moment of particularly “confused spirituality” in pre-1860 Vatican concordat Haiti which employed both “African and European materials.” As Joan Dayan tells us, “bags with fetishes, human bones, and snakes were employed in Catholic rituals, while vodou practitioners, called ‘frères,’ carried out priestly functions and recited Catholic liturgy.” These frères themselves, did not attest to be Vodousans, but were regardless fueled by the espirits. This is to say that for many practitioners, the clergy man and the ougan could be one and the same or different aspects of the same divine power. When priests and doctors could not do the job, the papa-loi and mama-loi might. When the ougan sold you poorly working trinkets, the priest could absolve your sins for a hefty price.

The lived reality was within the lack of real barriers in the Haitian social structure regarding belief. Laënnec Hurbon argues that at the level of politics successive post-revolutionary states in Haiti were torn between “maintaining Vodou as an inadmissible support to their power, and appealing to the Catholic church as [Haiti’s] sole official religion.” The conflict was replicated within local politics by the mid-century. Vodou, even as an intolerable feature of the Code Rural and Code Pénal, and Catholicism on the ground were tempered by the

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312 By the mid-nineteenth century, the only other major power that had not recognized Haiti other than the U.S. was the Vatican. Following the Revolution, the Vatican followed in the steps of France and non-recognition and sent no priests to the island. Haitians, despite the lack of a formal Roman Catholic priesthood, continued practices Catholicism with what the Church derided as “renegades”. Joan Dayan, Haiti, History, and the Gods (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 53; Dubois, Haiti, 142-143.


push and pull forces of the authority of local rural police and the *juge-de-paix* appointed to the *tribunal de paix* (the local court in each commune). Even as such practices were subject to the criminalization of the law, as informal institutions these popular spiritualisms were part of the web and weft of quotidian practices for peasants, poor, elite, and educated alike. In turn, local authorities derived a form of revenue and social capital and bought into the local moral capital. J.B. Prax regularly witnessed public official such as with the “papa-loi” openly discussing town events and policies with the rural police or the *juge de paix*. Likewise, numerous Gonaïves elites either engaged frequently with *ougans* and *mambos* or sought them out in their time of need. One account of a Jean Simon described him as such: “sixty and black… a prosperous man of Gonaïves… 8 concubines… a mason and he also believe in sortilèges, whereas he has a vague faith in Christianity.”

To be sure, presidents and emperors spoke in absolute terms, but local jurists, priests, and officials invariably tempered sweeping proclamations and legal codification with personal and pragmatic interests.

One of the few institutions that knit together the competing elites of the ruling classes was freemasonry. Though black freemason presence around the Atlantic was relatively small, their particularity in Atlantic localities—especially in Haitian cities where freemasonry was ubiquitous—reveal “an intricate stranding of all these realms of the Atlantic into an overarching ‘web.’” While restrictive, freemasonry combined the complex networks of small, educated, Francophile Haitians across the regions and formed a basis for limited democratic proclivities amongst the ruling class.

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316 Ibid., 612-623.
local institutions for popular participation and community building, the Masonic Order in Haiti was “an important semi-public locale for the emergence of elite citizenship after slavery.”\(^{319}\)

Additionally, as Craig Wilder has stated about black freemasons in mid-century New York City, “although black secret and benevolent societies had discrete memberships… they were generally viewed as community organizations.”\(^{320}\) When Haiti won its independence freemasonry was so ingrained into local culture that the all-black revolutionary government inherited the Masonic lodges.\(^{321}\)

Historian and politician of the early republic, Beaubrun Ardouin, saw the link between Masonic practices as fundamental “for maintaining the harmony between the two powers” of the President, who was almost always the Grand Protector of the Masonic Order and the President of the Assembly, almost always a freemason themselves. French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, wrote in 1843 that there were 23 masonic lodges in Haiti, and “one derisorily calls the senate the twenty-fourth lodge.”\(^{322}\) Citing the lack of educational institutions, Schoelcher attested that funds were spent to build new mason lodges over schools or roads despite the fact that, “There is not a small town that does not possess its lodge.”\(^{323}\) The English missionary, Mark Baker Bird described Freemasons as ubiquitous in the government and as “a distinct feature in Haytian society,” numbering the amount of Masons in Port-au-Prince alone as one thousand.\(^{324}\) In Gonaïves, J. B. Prax was able to witness consistent celebrations of Fraternal days by Masons.

\(^{319}\) Mimi Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 58.

\(^{320}\) In 1845, the Black Lodges of New York City even renamed one of their Lodges the Boyer Grand Lodge after Jean-Pierre Boyer. Craig Steven Wilder, *In the Company of Black Men: The African Influence on the African American Culture in New York City* (New York City: NYU Press, 2001), 113.

\(^{321}\) Haitians have a long tradition of freemasonry that extends to the colonial period, when the Grande Loge de France and the Grand Orient de France existed in Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien (then Cap-Français), Saint-Marc, Petit-Goâve, and Gonaïves. Louverture signed his name with a combination of two lines and three dots, a popular masonic shorthand of the time. Dessalines’s sword, displayed at the Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien, is clearly engraved with square and compass motifs.

\(^{322}\) Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, vol. 2, 217.

\(^{323}\) Ibid.

\(^{324}\) Bird, *The Black Man*, 186.
who paraded openly in the town center decorated in many colors and surrounded by drumming rather than in secrecy. Freemasonry contributed to the formal network of allies who controlled regional political and economic resources and, likely, political actors relied these alliances to extend their influence.

According to James Theodore Holly, only women went to Church in Haiti; the men “gratified their religious sentiment” through the symbolism and ceremony of the Masonic lodge. On one hand, Freemasonry engaged in a civilizing process of moral education, self-improvement, and elitism. On the other hand, Freemasonry drew upon a lexicon of esoteric order that formed the crux of elites and popular black publics, drew on the idioms of military fraternity that gave the nation its military republicanism, and did have a few ties to the development of Vodou practices. These were significant, because while masonry was Euro-centric, freemasonry was adapted through black logic, at times formulating a counter-public of secrecy and formal fictive kinship outside of state hands while also forming a hegemonic public of elite respectability. Afterall, Freemasonry was never persecuted in Haiti, and with its own mysterious heritage of runes, symbols, elaborate masquerades, and divine knowledge, Freemasonry overlapped with sosyétés and compagnies and thrived among the small literate middle class.

Vatican indifference—alongside political rejection—certainly hampered Haiti’s integration into the Atlantic with a lack of internal development and formal education system. Yet, it is clear from these different accounts that Haitian religious imagination freely drew on their own definitions of spirituality as colonial infrastructure began to disintegrate and the gap widened between the urban elite and the rural peasants. A new society was formed, not an

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African one per se but nonetheless inspired by its ancestral influence, whose members considered themselves children of Guinée, of an ancient homeland “that slowly drifted from history into the realm of myth.”

**SUBALTERN RELIGIOUS AGENCY, POST-EMANCIPATED SPIRITUALITY AND REVIVALISM**

The great complexity and the distinctive features of Haitian popular spiritualism formed a sociopolitical landscape marred in political challenges during the national crisis that exploded onto the scene between 1844 and 1848. Haitian historian Thomas Madiou, writing about the year 1845, named two sects—the guyons and the saints—as causing a particularly violent amount of religious strife. The guyons, reputedly cannibals and practitioners of evil, were “fanatically” pursued by the saints who saw them as “the damned.” In the latter half of 1845, an elderly woman was killed by some fervent saints. The saints accused her of the “devouring” of a child and the possession of his or her soul. The authorities stepped in and arrested both saints and guyons. The trial at Port-au-Prince set off a “great commotion” according to Madiou, but in the end all of the accused were released due to the government’s concern that holding a trial would heighten charges “abroad that there were anthropophagists in Haiti.”

Several days later, at 11 p.m., a considerable crowd of saints, with drums, gathered across the prison which recently held them seeking presumably to celebrate this victory. The throng, led by a young man and woman in white, sacrificed a goat and engaged in ritual dancing. The police danced as well, a fact which serves as an indication that the relationship between local authorities and the saints was

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330 Ibid., 319.
331 Madiou could see no difference in the dances that Saints, guyons, or any other Voduosans practiced, calling the saints dances “coulvereuses and voluptuous.” Ibid., 320.
more complex than Madiou had imagined. The pleasure and triumph in the feet of the saints’ demonstration in 1845 indicates that the popular religious ethos that sustained autonomous political and social organization had come to national attention.

The mystery of who and what constituted these two groups pervades research into 1844-1848. Madiou identified them as “one as dangerous as the other”, avoiding any moral distinction between the two groups.332 To him, as most writing observers, they were both groups of vodou bandits and should be treated as one. A letter from 1845 comments on this moment as when practitioners of Vodou were “emboldened.”333 Another unknown priest wrote on August 7th, 1845, “all the terrible superstitions that the strong government of M. Boyer had contained, have manifested with more ardor than ever.”334 Alphonse Cabon, historian of the Catholic church in Haiti, believes that the saints had become powerful by 1845, being able to openly conduct a ceremony in the capital. Whether in celebration of the release of their fellow Saints or the eradication of a Guyon, or both, Madiou, as well as Cabon, framed the event as audacity, but as Ramsey reinterprets the situation, it reveals that the saints had a measure of comfort, if not “immunity” or “impunity” with the religiopolitical landscape.335 This was possible because Pierrot’s short ten-month term in presidential office (April 1845-March 1846) was marked by the increasing power of the vodou and folk practices. During this time, Jean-Louis Pierrot, a northern man, was Henri Christophe’s brother-in-law, Acaau’s close friend, and was married to Cecile Fatiman, one of the mambos at Bois Caiman.336 Thus, 1845 was a thunderous year for

332 Ibid., 319.
333 Cabon, Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haïti, 150.
334 Ibid., 390.
335 Ramsey, The Spirits and the Law, 75.
popular spirituality and Madiou’s reflections reference what is akin to a spiritual revival in mid-century Haiti.

Raybaud’s commented on the distinctive connection between saints and the political landscape following the events of 1843: “Pétion and Boyer, had nearly succeeded in preventing [Vodou’s] utterance; but the bands of Acaau restored them to honor.” The religious belief that the Virgin Mary authorized Acaau was the kind of mobilizing element in the superstructure of Haitian society that affected political activity. Nearly one year before the events in Port-au-Prince in 1844, Louis Jean-Jacques Acaau announced at the calvaire (open-air crucifix) in the Western parish of Les Cayes that “divine providence ordered poor people, first to pursue mulâtres and secondly share the properties of the mulâtres.” Acaau’s words were endorsed that day by a guildeve (rum distillery laborer), named Joseph. Frère Joseph, as he became known, was in turn endorsed by La Vierge. He proclaimed, according to Raybaud, “Acaau is right…the rich black who knows how to read and write is mulâtre; the poor mulâtre who does not know how to read or write is black.” Thereafter, Joseph, became Frère Joseph, and he dressed in white, wrapped his head in a white mouchoir (scarf) and developed “a magical influence on the populations of the plains and mountains.” With a cierge (candle) in his hand he marched in the middle of Acaau’s bands edifying novenas to the Virgin. Thus, the period between 1843-1848, the political and civil conflicts manifested through spiritual pleas for new relationships between state and people.

337 D’Alaux, Souloque et son empire, 82.
338 Ibid.
340 On should note the continued legacy of this phrase which shows up as late as the 1880s under Salomon. Cabon, Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haïti, 391; and St. John, Haiti, or The Black Republic, 136.
Inevitably, for the Southern peasant-based movement, the political struggle was also a religious one, led by *La Vierge* and the *espirits* together.\(^{341}\) In the *Piquet* rebellion, the radical claims for racial equality, social justice, and participation in economic autonomy, became a political cry as well as a religious rally. Each band of *saints* were self-governing as they were led by a *licteur*, an officer bearing the power to execute, and a *frère* charged with recognizing the *guyons*. This *frère* was also “the judge and executer of high works,” making them the moral authority.\(^{342}\) In the *saints* and *Piquets*, the liberative and autonomous aspirations of the *lakou* system, popular spirituality and the *kombite* transformed the political and economic struggle into a religious crusade. Arguing for land redistribution, the elimination of export duties on their agricultural products, and the creation of national education, Acaau’s band became known as the *armée souffrante*, or the army of sufferers. They became more readily known as *Piquets* for the crude spear-like weapons they carried in lieu of guns and steel weaponry. Within this ‘suffering army’, the post-emancipated peoples placed their opposition to the hegemony of the ruling class and of Boyer’s oppressive system.

Here, we might refer to the political associations with Kongo and witch-hunts in equatorial Africa where social order also reflected the cosmological understanding of the universe. Saint liturgical practice of spiritual legalism through the *licteur*, may be a possible link to the juridical approaches that arose from the significant and dramatic increase in the rise of arbitrary laws and witchcraft accusations in the Loango Coast Kingdoms of Kongo and Sonyo in the eighteenth century.\(^{343}\) As James Sweet has rightly articulated, histories of the African-

\(^{341}\) Leslie Manigat tells us that peasant bands from Saltrou to Jacmel “[mixed] religious claims with their sociopolitical demands” while “expressing themselves in the form of a mystical and magical movement.” Leslie François Manigat, *La révolution de 1843*, 21.

\(^{342}\) Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti*, vol. 8, 319.

Atlantic require serious engagement with archaeology, historical linguistics, oral traditions and material culture. In this case, the saints certainly mirror Kongloese root experiences in Afro-Atlantic Christianity where revelations of Virgin Mary, dreams and apparitions of royalty and prophets are set to defeat the forces of oppression and lead to the restoration of divine kingdomhood. These examples highlight the necessity of studying the cultural and spiritual practices of African traditions in Haiti, not to identify Saints and Guyons as authentically African per se, but to recognize that the connections of Bantu-speaking peoples and their religious contributions to the Americas continually regulated sociopolitics, even as their complex integration and redeployment also furnished continual reworkings of their political logic and employment.

But who were the guyons? The meanings of such nomenclature stood against the socially accepted practices of ‘sevi lwa’ with an image of uncontrolled fugitivity and a significance maybe not meant to be understood or interpreted, but instead felt as an everyday threat to society; hence ‘bad’ vodou. The saints constituted themselves as a sect in opposition to the guyons, but less time is given to the nature of the so-called guyons. This may suggest that to a large extent guyon was itself a term in flux, used as a stand-in for the violent forms of spiritualism and maladies of the nation with associations to the boko or the Macaya division of Vodou. Nowhere do accounts describe what truly constituted a guyon, except to say what

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Madiou described them as: “reputed to carry pouches containing fetishes, human bones, and even snakes.” The contemporary meaning of *giyons* is ascribed to “jinx” or “bad luck”, but no documentation of the origin of the term for mid-century Haitian life exists. More often in foreign accounts, the *guyon* was associated with the *loup-garou*, a term associated with West African secret societies but also with the werewolves of French agrarian folklore of Normandy. To name themselves the *saints* with their leaders as *frères*, just as much as to name the *guyons loup-garous*, portrays a Manichean conflict of good and evil that could be traced back to both Haiti’s African and European origins.

The *armée souffrante* continued until the senate conceded and elected the Phillipe Guerrier in 1845. However, *Piquetiste* sentiment loomed in the South and, in the West province, the *Piquets* and their allies essentially governed outside of state control until 1848.

When Pierrot ascended to Presidency in 1846, he placed Acaau as commandant of the arrondissement of Nippes, where he “had a magical influence of the populations of the plains and the hills.” This demonstrates that as a regional leader, Acaau maintained a great amount of charismatic legitimacy, even as tensions cooled. Persecution did return in 1847 with the Presidency of Riché, a staunch Catholic, who implemented the law without an attempt to categorize the *Saints* and *Guyons* or any other religious factions. Acaau rebelled against Riché

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345 Ibid.
346 Madame Guyon was a 16th century mystic in France.
348 Acaau was named commandant of Nippes in the south, ending the *armée souffrante* movement. See Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti*, vol. 8, 331.
349 Ibid., 330.
350 In a presidential circular concerning agriculture dated Sept. 1846, Riché announced that “all these forbidden dances such as le vaudou are completely abolished” and that “all these makers of ouangas and macandats are sought out and delivered to justice to be punished in conformity with the law.” Cabinet ministers Céligny and Beaubrun Ardouin issued a circular from the elite mulatto oligarchy reinforcing Riché’s message: “Honest dances can take place…outside of extraordinary cases and according to an explicit permit.” Later in 1846, another law was passed specifying that recidivists would face hard labor in maritime prisons. Thalès Jean-Jacques, Haitian legal historian, sees this law as mysterious, noting to his knowledge, that maritime prisons were never built. See No. 2205.-
and was defeated by state forces in Feb. 1847, a mere month before Soulouque’s presidency. The political culture which grew out Acaau and Frère Joseph, like the Piquets, did not disappear. Because they emerged out of their own local institutions and black publics rooted in informal participation and belief systems, their claims were buried within the social dynamics of the nation-state plagued by the rural/urban divisions. For the Saints and Piquets religious imagination was a source of resistance as well as negotiation with their environments. Theologies could be reinterpreted, endowed with new qualities, missions, and functions; the liberated could articulate a new history where the Virgin could speak through the spirits which projected Frère Joseph’s power.

**NOTRE DAME AS A SOCIOPOLITICAL TOOL:**

The situation Soulouque inherited in March 1847 was one of little promise. The political legitimacy of the current state, where senate and congressional power was in the hands of the mulâtre ruling class, was only a little more than a series of fleeting regimes, liberal in prospect, authoritarian in utility, and, ultimately, contingent on acceptance by the militant black populaces of the South and West provinces. In the North, where larger land parcels had survived with the reign of Christophe, had attempted succession in both 1844 and 1846. With the declaration independence of the Dominican Republic in 1844, the Haitian nation lost the Vatican’s first archdiocese in the Americas at Santo Domingo and the national pilgrimage site of La Virgen de Altagracia in Higuey. Pilgrimages were still taking place, but into the newly formed

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Dominican Republic. In face of the weakly veiled authority of the ruling class and what amounted to an illegitimate state, Haiti needed a new national icon. Soulouque may have believed that after a career of six decades in watching social strife and regionalism split the nation-state, a shared spiritual identity of Haitian-style Catholicism-Vodou could bring some form of stability beyond the “bayonet” of Boyer. Consequently, Soulouque inaugurated a syncretic solution at Saut-d’Eau: rather than Altagracia, Notre Dame de l’Assomption would become the new national icon. It would be strategically placed away from the urban center of Port-au-Prince and at the heart of the country near Mirebalais. In the end, the president-turned-emperor saw a chance to use popular religious aspirations as a tool of the state and to turn the Haitian spiritual culture into his advantage.

On many levels, it was not an unexpected set of events. Riché’s defeat of Acaau was a celebrated victory for the Boyeriste and Rivièreistes, who judged the Piquets, the armée souffrante, and the saints as the same perceived threat against the system even as they used them for coups. Riché did not change the system in which the elite profited off the peasant majority, nor did he touch Code Rurale, Code Penal, or change the duties on Haitian exports. For Soulouque, an ex-slave who climbed the ranks slowly into government, he knew these politics played closely in the ears and mouths of Haitians who did not write and record their experiences but lived Boyer’s Code Pénal of 1835. It was precisely within these legal and ideological ambiguities and contradictions that an opportunity for the imperial Haitian state to foster a superfluous relationship with popular spiritualism arose. By representing the competing and integrated religious discourse as a basis of political legitimacy Soulouque could coopt vernacular

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tools such as telediol, which could spread news throughout communities with little trust in state regimes.

Therefore, while the cooption of the 1844-1848 struggles helped frame Soulouque as a charismatic center of public life, the popular vision of his power was also the result of the spectacle and use of vernacular politics to secure legitimacy at a time of illegitimacy. As Paul C. Johnson states, “images of the saints have provided privileged, divinely sanctioned sites for negotiating the powers of ethnicity, nationalism, and… race.”352 Soulouque, himself an adept and avid Vodousan, floated between the Catholic-Vodou ethos and tied the moral authority of religious leaders to his power.353 The imperial regime turned against the sortilèges laws of the Code Pénal of 1835 and utilized the logic of the saints beliefs; only the guyon, that is, the ‘bad vodou’, would be targeted. Lastly, he formed a cult of personality regarding the new regime, with himself and his family at the head of the Haitian church, Vodou Pantheon, and Freemasons. With all of these, Soulouque, functioning within the habitus of popular religious imagination, brought the social conflict which defined the crisis of legitimacy to the national level, and portrayed his new state as a nation of new moral identity.

**Coercing Popular Spiritualisms**

In early 1848, the Piquets were demanding vengeance from the landowning class, but fear of state reprisal kept them at bay. During this time, according to Raybaud, Frère Joseph had opened a shop of sorcery in Port-au-Prince selling amulets, where his reputation as a Piquetiste

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and a ougan rose.\textsuperscript{354} He was called up for the anniversary of Riché’s death and Soulouque’s presidency in 1848 to play an advisory role in Soulouque’s early regime.\textsuperscript{355} While this specific role as an advisor is unmentioned by the sources, once Frère Joseph was a prominent member of Soulouque’s entourage, \textit{Piquets} saw this as a sign of favor, and on April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1848 turned against mulatto General Dugué Zamor the \textit{commandant} of Les Cayes, where Acaau had begun the rebellion in 1844.\textsuperscript{356} To the \textit{Piquets}, who cheered Soulouque with cries of “Papa!” and “\textit{Vive Soulouque!”}, Soulouque was the charismatic leader who could take over Acaau’s place and give life to the claims of the dispossessed. With the death of Acaau and the destruction of the other \textit{Piquetistes} regional leaders, an important vacuum of religious power and moral authority was left open. Frère Joseph fell out of favor with Soulouque as part of the house-cleaning of the post-April 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1848 attacks but his reappearance constituted a rebranding of his regime’s aspirations as one of social regeneration according to peasant and poor demands: the destruction of the rich classes.\textsuperscript{357} The purges of 1848 proved to be widely popular as the peasant and poor masses claimed their violent retribution on the wealthy commercial class and landholding elites.

Yet, public spectacles of violence alone would not keep the president in power, especially considering his failure to recapture the Dominican Republic in his early 1849 invasion. In fact, the 1849 Dominican campaign proved to be immensely unpopular. Yet, within the span of two months from his return to Port-au-Prince on May 6\textsuperscript{th}, the first sign of \textit{La Vierge} appeared. Could Soulouque have planned the whole affair? According to P. Percin, the Haitian priest visiting the

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\textsuperscript{355} Zamor was himself a former Piquet leader until he was given the post of commandant over the entire \textit{arrondissement} of Les Cayes much like Acaau. D’Alaux, \textit{L’Empereur Soulouque et son empire}, 71, 90-91, 139; Dayan, \textit{Haiti, History, and the Gods}, 53; Ramsey, \textit{The Spirits and the Law}, 80; Moïse, Claude, \textit{Constitution et Luttes}, 185.

\textsuperscript{356} More about the 1848-1849 in the previous chapter. D’Alaux, \textit{Soulouque et son empire}, 139-140.

\textsuperscript{357} Moïse, Claude, \textit{Constitution et Luttes}, 186. Also discussed in the previous chapter.
\end{footnotesize}
Vatican, the then-President had sent dispatches to Rome asking for a bishop for his consecration since September 27th, 1848, only months after the initial violence of April 1848.358 When Soulouque received no reply from the Vatican, he wrote to the archbishop of Santo Domingo telling him that he could reconcile the Dominican Republic and Haiti’s war by consecrating Soulouque under the banner of friendship.359 Soulouque had planned to name himself emperor before 1849, but if so, he waited almost a year to do so.

**Controlling the news**

Soulouque’s effectivity came from his use and knowledge of the most important part of Haitian vernacular politics: rumors. As Alejandra Bronfman states about U.S. occupation in early twentieth century Haiti, “gossip, rumors, warnings, news, jokes, and stories circulated amid produce, people, and animals” faster than newspapers or the telegraph.360 Their evanescence functioned as a discourse running counter to the highly controlled publications of the literati. Every major and minor market, every traveling vendor rushing to towns quickly before their goods were spoiled, and each intermediary marchand transaction meant to quickly shuffle goods past the mountainous regions in Port-au-Prince was an avenue of discourse which connected even the fragmented regions of mid-century Haiti. The channels of the market circuits and the explosive news of *La Vierge* were a chance to fill in the moral authority Soulouque gained with the Southern and Western Piquets nationwide.

Soulouque primarily controlled the news of the Marian apparitions by officiating them publicly and piece by piece. His first move was his mystificateur who claimed the sign was of the Virgin with an imperial coat and scepter. Before this news, no other accounts seem to have

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358 Cabon, *Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haïti*, 408.
359 Ibid., 411.
associated the apparitions with monarchy. In fact, the traditionally known story till this day associated with *Notre Dame de l’Assomption* and Saut-d’Eau, does not mention Soulouque in anyway.\(^{361}\) Interestingly, the mystificateur was not an unknown individual or ougan, but future court painter Colbert de Lochard.\(^{362}\) He formed around him a group of loyal and well-known priests to affirm the apparitions which included abbey Pisano of Mirebalais and abbey Michel, a French priest popular amongst the more elite clergymen. The priests found opposition from the individualistic abbey Cessens who passed off the apparitions as lies and entirely fetishistic. Cessens, playing the papacy and the Haitian government from the sidelines, wrote to the Vatican in 1850 regarding Soulouque’s coronation: “The Empire has been prepared by the execution to death of prominent men and by supposed apparitions of which we can have no belief.”\(^{363}\) Although Cessens, well-known for his extensive series of lies, slander, and libel, is not the most reliable source, the fact that he saw the apparitions as part of a power struggle to legitimize the government in the eyes of onlookers remains significant.

As the second apparition appeared near Mirebalais, rumors spread that now *La Vierge* had appeared with a crown. Soulouque ordered ministers Louis Dufresne, Jean-Baptiste Francisque, Lysius Félicité Salomon, and other members of the legislative cabinet to study the phenomena.\(^{364}\) Of course, Soulouque was already Emperor by August 25\(^{th}\) and the need for the spectacle would have receded. But, again, on November 23\(^{rd}\), 1849, a third set of apparitions was rumored to be seen again in Champs-Mars. This time the Empress Adelina went on her own

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\(^{361}\) For popular accounts see Michel Laguerre, *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti* (New York, 1981).

\(^{362}\) This is according to Justin Bouzon, who writes that Colbert de Lochard was actually the second painter called by Soulouque to copy the apparition into a drawing. Bouzon, *Études historiques*, 153. See also Michel Phillipe Lerebours, *Tome I: Haïti et ses peintres de 1804 à 1980: souffrances & espoirs d’un peuple* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimeur II, 1989), 129-155.

\(^{363}\) Cabon, *Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haiti*, 409.

\(^{364}\) Dufrense (the general of the army and minister of war, the navy, and foreign relations) Francisque (minister of justice, worship and public education) and Salomon (minister of finance) were all founding members of Soulouque Imperial cabinet. Laguerre, *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti*, 87.
pilgrimage and witnessed the events solidifying the national veracity of the appearance of the apparitions. Over the course of the five-month period, the imperial regime solidified its connection to the apparitions by funneling the rumors into comprehensive sets of events that could be retold quickly and covered the nation.

There are no articles in *Le Moniteur* or *La Feuille Du Commerce* in 1849 that mention the apparitions. Yet, the following year, Abbé Sapini, the curé of Mirebalais, mentioned several words about the development of at the celebration of the Empire on August 26th, a national holiday. Calling for the “true patriots”, Sapini declared “it was time that religion, resuming a new growth, should be the object of all national concern.” In his passionate sermon he described the explosion of Saut-d’Eau as a pilgrimage site: “with what ardor they all go to Saut-d’Eau from everywhere to implore the mercy of God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.”

Within a year, Saut-d’Eau had already become the major pilgrimage site. In 1851, discussion on the state of the national churches led to the duke of Cazimir being chosen to erect religious and useful works in the new town of Bonheur. Later, Soulouque changed the region’s status from that of a rural section of River Canot to a *poste militaire*. With an understanding of drama and effect, once the rumors of the apparition reached the palace, controlling the flow of information became a priority for Soulouque. His strategy harnessed the channels that already existed outside the state to solidify its legitimacy.

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365 Ibid.
366 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, September 14, 1850.
367 Ibid.
368 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, April 17, 1851.
369 President Salomon made Saut d’Eau a quartier and appointed a courtroom judge and county officer in 1885. Laguerre, *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti*, 88.
**Usurping the Lois for the Lwas**

Haitian ruling classes, dragged by their own designs and the agency of the nascent state to curb foreign eyes, issued *sortilège* ordinances, arbitrating law against practitioners. Yet, as early as 1847, Soulouque attempted to limit the state’s interaction with popular religious practices issuing a circular on October, 18, 1847 that enjoined the authorities, in severe terms, “to maintain [Riché’s] interdiction which pressed hard on le vaudoux and le don Pedre.”370 But several weeks later a second circular from Soulouque “forbade, in terms no less severe, the same officers from molesting the good people who wanted to enjoy dancing the arada.”371 Was the state in a period of confusion? Had a mistake been made? Rather, than disturbing the “good people” who privately and publicly were practicing *good* Rada, there would be a distinction made. Like the saints, with their *licteurs* and *frères*, juridical prudence was a matter of the social ethics of good or evil. Good ritual practices and dances were encouraged; bad vodou, that is, the *guyons*, the *loup-garous*, *petwo*, and the cannibals, were to be struck down. If war against the enemies of the state was the raison d’être of the empire, then this extended itself religiously. In this epistemic framework, Soulouque’s approach largely ignored the state’s official policy towards spiritual practices on the ground. Instead, he opted for state interactions with popular beliefs that mimicked the local push and pull forces that guided the vast majority of Haitian lives.

Although these laws against *les sortileges* were repudiated by a nascent Haitian state desperate to eschew accusations of barbarity, precedent for their structure existed. The *Code Pénal* of 1826 criminalized *sortilèges* and the selling of *macandal* under *sortilèges* as minor offenses. But it was the *Code Pénal* of 1835 which extended the laws and “invest[ed] in precise

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371 Ibid. 90-91.
nomenclature.” Articles 405-407 of the 1835 *Code Pénal* penalized *ouangas, caprelatas, vaudoux, donpèdre, macandals*, other *sortilèges*, and their makers; this extended to the trade of fortune-telling and divination and the confiscated religious objects.

While these penal laws were slippery at best, Kate Ramsey’s work has stated that their application warrants inquiry, particularly as those laws related to “state concerns with intensifying peasant labor” since “rural dances were believed to diminish agricultural productivity.” Boyer’s legal codes specifically placed new boundaries on property owners, *cultivateurs*, and agriculturalists. When we speak of the ‘assault’ on rural communities we must remember that this entailed complex kin patterns, forms of mutuality, and custom held in common. Land was the material basis to rural community; labor was the social adhesive. Since “serving the spirits” is deeply tied to land, the burgeoning *lakou* system that emerged during that period and the hierarchy among practitioners in rural Haiti threatened state authority as a potential “parallel governmentality”, or rather, a competing hierarchy with its own set of moral and social authority. This included the *licteurs* of *saint* bands, the heads of *kombites*, and *ougans* and *mambos* of the *hounfours* as well as the regional strongmen who used these methods to ensure their own local legitimacy. In other words, state lawmakers produced laws focused on the subjugation of folk practices which essentially functioned to “contain and [marginalize] the subaltern rural majority.”

Local people, however, shaped enforcement and responses through their own form of defense. Ramsey states “the government’s enforcement of laws that did not distinguish between

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375 Ibid., 17.
376 Ibid., 55.
popularly sanctioned and popularly repudiated practices was politically unsustainable.”377 The state attempts at juridical modernity worked against the practices of peasants, poor, urbanites, and even elites; all Haitians lived a daily set of rituals that melded the schema of Christianity and Vodou. Furthermore, though collective spiritual practices were subject to sweeping penalizations they operated outside of state logic, organically and ingeniously subverting the state’s juridical practices. For example, on the eve of the Christmas of 1854, J. B. Prax heard tambous (drums) and Vodou music as it entered the center of the city of Gonaïves. A young mulatto woman pushed out next to Prax’s throng motivated to dance. According to Prax, she was motivated by the death of a child and she wished for a “Christian priest” to come to her home to pray over the body.378 In this particular example, not only is a vodou-like ceremony entwined with the holiday of Christ’s mass, the young woman dances to the drums in order to obtain a catholic priest. In this case, she would have violated the Code Pénal, incurring fines and possible prison time if she were a recidivist. Instead, Prax notes, “she danced that afternoon, the night and the morning, for several days” all without incursion.379 That same year, a prophetess, the unnamed wife one of Soulouque’s aide-de-camp, operated openly as a spiritual healer in the Port-a-Piment and Gonaïves areas, until she was accused of poisoning a woman in 1854 when she died two days after treatment.380 In one of Spenser St. John attempts at a scathing denunciation of Soulouque’s era, he recollects a story of a mambo “arrested for having performed a sacrifice too openly”; when told that she would be shot, the mambo laughed claiming that if she were to “beat the sacred drum”, everyone, “from the Emperor downwards” would follow her march through the

377 Ibid., 56.
378 Prax, Ahiti, 634.
379 Ibid.
380 Ibid., 635-637.
Individual occurrences such as these were ubiquitous to Haitian spiritual experiences and made the laws built against popular spiritual practices both ineffective and dangerous to public order.

In another case in 1855 given to us by Prax, years into Soulouque’s reign, Prax observed an event in which a suspected *loup-garou* woman was called up to the local *juge-de-paix*. The *loup-garou* woman was accused by the mother of a local child, who suspected that the loup-garou was causing her child to lose weight and not latch onto her breast. The *juge-de-paix*, rather than using any of the laws against *sortilèges*, commanded the suspected *loup-garou* woman to return to her home accompanied by two soldiers and heal the child. The child was healed and there were no repercussions. Why would a *juge-de-paix* let a *loup-garou*, that is a person suspected of malicious intent, go without any repudiation? Numerous reasons bely the historian of law and religion in Haiti. The *juge-de-paix* may have been a Vodousan himself, either fearing or respecting the woman’s power. Perhaps, the *juge-de-paix*, knew the woman was not a *loup-garou*, but conferred to the local moral politics which demanded that a ritual be performed to rectify her perception as a *loup-garou*. Maybe, in reference to Soulouque’s 1848 decree that “good people” not be persecuted, the *juge-de-paix* saw the potential for the disruption of public order from a quotidian affair. That a local woman was accused by another local woman based on superstitious fears was altogether not an uncommon case of mistrust and suspicion. In either case, the local juridical institutions abandoned the legal codes to a great extent in exchange for moral legitimacy and authority. This does demonstrate that the state did not cede in using the laws altogether. In continuity with the bounds of “good”, socially moral vodou, persecution was directed towards those typically deemed as threatening to social norms. Like the aforementioned

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accused loup-garou woman, upholding the system of moral authority came at the greatest cost to poor, unmarried women.

Throughout the regime, all those accused of cannibalism were condemned to death. In one case in 1856 the imperial courts of Cap-Haitien announced through the Gazette des tribunaux, the publication of the cours de cassation, the condemnation of twelve to death for the murder and torture of a young girl and man.\textsuperscript{383} The Gazette failed to mention any more, but according to J.B. Prax the event was widely talked about as it involved a case of cannibalism. These sorts of trials were frequent enough to be reported in Le Moniteur in 1851, 1853, and 1856 and each was given the highest penalty of the law. While these laws against sortilèges contributed to the marginalization, social stigmatization, and everyday economic exploitation of the rural and poor majorities in Haiti, even when they were not strictly being enforce to the full extent, imperial stratagem adopted that of the saints: there were good honest Vodousans and dancers of Haitian tradition; there were also the evil, unredeemable, cannibals who would be treated as guyons.

\textit{The Symbolic Meanings of Empire}

On June 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1854, in La Feuille du Commerce, the new ecclesiastical superior of Port-au-Prince, Abbey Pierre Moussa, a Senegalese priest who found Haiti as an escape from the racism of the Franco-West African colonies, praised the black empire as a spearhead for Christianity. “Never, yes, never has religion been so worthily honored”, Moussa, declared Faustin I and Empress Adelina as the most zealous pursuers of “humanitarian actions” and children of “Guinée.”\textsuperscript{384} Not only did this sort of religious propaganda fit the typified language of regeneration associated with national rehabilitation, it also connected the Haitian throne to

\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 588.
\textsuperscript{384} La Feuille Du Commerce, June 17, 1854.
ancestral Africa. As one member of the Congrégation of Saint Espirit wrote about Abbey Moussa’s appearance in Haiti: [Haiti] is the only soil on the globe where the black breathes in all his plentitude the pure air of liberty.”385 Abbey Moussa’s position as an African man and Soulouque’s position as an Emperor of the only free black state in the Americas was a reminder of the blatantly anti-colonial stance of Haiti in a world surrounded by colonies, slavery, and white supremacy. The state spiritualism of Soulouque did not reject blackness nor the retentions of Africanity that made them children of Guinée. The strong pillar of support from Abbé Moussa not only lent prestige to the Church within Haiti; they also altered the balance of political power by securing its religious support for the Emperor himself.

In constructing Notre Dame du Mont Carmel at the site of one of the apparitions of Notre Dame de l’Assomption near the provincial town of Ville-Bonheur, outside of Mirebalais, the soon-to-be emperor could weave the conflicted-yet-connected traditions of Vodou and Christianity onto his legitimacy as Emperor. 386 In this case religion was important to the nationalist movement that adopted its language, built upon the religious identity of the Haitian community, and cloaked itself in religion and relied on religious leaders and institutions to promote its cause. The construction of a state church near this important vodou site wedded his monarchial authority not only with folk Catholicism but with the entirety of the Vodou pantheon. If the laws created against sortilèges “were always already implicated in the social logic of “sorcery”, and their prohibition was the implicit confirmation of their existence, the building of Notre Dame du Mont Carmel at Saut d’Eau, was unspoken evidence that Soulouque’s ruling

385 Cabon, Note Sur l’Histoire Religieuse, 457.
386 Today Saut d’Eau is one of Haiti’s most important pilgrimage sites. Terry Ray, “The Politics of Patron Sainthood in Haiti: 500 Years of Iconic Struggle”, The Catholic Historical Review, Vol. 88, No. 3 (July 2002), 528-529.Till this very day, pilgrimages to Saut d’Eau occur on July 15th on religious days shared with St. John, the Virgin, and Damballah and his wife Aida-wedo. See Alfred Métraux, Haiti: Black Peasants and Voodoo (New York: Universe Publishers, 1960), 92-94. Interestingly this book contains a photograph of a Petit Goâve camón, or truck, with the words “Empereur Soulouque” painted on.
class recognized the lwas.\textsuperscript{387} The national political significance of this was immense. Vodou and folk Catholicism formed a core aspect of the national imagining largely unrecognized by the state. The cultural significance of such a monument becomes clearer when we break down the multifaceted meanings of La Vierge, Damballah, and the Emperor. Saut-d’Eau, before independence, had been associated with the rada lwa Damballah, who occupies the position of the primordial creator of all life, one of the most important of the lwas. Damballah, associated with waterfalls, snakes, and hierarchy, constituted an important symbol to Soulouque’s advantage. If empire was to co-opt folk Catholicism and vodou, then Damballah was the most important Vodou symbol of his divinely secured right to monarchy. Interestingly, the site is further entwined in the unique situation of the 1840s-1850s because before the earthquake that hit Cap-Haitien in 1842—which was strong enough to shatter glass in Port-au-Prince and rattle plates in Santo Domingo city—there was no reported waterfall near Ville Bonheur in the arrondissement of Mirebalais.\textsuperscript{388}

The decree to build the church Notre Dame du Mont Carmel near Saut-d’Eau was also a strategic move because it “appeased the widespread discontent of the peasantry at a time when the society bore the weight of the elite class and the coercive system installed by the rural code of 1826.”\textsuperscript{389} It is dually important that this was subtle transgression across the urban/rural divide: large government constructions rarely took place outside of the larger cities. In the Chamber of Representative’s discussions on the reconstruction and re-edification of numerous major churches, including that of Jérémie, Jacmel, and Cap-Haitien (still unfixed since the 1842

\textsuperscript{387} Ramsey, The Spirit and the Laws, 71.
\textsuperscript{389} Micial Neréstant, Religions et Politiques en Haïti (Paris, 1994), 97.
earthquake), representative Desmores Lafontant demanded that of the 300,000 gourdes be set aside for public works, money be allotted for churches outside of the urban areas, because “communes outside of the capital are completely neglected.” Against the legislated check on the full citizenship of moun andeyo, peasants and the urban poor, Soulouque could build an important link between popular spirituality and the nation.

The popular Catholic traditions of venerating saints’ relics and memorializing miracles through iconic signs of grace and pilgrimage were entwined with Vodousans own pilgrimages to sacred sites. As Saut d’Eau was already a site of Vodou pilgrimage, the Emperor used the Empress to solidify the site as a national spiritual center. On the 1851 celebration of the Notre Dame de Mont Carmel, occurring during July 14-16, Empress Adelina, accompanied by troops of soldiers, proceeded to travel from the National Palace in Port-au-Prince to Saut d’Eau. This was the queen’s journey pilgrimage, a nearly thirty-mile journey through the rocky hills and mountainous central valley of Haiti, in which she gave alms to the poor and sang hymns. The pilgrimage, as a social system which connects personal scared vows to community ritual, “strengthen[s] the collective consciousness and established order by negotiating local and supra local identities.” Michel Laguerre, in talking about how Saut d’Eau has become a national symbol that is exploited by the state in the twentieth century, states that “the pilgrimage plays an integrative role in contemporary Haiti in the maintenance of status quo” through the establishment of communal links, causing periodic cash flow, and promoting the continual development of religious syncretism by having lwas and les saints in proximity. Thus while

390 Le Moniteur haïtien, July 6, 1850.
391 Le Moniteur haïtien, July 19, 1851.
393 Laguerre, “Haïtian Pilgrimage to O.L. of Saut d’Eau,” 1, 19.
informal politics of popular religion and peasant mobilization operated outside state institutions, the spiritual and vernacular publics came into face to face interactions of exchange with the state at Saut d’Eau.

Soulouque’s work to strategically to validate certain vodou practices while condemning others made for enigmatic sight for the empire’s foreign apologists, who continued to decry Vodou as cannibalism and superstition. Paul Dhormys, French travel writer and apologist of the second empire, characterized Soulouque as a “good Christian” who did not miss Sunday Mass in Port-au-Prince with ambitions to “become the first dignitary of the Church of Haiti.” 394 Dhormys imagined Soulouque’s representation as a Catholic Monarch and “Vaudoux” high power, although in his interpretation, he sees this as the “church of Haiti.” There is no evidence that proves Soulouque’s position in the hierarchy of any Vodou dignitaries or society. Could Vodou have a ‘pope-like’ figure? The autonomous egalitarian nature of Vodou beliefs would imply no; the hierarchical nature of ougans, mambos, and lwas, however, could be replicated at a higher level. In fact, the papa-loi and mama-loi, named themselves after hierarchical positions of power. Prax records: “The two ministers, who preside worship take the names of maître and maitresse, president and presidente, roi and reine, empereur and imperatrice.” 395 While much more were simply named papa and mama, Prax remarks, “these titles loaned from the political state of the country.” 396 The reflection of power is not dissimilar from the reworking of colonial society where the master-slave relationship was mirrored in the practice of the maître, the all-powerful master, and the zombi, the soulless husk; popular practices echoed dynamics at the national level. Soulouque, perhaps in vain, attempted to imprison individuals and practitioners

395 Prax, Ahiti, 575.
396 Ibid., 575.
claiming the imperial titles after his accession to Emperor in 1849. One doubts that he managed to achieve his goal, but it demonstrates his attempt control Haitians temporality, in which their cosmology (the ougan, mambo, espirits, and the saints’ daily involvement in their lives) and make an indistinguishable link to their secular world (the state and the empire).

If anything speaks to Soulouque’s ability to coopt Haitians disparate but interplayed spiritual publics, Colbert de Lochard who confirmed the sign of La Vierge was himself a mason. While attitudes about freemason’s shifted pejoratively in the aftermath of the post-concordat period due to estimations that freemasonry would be dangerous to the development of the Catholic church, at this point Haiti’s freemasonry had the advantage of being not only tolerated but intimately connected to the state. There were 4 lodges in Port-au-Prince alone and numerous funerals of public and royal officials describe great crowds of masons, with eulogies at times openly referencing the “Grand Architecte de L’Universel”.

In a contested space of spiritual hierarchies, taking control of freemasonry’s close relationship to national memory and government amplified his charismatic power. As Emperor, Soulouque also nationalized freemasonry by reforming Haitian Masonic orders into the Grand Freemason Order of Haiti in 1850 which installed him as Grand Protector. This certainly is demonstrated in the open and public patronage of freemasonry: Le Moniteur reports that more than once de Lochard presented paintings of Emperor and mason figures to lodges in Cayes. While the U.S. Grand Lodges deemed Haitian Masons “irregular”, Haiti’s Grand Lodge’s

397 Ibid. 575.
399 Le Moniteur haïtien, September 20, 1851.
400 Le Moniteur haïtien, November 9, 1850 and Le Moniteur, March 22, 1851.
representatives were accredited at the Mason Congress of Paris in 1855. Freemasonry commanded a vivid metaphor of hierarchy and personal efficacy in the real daily lives of bourgeois men. Significantly, James Theodore Holly, an experienced Mason himself, visited and preached at Haitian masonic temples during his time in Haiti and “delighted in reminding the mulattos that only three public organizations in Haiti had autonomous native administrations: the government, the Masonic fraternity and the Orthodox Apostolic Church.” To Holly, freemasonry was one of the few institutions that Haiti could claim as its own black institution and it was a cornerstone of Haitian ruling class society. Indeed, it was not just notable free association, but fundamental to legitimacy and thought surrounding hierarchy.

For these first years of the second empire, it seems that Soulouque was successfully able to transmit his unique sense of charisma through the Haitian spiritual landscape. As thousands poured in Saut d’Eau for spring celebrations, the emperor’s authoritarianism was not necessarily perceived as domination. His subjects could not fail to see the symbols. If African manifestations of Catholic saints had secret, deeper meanings, then the nearly fifty years of the proliferation and conflagration of religious beliefs would have had their own meanings. For sevîteurs, Christians, and Masons alike, occupied with questions of virtue and morality, legitimacy relied on the ambivalence of an identity resting on the sense of charismatic authority. Saut-d’Eau, today, is one of Haiti’s principle spiritual centers and hundreds of thousands flock to its waters in the springtime. While Soulouque is not the principal popular memory of the curative waters of Saut d’Eau, the dialectical relationship with the state that Soulouque developed has never vanished. Presidents who wished to incur some popular will give money and support a form of their own

402 Dean, David, *Defender of the Race*, 91.
pilgrimage, albeit not in person. Likewise, since Soulouque, the Haitian government has had military as well as symbolic control over Saut d’Eau using gendarmes to spy on pilgrims.\footnote{Laguerre speaks of the relationship between the Duvalier dictatorship and the site as a continual symbol of government domination. See Laguerre, Michel, “Haitian Pilgrimage to O.L. of Saut d’Eau”, 19.}

**MORAL IDENTITY AND POLITICAL LEGITIMACY**

On Sunday, March 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1850 in Port-Au-Prince, armed policemen entered a Wesleyan church service and ordered nine or ten young Haitian men to exit the church. When the young missionary, a native Haitian, Monsieur Heureux, protested, he was also arrested by a police officer and all the men were condemned to imprisonment upon a ship. An extract from a letter written by a British Wesleyan minister arriving to Port-au-Prince at that very moment read, “they were told that they were going to show them what a change of religion would cost them.”\footnote{Bird, *L’independence haïtienne*, 232.}

From the view of Protestant missionaries with the mission of civilization and progress, the event was an attack on the standards of the freedom of religious practice; it upheld the barbarism placed on Haiti in accordance to the lasting power of Vodou and ignorance. But according to the new regime, with Emperor Faustin I Soulouque at the head of the Haitian Church, Catholicism was a form of *Haitianness*. While the persecution against Vodou has led to what Hénock Trouillot has described as periods of “passing storms”, intermittent episodes of persecution, the study of the state led religious oppression to Protestantism is larger understudied apart from historians of religion.\footnote{Taken from Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 76.} As long as articles 405-407 were laws in the *Code Pénal*, they could always be enforced for political means against Vodou. But where were the laws against Protestantism? According to Catts Pressoir, nineteenth century historian of Protestantism in Haiti, the shift of religious beliefs in the mid-century was considered the change of political
alliance. Soulouque’s informal discourse acknowledging the role of Vodou and Catholicism provided legitimacy for the state as well as national identity. In other words, Haitians could be Catholics, private and public *sevîteurs* of the *lwas*, free-masons, and members of *sosyétés*, but they should not be Protestants.

The fact that Dessalines, the first national leader, became a *lwa* in the Vodou pantheon after his assassination in 1806 demonstrates that a religious form of nationalism was not a paradox for nineteenth century Haiti. It was ingrained in the nation’s fundamental rituals. Given that the Holy See at Santo Domingo, through the Haitian occupation period deep into the Dominican nineteenth century had made “fervent Catholicism” a central element in Dominican elite culture, orthodoxy played a major role in defining political alignments throughout the island. In the Cazeau-Francisque conspiracy of 1851, *Le Moniteur* claimed that Francisque’s faux republican-socialist ploy failed only because he “ignored, without doubt, that the current government had been founded by the hand of the all-powerful, from the Lord, from the one who alone has the right to create states.” Specifically, in this example, political legitimacy is framed as genuine because God was the moral identity of the State; to act against the state was to act against God, confirming divinity through divine right. In this conspiracy where revealed “only through the divine hand [of God]”, divinity was eminent in the throne, in the nation, and in the law.

This same basis of legitimacy was reflected in the sporadic campaigns against Protestantism, the search for a concordat, and Soulouque’s search for an ecclesiastic that would

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408 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, March 29th, 1851.
support his coronation. The persecution of Protestants in the Haiti is an odd case, where the tendrils of nationalism and religion are more connected then separate. Religion played more than an influential role in the efforts to unify Haiti people and state: it was a cohesive element, determining the language and context used by national leadership, and the interplay between separating Haitian Catholicism from other ‘Catholicisms’ was fundamental to the nation-building of the second empire. It formed a moral identity that fostered a chain of legitimacy that went beyond the popular and elite levels and into the inner workings of the state authority. At the international level, Haiti’s fervent steps to ensure Catholicism’s continued ascendance, was to play to the narratives of progress and civilization. At the ground level, the second empire was to embody the pantheon of Catholic and Vodou hierarchy, mimicking “on the ground” religious belief at the national level.

REJECTING FOREIGN RELIGION

The empire of 1849 was not particularly unique in its rejection of Protestantism in Haiti. President Boyer, left no protections for English missionaries, even counseling them to leave Haiti, though they certainly remained well rooted in Puerto Plata and Samana. Despite article 32 of the 1849 imperial constitution which declared that “all worship is equally free,” historically, Roman Catholicism and Vodou were the religious belief systems of the Haitian founding fathers. Equally important, Protestantism was ontologically incongruent with Folk Catholicism and Vodou. Methodist, Episcopalian, and Baptists missionaries did not seek to parse out ritual practices nor did they adorn themselves with material objects and grand symbology such those in Vodou, Catholicism, and freemasonry. Prax commented on this tense relationship:

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“Protestant ministers work with few privileges; the simple [protestant] worship cannot compete within the eyes of noirs with the pomp of Roman religion.”⁴¹¹ Mark Baker bird himself sought to deter the Haitian government from making Protestantism less important than Vodou in his eyes: “We ask that the ministers of the gospel enjoy the same liberty which is accorded to the chiefs and the queens of those immoral [African] dances.”⁴¹² Certainly, the pluralism of the addition of Protestantism threatened the religious politics at the center of state legitimacy. The Protestant sects were religions without hierarchical figure heads. In comparison to the pope or the ougan leadership, Soulouque could not assumed himself at the head of the religion. Conversion to Protestantism by Haitians would disturb the tenants of Soulouque’s carefully controlled multifaceted cohesiveness of Catholicism and Vodou at the state level.

The schismatic Haitian church greatly supported the removal of Protestants. Abbé Pisano of Mirebalais himself wrote a defamatory article in 1851 defending Haitian Catholic practices from “charlatans” who named Catholicism a “religion of money” and calling those who preached the “God des Anglais” liars: Calvinists were “tyrants”, Wesleyans “pseudo-deacons”, and Methodists he termed “marshalist oddballs.”⁴¹³ That Protestantism was a foreign belief was crucial to the stability of the Haitian church during schism. With no revenue, little monetary support, the vital lifeline of the priests and abbeys were a direct connection to the Haitian nation to whom they could extract money. Thus, Haitian priests preached that to support another religion was to support another nation.

Discussion was frequent as Haiti’s priests derided Protestants from the steps of churches. In one of these cases where discussion between a Methodist and a Catholic on religious subjects

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⁴¹¹ Prax, Ahiti, 570.
⁴¹² Pressoir, Catts, Le Protestantisme Haïtien, 220.
⁴¹³ La Feuille du Commerce, January 5, 1851.
turned into insult, reports returned to Soulouque that the crown had been attacked. Though, according to Pressoir, the emperor had often “tired of hearing that those who changed their religion might also one day try to change the form of government and overthrow the empire”, the affronted Soulouque “still said that to be a Protestant was to give himself to the English and to facilitate their entry into the country.”

For the Haitian church, Protestantism was one of the sorely needed scapegoats it depended on to bolster its attachments with the Haitian national imagining. For the empire, the threat was in the self-determining role of their subjects. Only a community of peoples with a common heritage and a strong central figure would survive the regional, factional, and class differences that tore Haiti apart in the mid-1840s.

Interestingly, Soulouque did not stop Protestant missionaries from advertising their reunions in *Le Moniteur*, the official newspaper of the state, as Mark Baker Bird and several others frequently did through the 1850s, nor did he attempt to persecute foreign born preachers. James Theodore Holly, who became the first black Episcopal Bishop of Haiti in 1874, went to Haiti in 1855 while interested in an immigration program and experienced much less opposition as he was interested in forming a black Episcopal church. In truth, it was the Haitian urban bourgeoisie who had a penchant for Protestantism; quite possibly these same groups overlapped with the perceived threat of urban-born liberal republicanism. Protestantism took a minority foothold in the larger port cities where interactions between foreign merchants and consuls were more regular with Haitian merchants. Moreover, Bird, a Methodist Minister, believed that Haitians who attended Protestant services saw little difference in the Protestant and Roman Catholic sects, as every Sunday his ministry was filled with Catholics who also went to Mass.

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415 See Dean, David, *Defender of the Race*.
As Bird remarked, “Haiti is a Roman Catholic country, Protestants and Catholics are buried in the same cemetery, without any distinction.” The possible added factor was in the reality that Protestants did not charge their observers for redemption as the Catholic priests did. According to Bird, the 1848 massacres led to an exodus of new worshippers. Contrarily, the Pastor F. Eldin who spent several years in Haiti under the regime as a Wesleyan missionary testified, that no obstacle was put to his pastoral action and that he was thus able to establish parishes and schools throughout the country. Yet, as building commenced of a Wesleyan church in Jérémie in 1849, the imperial government ordered its suspension. Only after multiple petitions was the church completed in 1851. In the act of taking such a notable step against Protestantism, but then reneging, it seems that the imperial government did not take every chance to persecute Protestants but chose moments to nationalize the discourse against Protestantism.

What Protestant missionaries were witnessing in 1849 as they were denounced at the foot of the cathedral in Port-au-Prince, was the converging of a new national moral identity meant to unify the nation-state under the umbrella of empire and emperor. As head-of-state, head-of the church, and a Vodousan emperor, Soulouque targeted Protestantism as incompatible with the nation and, thereby, incompatible with his rule. But Soulouque was not alone. The view was widely represented amongst the clergy and the government elite who also saw Protestantism as a threat. In sitting with abbey Eymat, who served in Haiti since 1839, Imperial Chancellor Delva remarked on the rise and threat of Protestantism: “Protestantism here makes the most grave progress… the English merchants push [people] there with ardor.” The threat of foreign

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417 Ibid., 260.
418 See F. Eldin, Haiti, *Trieze ans de sejour aux Antilles*.
420 Cabon, *Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haïti*, 419.
religion and foreigners themselves, was one of the scapegoats that gave shape and form to social cohesion between the emperor, the government, and the people.

**SECURING CATHOLICISM**

The Haitian government’s rejection of Protestantism was not only a scapegoat; it was a declaration that the territory of Haiti was religiously homogeneous in its devotion to Catholicism. In this period the imperial government attempted to move toward the bonds of Catholicism straight from Rome rather than from its national church. Haiti had never truly developed a secular state even as Dessalines declared no official state religion. Article 34 of the imperial constitution of 1849, which promulgated “special treatment” to Catholicism, gave the state the responsibility of protecting and fostering Catholicism.421 As Bird recollected about the 1840s and 1850s, “in this epoch the Catholic church was the national church of Haiti.”422 Yet being a Catholic nation outside of the bounds of Vatican recognition remained a state issue. Conflict with Rome came not only from the government but from within the Haitian church. The Haitian clergy harbored the most opposition to questions regarding the state of ecclesiastical affairs. A great number of clerics—already being apostates and self-anointed—were anticlerical in the sense that Papal authority challenged their own authority in Haiti.

Much like the regional and factional leaders who assumed local legitimacy and power and acted as political entrepreneurs, Haiti’s clergy amassed local support and local funds, often tying them directly into the political schema of factionalism. Furthermore, the Haitian government appointed positions based on its need and left parish priests largely to themselves.

Therefore, when Soulouque encouraged new papal delegations to visit Haiti, the exchanges turned into a war of national sovereignty and political intrigue. Clerical discourse within the capital attempted to steer a course through the rugged political terrain where Vatican emissaries were not trusted and the Haitian clergy fought to maintain its power. Though many moments of stagnation and the eventually failing of attempts to create a Haitian church run by the Vatican can be attributed to Abbey Cessens in these early years of the empire, one should recognize, that this was not a failure simply due to personalities. The missions largely failed because everything the empire had done to secure its legitimacy—1848, La Vierge, and syncretism—were largely unsupported by a clerical Vatican that sought to supplant centralized spiritual legitimacy and authority—an argument deeply ingrained in Latin Americas first nation-states.

The three papal missions sent to Haiti were all failures: abbey Jan in 1849, Sir Smith in 1850, and Monsignor Spaccapiétra in January 1852. In late 1848, a French clergy delegation dedicated to the church in the colonies, Le Congrégation du Saint-Espirit, sent abbey Jan and abbey Dominique Strumetz to investigate the state of the Haitian clergy.423 After an exchange of words with Abbey Cessens, abbé Jan left Haiti after only three months. Abbey Cessens went as far as claiming that Papal delegates were feeding state secrets to foreign consuls. P. Percin, writing about Cessens’s unceasing slander against papal officiates, declared “[Cessens] is our mortal enemy.” The curé of l’Anse-à-Veau in the South called him “the demon Cessens.”424 With Smith’s delegation in 1850, a number of commissioned Christian paintings for churches in Haiti caused skepticism among visiting priests who suspected a “syncretic use of Christian images.”425 The suspicion of Soulouque’s superimposition of lwa onto Catholic saints was a

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423 Cabon, Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haïti, 403.
424 Ibid., 452.
recognition of his open practice of Vodou through religious imagery and set back the legal procedures between Haiti and the Vatican. Paul Dhormys commented on the arrival of papal emissary, Monsignor Spaccapiétra, the fifty-year-old superior sent to fix Haiti’s clergy. After a tense battle with Cessens, the dignified bishop Spaccapiétra was forced to retire, painfully disappointed in his hopes and his charity. Nevertheless, Soulouque’s own plans became more apparent during this period. He sought to secure a concordat and Papal recognition but would not relinquish state control as it was a foreign power. The entire time Soulouque continued to name his own curés and papal delegates, outrightly using traditional powers of the Catholic church as his own. One member of the Congrégation du Saint-Espirit stated that Soulouque was a “fanatic” with a “belief of being able to usurp the rights of the church and himself name a bishop.”

Finally, the numerous attempts at finding a bishop to consecrate his coronation led to another option. He moved to secure a worthy ecclesiast to consecrate his coronation. When negotiations with the Pope fell through in 1852, Soulouque’s intentions to bypass the papacy were made known. He offered 40,000 gourdes to abbey Eymat who had left Haiti for France in 1851. In the latter half of the year, Cessens rumored, he offered 30,000 to for a bishop willing to travel to Haiti.426 Though the Emperor never gave up trying to secure a papal bishop, by 1852, he had given up on needing a connection to the papacy. He settled for Haiti to remain in schism and he continued to elect his own ecclesiastical superiors. The Haitian church served to meet his ends to an extent, receiving little in return. Soulouque eventually called on the services of Abbey Cessens who agreed "for the good of the weak Haitian church," to consecrate his coronation.427 On April 18, 1852, Soulouque, after the benediction and blessings of Cessens, crowned himself and then crowned Adelina. Ironically, three weeks after the consecration, Cessens proposed to go

426 Cabon, *Notes sur l'histoire religieuse d'Haiti*, 421.
to Rome for a bishop himself, spending 30,000 francs, returning alone only for it to be found that he never went to Rome. By May 12th, 1852, P. Percin wrote, “Abbey Cessens has become the ridicule of the country.”

HEMISPHERIC CONTEXT OF 1840S

To what extent was this Haitian theology and political identity unique? Of course, Soulouque and his contemporaries, are neither unique, nor the last Latin American nations to have and utilize a spiritual aura around charismatic religious figures. As Benítez-Rojo explains, “no Caribbean politician can afford to seem opposed to the supersyncretic beliefs that live in among the official religious forms.” As in much of the nineteenth century national print cultures, religious leaders’ prayers and sermons dominated the discourse until liberal control later in the century. The romance of nationalism was tied to the discourses of regeneration, progress, civilization, and Christianity. Harkening once again to Sol Serrano’s argument, as states secularized their constitutions and governments, the languages of belief and divinity remained fundamental to national identities. In Haiti, this tied vernacular and orthodox religion to conservative beliefs which sought to preserve the status quo and build on the same institutions. While administrative institutions such as the church, fraternities like the freemasons, and black publics such as the kombite and lakou preexisted the nation, they operated as primary demarcations of national imagining. Liberal policies—open rejection of rural spiritual culture, urban and commercial projects, and unbridled faith in reason and progress—alienated the masses and ultimately translated into an attack on peasant communities and lifestyles. As Lowell

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428 30,000 francs in 1848, before the hyperinflation of 1849-1850 would have been 90,000 gourdes; by 1852, this would have amounted to nearly 360,000 gourdes as towards the end of 1852 the value of the gourde fell from 4 gourdes per piastre to 16 gourdes per piastre. J. B. Prax uses official government records from Celigny Ardouin and his time as the consul of Gonaives. Cabon, Note Sur l’Histoire Religieuse, 451; J. B. Prax, Ahiti, 441, 578.
429 Cabon, Note Sur l’Histoire Religieuse, 450.
430 Benítez-Rojo, The Repeating Island, 163.
Gudmundson has concluded, “Liberals’ inability to develop a series of images, an identity, a discourse capable of galvanizing mass support was a basic problem.”\textsuperscript{431} Even as the distinctions between Vodou and Roman Catholicism remained incongruent, beliefs were the common language and national conversation revolved around the 	extit{espirit} more than the literati’s print culture. The essential point in this context is that use of the Virgin Mary as the central force in the theological buttressing of sociopolitical legitimacy was characteristic of both revolutionary and national hegemonies in the Latin Americas. Just as the 1810-1815 liberation movements of Padres Miguel Hidalgo y Castilla and Jose Maria Morelos in Mexico coined themselves “Guadeloupe’s” with a flag of the colors of the 	extit{La Virgen de Guadalupe}, Soulouque adopted 	extit{Notre Dame de l’Assomption} as a banner for a new moral authority.

The struggle between liberal, anticlerical, and conservative proclerical forces can be categorized as universal to the Latin American nineteenth century, but it was nowhere maybe more evident in Ecuador’s mid-century modernization. Conservative President-turned-dictator Gabriel Garcia Moreno’s (1859-1865;1869-1875) feverish support for the church dedicated Ecuador to the Cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Equally, he utilized patronage politics and regionalism which made for a durable dictatorship and a solidification of national identity. Moreno imagined the assertion to the supreme authority of the papal state as a direct challenge to the Enlightened liberal ethic. In Moreno’s second term of presidency, the constitution was rewritten, making Catholicism a requirement for citizenship, outlawing free association and expression unless “[c]itizens] respected religion, morality, and beliefs.”\textsuperscript{432} The fact that Moreno


was himself a monarchist at a younger age and that he was assassinated by German liberal 
masons adds to the reality that the liberal and conservative conflicts which dominated the Latin 
American nineteenth century were attached to religious ethos.

Rafael Carrera, the Mestizo President of Guatemala from 1844-1848 and the President 
for life from 1851-1865, is another of Soulouque’s contemporaries for whom vernacular politics 
and religious legitimacy was central to national identity. An antiliberal, whose 1839 leadership 
of indigenous peasant revolt removed Liberals from power in the state of Guatemala, Carrera is 
an example of nationalism reliant on his promotion of the church and of indigenous rural 
communities, despite the two communities historically fraught relationship. Carrera’s 
conservative administrations recast the Guatemalan nation-state as a contractual relationship 
between God and the people which resembled the colonial system in its social organization.433 
Clerics in Guatemala preached that “God had chosen their nation like the Biblical Israel, and 
Rafael Carrera was their ‘Moses.’”, while the state was buttressed by the established church.434 
In 1854, Carrera reached a Concordat with Rome, reestablishing the links that were broken 
during the revolutionary period and securing Catholicism as the official state religion with the 
Pope as the head of the church.

Haiti’s Catholic-Vodou dynamic was a dominant component of Haitian life and, for 
Soulouque, the foundation on which the empire was explicitly based. In the reopening of 
legislative hearings on April 7th, 1852, several days before his coronation ceremony, Soulouque 
stated “God, in several days, is going to bless my crown, my scepter, my sword. May this

Guatemala, 1821-1871, The Americas Vol. 54 No. 1 (July 1997), 17-38. See also Juan Carlos Solórzano, “Rafael 
Carrera, ¿reaccion conservadora o revolucion campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873,” Anuario De Estudios 
Centroamericanos 13, no. 2 (1987): 5-35 and, Frederick Stirton Weaver, "Reform and (Counter) Revolution in Post-
Independence Guatemala: Liberalism, Conservatism, and Postmodern Controversies", Latin American Perspectives 
434 Ibid. 28-29.
solemnity be, in a way, an inauguration of good presage for the cordial heart which must characterize our mutual relations.” As Haitian soldiers prepared for the coronation in April 1852, they were distributed new eagle standards that were blessed by the clergy. The new fête patronale dedicated to the Emperor, organized around July 26th and the appearance of the apparitions, included a daylong religious ceremony with two sermons and a military parade flying the colors of the Haitian flag. Blending the religious symbolism of the throne with the empire was a way of offering hope through an optimistic, theological interpretation of national events. The reorganization of the state as empire came to depend upon and demand that religion unify the disparate factions that dismantled Haiti during the mid-1840s.

In contrast to Ecuador and Guatemala, the state supported moral identity the emerged in Haiti, could not allow the church to have control over the election of a state archbishop. As with Boyer’s regime, direct control of the Haitian church from Rome would have signaled a loss of national sovereignty. The church, as aforementioned, was a foreign power. Yet, this was not the end for Haitian religious nationalism. In fact, the nationalist vision rested upon this independence rather than a direct link to the apostolic church. Commenting on the proposed reestablishment of the Catholic Church in England in 1851, one Haitian journalist wrote:

“We, who absolutely reject every religion of the state, find that, except for the bad taste of form, there is, in reality, little reason to replicate it. All the more reason, then, to oppose the pontiff to the Pope, and it is precisely because, with an official Church, the ground was not favorable to the principle of liberty… When England separated itself irrevocably from Rome, she had been pushed, less by a religious antipathy, than by a sentiment of national love. Today still, abstraction is derived from official bigotism, which the people reproach instinctively to Cardinal Wiseman and to his twelve bishops, there being the subject of a foreign prince.”

435 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, April 17, 1852.
436 Ibid.
437 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, July 31, 1852.
438 *Feuille du Commerce*, January 19, 1851.
The journalist’s comparison of Haiti to England is significant at a moment when Haiti was vying for a diocese. Haiti, according to his claims, did not need a state religion connected to Rome, even as it protected Catholicism. Even in England—ruled by another enlightened monarch—the threat of a “foreign prince” lent itself to the undermining of unity and political legitimacy. This reflected Emperor Soulouque’s own attempts marred by Vatican rejection by 1852 and the national anticlerical clerics, to whom hierarchy was not the issue but national authority. The second Haitian empire continued to rely on the imperial constitutional article 7 which stated, “No white, no matter their nation, shall put his foot on this territory with the title or master or proprietor, neither shall he in future acquire any property therein.”\footnote{“Constitution Impériale d’Haïti (1849)” in Janvier, Les Constitutions d’Haïti (1801-1885), 235-264. https://haitidoi.com/constitutions/1849-2/} The importance of this statute, directly traced back to Dessalines’s article 12 of the 1805 constitution, was in assuring the Haitian nation that it would not be dominated, politically or economically, by any white nation. This put the Haitian government in direct conflict with the papacy’s ownership of church property and right in Haiti. Not capitulating to papal demands, while not Soulouque’s plan, was a powerful statement of national sovereignty which undergirded his spiritual legitimacy.

**CONCLUSION**

Significantly, the second empire’s multifaceted claims to legitimacy represent an often-overlooked aspect of the nation-state in popular imagination: the national political significance of spiritual imagination. Undoubtedly, these narratives reveal a vernacular idiom of state obsession with political legitimacy, but they also reveal that popular and national spirituality was at the core of popular will in the national context. What better way to justify power than to convey it as a divine manifestation especially in the face of a history of sporadic elite opposition to popular spiritual practices at the state level? The state domination that was fulfilled by empire functioned
as an act of divine benevolence and what had defined Haitian peoples, their imagination of
divine reckoning and the change of class, was turned on its head.

Soulouque did not significantly enhance the life of rural and poor Haitians. Nor did his
fight against the entrenched post-colonial division continue beyond its initial years. If radical
spiritual imagination had brought Haiti’s South to the brink of peasant revolution, they did so
through, not in spite of, the recasting 1848 as divine and through ongoing state violence recast as
liberation from the old system. Many scholars have described this as an “uneasy” relationship
between empire and nation-state, where Haitian democracy was usurped by radical violence.
Yet, the Marian symbol of Notre Dame served as a spiritual web, and regardless of the actual
inequity that remained at the core of the state’s relationship with the nation, the nation-state was
made to be perceived as one religious fraternity. Nevertheless, Peasants and poor did not
envision a state that was simply democratic in euro-centric terms. Their autonomy had its own
collective independent clauses and their own hierarchy in both labor and religion. Similarly, the
Haitian church reflected attitudes of legitimacy which were disconnected from legitimacy as
defined by the Vatican.

Whatever did happen, Soulouque’s use of Vodou was part of an effort to pacify the
explosion of kombites, hounforts, compagnies, sosyétés, and mason loges, all self-regulating
cooperative organizations and links of rural workers, small landholders, or elite free association
connected with converging and, as in the aforementioned case, at times conflicting forms of
popular spirituality. By associating himself with the Virgin, Damballah, La Grande Architect,
and anti-Protestantism Soulouque harnessed the sacred realms for his secular power.
Soulouque’s informal and formal discourse acknowledged the role of Vodou, Folk and Orthodox
Catholicism, Freemasonry, and a myriad of religious strategies, co-opting Haitian’s religious
beliefs as a sociopolitical tool. Perhaps we should not and cannot expect more from someone with political aspirations to become emperor. It may be better for us as a crucial tool for understanding the historical processes that framed self-identity and the construction of the nation-state amongst post-emancipated men and women.
CHAPTER IV: “MON ÉPEE, MON PATRIE, MON DIEU”:
MONARCHICAL POMP, BLACK NATIONALISM, AND SOULOUQUE’S CORONATION OF 1852

On April 18th 1852, a ceremony of coronation was held in Port-au-Prince to officially crown Faustin I Soulouque as Emperor of Haiti.\footnote{Though Soulouque had been Emperor since August 1849, Soulouque went through numerous plans in trying to acquire a bishop from the Vatican to consecrate the ceremony before he finally ceded and installed Abbé Cessens and the ecclesiastical superior with the power to crown publicly him. See Adolphe Cabon, \textit{Notes sur l’histoire religieuse d’Haïti, de la révolution au concordat, 1789-1860}, (Port-au-Prince, 1933).} A full month of preparation culminated in what one American newspaper and the British Consul described as, “great pomp.”\footnote{Ussher to Malmsbury, April 29, 1852, Port-au-Prince, \textit{TNA FO 35/44}; \textit{The Daily Dispatch}, May 17, 1852; ProQuest Civil War Era, 2.} An estimated one million \textit{francs} was spent on the gallant affair, a good portion of which was invested in the royal pavilion, crown, scepter and carriage of the Emperor and Empress and a promenade that showcased the royal family, the nobility, and the regalia of the black empire. As if to complete this chain of symbolic transformations, Port-au-Prince was transformed. A temporary church was erected on the Champs-de-Mars that stretched one hundred and fifty feet wide and two hundred feet long. A throne room was constructed and added to the national palace. Clothes, fabrics, and materials were imported from Europe. J.B. Prax noted that the Emperor’s carriage style was made similarly to that of the Queen of England.\footnote{Prax, \textit{Ahiti}, 23MD/1, Archives diplomatiques, \textit{Ministère des affaires étrangères}, La Courneuve, France, 358} French consul Maxime Raybaud, despite his detestation of Emperor Soulouque, declared that “under all [his] fabulous luxury”, Soulouque was certainly “the most \textit{stylish} Emperor of our era.”\footnote{Italicization is not mine. Gustave D’Alaux, \textit{Soulouque et son empire}, 257. Details on the coronation are from \textit{Le Moniteur haïtien}, May 1, 1852; the detailed “programme” by D’Hypplîte, attachments to Ussher to Malmsbury, April 29, 1852, Port-au-Prince, \textit{TNA FO 35/43} and Gustave’ D’Alaux, \textit{Soulouque et son empire}, 251-269}

The symbolic climax of the coronation of 1852 was intended to highlight the achievements of imperial reign by placing them on world display. Upon crowning himself with a
50,000 francs crown from Parisian Maison Rouvenat, Soulouque proclaimed that the position of emperor was created “to maintain integrity and independence” and “to not suffer under any other pretext, the return of slavery nor of any measure of feudality contrary to the liberty and the exercise of civil rights and politics of the people of Haiti and to government in sight of the interest, the goodness, and the glory of the Haitian family of which I am chief.” It was a proclamation of the submergence of the past and of a new nationalist mythos of sacred authority. A black emperor marked the destruction of lackluster bourgeois reforms, republican instability, and the end of political illegitimacy. The words were also in line with the Dessalinean tradition: it was predicated on the filative relationship of a father to their children, insisting on the defense of the nation’s integrity, independence, and continued anti-slavery.

The coronation, however, was convened not merely to represent the “integrity and independence” of Haiti’s sovereignty. Filtered through the aura of black masculinity and militancy, it was a grandiloquent manifestation of the larger-than-life paternalism of a regime brought on by popular royalism. Contrary to the history of the Age of Revolutions as a purely democratic endeavor, popular royalism was one of the new perspectives in the transformation of politics in the wake of anticolonial and liberal thoughts, often downplayed in narratives that define the period as a teleological march towards modern liberal democracy. Marcela Echevarri has called attention to the problematic focus on popular republicanism, which has had a tendency to inscribe, even from a subaltern perspective, “a modernizing narrative of

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444 Délide Joseph, *L’état haïtien et ses intellectuels : socio-histoire d’un engagement politique (1801-1860)* (Société haïtienne d'histoire, de géographie et de géologie (SHHGG) en partenariat avec la Foundation Roger Gaillard (FORG), 2017), 150; *Le Moniteur haïtien*, May 1, 1852

445 The field of popular royalism is rapidly expanding and illustrates the significant history of royalism in debates of freedom and citizenship in Europe. Moving away from a nationalist framework to an Atlantic framework—suggested by Marcela Echeverri’s work—the point of view can be transferred productively to have conversations of popular royalism in the Americas. See Marcela Echeverri, “Presentation: Monarchy, empire, and Popular politics in the Atlantic Age of Revolutions” October 28-29, 2016 at Yale University, funded by STARACO, Université de Nantes, Yale’s MacMillan Center’s Kempf Fund, and Yale’s Department of History.
independence and liberal revolution.” In reality, concepts of freedom, citizenship, and general will remained central to popular engagement with monarchical politics and as Chelsea Stieber has noted, Haiti’s own writing elite contested the government routes of republicanism and monarchy well into the nineteenth century.

The empire’s acts of political theater drew on accessible cultural references to a great number of men and women, from whom both a legacy monarchical aspirations, visions, and references to the end of republicanism made potent symbols of vernacular freedom. In other words, the theatricality evidenced in grandiose costumes, immaculate grooming, and prodigious displays of sophistication grasped the collective fantasies of the subaltern and the marginalized. During an epoch in which nations were judged by their ability to represent their virtues through their national institutions, the coronation was a national ritual that was enveloped in the long-term project of Haitian sovereignty and the justification for black self-rule under “big-man authority.” Marshall D. Sahlins has argued that what is indicative of “big-man authority” in universal situations is “personal power”, in which the status of power is the “outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal, lesser men.” In the wake of 1848 and 1849, empire under the heroic masculine identity of Emperor Soulouque could offer a subjecthood of redemption rather than the unequal citizenship that marked the pathology of nineteenth century liberalism. In return, Haiti’s citizen-subjects fed

446 Ibid., 240.
447 See Stieber, Haiti’s Paper War.
448 In this chapter I find it useful to draw from the work of Sahlins and apply the term “Big-manism” to represent masculine figures who confer social capital through the representation of a who by means of combined ostensible interest in the general welfare and a profound measure of self-interested cunning and strategic calculation, establishes “relations of loyalty and obligation on the part of a number of people” who in turn build their renown. Marshall D. Sahlins, “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political types in Melansia and Polynesia”, Comparative Studies in Society and History vol. 5, no. 3 (April 1963): 291.
449 Ibid., 289.
on militancy, exuberance, and displays of black masculinity as an articulation of national identity.

J. Michael Dash, commenting on the way the United States “invented” the idea of “savage” Haiti and the way Haitian literature subversively rewrote “Haiti” against these stereotypes, states that “Haiti emerges as an inexhaustible symbol designed to satisfy material as well as psychological needs… Images of mystery, decadence, romance, and adventure are not arbitrary.” These two images of Haiti are neither picturesque nor innocent, but articulate the imaginative strategy of mythification through models of failure and success. While these uses are well studied, I wish to turn the focus on how performative mythos could be used to make itself socially and politically legitimate. In examining the relationship between popular legitimacy and performative monarchy, this chapter offers a portrait of mid-nineteenth century Haiti that moves beyond established approaches of the second empire. I investigate Haitian imperial culture and society based on the drama which Emperor Soulouque evoked as the basis of his power. Political posturing of image and style was part and parcel of the theatre of paternalism that offered an alternative vision of race and class as well as a different vision of Haiti “submerged in a subaltern consciousness.”

While I aim to contribute to the broad historical accounts regarding visual and material culture of the second Empire, this chapter attends to symbols and social capital of national consciousness. While defending Haiti’s existence to the outside world, Soulouque fostered a sense of national identity based on representation, paternalism, and a constant theatre of authority. Empire renounced republicanism, and thereby the former ruling elites, symbolically

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shifting the basis of legitimacy to peasants, urban poor, and regional leaders. But to continue to hold legitimacy beyond immediate repression, Emperor Soulouque utilized paternal power—closely tied to violence, terror, and punitive benevolence—which was legitimized through these public displays of grandeur. The expressive styles of dramatic costuming, calling attention to the imperial majesty of the Haitian empire in assertive “displays of vanity”—as Cuban Ethnologist Fernando Ortiz has remarked upon—marked Haiti and its people as the opposite of their status as ex-slaves; definitely to mark themselves non slaves.\footnote{Fernando Ortiz, “The Afro-Cuban Festival ‘Day of the Kings,’” in Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro Cuban Culture, ed. Judith Bettelheim (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner, 2001), 43.}

Anthropologist Wayne Modest has discussed the ways in which the material culture of the Caribbean is largely ignored in museum collections and absent from artistic space as it escapes conceptions of archetypal categories.\footnote{Categories in the Western canon rigidly recognize European, American, African, Indigenous, Ancient, and Modern conceptions of artistic fields. Caribbean materiality, with a history of forced migrations, slavery, colonialism, and labor regimes escapes, these categories falling often within imperial designations, ancient pasts, or invisibility. Wayne Modest, “We Have Always Been Modern: Museums, Collections, and Modernity in the Caribbean”, Museum Anthropology 35 (April 2012).} I believe to rethink Soulouque’s regime, we must perceive it as more than a reproduction of Imperial Atlantic habits. Erica M. James contends that “to see nineteenth century Haitian portraits requires a rethinking of notions of time, space, and development reaffirmed through Western art-historical methodologies.”\footnote{Erica Moiah James, “Decolonizing Time: Nineteenth-Century Haitian Portraiture and the Critique of Anachronism in Caribbean Art”, Nka 1 May 2019 (44), 10.} Similarly, I argue that the Haitian imperial regime of the 1850s was not a mere copy of its white counterparts. Building on Ortiz, Modest, and James’s work, I want to rearticulate the second imperial regime as an increasingly hybridized national project of self-fashioning that recognized Haiti’s African and European origins in its monarchical pomp. Empire affirmed its sociopolitical legitimacy by taking note of Haitian political psychology and sociocultural identity as culturally
worthy through spectacles of imperial nationalism, Afro-Creole militarism, and black masculinity.

The coronation of 1852 is significant because it demonstrates the links between national symbols and the continuing formation of a tutelary state in the 1850s in which progress was defined by the recognition of vernacular demands. Charles F. Walker states that there is a need to emphasize “the study of public rituals such as parades and elections and in course with the examination of power struggles at the heart of caudillo politics.”455 Similarly, Frances Ramos explains, “ritual permeated all aspects of political life”, helping councils men legitimize church and state, cementing civic and military identities, and stimulating connections and memorable interaction with the state.456 Similarly, Lauren Derby, in her study on the Trujillato era of the Dominican republic (1930-1961) has called attention to the “theatre state”, commencing and ending with grandiose state processions.457 In its affirmation of Haitian sovereignty, imperial domination was a high art and the drama of the black emperor was central to the exercise of its authority. Imperial monarchy was understood as a filative arrangement of power. Displays of ostentatious paternalism and authoritarianism, were at best synonymous with black male interests, black male aspirations, and black male politics. This was not a completely coherent project in which Haiti’s second empire aimed to transform the nation into a feudal kingdom. Rather, it was a performance of power durably embedded in the national narrative where leaders were fathers, and thus, were unquestionable and justifiably repressive. Style was a visual symbol that referenced the gwo nèg (big man) charisma of his predecessors.458

457 Lauren Derby, The Dictator’s Seduction, 5.
458 Jana Evans Braziel, “Introduction: Haiti’s Transnational Politics of “Big Man-ism” in Artists, Performers, and black Masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) and Elizabeth McAlister,
state relied on the theatrics of power, then the Emperor was the main male protagonist of a Haitian drama, the *toro* (bull), and the imperial family were the stock characters, wife, and daughter.

While repression made Emperor Soulouque into a representative of collective aggression and *La Vierge* made Empire into a political embodiment of divine legitimacy, it was monarchical pomp, royal excellence, elite sophistication, and displays of black power that extended the Emperor’s presence across the nation and across the Atlantic. Documentation of the coronation is well-known to us from the series of foreign and domestic reports. Reports were civilizationist, progress-based discourses which had little capability of grasping Haitian epistemology. Thus, I seek to demonstrate that the coronation of 1852 was not simply the achievement of a megalomaniac. Rather, when placed within the context, the coronation ceremony was a national ritual which sought to reconstruct the paramount divisions of factions and regions into a singular political figure. Second, I seek to expand upon scholarship of Haiti’s mid-century war of images and on scholarship considering the role of visual and material culture in postslavery spaces. The vivid Daguerreian image of Haiti within the coronation lithograph album produced a new and vibrant Afro-Atlantic image of black men and women. Following this, the chapter moves to how the empire was received popularly. Monarchical performance gave the Emperor a cult of personality through the veil of a close to the ground paternalism and the symbolism of a diverse nobility. Though, popular practices were apt to escape the logic of nineteenth century white commentators and the written record is far removed from the lives, ideas, language, and practices of the bulk of the Haitian population, much can be read in between the lines of the nationalism and Haitian cultural imagination. Lastly, this chapter reads these interactions with black

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masculinity as grand dramas that reproduced already visible obsessions with paternalism. As Emperor, Soulouque, far from being an isolated figure, was aware of, responded to, and cannily attempted to retranslate Haiti’s image both at home and abroad through characterizations of the imperial family and a reputation as a staunch “gwo nèg” who followed in the tradition of his revolutionary predecessors.

THE CORONATION OF 1852

A flurry of announcements bombarded Haiti in March of 1852. A program of the coronation was circulated in mid-March, announcing the ceremony’s start at sundown. The plan was to have the audience prepared by dawn, undoubtedly the best time to see the sunrise illuminate the southern mountain range, the newly erected church, and the imperial tent (figure 5.1).459 In accordance with the atmosphere of divine consecration, there had not been a public execution for political or criminal offenses in the capital for “upwards twelve months”.460 A contemporary witness described life in Port-au-Prince as having “reached an extreme intensity”: stores and boutiques were full of customers, merchants were delegated to function solely for the coronation, and the homes of Port-au-Princes elite were to house foreign dignitaries and delegations from across Haiti.461 Though planned for the 11th, cannons sounded at sundown of April 17th and beginning at 1 a.m., a salvo of guns awoke the city alongside three hundred drums. At 3 a.m. military deputies from the entire empire arrived on the Champs-de-Mars. Senators and administrative and judiciary bodies followed at 4 a.m., escorted by armed forces of pikemen and

460 Ússher to Malmsbury, April 29, 1852, Port-au-Prince, TN4 FO 35/44.
calvary. Finally, foreigners, consuls, and dignitaries assembled in front of the church at 6 a.m. where they waited. At the pediment of the imperial tent were two lions and motifs of the palm trees and eagles, painted by court painter Colbert de Lochard. Inside, lined in blue carpet, were bandoliers inscribed in gold, crafted by the chevalier Bernadotte d’Ulysse, and the aisles were surrounded by the national colors.\footnote{462}{Ibid., 43-45.} The new throne room added to the palace had a floor of marble, with a portrait of Abbé Gregoire across from a portrait of the Emperor also by de Lochard.\footnote{463}{Prax, Ahiti, 354; “A translated account from Emperor Faustin I, of Hayti, and his Palace”, \textit{New York Daily Tribune}, May 25, 1850, ProQuest, 2.} From 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. troops poured into the coronation grounds with new imperial
standards and shakos until the sound of 8 batteries announced the arrival of Princess Olive, preceded and caboosed by pages. By 10 am Emperor Faustin I and Empress Adelina were on their knees in front of Abbé Cessens as he blessed the crown, scepter, and sword of Soulouque.

In the solemnity of a public ritual, the Emperor stood up, crowned himself, and then crowned the empress. A one hundred and one canon salvo erupted, and imperial artillery discharged. The French gunboat, *Crocodile*, most of its dignitaries in attendance, fired its own discharge in celebration.\(^{464}\)

Diana Taylor’s methodological lens of “performance” as a category of analysis constitutes of a perspective that might help us reimagine the ceremony and its symbolic authority: in events “where civic obedience, resistance, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity are rehearsed and performed daily in the public sphere” the repertoire and performance of daily, as well as, grand national rituals constitutes a space where the state and the individual come into contact zone of power.\(^{465}\) Therefore, the coronation of 1852 was more than dramatic mimicry of European excess and imperial majesty. The ceremony was a highly orchestrated symbolic national ritual that formed a principal crux of Soulouque’s mythmaking: paternalistic absolutism grounded on the principle of the destruction of the 1840s republicanism. Haitian sovereignty, though half a century away from its advent, continuously struggled against its emergence from the colonial past: “the most perfected example of the plantation system, and then its egregious failure, a decline from splendor to unparalleled squalor in the years following independence…Lost in between is the emergence of the Haitian state itself.”\(^{466}\) As a state fantasy of national transformation, the coronation of 1852 reflected this nearly fifty-year long struggle.

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\(^{464}\) *Le Moniteur haïtien*, May 1, 1852.


Unveiled, the ceremony testifies to the moment of success in the second empire’s domination; for those first years, empire and monarchy effectively transformed Haiti’s fractured interest groups into one coherent national project. As a public spectacle, it was the culmination of four years of consolidation: first, 1848’s rejection of traditional elitism and co-option of popular violence; and second, 1849’s appearance of the national icon La Vierge with a crown and scepter in Port-au-Prince and Mirebalais. The second empire was formed from a post-slavery political culture where elites fought over the rules of political enfranchisement and social order while looking to Europe for civilization. Soulouque, as Faustin I, had managed to organize numerous visual and performative cues that made empire’s political messages effective. Empire’s legibility derived from a host of power symbols that embodied the grandiosity of his imperial contemporaries in Brazil, France, Britain, West and Central Africa and Russia while coming into close contact with liberatory practices and traditions of royalism in the eyes of the Haitian people. The official national newspaper, Le Moniteur haïtien, recounted the ceremony piece by piece, announcing in a grand fashion:

"After putting in to practices all the political theories, from 1804 to 1849, the Haitian people, cleansed by the misfortunes and by experience, reunited at the capital to forget the internal divisions, swear in the hands of their sovereign, who shut down the abyss of revolutions, being faithful to the imperial constitution—the new order of things, agrees with the words and the ideas of the people, allied the democratic elements [with] the aristocratic elements and satisfied all the interests of the nation."467

The festivities formed the core of these grand theatrics and long political orchestrations, demonstrating national unity, the importance of the military, and the sacred union of monarch to nation. The orderly presence of elite and popular throngs, the management of thousands of armed men in the capital, and the significance of the imperial family evoked a sense of stability and authority that reinforced the new Emperor’s sole position as father and protector.

467 Le Moniteur haïtien, May 1, 1852.
The efficacy of Soulouque’s approach to visualizing and ritualizing political stability and legitimacy has a long history of disavowal. From the coronation’s commencement, it was characterized as a narrative of state excess and failure. Like his predecessors, the white Atlantic press described Haiti’s move to empire through ways that framed Emperor Soulouque as ignorant, narcissistic, cruel, and delusional, charging him with destroying the national treasury for self-important aggrandizement. A Paris correspondent asked upon his installation as Emperor in 1849, “Would it not be better for him to pay Haiti’s debts to France and other nations?”468 Though white presses of France tied Soulouque’s extravagant monarchical performances to psychopathy and tyranny, Haitian journalists were quick to point out, changes in government were commonplace in Atlantic discourse as they reported international news from the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

One major example of this history of disavowal is the debates that have long surrounded the estimated cost of the coronation. J.B. Prax, consul d’affaires of Gonaïves, reported a total sum of an estimated 1 million francs for the entire ceremony: 45,000 piastres for two carriages, two imperial coats, decorations for the Order of Faustin, mirrors, tapestry and the banquet and, at least, 750,000 francs for the throne, flags, prie-dieu, crosses, and velour.469 British Consul Ussher believed the imperial crown to cost a total of 52,000 francs.470 Haitian intellectual Antenor Firmin estimated the material costs to be 800,000 francs with the crown alone as an estimated 50,000 francs, an altogether 4,195,000 gourdes to cover the installation costs.471 To be sure, these costs took a heavy toll on a financial state that planned to devote, first, in service of

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470 Ussher to Malmsbury, April 29, 1852, Port-au-Prince, *TNA* FO 35/44.
the interior and agriculture, and second, in service of public and judicial works, respectively, 735,937 and 306,293 gourdes.472

Yet, the obsession with the cost lends itself to the stereotype of failed black leadership that were long cemented in the narrative of Haiti’s leaders. Cutting comments about expenses were typical. Raybaud notes that in 1847, Soulouque refitted a 10,000 francs green outfit meant for President Riché ordered from France, comparing it to the entire education budget.473 In commenting about Soulouque’s disagreements with Monsieur Déjardin of Descore, the French négociant and chief businessman to the Emperor, Prax noted that Déjardin openly criticized the Emperor for over abundant gifts of couches to barons and marquis over the purchasing of clothes for the poorly outfitted army.474 Foreign press never failed to preoccupy itself with each particular item. One American magazine in 1870 described Soulouque as “a man of ability, but weak in vanity” and displayed a lithograph of Soulouque’s gold scabbard and dagger, to which the journal claimed, “must have been a tempting toy in the hands of a tyrant.”475

Yet, within Haiti, popular and elite opinions saw an option for a new stability, unity, and conscious racial recognition of Haitian-ness. Thus, rather than a rigid structural reading of Haiti’s second imperial moment, I read the coronation as a performative symbol and ritual which embodied Haitian desires across classes and regions. Observers noted that the sight of coronation produced a certain effect; Soulouque’s “massive crown of gold” created a level of awe that allowed him to elevate his theatrics to the national level.476 Similarly, few foreigners remained silent on the sheer expansiveness of the royal house and a nobility with numerous formal grades

473 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 257.
474 Prax, Ahiti, 406.
475 An Emperor’s Toothpick, Ballou’s Monthly Magazine (1866-1893) (Dec 1870); 32, 6; American Periodicals, 507.
476 Prax, Ahiti, 370
from dukes, counts, knights, barons, down to pages, teachers, artists, architects, gardeners, and chefs. For foreign observers and the exiled republicans of Haiti, this proved to be a controversial moment, surrounded by legends of religious fetishism, foolish exuberance, and buffoonery. But it is also a narrative that demonstrates the accumulated symbolic capital and personal power of Emperor Soulouque as the divinely assured regal dresser, part-general, part-myth, and all man.

**WAR OF IMAGES AND THE “IMPERIAL ALBUM OF 1854”**

The lithograph of *Vil-de-Lubin, Comte de Pétionville and Général-de-Brigade* (figure 5.2), reproduced from an 1852 daguerreotype, is one of the more curious images of a young black man in 1850s in Soulouque’s *Album Impériale d’Haïti* of 1854. Compared to images of Fredrick Douglass that floated the Atlantic abolitionist circles, Vil-de-Lubin is not statuesque and stoic; his figure is unexpectedly jovial. The lithographer, N. Corradi, chose to extensively detail the torso and facial features. Vil-de-Lubin sports contemporary and widely used Atlantic military attire and arms in the post-Napoleonic war period—laced with froggings, loops, epaulettes, and a dolman—while donning the medals of the Imperial and Military Order of St. Faustin (*l’Ordre Impérial et Militaire de Saint-Faustin*), the Imperial Civil Order of the Legion of Honor (*l’Ordre Impérial Civil de la Croix de la Légion d’Honneur*), and a medal conferred

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upon the Governor of the Capital of the Empire. Yet, there is a cheerful expression on Vil-de-Lubin’s face. Was this a choice made to portray the actual characteristic of the Count of Pétionville and gouverneur de-ville of the capital? Was this the artist’s personal hand? Though the imperial art of the court replicated European-style portraiture of national leaders and heroes, in the chiaroscuro of printmaking, this application of lithography to early photography inverted

478 Governor of the capital is akin to the military mayor of Port-au-Prince.
European standards of white and black to create a new, meaningful image of Haiti. The narrative of militarism, blackness, and delight illuminates the complexity at the heart of Haiti’s imperial aspirations and limitations in a basin where slavery persisted.

As the nineteenth century advanced into its middle decades, Euro-American conceptualizations of Haiti became phantasmagorias complete with fantasies of apocalyptic violence and threats to natural order. Atlantic imperial desires and failures to pacify and control black free labor the post-slavery Caribbean turned into a racist vitriol. In the face of this fury, Afro-Americans generated and claimed the tools of recognition in a guerre de plume.479 The notion of combat literature, elaborated by Frantz Fanon, has often been limited to literary works about independence struggles.480 But in this case, the lithograph of Vil-de-Lubin can be translated as a work of combat imagery which emerged in a period when racist propaganda about black biology and black representation proliferated in a guerre des images. For imperial Haiti, this was not a simple matter of representation. It was a war, and the battles were fought by writers, artists, and the thinkers who confronted the world with their own discourses of black pride and power.

This section follows the way the Album Impériale d’Haïti of 1854 was a crucial site of critical Afro-Atlantic cultural production where, as Chelsea Stieber argues, Soulouque’s concept of empire “challeng[ed] the exclusionary, racialized notion of ‘civilization’” through the active patronage and cultivation of the visual symbolism of power, Dessalinean heritage, and unabashed self-fashioning with extravagant attire, empire could consolidate its hold on populism.481 Deborah Willis observes that nineteenth century images of black people reshaped

480 Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2007), 173.
481 Stieber, Haiti’s Paper War, 165.
Afro-American definitions of “education” and portrayed to them “new lives, new identities, [and] new prospects” in a period were slavery held fast. Laura Wexler, goes further, remarking that Frederick Douglass could remake “American imagination” and become a “visionary force” through the torrents of his photographic and lithographic portraits. Though, the images have not been a great object of study and much remains unknown, art historian Karen Salt sees them as “unparalleled resources for those interested in understanding the migration of images of black statehood and power.”

Haitians were fully aware of international eyes and did not accept narrow constructions of race that were embedded within Euro-American racial discourse. Instead, empire “articulated the nation’s power, its rights as a self-affirmed black nation to political recognition, and its independence,” through a visual propaganda that accompanied the much-discussed coronation of 1852.

**IMPERIAL HAITI’S NEGATIVE PRESS**

The Atlantic world wrestled with imagining and imaging Haiti since its inception. However, when Haiti declared empire in 1849, it was bombarded with a new wave of insults in the international press. White observers determined Soulouque to be a megalomaniacal fool who could not rule through democracy and, thus, ruled by tyranny—a principal example of the failure of emancipation and the danger of black self-rule. Critics such as Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Sibylle Fischer have shown that the articulations of the threat of a black nation of ex-slaves were widespread. Whether as a form of discursive silence, where Atlantic powers refused to

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483 Ibid., 53.

acknowledge the paramount events of the Haitian Revolution, or as disavowal, in which the response of the fear that “another Haiti” could happen led to the Atlantic rejection of black nationhood, Haiti’s nineteenth century was portrayed more often than not, as an example of the failure of liberal, democratic ethic.

For the white Atlantic, the idea of a black emperor was as audacious as it was ridiculous. The Parisian newspaper *La Réforme* labeled Haiti’s turn to empire as “below ridicule”: “If President Soulouque believes that in placing upon his forehead a crown of gilded pasteboard, he will make himself more respectable in the eyes of the intelligent portion of his fellow citizens [or] foreign powers… he is singularly mistaken.” For the French-reading publics the use of the epithet of “Soulouque” became a Republican rallying cry inciting popular anger against the Second French Empire; “Down with Soulouque!” became synonymous with “Vive la Republic!” International press followed, referring to Napoleon III during the coup d’état of 1851 as the “French Soulouque.” Karl Marx used the analogy of Soulouque in 1852 to describe the empire’s administration, comparing Napoleon III’s court to “a noisy, disreputable, rapacious bohème that crawls into gallooned coats with the same grotesque dignity as the high dignitaries of Soulouque.” Closer to Haiti, the United States, already in a bitter conflict over slavery and territorial expansion, used Soulouque as a warning of the result of emancipation. In 1852, Robert Walsh, American Consul-General to France, claimed Haiti awash in “Cimmerian darkness.” In the introduction of the U.S. reprinting of Maxime Raybaud’s scathing *Soulouque*

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et son empire, the translator compared the riches of colonial Saint Domingue to Haiti’s: “it was French—it is now African.”

A swift examination of Haiti’s foreign press reveals a shifting and, often, contradictory fixation on the black emperor’s visage. One description of the Emperor portrayed him as “of middle stature, expanded breast, and broad shoulders, and is stout [sic]… his complexion is black, but his features have not that stolid and savage expression that is observable in the natives of Africa.” The *New York Daily Tribune* commented that he was “entirely black, but by no means… purely African.” An American clergyman commented in 1853: “his color is the dingiest coal-black; but he has not the thick lips and other characteristics that usually accompany this complexion.” One description by the American Phrenological Journal, accompanied by a poor lithograph (figure 5.3) in which Soulouque is barely visible, claimed: “His head is broad for an African, hence his selfish feelings are more strongly marked than usual for one of his race.”

For white Atlantic onlookers, Soulouque was a personification of the racist caricature that undergirded cultural imagination in the West. Such commentary was immensely second and third-hand myth and, often, derived more from preconceived and confounded notions of black self-rule. As British Consul Ussher once commented in Edward Bathurst’s defamatory work on

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492 “Emperor Faustin I, of Hayti, and his Palace”, *New York Daily Tribune*, May 25, 1850, ProQuest pg. 2
his consulship in Cap-Haitien: “Soulouque’s appearance is of little real importance except that in
the present instance it proves the spirit, in which this pamphlet is written.”495

The lithograph reprinted by the American Phrenological Journal is characteristic of the
way white perceptions met with white visual practices becoming racist in extremis. In the
accompanying lithograph (figure 5.3), Soulouque is not just black; he is very black—even jet
black. This was both a direct and indirect reality of the power and process of chromolithography,
where artists quickly produced multiple prints or imitated the character of another piece. In this
case, the rapid and increasingly racialized obsessions within printmaking formed new stereotypes
while working with old denigrations. Though chromolithography offered a more nuanced way of
representing skin tones, it simultaneously enabled increased circulation of such racist imagery,
playing a central role in the ideological founding of race. For Haiti, these prints addressed
Haitians through exaggerations and malapropisms; a reality reflected in the exaggerations and ill-
use of color in skin tones. White lithographers and artists failed to reproduce realistic images of
the black Emperor; they only knew how to render blackness through an excess of black. As
Haitian art historian Michel-Phillipe Lerebours contends, the chromolithography of Haitians in
this period was largely oversimplistic representation, lacking technical sophistication, producing
images with “garish coloring, generally vulgar and without nuances… [and] completely linear
organization.”496 Such images were sensational guesswork and, therefore, were highly
commodifurable as lithography and print expanded.

The worst examples can be found in the images of the French caricaturists and
lithographers. Working freely with the republic’s return in 1848, 1851 proved a test as Napoleon

495 Edward Bathhurst was removed from Office in 1851, for his abuse of his privileges and of complaints from a
in Consular Dispatches TNA FO 35/43, 48.
496 Lerebours, Tome I: Haiti et ses peintres de 1804 à 1980, 80, 82.
III censored, banned, and arrested critics of imperial France. In the face of state censorship, absurdist humor flourished, namely at the expense of Haiti. They utilized the image of Soulouque to portray an imperial minstrelsy in the form of an exoticized Faustin I. These ridiculous and incendiary political cartoons by Honoré Daumier, Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (known as Nadar) and Vicomte de Noé (known as Cham) in the popular illustrated magazine, *Le Charivari*, portrayed Soulouque in the most deplorable, racist, and banal manners. With an enlarged jaw and ill-fitting bicorne hat, and the physical characteristics of an ape, Soulouque’s every endeavor was taken as a joke. They accused him of owning fake jewelry, of failing to pay indemnity payments, and, in one piece, (figure 5.4) facetiously commenting on Haiti’s monopoly: “Soulouque buys coffee at the cheapest, sells at the highest.” In another cartoon by Cham, Soulouque having his portrait taken, proceeds to have his boot repainted as well, reflecting their perceptions of his ignorance.

The French press did not only target the Emperor. The caricaturists took to comparing Empress Adelina and Princess Olive to *Ourika*, the eponymously famed 1823 novel by Claire de Duras. A notable figure in the literature of the slave trade, the analogy compared Ourika’s Africa-meets-Europe mishaps with the Empress and the Princess, claiming their inability to read without a French teacher or to employ proper female etiquette. One caricature expressed, “Empress Ourika becomes furious at her piano professor who dares support that a white is

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497 Vicomte Charles Amédée de Noé’s grandfather had owned the plantation Bréda where Toussaint Louverture was a slave. Cham drew over 60 caricatures of Soulouque between 1848 and 1850, collected in *Soulouque et sa cour*. Elizabeth C. Childs, *Daumier and Exoticism: Satirizing the French and the Foreign*; Heinl and Heinl, *Written in Blood*, 200.


499 Ibid. 6.

500 First printed in 1823, and based on the real-life of a Senegalese girl named Ourika whom was brought to France in 1786, *Ourika* portrays the story of a African girl arriving in the France, given away to the de Beauvau family, and then “rescued” from slavery. Christopher Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 159.
Figure 5.3 “Emperor Faustin I. His Phrenological Character and Biography”, American Phrenological Journal, May 1856, 23, 5, American Periodicals, 101.

Figure 5.4 Noé de Cham, Soulouque et sa cour: caricatures par Cham (Paris: Imprimerie Lange Lévy et comp.).
worth two blacks."\textsuperscript{501} Although their images were subjected to the similar treatment as their condemned male counterpart, the Emperor, the foreign damnation of these women does not come from a perceived inability to rule, but a perceived savageness within Haiti’s inability to progress past “barbarism.” Just as Ourika’s “experiment with personhood fails” when the reality of the color of her skin sets in—Duras going as far to say that Ourika began to see her hands as those of apes—the imperial women are farcical attempts at civilization.\textsuperscript{502} The caricatures of Emperor and Empress were so indelibly prominent that the Gambier company, famous at the

\textsuperscript{501} Ibid. 5,6.
\textsuperscript{502} Miller, \textit{The French Triangle}, 165.
time for making smoking pipes depicting personalities such as Victor Hugo and Napoleon, made bowls with the heads of Emperor Soulouque and Empress Adelina styled after their characters in *Le Charivari* (figure 5.5).503

The French caricaturists were not alone. As biological racism grew, white authors drew from Haiti an inspiration for barbarism, cannibalism, and fetishism that undergirded racial thinking and phrenological assumptions.504 The international ascendance of Soulouque’s figure and the fetishization of Vodou was contemporaneous with what has been termed as a shift in “raced discourse” in the 1850s and the 1860s: “from optimism and humanitarianism of the abolitionist and philanthropists of the early decades of the nineteenth century… to an aggressive and openly derogatory racialism undergirded by the new science of anthropology and espoused by travel writers, scholars, missionaries, and politicians.”505 Pseudoscience of the period presented Africans with heavy brows, prognathous jaws, lowered ears, and other atavisms which was understood as evidence of inferiority and criminality. Claims about the sexuality and gender norms of black women and black men supported the emergence of ethnological, historical, and sociological ideas about racial differences that portrayed blacks as submissive, untrustworthy, and eager to be pacified by white civilization.506 Soulouque, and thereby, Haiti’s second empire was the perfect target for these racists looking to justify arguments of progress, civilization, and

white supremacy: 1848 was already a “massacre”, a black emperor could only be imagined as a tyrant, and Soulouque open recognition of Vodou was proof of black self-rule’s barbarism.

**The Industry of Defense**

The emblematic *Album Impériale d’Haïti*, lay in direct contrast to the caricaturists, ethnologists, and the visual debasement of anti-Haitian and anti-black commentators. With its completion in 1854, the *Album* was widely circulated around the Atlantic world. What is significant, is that the daguerreotype and the lithograph, tools originally meant to render a world of white perceptions, simultaneously engaged in a process of visual enfranchisement. The daguerreotype—first established in 1839 by Louis Daguerre—was vastly improved by the 1850s with a collodion photographic process that made taking photos as quick as 30 seconds. The mirroring silver plates captured light quickly, and the daguerreotypes could be made into lithographs, making them easy to mass produce. According to Joan M. Schwartz the advent of the use of photographs in the nineteenth century by governments allowed them “to convey government policy, [communicate] corporate ideology, construct national identity, shape collective memory, establish symbolic space, and define concepts of self and cultural other.”

For imperial Haiti, the daguerreotypes and their lithographed copies challenged racist misconceptions, while upholding their own national mythos regarding an alternate image of Haitians.

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507 I have found the *Album Impériale* housed at several archives: Schomburg Digital Collections, Yale University, Boston Public Library, National Archives at Kew, and the Archive Nationales (France).
Civilization always loomed in the minds of Haitian ruling classes. The term “civilizing mission” can be used to characterize the expectations of colonial minds who were concerned with embedding normative values of the British middle-class through missionaries, colonial officials, and aggressive social reform.\textsuperscript{510} From the French \textit{mission civilisatrice}, Haitian elite geared towards France inherited a similar zeal to cast out perceived demons of ignorance and superstition.\textsuperscript{511} Whereas the French and British civilizing missions ensure cultural support for imperial enterprise, the discourse of civilizationism in Haiti contributed to a ruling class elite who went through painstaking efforts at times to reproduce civilization in Atlantic eyes.

Thus, formalized approaches to national art existed at different intervals of time.\textsuperscript{512} King Christophe opened an Academy of Arts in 1817 under the direction of British Painter Richard Evans producing numerous works regarding the royal family and Christophe.\textsuperscript{513} Yet, the second imperial moment may constitute the highest national and state interest in art, aside from the post-1944 opening of the Centre d’Arte.\textsuperscript{514} Spurred on by Soulouque’s own deep interest in art as well as the growth of patrons under nobility, art played an important role in the performance and political legitimacy of empire. The work of Baron Colbert de Lochard, the royal court painter, captured the tradition of official portraiture, portraying the Emperor and imperial family as

\textsuperscript{510} For more see Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, \textit{“They do as they Please”: The Jamaican Struggle for Cultural Freedom after Morant Bay} (Kingston: University Press of the West indies, 2011) and Catherine Hall, \textit{Civilising Subjects: Metropole And Colony In The English Imagination, 1830–1867} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

\textsuperscript{511} Though “missions civilisatrice” is noted as by word of French colonial expansion under the third republic, the cultural components existed long before the 1870s French nationalistic period. See Matthew Burrows, ”Mission Civilisatrice': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 29, no. 1 (1986): 109-35.

\textsuperscript{512} This chapter will not delve into the long history of nineteenth century painting in Haiti.


central to “Haiti’s development of a sense of national identity.” Numerous more paintings are attributed to painters Lamothe Duthiers and Auguste-Rémy Bastien. Some paintings also askew traditional simplistic portraiture such as one made for Gélin Hyppolite, St. Jacques St. Faustin, where the numerous religious meanings of St. Jacques, Ogou, and Emperor Faustin are all conflated. Such approaches demonstrate the close relationship to national memory—evoking Haitian epistemic and ontological practice as the horizon of identity, authenticity, and sacred authority and are worthy of further in-depth analysis.

Haitian literati were not, as one writer declared in _Feuille du Commerce_, “surprised” by the “bad tastes” of the _Le Charivari_ and other journals. With a ruling class society geared towards orthodox Catholicism, French language, and Western enlightenment values, the lettered elite looked to defend Haiti’s existence as the only free black state in the hemisphere by arguing its order, progress, and pride in works that often spoke to foreign audiences. Generally, these _lettres pour l’occidente_, or letters for the West, defended Haitian liberty, making efforts to reject and downplay Vodou, Kreyól, and the autonomy of _moun anveyo_. Yet, Stieber’s assertion that perhaps a majority of “Haitian intellectual and political thought engages in a antiliberal critique of the Enlightenment” and that Haitian print culture in the north under Christophe represented a “weapon of the state” gives us an alternative way of thinking of _lettres pour l’Occidente_ as _lettres à l’Occidente_. By this I mean, that these works were not simply affirmations of the Western civilizing mission, but were also critiques of the West’s portrayal of race, often taking up the mantle to defend Haiti’s African heritage, the _creolité_ of Haiti’s elite, and the necessity of

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517 _Feuille du Commerce_, 20 January 1850.
518 Stieber, _Haiti’s Paper War_, 9, 89.
a black state. While national poetry had already surfaced in the 1830s with popular depictions of the Revolution or written oral traditions about indigeneity, the 1840s and 1850s marked a period in which historically focused literature emerged as not only the most crucial national narratives, but also the most fundamental defenders of the existence of the Haitian. Thomas Madiou’s *Histoire d’Haïti* (1847-1848), Beaubrun Ardouin’s *Études sur l’histoire d’Haïti* (1853-1860), Joseph Saint-Rémy’s *La vie de Toussaint L’Ouverture* (1850) and *Pétion et Haïti* (1854), and Emile Nau’s *Histoire des caciques d’Haïti* (1855) most prominently did the work of combatting foreign narratives that depicted Haiti as barbaric through corrective histories that revised the birth of Haiti. Though these were competing narratives—some writing in republican exile and others drawing upon the lineage of Haitian black founding fathers—their writing was part of a “veritable discursive defense industry” both at home and abroad.519

Photography, “ultimately a democratic technology,” presented something altogether different from the tradition of painting and writing.520 While it remains a representation—posed, planned, and cropped—it articulated a wonderous new reality that representational images could not: these were not imagined reflections, but the closest the viewer could be to reality. The daguerreotype’s function as device that captured an in-part accurate depiction must have quickly dawned on Soulouque. The violence and terror of 1848 as well as Soulouque’s 1849 invasion of the Dominican Republic was widely publicized across the Atlantic as part of black efforts to destroy white and mixed populations. He was also “greatly annoyed” of French portrayals of him as an illiterate savage.521 Photography was central to the documentation of black lives and

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“provided a means for challenging negative stereotypes and assumptions about black people in ways that create[ed] a counter image of who they are, as well as who they might become.”522

Of the twelve images in the *Album Impériale*, nine are portraits. Only two are women. The rest occupy civil, military, and ministerial functions. The lithographs are not of a poorly dressed army, savage ex-slaves, or of indolent peasant figures, but of primarily armed, militaristic elite men—though the images of Adeline and Princess Olive are equally stunning portrayals of black royalty at the time. There are no inflated noses and lips or enlarged jaws. In their place are defined facial features and varied skin tones. The men don *à la mode* hairstyles of sideburns, moustaches, and clean-shaven faces of the Victorian age. Specificities such as eye shape and wrinkles are easily visible. Each portrait is that of an individual. Compared to the black figures in French caricatures, these highly detailed lithographs represented people, not “amorphous black stereotypes.”523 To realize the vision of imperial Haiti, the *Album* brought together the combined efforts of a group of expert printmakers to whom he delegated the lithographic work: P.A. Ott, N. Corradi, and Charles G. Crehen, and the camera of New York based A. H. Hartmann, son of Hippolyte Hartmann, a Martinican daguerreotypist.524 The ability to produce, render, and reproduce these lithographs firmly placed the mean of self-fashioning in the hands of Soulouque.

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524 More research must be done to fine these travelling daguerreotypists and photographers and artists who often worked on miniature portraits while traveling the isles. For one interesting work the briefly mentions A. H. Hartmann see: Netherlands Museum voor Volkenkunde, *Fotografie in Suriname, 1839-1939* (Rotterdam: Fragment, 1991), 22.
(Figure 5.6) Lithograph by L. Crozelier after daguerreotype by A. Hartmann, “Faustin Ier Empereur d’Haïti,” lithographic plate 3, as found in the *Album Impérial d’Haïti* (New York: Th. Lacombe, 1852), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections.
(Figure 5.7) Lithograph by L. Crozelier after daguerreotype by A. Hartmann, “L’Impératrice Adelina,” lithographic plate 3 as found in Album Impérial d’Haïti, (New York: Th. Lacombe, 1854). Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections.
The image which Soulouque wished to confer upon the Atlantic world and around Haiti was one of a true black monarch standing regal in flowing robes and jewel crusted crown. His own coronation portrait (figure 5.6)—accompanied by the Empress’s (figure 5.7)—portrays the stature of a classic European monarch. They are full figures, from head to feet, that also show off the newly built throne room. Possibly modelled after François Gerard’s *Portrait of Emperor Napoleon I*, the composition embodies Soulouqué’s desire to be included in the Atlantic’s leadership. It also would have satisfied the incessant white curiosities surrounding Soulouqué’s own visage. There are no simian attendants, no excess mimicry. Both figures meet the viewer’s gaze in ermine robes without smiles or grins. Soulouqué’s arm holds a scepter; Adelina’s arm is raised to her left breast. Their costume is highly detailed, making sure to render the patterns and shades in the frocks—perhaps a nod to the widespread belief that this was an emperor in rags. Soulouqué crown stands centered, uncompromising, and, indeed, larger than life. Adelina, with parted line-styled hair stands unstrained and unsoiled as a reflection of modesty, inward virtue, and significant social standing. We know the albums circulated. An 1859 *L’Univers Illustré* article contains little about the state of Haiti but offered the image of the emperor and empress on the front page. These images were not the caricatures of Cham and Daumier, but copies from the album. Furthermore, they were copies from an *Illustrated London News* article. No one could mistake these silent stoic figures with the pejorative images projected from international press.

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526 Most likely the reprinting had to do with the news of Geffrard’s victory in January 1859 as the competing *Le Monde Illustré* printed images of Geffrard the same day. Illustrations of Faustin I and Empress Adelina, copied from lithographs by L. Crozelier, as found in the *Album Impérial d’Haïti* New York: Th. Lacombe, 1852. *L’Univers Illustré*. 26 February, 1859, copied from *Illustrated London News*, 16 February 1856, 185.
RECEPTIONS OF BLACK MONARCHY

In a carriage led by eight horses and marshaled by six aides-de-camp on horseback, the newly crowned Emperor Faustin I made his way through Port-au-Prince following the coronation. The Emperor and Empress were met with boisterous crowds and cheers from his numerous supporters. The lithograph, “Cérémonie du couronnement, 18 Avril 1852 !!!” (Fig. 5. 8), included in the *Album Impériale d’Haïti*, portrays one atmospheric moment of the jubilation outside of the imperial tent.527 However, Erica James emphasizes, in relation to images generated by Christophe’s kingdom, these images “invite questions of articulation beyond negotiations of subaltern power,” as they were built to justifying invariably violent methods of control.528 Men sit on horses with chapeau-tromblons. Fully uniformed soldiers are meticulously organized into two parallel rows surrounded by popular excitement. Like the other album lithographs, the image is a rebuttal to the narratives of “chaos” and “barbarism” that circulated the Atlantic world. The piece is also a stark contrast to the political strife of the 1840s. The print highlights the theatre of unity and mass public adulation that underscored the cult of paternalism that kept the imperial project alive. The image the Haitian nation-family was recast: instead of a dysfunctional family challenged by the racist assumptions of poverty, idleness, and poor leadership, they are a well-mannered fraternity.

To what extent was this narrative successful in Haiti? Clearly, the principal factor promoting the solidarity of empire was the specter of instability. One commenter in *Feuille du Commerce* explained this, comparing republicanism to a “worse form of slavery”: “If I halt in

front of the republic of 1848…the country where there is the most freedom is monarchy, and the
one where there are the most slaves, and where slavery is harder, [is] a democracy appended to a
republic model.”529 The need to restore a reliable order of legitimate political succession, widely
understood to be one of the principal issues of the mulâtre republican hegemony during the
period of 1843-1847, when Northern generals Guerrier and Pierrot were elected to appease the
North and South, was crucial. Thus, after the multiple republican eras from Pétion to Riché, the
second Empire presented itself as a new era with tones of Dessalinean and Christophean

529 Feuille Du Commerce, January 20, 1850.
monarchy. Just as his predecessor’s regimes sought to deal with the peril of factions and regions, the regime sought to ensure, according to Soulouque’s words, “a new era of order and stability…appeas[ing] the discord, extinguish[ing] the agitations, and ending the abyss of revolutions.”

Soulouque lived through the Haitian Revolution and the numerous reinventions of Haiti. He was a man who went from slavery to President which said a great deal about his political intuition. In the early years of his regime, his commanding leadership in the wake of the journée of April 16, 1848 and his religious posturing vis-à-vis apparitions of La Vierge were perceived as restorative of the nation’s honor. Empire, therefore, could shape higher loyalties while stifling the development of factionalism. This section’s focus is on how the cultural politics and visual culture of ceremony and popular monarchy created, reaffirmed, and justified class belonging and social equality while presenting social mobility in the form of nobility. Michael Taussig has called the state’s ability to project itself as a magical power-object *maleficium*. Within this new nationalist mythos, was reflected in the unprecedented performance of coronation and the new national rituals as a new covenant between a paternal authority power that broke with the previous republican liberal models. This was a popular idiom in the immediate post-revolutionary period that remained deeply tied to vernacular politics on the ground and extended beyond ritual moments without disrupting vernacular autonomy—the base of Soulouque’s power. Dually, the coronation also represented an institutional consecration, where popular practices were tied to historical, spiritual, and political bodies that dealt with the incumbent issue of the fractured regions without necessarily always being seen as domination. The

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530 Discours de l’Empereur d’Haïti à l’ouverture de la session législation de 26 Septembre 1850, Attachement in Ussher to Palmerston, September 25, 1850, *TN4 FO 35/38.*

imperial state instead firmly entrenched a paternalism forged through a long legacy of popular black royalism and a closer state reciprocity and presence in the daily lives of Haitians.

**THE LEGACY OF BLACK ROYALISM**

In Soulouque’s coronation portrait there are two scepters. One scepter is in his right hand with Haiti’s distinctive eagle of freedom, which appears on the empire’s emblem.\(^{532}\) The other, topped with the hand of benediction associated with papal blessings, lies diagonally on the wall to his left. Within the Haitian *weltanschauung*, this would have also been a symbol of Napoleon I and his scepter, *la main de justice*, a symbol of a ruler’s power to dispense justice. Afro-Catholic monarchy is, as Cécile Fromont contends, a space of correlation, a “common [ground] in which cultural agents can bring together ideas belonging to radically different realms, confront them, and eventually turn them into interrelated parts of a new system of meaning.”\(^{533}\) In this case within the dialectical realms of an Haitian elite and Haitian subaltern, choosing to include both scepters was not a mere mark of the new power the coronation was meant to embody, but it was demonstrative of the symbolic transformation empire was meant to represent. Richard Burton identifies rods, swords, scepters, staffs, sharpened sticks, and flags as symbols of Afro-Creole power in nineteenth century cultures of opposition: “The rod in its multiple manifestations becomes the symbol of both power and popular opposition to power in the Caribbean.”\(^{534}\) A symbol of masculine, paternal, and divine authority, the scepter can be compared to other visual traditions seen in depictions of Dessalines with saber, Christophe with elegant canes, the crosier.

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of Catholic prelates, spear-like vèvès and poto mitans that riddle Vodou rituals, or the armaments of the lwa, Ogou, and saint, Saint Jacques. The symbols offered personal purity, social values, and racial consciousness as a means of negotiating the rapids of social flux. The second empire’s adherence to the supranational paternalism of Emperor Jean Jacques Dessalines was not a coincidental by-product; Haitian perceptions were carefully cultivated by Soulouque, who recognized that national iconography of royalism went hand in hand with popular legitimacy.

The iconography of black monarchy has a long pedigree amongst the Afro-descendants of the Caribbean. It is, in fact, a paradox of republican historical memory that nearly three decades of Haitian regimes were monarchical, surrounded by traditional iconography of lions, eagles, and royal bees. In addition, “royalty saturated the landscape” of Africans, and their encounters with Europe and the Americas through Trans-Atlantic slavery only reinforced the ritualistic practices of power and monarchical symbolism. Monarchical imagery appears in many forms of popular expression in the Caribbean, drawing upon signs of royalty to consecrate a sense of superiority through coronation rituals and references. The Cuban cabildos incorporate many symbols of monarchy, including thrones and other emblems. One of the longest running monarchical manifestations in Brazil are the coronation ceremonies and processions of African sovereigns practiced by the enslaved and free members of black cofradías (confraternities) on congados (feast days) where celebrants draw on a repertoire of embodied practices (performance, song, dance, gestures) to represent African monarchs. Similarly, Rara bands, popular peasant organizations, invoked multiple imageries borrowed from monarchy as well as

republicanism and the military such as, *wa, renn, prezidan, avan gad, minis,* and *kapitèn.*537 The *Rara* celebrations of Haiti during the holy week orchestrate mock wars by having stick fights over sugar territory and crown public queens.538 From the lived experience of Dessalines’s empire and Christophe’s monarchy in the North of Haiti to regal portrayals of imagined black kingdoms in José Aponte’s art, to the royal majesty of spiritualisms in Bawon Samedi and Damballah, black monarchy was a veritable icon in the archive of black sovereignty and self-articulation.

Soulouque’s royalism and regalia had a special significance, since it harkened back to Emperor Dessalines and King Christophe, providing a unique iconography of black military heroism. Dressing in the costume of the founding fathers and adopting the two lions of Dessalines enabled him to cast himself as an epic male warrior who descended from a commanding black persona who successfully defined the nationalist project.539 For Haitians, the prevalence of Dessalines was part of a natural logic and historical memory. Desemvar Delorme, a member of the Salvanistes that rebelled against Geffrard in 1865, described Soulouque as “picking up the crown of Dessalines” and, thus, inheriting popular praise throughout the imperial period.540 John Bigelow, visiting the island in the 1850s professed that the name of Emperor expressed “nothing Napoleon-like”; “it supposes only an authority better respected than that of the President, and recalls to the Haitian the popular recollection of Dessalines.”541

541 Bigelow, *Jamaica in 1850,* 194.
The goal of empire and the title of emperor in 1849 strategically imitated and recalled the former national leaders but was not a mere copy. Deborah Jenson has argued, Dessalines took the title of emperor “to compete with the ever-more imposing edifice of French state power.”\footnote{Deborah Jensen, Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 105.}

In contrast, Henry I Christophe preferred the title of king to put forward “Haiti’s pacific character against the continuous threat of French neocolonialism that was imperial in both political and military terms.”\footnote{Friedemann Pestel, “The “first crowned monarch of the New World”: Monarchical legitimation and symbolic politics of Henry I of Haiti (1811–1820),” Atlantic Studies (November 2020): 5.} Neither was needed in the second empire’s case, as France was still a republic in August 1849 and though French threats continued, they dealt typically with the French indemnity and Dominican independence more frequently. Empire, here, evoked historical memory amongst the general Haitian populace, and the monarchical North, which remained a prevalent combative space of ex-monarchists from Christophe’s kingdom. For King Henry Christophe, “symbolic politics, including its African and Native Caribbean elements, served to consolidate his reign in the domestic realm” while also “reclaiming symbolic equality, if not moral superiority as an instrument of political survival towards the European powers.”\footnote{Ibid.} Yet, the issue between Christophe’s puritanical code of conduct and the practice of agriere coporalisme deeply distressed the northern peasantry. Soulouque, who flouted empire while spouting Vodou piety and a laissez faire monopoly, certainly approach monarchy differently, preferring the symbolic capital of royalty over the pragmatic autocracy of Henry I. Nevertheless, the bond between Soulouque and Christophe were likewise real and seemingly intense, for all that divided them. Soulouque kept the two sculpted marble lions which columned Henri Christophe’s palais nationale in Milot constantly white-washed in 1848 even before his rise to
emperor, an indication of his understanding of symbolic arts, monarchical pomp, and the display of power.545

THE PRESENCE OF POWER AND ADULATION

In this circular and cumulative operation of transformative performance, ideas of wealth and power, but also visual manifestations of Haitian masculine prestige and dominance became mutually reinforcing. Stemming from the militarism demanded by external and internal opposition, the Haitian political imagination acquired a distinct deleterious character. The first five leaders of the Haitian state were legitimate by virtue of their leadership in the revolution and, thus, ruled the country with iron fists, enacting their own constitutions. Soulouque was an unlikely candidate for the status of imperial or divine rulership. Even as an ex-slave revolutionary, he was not considered blessed with intrinsically prepossessing presence. Rather, it was a close to the ground paternalism and a culture of ritualistic praise that legitimized the second Haitian empire’s authoritarianism. Taking into account that informal politics operated outside of institutions, through common face to face instances of exchange, political theatre and performance through patronage and public ritual turned away from the abstract republican state and maintained “seeing” astute sovereignty as part of the longer tradition of Haitian political imagination.

These links were not only abstract. Soulouque’s supporters—Piquets, Zinglins, and his regional leaders—avidly followed Haiti’s transition to empire. When canons were sounded at sundown of the 17th there was “clamor of public joy” from Bel-Air and Morne-à-Tuf neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince, where immense sums of Zinglins lived.546 The week was declared a period of celebration all over the city: administration and businesses shut down as a

545 Bathhurst, Hispaniola, Hayti, Saint Domingo, 48.
546 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 260.
“profusion of drinks” were distributed amongst the army and the people of the city.\(^{547}\) Official transcription of the ceremony in *Le Moniteur* described Thursday the 22nd and Friday the 23rd, as days of “popular rejoicing.”\(^{548}\) National and popular dances occurred throughout weeknights around all monuments of the city and for the elite, the revelry continued for a week with elegant balls.\(^{549}\) This was the image of a charismatic leader, rooted in a sense of communal solidarity amongst his supporters on the ground.

The weeklong rituals and dances that accompanied the coronation emulated the celebrations of Haiti’s January 1st. Marking Haiti’s Independence Day, as well as New Years, January 1\(^{st}\) celebration have a long tradition of popular support.\(^{550}\) *Le Moniteur*, at this time edited by Madiou, compared the throngs that assembled from April 17\(^{th}\) to April 24\(^{th}\) to that of the first day of Haitian independence. Auguste Magloire writing about his youth as multitudes of people crowded Port-au-Prince in early April, similarly, compared the Coronation of 1852 to Haiti’s second Independence Day.\(^{551}\) The coronation rituals and the national holidays which followed can be best understood as a program which connected the ethereal, abstract Haitian state to the historical memory of the inception of the Haitian nation. One poem published in *Le Moniteur* recited:

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“Dessalines, Pétion, from the heavens,
Will contemplate their worthy successor
Freedom walks proudly in these places
Long live our illustrious emperor”\(^{552}\)
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The sense of proper succession evoked national memory and a historical synchronism that drew parallels to the cultural practices of Haiti’s popular classes and elite. Praise became part of a

\(^{547}\) *Le Moniteur haïtien*, May 1, 1852.

\(^{548}\) Ibid.

\(^{549}\) D’Alaux, *Soulouque et son empire*, 268.

\(^{550}\) Thomas Madiou in his *Histoire d’Haïti*, writes about the importance of Independence day celebrations in volumes 3-5.


\(^{552}\) *Le Moniteur haïtien*, May 29, 1852.
political economy of discourse, one which enabled the Emperor to garner symbolic credit with
the national pride while satisfying his own need to accumulate popular and elite symbolic
capital. Remark ing on the epoque, Frédéric Marcelin, stated that the pomp of these official
celebrations where *dames d’honneur*, pages, squires, officers of the crown, and princes marching
to the hymns of the *Te Deum*, remained in the memories of the former generation well into the
1880s.⁵⁵³ Official poetry also extended to loyal regional supporters of the regime such as ex-
president Louis Pierrot, now imperial prince. One poem, quoted by Raybaud, places Pierrot, the
man accredited with keeping Northern separatism alive in 1844 and the revival of Vodou with a
role in Rome Godhood:

In the eyes of the universe Pierrot is a great man;
Formerly he took part in the Pantheon of Rome.⁵⁵⁴

Perhaps to further pacify Northern secessionism or as a way to subsume Northern support under
imperial rule, there were also celebration days for former President Phillipe Guerrier.⁵⁵⁵

It is important to note that these ritual celebrations were part of a long program of public
and collective celebratory events such as the official institutionalization of January 2 as the “Fete
de Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Empereur” in December of the tumultuous year of 1848.⁵⁵⁶ The
national holiday had strong popular links to Vodou revivalism. Raybaud, through a veil of detest,
commentated on the popular affect: “Since 1848, Haiti has had one more national holiday, the
 fête of Dessalines… barbarism [Vodou], which was believed to be dead, unexpectedly came to
claim the benefit of its rehabilitation.”⁵⁵⁷ Such a national celebration of the now *lwa* Dessalines,
significantly, did not simply recall the founding father through the salvo of canons and guns; it

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⁵⁵³ Frédéric Marcelin, *Ducas Hippolyte, son époque, ses œuvres* (Havre : Imprimerie de A. Lemale, 1878), 7-8.
⁵⁵⁵ *Le Moniteur haïtien*, July 5, 1851.
⁵⁵⁶ *Le Moniteur haïtien*, December 23, 1848.
evoked the national memory that the first founding father was also an Emperor. During independence days celebrations in 1851, the Comte de l’Azile proclaimed to the third division of the South that Dessalines was a “monarch… at the head of our ancestors”, a common element of state discourse surrounding celebrations.\footnote{Le Moniteur haïtien, March 29, 1851.}

Though the Emperor displayed a style of life that exceeded bourgeoisie origins and represented himself as an entity above and beyond, he was carefully adherent to maintaining a popular presence, showing his power through \textit{being seen}. After addressing the nobility after the ceremony at 3 p.m. the emperor and empress toured the streets of Port-au-Prince in his carriage. On a second tour of the city that afternoon, surrounded by a decorated cavalcade, he tossed money to the people with abundance until 6 p.m. when they reentered the palace. The Emperor and Empress again toured the entire city on the 19\textsuperscript{th} and on the morning of the 21\textsuperscript{st}, all important functionaries were brought to the palace grounds where Soulouque and Adelina spoke to them directly. Though Port-au-Prince’s brief period of transformation during the Coronation ended with the celebrations, by May of 1852, the Chamber of Representatives commissioned two bronze statues of the emperor and empress to be made exactly in the same place as the temporary church, a symbol of his ever-close paternalism.\footnote{Magloire, \textit{Histoire d’Haïti d’après un plan nouveau}, 64.}

From the advent of his emperorship, every Thursday, at 10 a.m., Soulouque was to give an hour to the entire public, where people would have a chance of verbally addressing the emperor with petitions which would be addressed the following Thursday.\footnote{“Ordonnance” November 9, 1849, (Port-au-Prince, L’imprimerie impériale), 16, BHFIC.} The imperial tradition is highly likely connected to Soulouque’s urban support from the \textit{Zinglins}, who from 1847-1849 would gather outside of the national palace demanding to speak to Soulouque
directly. The practice was reaffirmed as the *Audience publique* in the laws regarding the etiquette of the court in 1850.\(^{561}\) Certainly the very fact that an open forum was created to air grievances across factions was an important casual factor. Radecliffe-Brown, addressing the question of state in terms of fiction, observes that the state appears as “being real” through the limited actions of individuals and social structures. As a result, power can only act through real individuals such as “kings, judges, and policemen” and not simply through the state.\(^ {562}\) Since the landscape of power in Haiti’s hinterland represented the deep urban and rural disconnect that was intensified by Boyer’s presidency, the creation of the *Audience publique* empowered citizens since it appeared to include them in the new political apparatus. In comparison to the *espace social vide*, the formalized ritual of father of the nation listening to the children of the nation also reinforced the paternalistic qualities of nation and state. Likewise, while they participated in the *Audience publique*, they enabled Soulouque to police them better as well as having the power to police and denunciate others. Thus, what may have seemed empowering was, in Michel Foucault’s terms, itself a “technology of power,” or “mode of submission.”\(^ {563}\)

The Emperor regularly travelled around the numerous regions casting a wide net of appearances. In Gonaïves, he made a speech addressing both soldiers and peasants; in Jacmel he addressed students.\(^ {564}\) His posturing as a man of cross-class interests, “inaugurating statues, presiding of ceremonies, commemorations, and holidays, and giving speeches” was part and parcel of a “performance of power and nationhood” linked to collective celebratory practice.\(^ {565}\) From July to October of 1851, Soulouque marched up to Cap-Haïtien to stabilize the region after

\(^{561}\) “Etiquette de la cour” in *Feuille du Commerce*, January 22, 1850.


\(^{565}\) Ibid.
Prince de Bobo, the northern regional leader and rival strongman, fled. The Emperor’s arrival coincided with a show of power; the north’s secessionist sentiments were disbanded as the region was forced to reckon with an army swelled by Southern supporters. The city was illuminated upon his arrival and the entirety of the city was lit with flags with palm tree insignia through the night. The city of Port-au-Prince was similarly illuminated upon the return of Soulouque following his campaign with the Piquets in 1848. His presence sparked celebrations in the Le Cap, though they were under duress of Soulouque’s potential punitive consolidation.

Such political theatre was always reinforced by Soulouque’s obsessive concern with rendering a tableau of black majesty that resulted from close associations of historical lineage, authority, and the distribution of violence. At the April elections of 1852 Soulouque showcased his taste for bravado meshed with threat only days before his coronation: “God, in several days, is going to bless my crown, my scepter, my sword. May this solemnity be, in a way, an inauguration of good presage for the cordial heart which must characterize our mutual relations.” Here, the paternalism of punitive benevolence naturalized the Emperor’s power; the domestic patriarchy of the Haitian family was reverberated as state authority. These grand displays served to remind factions and regions of their subjection paired with ritual adulation.

ENCAPSULATING THE DIVIDE

Though expressed often through the lens of disdain, reports could not help remark that Soulouque’s nobility, in the words of Prax, “all throughout [Haiti] produced a certain effect.” Magloire commented that though empire and nobility had earned a title in “ridicule” and “masquerade”, there was a “real complicity in Haitian society.” On one hand, nobility was an

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568 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, April 17, 1852.
effective way to reorganize the Emperor’s allies and enemies into a malleable and controllable group of elites. On the other hand, a nobility was one way to exploit the social and political contradictions that plagued the early republican era in their power struggles by gaining personal power and loyalties. In truth, nobility was multifaceted: elite sophistication through nobility appeased Southern peasants by bringing in new elites from the peasantry class; it appeased the urban populace as hundreds of new faces were brought into the fold through clerical work; it appeased the North as it returned to the long line of Christophean elitism. Though in appearance Haiti’s nobility amounted to a European copy, Soulouque perfected a poly-epistemic approach, reforming the meanings of nobility to meet the Haitian political imagination. While French in name, the titles designated positions rather than privileges; they distributed honors and medals, rather than distributing power. It simulated monarchy’s nobility in form but was Haitian in practice, and, contrary to the ridicule it received it amounted to more than just ambition and taste for magnificent displays.

The Imperial Constitution of September 20th, 1849 granted the Emperor the right to create hereditary titles and confer other honors. The first patents issued by Emperor Faustin I created five princes of the empire, 61 dukes, 96 counts, 345 barons, numerous chevaliers and nobles, even naming four baronnesses.\textsuperscript{571} Like Christophe, Soulouque’s nobility sought to naturalize the absolute authority that derived from his constitution. The mask of paternalism served not only the leader’s own ambitions but those of the elite, officeholders, and military leaders as well. The higher ranks were almost exclusively conferred on distinguished and high-ranking military officers, many of whom were ancient surviving leaders of the wars of independence. Noble clothing was meticulously done, detailing the difference lengths and colors.

for Prince, Dukes, and Barons and how women of the court were to present themselves.\textsuperscript{572} An imperial ordnance regulated court etiquette including establishing \textit{jours de cercle à la cours}, each Thursday at 5 in the afternoon, where they were address in full noble garb by Soulouque and at times the empress.\textsuperscript{573} One of the key aims was to bring a degree of public order and in this the empire was successful. With the creation of a nobility of loyal and orderly generals, the elites explicitly rejected republican institutions and portrayed the nation-state as a harmonious, integrated community in which tensions appeared to cease to exist. Whatever conflicts of interest might arise could be best handled by the enlightened rule of the leader, the patriarchal benefactor of all.

The titles, though French in name, were divorced from their European counterparts. For example, at the beginning of his reign, Soulouque named four princes: ex-president Louis Pierrot of the North; General Lazarre, a participant in the 1843 provisional government; General Souffran, who alongside General Paul was passed up for Soulouque; and Monsiegneur de Bobo, strongman contender in the North.\textsuperscript{574} None were the hereditary sons of the Emperor nor would any inherit the throne if he died. Pierrot, older than Soulouque, remained prince long into Soulouque’s reign, while Lazarre and Souffran died early. Bobo was ousted in 1851. Special privileges and titles certainly swelled the new aristocracy, but the honors more officially extended the practice of official prestation and fealty to empire. Territory was not assigned to positions and the titles gave them little economic distinction. In fact, the empire rewarded a

\textsuperscript{572} “Ordonnance Portant organisation de la maison de S. M. l’Empereur et celle de S. A. I. Madame la princesse Olive Faustin, et déterminant les insignes militaires, le grand costume de la noblesse et l’étiquette de la cour”, attachement in Ussher to Palmerston, 4 March, 1849, \textit{TNA FO 35/38} ; “Grande costume de la Noblesse” in \textit{Feuille du commerce}, \textit{January 27, 1850}.

\textsuperscript{573} Magloire, \textit{Histoire d’Haïti d’après un plan nouveau}, 65-66.

\textsuperscript{574} Ordonnance portant nomination de ministres, \textit{Haïti (Empire) Laws, Statues, Etc.}, 1849-1858, Port-au-Prince, September 22, 1849, \textit{BNH}.
majority of the nobility paltry sums, paying his dukes as little as 70 francs a month. Each count, duke, baron, and knight were expected to provide for their own income, meaning that often noble women cultivated household economies through sales of personal crops.

Nobility was thus a political gambit for legitimacy, merging noiriste Zinglins, Piquets, and pacifying the black northern elite. In effect, it worked to reduce the tensions of colorism that rocked the 1840s. Soulouque did not aspire to be a noiriste in any contemporary sense. But noirisme was a closer reflection to the base of his power and it displayed an active political bid against Boyeriste and Rivièriste republicanism which was largely dominated by mulâtres.

Nobility achieved a level of political certainty which surrounded the Emperor with a governing coalition that reflected the combination of intellectuals and military leaders with strong ties to black publics like Lysius Felicité Salomon from Les Cayes and Jean-Jacques César Dessalines, the grandson of Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Yet, he also employed mulâtres such as Louis Dufrene as his Foreign Minister and Thomas Madiou as chief editor of the national press. The image of a nobility of noirs and mulâtres set the message that color and lineage were meaningless. As Lauren Derby explains about the “patronage” state, “social capital was based less on who you were, but on ‘being there’, looking the part, and having a connection to the regime.” Antenor Firmin, despite his abhorrence of Soulouque, asserts that since the government of Boyer Haiti had been in a “state of disassociation” and that “elements of Haitian

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575 D’Alaux, Soulouque et son empire, 249.
576 Ibid. 248.
578 To clarify, this is not a 1:1 comparison to the twentieth century Dominican dictatorship, but a reflection of how political symbolism and “the myth of equivalence”—that is how a populist leader creates identification with the masses through a façade of equality—is used in populist nationalism. Derby, The Dictator’s Seduction, 187-188 ; 257.
nationality… [were] forced to differentiate each other—intellectually and economically.”579 Yet, following Soulouque’s nobility, “public functions seized to be of a particular social group” and Haitian governments would never return to a strict and visible color line in the government.580

Soulouque did not just add military and intellectual functionaries to his nobility. What eventually made the nobility a whopping 29,000 large by the early 1850s were of thousands of civil functionaries. Senators and deputies were all barons equal to military colonels. To the list was added treasurers, customhouse captains, inspectors of mahogany, members of the bureau of the monopoly, imperial printers, redactors, painters, and academics.581 Soulouque extended the hand of state presence where there was none, granting significant concessions to peasant rebel leaders and landless urban poor, as well as former elites. Piquets such as Jean Claude, Jean Denis, and Voltaire Castor became counts, dukes, and chevaliers. Already influential regional strongmen, they now were under the indirect auspices of the empire and, in turn, were representatives of the empire’s power. They were being offered a recipe for black dignity and personal success, and a means of reconciling the two. For numerous members of society previously at the margins of the state this was the first time some families acquired a position of prestige.

This was significant, because the second Haitian empire was not a reflection of redistribution of wealth or land; it was a redistribution of symbols and social capital. The rural rejection and urban neglect experienced at the hands of the republic’s elite, could seem undone by new popular faces. Thus, the second empire’s nobility was neither static, nor rigid. It presented the chance for self-fashioning and potential upward mobility, which was an important

580 Ibid.
581 “Ordonnance qui confère de titres nobiliaires aux fonctionnaires civils” in Haiti (Empire) Laws, Statues, Etc., 1849-1858, Port-au-Prince, October 31, 1849, BNH.
component of the populism of the regime. For an elite who wanted limited change, nobility presented a solution: it was a re-masking of the same system that presented itself as a populism but challenged little of the norms. The hinterlands and cities remained contested space, difficult to perceive from outside vantage points, but now subsumed under the umbrella of Emperor and empire.

**BLACK MASULINITY, CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY, AND VANITY**

Soulouque was notorious for his attention to dress, his penchant for uniforms, and his immaculate regalia. Indeed, his passion for fashion earned him the ire of many commentators: Raybaud who claimed to have seen him change into 3 to four different costumes a day asserted “dressing is, very certainly, one of the greatest cares of Soulouque.”\(^{582}\) When U.S. agent, Benjamin E. Green ventured to Haiti as a representative of Santo Domingo in 1851, *Le Feuille du Commerce* mocked his rustic appearance compared to that of the illustrious Emperor’s: “The truth is that Mr. Green presented himself to the Emperor in a frock coat and straw hat. His costume contrasted considerably with [the Emperor’s], full of decency and dignity.”\(^{583}\) Why did Soulouque demonstrate such a concern with articulating and promoting his style? Fernando Ortiz soundly makes the claim regarding showy and brazen costuming among male urban underclassmen in Cuba, regarding these “displays of vanity” as an expression of their status as non-slaves.\(^{584}\) I argue that, dictating imperial culture through style was certainly not enough. The fashion and charisma of uniforms and regalia—chosen with a distinct awareness of the Haitian sociopolitical past—lent themselves to conversations surrounding national identity, the role of black male power, and gave his rule a necessary imagery of supreme guardian and patriarch of

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\(^{582}\) D’Alaux, *Soulouque et son empire*, 257.

\(^{583}\) *Feuille du Commerce*, January 12, 1851.

\(^{584}\) Fernando Ortiz, “The Afro-Cuban Festival ‘Day of the Kings,’” 43.
the nation. Within this allegorical framework of the country-as-the-family, empire conceptually usurped the fragile republican allegories of brother-family, returning to the vertical father-child relationship.

Paternalistic empire was domestic patriarchy writ large; visual and ceremonial presentations of the imperial reign elaborated the allegories and metaphors of the father figure, the family, and female domesticity. The argument for racial equality invariably declared black men to be equal to white men in terms of masculinity. In this section I explore how gender served as an allegory of class, color, and race that consolidated the image of power though national narrative of doting wife and poised female child. It justified the dominant hand of the man in command and fashioned a resolute captivating persona that were in stride with the calls for one-man rule in 1848. Much like the Coronation of 1854 and the Album Impériale’s focus on military men, masculinity fueled faith in Haitian citizenship from its armed inception, allowing men across classes to buy into nationhood as armed black soldiers. Haiti’s maroons and revolutionaries, though filled with female figures, were characterized by the dominant male generals who commanded with iron fists, more than likely the first toros and gwo nèg. The martial discourse of “sword-bearing citizens” and “male-center familial relationships,” following Mimi Sheller’s supposition, “served to uphold non-democratic state structures.”

Representations of Imperial Family

The personalism of the empire and the imperial family was disguised as an elaborate theater of order, regeneration, and equality centered on gendered tropes of respectability and paternal power. In July of 1849, when rumors of La Vierge’s appearance in Port-au-Prince began

circulating, Soulouque organized for Colbert Lochard to draw *La Vierge* with a *manteaux* (coat) and a crown.\(^{586}\) A defining moment in Haiti’s transition to empire, the painting was reproduced on a large canvas, leading Justin Bouzon to sardonically comment, “*Voilà* how heaven itself had destined a crown to Soulouque.”\(^{587}\) Baron Colbert de Lochard produced a string of courtly paintings throughout the second Empire’s existence (few of which survive), but in December of 1852, he produced one depicting the Ascension of the Virgin Mary and the Emperor.\(^{588}\) While it is lost, *Le Moniteur* recorded that painting as being paraded down the streets to crowds after it was finished. The imagery of the Mother of God crossed with Soulouque’s is significant. The metaphorical *Vierge*, an icon representative of purity, authority, and divinity at the heart of Haitian national identity, was bound up with the corporeal consolidation of a national narrative of paternalism and destiny. Mary’s popular representation of the sacred feminine roles of mother, as we have seen, brought of special issues with national identity. The intricacy of this spiritual symbolism in part derived from the complex and contradictory nature of the Haitian family: regarding the family structure, *plasaj*, serial unions, concubinage, female-headed-households, and de facto polygyny, were all troubling to elite visions that upheld dominant patriarchal ideals. The tremendous contribution to farming, marketing, and the internal food trade in Haitian society—through political upheaval, repression, and rural stigmatization—was undercut by urban bourgeois ideals that saw polygamy and common law unions as a sign of

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\(^{586}\) Colbert Lochard, the courtly painter, according to Justin Bouzon was the mystificateur that was brought in to affirm the appearance of La Vierge. Justin Bouzon, *Études historiques sur la présidence de Faustin Soulouque* (Paris: Gustave Guérin Etc., Editeurs, 1894), 153-154.

\(^{587}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{588}\) *Le Moniteur haïtien*, January 15, 1852.
“backwardness.” As Mia Bay stresses about the relationship of postslavery and women, “emancipation did not resolve the tentative status of black womanhood.”

Neither Soulouque nor his predecessors evinced a predilection for married life. Soulouque like Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe did not marry until it was necessary, finally marrying Adelina when he was president. Pétion and Boyer had numerous mistresses. Soulouque’s own dalliances were well-known, and they continued through his reign. The importance to Haiti’s male leaders was not the lived experience of matrimony and heteronormative household, but the symbolic capital in maintaining cultural position through performing traditional patriarchy. From the inception of the military dominated society of emancipated Haiti women were left out of the conception of being citoyennes since the Constitution of 1804’s article 9 referenced worthy citizens as a “good father, good son, good husband, and especially a good soldier.” Thus, the ranking of sexes in this grand theatre was not just metaphorical—it was backed by the corporeal reality that the Imperial Constitution of 1849 that mandated a hereditary descendant to the throne be natural and legitimate, directly male to male, and by order of progeny. This discourse of Haitianess as primogeniture expressed a network of meanings in a culture which “simultaneously praised and silenced women.”


591 Mademoiselle Jute was first Petíon’s mistress and Soulouque was made her household guard. Following Petíon’s death Mademoiselle Jute became Boyer’s mistress, which is how Soulouque became attached to Boyer’s retinue. More than one woman, Madame Legendre and Madame Faubert.


a straightforward claim about the body of the state, built on the relationship of fathers to families and men to women. Just as, in the patriarchal family, the father wields authority over the household, “the king’s sovereignty over his ‘incapable’ and ‘immature’ subjects is considered a ‘natural’ consequence of his superior wisdom.”  

Though, the theatrics of imperial nationalism borrowed familial metaphors to naturalize militarism and the social subordination of women, this was symbolic at best. While women were largely absent in the official record, they played the major roles of household management and internal market systems. In local publics, women established themselves as the center of the petit commerce as market intermediaries who bought and sold produce; as traveling marchandes and madam saras who served as links between local regional and urban markets; in religious hierarchy as mambos and spiritual healers; and in the household as the primary managers of home economics. Women with enough capital could be full-time market traders independent of men. Sheller quotes the account of a marchande in 1854, depicting the extent of her financial independence:

“[Elsiné]… is the capitalist of concern, and does all the business… she is worth from fifteen to twenty thousands dollars all of which she has made as a dealer in provisions… by gradual accumulations she got some capital ahead, and now buys from commission merchants in large quantities, and sells on credit to retail dealers—mostly to girls who she has trained.”

The understanding was that that Haitian families were patriarchal, but that women played a pivotal economic role in day-to-day operations.

For the international press, the hypervisibility of Vodou, political instability, and black women in the marketplace, were all linked to Haitian masculinity. White patriarchal ideas challenged Haitian men’s authority as economic providers by pointing to the commonplace of

597 Sheller, Citizenship from Below, 177-178.
women in domestic economies and the marketplace. They decried Haitian men as dominated by female households, infantilizing the black peasantry as idle and lazy. This must have meant little to nothing to the peasantry disinterested in Euro-American criticisms, but for the literate Haitian elite, masculinity was centered on patriarchal control in the public and private realms. Yet, educated urban elites, proceeding to restrict women’s activities discursively rather than physically, wrote of a national identity enveloped in a “heteronormative project” with “urban patriarchal norms” at the heart. Haitian female subjecthood flowed from the public performance of proper familial roles, proper education, refined behavior, and their fixed roles within the family.

The display of imperial women, in particular, “was a means of accumulation”, attached to “symbolic capital” and the renewal of the “traditional genre of masculinity.” Upper class women habitually appeared in short stories, advertisements, disputing claims in court, and as circumstantial references in the men’s political schemes. Respectability was central to this schema where the conceptual system which undergirded the rejection of republicanism to reassign political important to fathers as supporters of aristocratic and dynastic rule. For Empress Adelina, as for many other women, the only cultural current was through the model of the selfless mother, spouse, and mystic. But Adelina was more than a simple figurehead. Adelina was a fierce and staunch executor of her symbolic duties and it was Adelina who brought a spiritual and tireless conviction to the great theatre of Souloque’s rule. Le Moniteur and La Feuille Du Commerce regularly printed the Emperor and Empress’s visitation to mass.

599 Derby, The Dictator’s Seduction, 111.
Accompanied by the *dames de la cour*, the Empress frequently attended parish churches to sing in honor of the Virgin of Mount Caramel and attended major funerals. Adelina and the *dames de la cour* made frequent processions down the streets of Port-au-Prince for all to see, at times distributing food to the poor. As two ex-slaves, the Emperor and Empress both reflected the syncretic spirituality of post-slavery Haiti, but Adelina was, in her own right, a spiritual center of empire. In late 1849, rumors of a third apparition of Mary circulated and Empress Adelina went to confirm the appearance, elevating what was regional sighting to a national phenomenon. In another moment, following a two-month drought in 1850, the Adelina herself led a mass in song. The *fête patronale* of the Empress coincided with the day of Saint Anne, the Mother of Mary. When the Empress’s mother died, a three-day funeral was set at Croix-des-Bouquets on July 20th, 1852 which began with the sounding of canons, popular dances, and multiple processions through the capital city. Such displays informed women’s work with churches and civic associations aimed at modeling “proper” behaviors to bourgeoisie and elite class communities. At the same time, as Empress, Adelina could reflect a spiritual tenacity and determination that Haiti’s church women, spiritual healers, *mambos*, and *madam saras* all engaged in a daily basis. These outward displays of spirituality, manners, chastity, and industriousness exhibited the extent of what women’s social awareness should emulate—stopping short of any formal politic—while elevating the imperial family to the national level.

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600 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, April 17, 1852.
601 *Le Moniteur haïtien* April 1, 1854.
603 *Feuille du Commerce*, April 28, 1850.
604 There is also a *Ti Saint Anne*, but pilgrimage site was formed in early 20th century. *Feuille du Commerce*, 29 July 1850.
605 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, July 31, 1852.
Numerous sections of *Le Moniteur haïtien* and *Le Feuille du Commerce* were littered with the comings and goings of the imperial family as well as their ritual adulation. As a national metaphor, the imperial family embodied the extent of state boundaries and national sentiments. On February 15th, the day of the *fête patronale* of the Emperor, one baroness, an Almonor de Gorgues, composed a song, “Hymne à la famille impériale,” asking in supplication for the continual conservation of Adelina and protection of the Princess Olive.607 Such adulation became the normative program of many national rituals. These turns of phrase personify the state as both protective and strong and the nation as nurturing while encouraging “fraternal” cooperation among citizens. In one ceremony the imperial family led a retrospective national funeral service for the dead of the war of independence.608 In others they went to masses together, often portraying the second important state metaphor: the sacrosanctity and devotion of Soulouque as a paternal benefactor. This private evocation of father and family buttressed the public evocation of leader and state. Imperial family was incorporated into ritualized public ceremonies that not only celebrated Soulouque’s authority as a husband and Adelina’s position as a wife, but also as an intermediary of national sentiments.

Princess Olive herself attended masses assisted by the grand dignitaries and was privy to the exuberance of dances, parades, and clothing.609 Princess Olive embodied the ascendancy of the new class lifestyle which privileged achievement rather than ascribed criteria of birth. While she was given lavish gifts, her education was persistently publicized: eight professors were brought in for her royal education, an education which included history, mathematics,

607 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, February 25, 1854.
608 *Feuille du Commerce*, June 23, 1850.
609 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, May 29, 1852.
embroidery, painting, and dance. Gendered stereotypes of the working Haitian woman and the infantilized Haitian peasant were confronted with the constraints of nineteenth century gender etiquette, which muted and silenced any female responses. Thus, filtered through Princess Olive was an aura of perfection and refinement, functioning as a symbolic icon of the bourgeoisie family model—a simple metaphor embodying the natural patriarchal authority of nationhood. The story of the imperial family captured a high drama. As a national symbol it served as an allegory for the nation, telling a moral tale abound the boundaries of state power.

*Faustin I, Gwo Neg e Toro*

The consistency at which Soulouque’s image as a staunchly upright father reinforced his state paternalism could only be equaled by his ability to produce an image of a confident, strong, and awe-ful black male figure. John Bigelow’s momentary visit to Haiti compared Soulouque in a military costume to a that of a “Roman emperor”: “he [wore] a handsome green uniform, irreproachable either in material or form… two golden epaulettes ornated with two silver stars; a plaque, provisionally ornated with crystal, decorated his breast… a sword by his side, and carried his hat in his hand.” Soulouque’s power was the center stage of a great spectacle reflected vis-à-vis his wardrobe: expensive, compelling, and uncompromisingly masculine. The Emperor took great pleasure in making a spectacle of himself as a *gwo nèg*, or big man, overlooking Sunday military procedures on Champs de Mars, publicizing his ventures to his countryside home in Petit-Goâve, or privately speaking condemnations upon what he considered to be his Dominican opponents. As Faustin I, he could not afford to reveal himself to be a leader who backed down to

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the Dominican Republic, the Atlantic Powers, republican in exile or, most of all, to opponents at home. For years this operated successfully as Soulouque’s regime centered uniformly on his persons: a Dessalinean figure, black, powerful, and threatening. For the fraternalism and militarism of Haiti’s men, this offered a masculine redemption story while justifying the repression and exclusionary acts that categorized imperial politics.

Importantly, militarism and the obsession with black masculinity neither began nor ended with the Second Haitian empire. “Building black masculinity became the central task in the construction of Haitian national identity”, Sheller contends. However, set against the plethora of emergent claims of Haitian emasculation from bourgeoisie familial values, Soulouque reproduced a hypermasculinity, dominant and violent, by representing himself as a turo. Toro in Kreyol means bull, but colloquially a bull is referred to as a turo bèf. Laurent Dubois writes that the vision of Dessalines as the turo—“a violent leader, one bent on revenge and carnage”—emerged in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. The turo in vernacular, however, also refers to a charismatic, unwavering figure, defined in the 1993 Dunwoody Press Kreyol dictionary as a “awe-inspiring, unbeatable person.” Comparable to the caudillo, the theatre of a turo emperor portrayed “a kind of self-serving opportunism, deception or avarice that is simultaneously disparaged and valorized.” The turo is a social type, who like the Dominican 20th century tiguere “claimed reputation since respectability was out of their reach.” The turo like the gwo nèg offered a male-oriented story that implied that obstacles in their way would be crushed.

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612 Sheller, Citizenship From Below, 142.
616 Derby, The Dictator’s Seduction, 175.
The passion for ornate uniforms and masculine militancy had other roots as well. As an ex-slave, born shortly before the Haitian Revolution, Soulouque must have seen the predilection for black strongmen in military symbols. Toussaint and Dessalines’s bicorn hats, outstretched swords, and French military garb were affective symbols in the vernacular political imagination. Michel Laguerre speaks on this tradition in the nature of Haitian society: “military liberators were revered as true fathers of rising nations, and their successors considered themselves the natural and legitimate heirs of the liberators”617. This is twinned by the colonial stock characters of Haitian vodou in General Ogou, Bawon Samedi, and Admiral Agwé and Catholic icons such as Saint James who wields a spear.618 Furthermore, militarism was the inheritance of anti-colonialism from the founding fathers. In the schema of post-slavery, regionalized centers of power and the persistent threat of re-invasion, became a “generative scheme of social organization in the peasantry”619.

For a majority of Haiti’s nineteenth century, the sight of a black man in some form of soldier’s garb was a common sight, even if they were poorly dressed in humble attire and rarely fully outfitted. When the Wesleyan Methodist missionary James Hartwell arrived in Port-au-Prince in 1840, he was immediately met by a “ragged” soldier who took him to the local commandant to get his papers, and he later described a rural soldier as “a man called Captain, no regimental number, no shoes or stockings, with a spur girt on his naked ankle, a sword tied round his waist with a piece of tailor’s list, and an old straw hat.”620 For the common Haitian soldier, drawn from the enormous peasant masses, it seems that the lack of uniforms did not inhibit the

618 While Baron Samedi is always referred to as a Baron, Agwé and Ogou’s epithets are not as static. See Donald J. Cosentino, “Imagine Heaven” in Los Angeles Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou, ed. Donald J. Cosentino (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
620 Quoted from Sheller, Citizenship From Below, 156.
symbolic masculinity embedded into military symbols. The presence of at least spurs, shakos, an imperial coat, or badge, swords, pikes, and national colors were more than enough to demonstrate one as a military gwo nèg or toro. The Haitian expression for someone who has gained authority, according to Jean Comhaire, is that he fè zépero, or grew spurs, just like this captain.

By recognizing the performative nature of cross-class Haitian masculinity, Soulouque captured public imagination as the popular figure in the realm. Soulouque displayed his ability to be assertive and successfully complete duties fostered upon his reputation, Prax notes that during the coronation ceremony Soulouque changed his coiffure three times.\textsuperscript{621} At the marriage of chancellor Delva, \textit{Le Moniteur} did not fail to report the illustrious costuming of the Emperor—a habit of blue velour garnished with \textit{fleur d’or}, white cashmere pants, and satin white shoes—while ignoring the bride and groom completely.\textsuperscript{622} National events were centered upon this gwo nèg. The military, too, was an extension of Soulouque’s person, a staging device that helped the emperor provide a paternal front he desired. At the 1854 anniversary of the coronation, Artillery was fired after each toast of the 150 table after party dinner.\textsuperscript{623} It placed him at the center of national life. The popularity of the militia as a means of status and political legitimacy made Soulouque choice of clothing a unique status marker. It was a creole argument inherently imbedded in the national narrative of slave revolution and old world African and European monarchy.

\textsuperscript{621} Prax, \textit{Ayiti}, 381.
\textsuperscript{622} \textit{Le Moniteur haïtien}, March 4, 1854.
\textsuperscript{623} \textit{Le Moniteur haïtien}, April 29, 1854.
CONCLUSION

Remarking on the year of 1852 during the anniversary of Haiti’s imperial turn in 1849, the Duke of Mirebalais, Casimir Vincent, exclaimed to the “children of the nation” and to the soldiers of a “divine providence”: “The crown that the Lord placed on [Faustin 1er], our Emperor, guarantees a brilliant future of the destiny of Haiti… already this new era has silenced the factions which existed amongst us… you know that discipline forms the union of our ranks; thus [the emperor] counts on the energy of his army for the maintenance of the constitution in vigor.”624 Within this adulating proclamation was a reality that empire groped towards a new self-definition for Haitians. It captures the aspirations of a new era while justifying the punitive paternalism of Soulouque. Expanded onto the notion of Haiti’s sovereignty, the splendors of empire, the advent of a new form of aristocracy, and masculine posturing of Soulouque’s early reign were much more than simple ambitions and tastes for magnificent displays; they captured a special understanding of Haitian political imagination and national history. They reminiscence in the symbolism of Haiti’s predecessors and sought out their own definitive meanings of empire and civilization. Public rituals created a sense of national unity and the hybrid nobility brought a sense of national belonging beyond the entrenched elite class.

No other Haiti head of state, apart from perhaps Christophe, made such efforts to spur artistic production and cultural self-fashioning through the process of representation, rebuttal, and mythification. The second empire was a national project steeped in vernacular idioms of masculinity and paternalism; the desire for a central authority and relative stability; in popular belief; and in political symbolism. Monarchy functioned as both a real physical institution with a

624 *Le Moniteur haïtien*, September 18, 1852.
single visible authority as well as a symbolic representation of a central leader with mythogenic appeal. While the efforts made to dissuade Atlantic opinions were largely disavowed, Soulouque brought a motivation that extended beyond the simple task of *lettres pour l'occidente*. By stressing the continuity and connections between visual culture, popular legitimacy, and power we can distinguish how imperial representations of Haiti presented themselves as legitimate and male well into the 1850s.
CHAPTER V. EMANCIPATED EMPIRE: CONCLUSION

At the fête patronale of 1858, Soulouque received his final praises in the public eye as barons, counts, and judges presented the emperor as a benevolent “father,” full of wisdom, and surrounded by trusted friends.625 Daigé Phillipe, in official verse, compared the “ardor of his soul” to Pétion, whose “immortal heroism” watched over Soulouque; he was followed by Fabre Geffrard—duke of Tabara and future leader of the republican coup—who praised him in the public light.626 However by 1858, the mythogenic aura the Soulouque regime cultivated in its origins had long dissipated in the eyes of numerous regional strongmen. It was clear to enemies of the empire that what had consolidated the throne in the 1840s and early 1850s—that is Soulouque’s charismatic connection to the masses via symbolic forms—had eroded over the course of the late 1850s. The throne had lost the supremacy of its legitimacy in the eyes of popular will after producing three unpopular invasions of the Dominican Republic, the loss of the island of Navassa to the U.S. Guano Act in 1857, and eruption of the southern rebellion around Les Cayes in 1856 which echoed the issues of 1848.627 Soulouque, defeated by these internal pressures and a republican coup at the end of 1858 from Gonaïves, abdicated in January of 1859 and set sail for Kingston, Jamaica, ending his nearly decade long reign as Emperor.

Writing from exile in Kingston in 1861, the ex-emperor addressed liberal President Fabre Geffrard, the legislative powers, and the courts of Haiti: “Had I conspired to acquire my title of emperor? Did I ask anyone? God and the Haitian nation had given it to me.”628 The ex-

626 Ibid.
628 Faustin Soulouque, Adresse de Faustin 1er aux Pouvoirs Législatif et Judicaire D’Haïti, 1st May, Kingston, 1861, BHFIC., Bibliothèque National D’Haiti, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
emperor, declaring the reinstalled republic illegal in the eyes of an imperial constitution mounted by the people, claimed that his power did not descend from his own legitimacy, but the legitimacy of the nation and of God. Even as an exile, Soulouque’s vision of his empire was grounded in popular will, divine right, and a turn to roots grounded outside of the bounds of conventional notions of liberal republican government. The main narrative of political legitimacy throughout this dissertation offers some corrections to traditional appreciations of the tumultuous origins of the second empire and a reinterpretation of domination and resistance in Haiti’s mid-century. It suggests that rather than a simply violent moment of repression which led to authoritarian rule, close analysis of the origins of the second empire dismisses assumptions about Haitian political backwardness and isolation in choosing monarchy and royalism over republicanism. The political conflicts of the 1840s and 1850s were brought about by a combined dual project of top-down consolidation from Soulouque and his elite allies and down-up informal networks’ claims upon their rights as Haitians.

Still, the second empire within Haitian historiography has been difficult to approach because of its place within the narrative of progress and doom. It remains true, that while the “new era” advocated by those supporters of Soulouque found inspiration in the black peasantry, urban underclass, and anti-republican factions, national rehabilitation through the cynical exploitation of charismatic symbols and the rhetoric of anti-republican redemption merely continued the distortion that had begun with independence in 1804: the Haitian subaltern, though recognized, remained voiceless, a part of a history that collapsed them into state violence. For the Haitian historian a paradox arises when we see that overall, the unequal rapport between state and nation did not change, only the name of the structure. Thus, empire succeeded in toppling a near complete revolution, and maintaining what we may even consider a conservative stance on
the popular reactions to status quo. For one class, production remained the marker of their existence; the other a marker of their exploitation. Indeed, within this schema of nation versus state presented in Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Haiti: State Against Nation*, there is only one continuous result: the erasure and silencing of political goals, strategies, and beliefs in liberation that were subsumed under grand state politics.

Yet, in accepting republicanism as representative of all Haitian nation-building aspirations, we reproduce the hierarchy of the same teleology which still inflicts a narrative of failure; we homogenize intranational political struggle into a vaguely mono-corporate movement of ideas; and we occlude other stories, possibilities, and sociopolitical forms. Without denying the political uncertainty that an authoritarian regime change can, and did produce, it seems unfair to suggest that this empire had no political program to offer the country other than violence, or that its supporters were after nothing but the spoils of power. Undoubtedly, there was much of the latter. But to reduce the practice of politics to just greed says little about the reasons why people took up arms and died shouting “*Vive Président Soulouque!*”

Therefore, how might a new emphasis on excavating politics of the subaltern and an understanding of the parallel systems offered by the study of sociopolitics reframe our understandings of Haiti’s state transformation? In this dissertation we have seen the role of how spiritualism and popular symbols of power, focused on kinship and a historical lineage of self-defined sovereignty, played the central part into the process of the creation of a second empire. Haiti’s political narratives must be tempered with the phenomenon of alternative symbolic politics, always at play within systems of parallel hierarchies. Furthermore, we must place a new emphasis on the scope of popular political imagination amongst Haiti’s Afro-descendants who interpreted their experiences in the Americas in terms of their contemporary worlds; they
interpreted their freedom and their visions of freedom not through the form of statehood, but through the values of local moral, spiritual, and symbolic beliefs. It was never a given fact that freedom, for the emancipated, would sympathize with democracy writ West or that liberté would be synchronous with republicanism. Throughout Haiti’s nineteenth century people, both rural and urban, were acutely aware that democracy, republicanism, and monarchy were themselves choices; deeper questions of this identification and interest in nation-state gives us a fuller account of political life. Although successive national leaders appeared to direct state reforms “for the people,” peasants, urbanites, tenant farmers, regional charismatic authorities, obstreperous juge-de-paix, and intransigent elites also ignored, bypassed, appropriated, modified, and opposed state programs according to local sociopolitical and cultural approaches. A pattern did emerge from this constant process of fragmentation and disjunction and during the 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, and all the way until U.S. occupation in 1915, the role of political legitimacy within the sphere of the charismatic leader fashioned contradictions and wavering narratives of the state. I do believe as we move forward in continual analysis of the nineteenth century, we can see that the spontaneous projects of the 1840s transformed into concrete strategies of resistances as Piquets, Zinglins, and other forms of subaltern resistance rose as central to the rise, stabilization, and fall of successive states.

Importantly, I have questioned discourses of doom located within Haiti’s narrative, but I do not simply replace them with a triumphant narrative of strategic cunning or to make visible Haiti’s popular politics. Considering the work of Yarimar Bonilla on the twentieth century Guadeloupe’s continual alternative popular political imagination, I would push to represent postemancipation politics on the ground in the Haitian nineteenth century as the site of a “pragmatic vision [that] managed to skirt the postcolonial crucibles of structural judgement, the
difficulties of small-state economies, and imperial dictates of global trade.” Any romantic view of Haitian state as a perfectly protective, black nation quickly fades when confronted with the multiple ways Haitian peoples served as cannon fodder to their never-ending militarism, domineering statecraft, the Atlantic free market system, and coercive labor systems from within.

My goal in historicizing their political arrangements and placing them within the framework of the nineteenth century Western Hemisphere and postemancipation Atlantic, has been to achieve a more complex narrative about state formation, freedom, and popular sovereignty. More broadly speaking, the history of the structural make-up of the Soulouque regime is an integral example of the work that is being done to the narrative of the politics in the revolutionary age. Arno Mayer, in his work, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, has argued that though Europe’s *ancien regimes* were losing ground to industrial capitalism, civil and political societies of the old regimes of monarchy and landed aristocracy kept their “distinct powers, traditions, customs, and conventions” precisely because they were deeply ingrained within social, economic, and cultural systems that continued to represent monarchy as “divinely ordained centerpieces.” To Mayer the persistence of teleological spirit of “tacit faith in progress” as well as the focus on “liberal civil society” and “democratic political society” resulted in a “partial and distorted” view of the nineteenth century. In chasing to categorize modernity as a high drama of progressive change within the “Age of Revolutions” and systems of monarchy as premodern, archaic, or simply repressive, there is a story that is left untold about the legitimacy and identity located in the enthusiastic redistribution of politics as a preservation and assertion of popular claims. Marcela Echeverri has put forth similar claims in her work,

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631 Ibid., 4.
Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolutions, about how these teleological assumptions “have carved a deep conceptual antagonism” where “royalism” is “exclusively linked” to colonial backwardness, in spite of the multitudes of indigenous and slave royalists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who saw monarchy as the sole defense of their rights against creole republicanism.632 I would go further in adding David A. Bell’s ideas, who in his recent book, Men on Horseback, contends that alongside the rise of the first democracies and the intellectual fermentation of the Enlightenment, the Western world had a “perennial longing for leaders with magnetic appeal and extraordinary abilities” whose forms of charisma “posed challenges to democracy but were also symbiotically linked to it.”633 This is to say, the coming to power on the whims of democratic change, followed by the concentration of power in the hands of singular popular figures was tied to the nature of democracy and popular political participation in the Age of Revolutions.

What does this mean about the second Haitian empire? Soulouque’s regime, and the subsequent state regimes that relied on popular agitation and claims-making are insightful case studies for how popular sovereignty in the form of vernacular politics interacted with political legitimacy and charismatic authoritarianism in the Atlantic world. And what remains historically enthralling about the 1847-1859 period is its relative longevity in the history of Haitian states. How did a monarchy emerge from the tumultuous mid-century, out of the crossroads of post-emancipation, second slavery, and rising peasants’ political aspirations survive for a decade? While Haiti’s imperial moments are criticized as a failure of government because the tenets of Afro-monarchy, popular violence, and state domination did not successfully express “freedom”

in terms of the republicanism or liberal democratic citizenship, as this project has discussed, white Atlantic exploitation and denigration of black aspirations and needs were a staple of the nineteenth century ethos. How could observers have seen that as Emperor Soulouque for the first years fit a model of alternative symbolic politics that did not reject the subaltern anger, took pride in the varied spiritual basis of the nation, and reflected Haitians as part of the masculine lineage of the nation’s founders. Whether an illusion of popular sovereignty or not, the second empire—with its culture of adulation, performance, and charisma—of continued to contribute to the formation of national imperial identity and the leverage of power deep into the end of the Soulouque regime.

We should consider a simple, but profound fact about the norms of society in the Age of Revolutions, as personhood and individual encounters with the state came under immense change from the prospect of democratization and political participation, whether authoritarian or democratic. As a symbol of necessary national acquiescence to the dismemberment of republicanism and to the new order of political life, in 1849 the formal refrain of *Vive la republique!* and *Vive le Président!* became *Vive l’empire!* and *Vive l’Empereur!* What did not change was the end chant, *Vive le Constitution*—a tertiary, yet, insoluble tract of political language that contained the power to prop up new governments or dissolve old ones. Such changes normally accompanied a regime’s shift; it was a label of discourse that reflected participation in constitutional nationalism and performance of a transitional symbolic order. While historians might take this simple shift for granted amidst the numerous, dysfunctional regime changes and political posturing of caudillos, republicans, presidents, and monarchs, nomenclature was not lost upon those who experienced such breaks with the past. Of course, we cannot claim that the simple chanting of these phrases meant the same understanding and
meanings of such grand terms. But what I have attempted to do in this dissertation is to ascertain a deeper depth of understanding of their entwinement, making it clear that these symbolic, rhetorical, and aesthetic categories mattered—particularly to those who felt acutely disposed to what they represented.

But there is another reason why this shift would be more notable. Political discourse was a foundational repertoire of national belonging, and contested discourses, routinely heard, bandied at cultural and political events, shouted as collective responses, and evoked by the recipients who reaped the benefits and by Haitians had a much broader effect on the relationship of popular sovereignty and political legitimacy then simple repetition. The political liturgy of the regime points to the vital importance of understanding the creation of rituals and performances of actions that incited mass participation. Given that in Haiti’s legacy of emancipation—by way of Afro-slave revolution—myths made meaning, symbols established order, and metaphors determined identities. Political legitimacy in the aftermath of republican illegitimacy required these mandatory rites of deference and adulation towards the Emperor as much as these mandatory rights where symbiotic to the feelings of mass inclusion and symbolic citizenship that justified the formation of a throne. That citizens were expected to display signs of adulation such as vox populi vox dei, and, that these signs in turn claimed the recognition of vernacular voices, was part of a larger cycle of quotidian lives in the postemancipation state. Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues, these are not meaningless epithets, but the language of routine; they are sign posts for relationships and state encounters which shape daily lives, even if they seem “banal.”

What is lost when we force out these narratives are the countless conversations, disruptions, and agitations that reflect Haitians’ beliefs across the classes of the 1840s. These parallel discussions were ingrained in social relations that impacted daily life and were routinely articulated as problems of freedom. Freedom was a discourse that embedded itself in arguments of landownership, customshouse taxation, high prices, religious articulation, the right to education, new clothes, and the right to mobility just as much as it located its meaning within statecraft and the much-recited constitution. Conceptions of popular legitimacy and vernacular politic articulated their own brand of freedom and, imaginatively, they could be remade through the adoption and coercion of that articulation. It serves to say, Haitian people did have a larger role in shaping the state and in responding to statecraft. Hopefully, the developing interest regarding the mid-century period will continue energizing a number of fields both within and outside of the Caribbean in regard to these polemics of state and freedom. For the history of post-emancipation, indeed, the history of the Americas and the Atlantic, is incomplete without the whole history of freedom.
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