Slavery & Abolition, 2013
Vol. 34, No. 3, 485–507, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2012.734089

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The Haitian Revolution, History's New Frontier: State of the Scholarship and Archival Sources

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Focusing on the era of the Haitian Revolution, this article analyses recent historiographical developments in both French and English. Though the field has made great strides in recent decades, it occasionally remains hampered by insufficient archival research, a parochial approach by US and French scholars, and linguistic fragmentation. The article also includes a survey of the main archival resources that are available to scholars in Europe, the Caribbean, and the USA.

In the penultimate decade of the eighteenth century, a would-be pioneer named Francis Alexander Stanislaus Wimpffen took his first steps in the New World. Having heard so much about the rapid economic growth of American colonies, he was taken aback upon encountering a rough-and-tumble Frontier community. Amenities were few, colonists uncouth and everyone's energy was focused on money-making. Settlers spoke of the colony as if it was the center of the world, but the colonial capital amounted to no more than 'two rows of huts, jolting along a dusty track called a street .... a Tartar camp'. With one major exception (racial discrimination), equality was the norm between settlers and wealth the sole social marker: 'All the whites are upon an equality,' he noticed, from the governor down to the last 'scoundrel from the galleys'. Political fermentation was also rampant. The inhabitants, though 'surrounded by mulattoes and negroes, indulge themselves in the most imprudent discussions on liberty', he wrote. Wimpffen spent two years in the colony before deciding to return to Europe via Philadelphia, convinced that the combination of 'absolute equality ... liberty, and slavery' would soon lead to a major revolutionary upheaval. He was right: one of the great Atlantic upheavals of the Age of Revolutions was about to erupt.[1]

Some US scholars might assume that the comments above apply to one of the 13 British colonies of North America on the eve of the American Revolution, but they describe the French colony of Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) immediately

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prior to the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804). Though unusually radical and profound, the Haitian Revolution was long ignored by non-Haitian historians who preferred to focus on its American and French counterparts. Thankfully, this situation is rapidly changing on both sides of the Atlantic. Sustained interest on the part of French scholars began with the bicentennial of France's first abolition of slavery in 1994, while that of US scholars may be attributed to the current boom in Atlantic history; the bicentennial of Haiti's independence in 2004 only reinforced this trend. To specialists in the history of slavery and the African Diaspora, the Haitian Revolution also offers a unique opportunity to retrace a successful struggle for black emancipation.

This growing Franco-American scholarly interest in history's new Frontier, Saint-Domingue, is both exciting and occasionally disconcerting. To use metaphors drawn from the American West, this 'gold rush' has turned Haitian revolutionary studies into a 'Wild West' as well as 'a land of opportunity'. The pace of publishing has quickened, bringing several groundbreaking works, but also others that merely satisfy the market's demand for new material. This uneven state of the historiography is attributable to transitory factors (the burgeoning field attracts many newcomers), but also more structural ones: the wide dispersal of archival sources, the language barrier for English-speaking scholars, and a US- or French-centric approach to Haitian history that has left many purely Haitian topics untouched outside Haiti. But archival sources are plentiful by the standards of the history of slavery and the Haitian Revolution lends itself particularly well to the multi-archival, multi-disciplinary approach currently favored by Atlantic historians. As the field matures, one should expect it to make great strides. Historical pioneers may rejoice: the best days of Haitian revolutionary studies are probably still to come.

State of the scholarship

The historiography on the Haitian Revolution does not yet have the theoretical sophistication of more established fields (particularly the French Revolution, which pioneered the concept of historiography). There are no established Marxist, neoconservative or postmodernist schools: aside from a few, more crowded subfields, works are often too few to be categorized by ideological bend. One must instead use simple identifying criteria, starting with the date of publication. As scholars' attitudes toward race and colonialism evolved over the past two centuries, the scholarship likewise went from a white supremacist era to a black nationalist backlash and finally a more post-racial present. The historian's country of origin also matters, with parochialism being the norm: Haitian historians have tended to focus on their national heroes (black or mixed-race, depending on the author's skin color), French historians on colonial debates' ties to the French Revolution and US historians on the Haitian Revolution's repercussions in the USA. The use of different methodological tools – such as political, social, gender, quantitative or Atlantic history – has also resulted in works that differ considerably in the emphasis they put on the relevance and political outlook of Haiti's Founding Fathers. The last and most relevant factor is quality: recycling secondary sources is common practice, so many works are based on insufficient primary research and the field's main milestones have been landmark articles

correcting unproven canards that had been circulating for years. Solid works on specific topics now exist, but there remain gaping holes in some key areas. Revealingly, one of the most frequently cited English-language works, Michel Rolph-Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* (1995), is a book about the *lack* of books on the Haitian Revolution.[2]

The field's limitations begin with general works. In the French language, some of the most frequently used overviews remain Pamphile de Lacroix's *Mémoires*, Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haïti* and Beaubrun Ardouin's *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, despite the fact that they were published in 1819, 1847 and 1853, respectively, and that they focus heavily on political and military minutiae. Some more recent Haitian authors, notably Auguste Nemours and Claude and Marcel Auguste, have also produced solid political and military narratives.[3] The English-language scholarship is scarcely more modern: to this day, US scholars routinely rely on C.L.R. James's 1938 *Black Jacobins*, a seminal work in its time but one whose factual content is now outdated and that is more useful as an example of black nationalist, Marxist scholarship.[4] In recent years, Laurent Dubois' *Avengers of the New World* (2004) has emerged as the standard work on the Haitian Revolution but, contrary to Dubois' earlier studies of color and citizenship, it is largely based on secondary and published primary sources.[5] The definitive history of the Haitian Revolution in any language has yet to be written.

Some major trends and themes can be identified despite the incomplete state of the historiography. Aside from a few nineteenth-century works by French, US, and British authors that were dismissive or even racist, the scholarship on both sides of the Atlantic was long celebratory of the Haitian Revolution and its leaders. Triumphant accounts remain common, but the best researched works today tend to be revisionist in character: while not denying the significance of the only successful slave revolt in world history, they emphasize its complexity, underline the porosity of the concept of race and point to the political ambiguities of leading black revolutionaries who wanted to preserve the plantation system even as they combated slavery.[6]

The scholarship on the Haitian Revolution's most famous son, Toussaint Louverture, is characteristic of this three-step process. Some hostile early biographies aside, historians long portrayed him as an idealistic defender of black liberation and independence, an image that is still very present in the popular imagination.[7] But three influential articles in 1977–1978 led to a sea of change in scholars' understanding of Louverture's worldview. The first, by Gabriel Debien, Jean Fouchard and Marie-Antoinette Menier, revealed that Louverture had owned and employed slaves before the Revolution. A year later Debien and Pierre Pluchon proved that Louverture had helped forestall a slave revolt in Jamaica in 1799. A third, by David Geggus, showed that Louverture's 'volte-face' from the Spanish to the French army in 1794 may not have been tied to his abolitionist ideals but to a self-serving career move.[8]

The historiography on Louverture now ranges from works that present him as the unreconstructed heir of Ancien Régime colonial society, as is the case of Pluchon's French-language biographies, to more sympathetic works by Geggus that present him as an extraordinarily complex former slave turned statesman.[9] Louverture is by far the most studied of any Haitian revolutionary figure, yet much research remains

to be done, particularly on his pre-revolutionary life. The fact that Louverture had twice been married as a slave, for example, has only recently come to light.[10] Revealingly, the leading English-language biography of Louverture, by Madison Smartt Bell, was written by a novelist who was very effective in capturing Louverture's soul but relied on a very scant amount of research when retracing his pre-revolutionary years.[11]

Scholars' fascination with Louverture's life is typical of a field that has traditionally revolved around the lives of leading revolutionary figures. This is particularly true of the scholarship in Haiti, where the Founding Fathers of the nation are revered as towering figures. And yet, despite this focus on traditional political biographies, the genre is far from comprehensive. The historiography on Louverture, though richer than on any other revolutionary figure, remains a work in progress. There is so little scholarly work on the Haitian Revolution's other great leader, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, outside of Haiti, that the fact that he had once been enslaved by Louverture's son-in-law has only recently been unearthed; other important generals like André Rigaud, Henri Christophe, Jean-Pierre Boyer and Alexandre Pétion are even less studied outside Haiti.[12]

Another issue is the hagiographic tone of many Haitian works. 'Most of the literature produced in Haiti remains respectful – too respectful, I would say – of the revolutionary leaders,' acknowledges Trouillot.[13] The influence of racial and political disputes on Haiti's historical output is partly responsible. Nineteenth-century mixed-race authors tended to exaggerate the influence of their mixed-race heroes (such as Pétion), while the rise of a black nationalist movement during the 1915–1934 US occupation, then the Duvalier dictatorship, led to a wave of polemic works designed to celebrate black figures like Dessalines and to minimize the achievements of mixed-race generals. The historiography on the birth of the Haitian flag is a case in point.[14] More recently, political and economic instability in Haiti has hampered the ability of Haitian academics to finance research on their country's proudest moment and to share their findings with an international audience. As a result, some historians, like Claude and Marcel Auguste and more recently Vertus Saint-Louis, have remained too little known outside Haiti; others, like Daniel Desormeaux, have moved to the USA altogether as part of a national brain drain.[15]

Though the biographical genre is often construed as old-fashioned in the modern historical profession, it can be a fruitful way to approach the Haitian Revolution because it allows for a 'micro-history' that underlines the multifaceted nature of the revolutionary era. Seen from afar, the Haitian Revolution can easily be misconstrued as a binary struggle pitting black slaves against white imperialists, but this misconception quickly dissipates when the Revolution is observed from a personal level. Accordingly, some of the more rewarding works in past decades have been tightly focused articles or biographies on second-tier individuals ranging from Joseph Bunel to Julien Raimond. Placing them under the microscope has uncovered new information on such basic facts as Bunel's race (often described as Louverture's mixed-race ambassador to the USA, he was actually white).[16] It has also revealed that many white Frenchmen were sympathetic to the Haitian Revolution, while upper-class black and

mixed-race Dominguans often embraced the French colonial model. By multiplying such studies, then working its way up to the overall narrative, the historical profession should reach a far more nuanced and comprehensive appraisal of the Haitian Revolution.

In reaction to the political, top–down nature of much of the traditional scholarship on the Haitian Revolution, there have been attempts in the past 30 years to examine the Saint-Domingue revolution 'from below', to cite the title of a book by Carolyn Fick, and to focus on the lives of the black rank-and-file.[17] The approach is obviously legitimate from a demographic standpoint (slaves represented 90 per cent of the Dominguan population), but it also has some important historiographical and political implications. Placing the black masses at the center of the narrative is tantamount to belittling the reputation of the leading black and mixed-race generals of the Haitian Revolution, who were comparatively conservative figures who tried to contain the radical impulses of the emancipated slaves. The tension is physically evident in Port-au-Prince, where a statue dedicated to the *neg mawon* or *marron inconnu* (unknown maroon) stands by uneasily next to the statues of the generals who once oppressed him. Trouillot labeled this internal struggle between the lower-class, African-born black freedmen who longed for yeomanry and the Caribbean-born, plantation-owning officers of color the 'war within the war'.[18] Because exploitation of the Haitian people by their leaders remained a feature of post-independence Haiti, scholars like Gérard Barthélémy have used the Haitian Revolution as the starting point of a 'créole-bossale' divide in Haitian society between a French-looking elite and the African-inspired rural masses.[19]

This bottom–up approach to the Haitian Revolution, however valuable in theory, is hampered by the dearth of sources. Elite actors, whether white, black or mixed-race, have left behind a substantial archival record, but the story of the black rank-and-file, particularly illiterate maroons who fled to the hills to escape plantation labor, is exceedingly hard to tell. Myths drawn from the oral traditions of Vodou help fill gaps in the historical record, but many historians are uncomfortable with relying on oral traditions instead of the written word. Because of social prejudices, elite Haitians were also long unwilling to draw from the popular culture of the *lumpen* (lower classes), at least until the *noiriste* or *indigéniste* movement that emerged in reaction to the 1915–1934 US occupation of Haiti.[20]

Jean Fouchard's answer to the archival gap was to examine notices on missing slaves published in the colonial press to emphasize the prevalence of *marronage* (running away) in the 1780s, and thus the long-standing revolutionary potential of the black population. But his method yielded little on the motives that pushed slaves to run away, which has remained an ongoing debate in the historiography: did slaves run away simply to protest a particular manager's cruelty, or did they have a more profound and universal opposition to the institution of slavery?[21] Geggus, for his part, combed through the records of plantations and slave traders to recreate the demographic profile of the black population; the result, like much of quantitative history, was informative and scientific but a tad dry, as it reduced the slave population to columns of statistics on sex ratio and life expectancy.[22] One last approach, influenced

by post-modernism, is to read between the lines of non-traditional sources (including works of fiction and oral traditions) to fill in the silences in the archival record. The approach is hit and miss: Joan Dayan's *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (1995) was occasionally penetrating, but other works occasionally come across, to this author at least, as unconvincing.[23] They did, however, bring attention to the partly fictionalized nature of many contemporary sources, such as Mary Hassal's *Secret History* (1808).[24]

A related trend, which one may describe as 'outside–in' rather than 'bottom–up' research, is the arrival of scholars from a wide variety of fields who study the Haitian Revolution from the perspectives of non-historical disciplines such as literary criticism and philosophy. A recent book by Deborah Jenson compared the writings of Louverture and Dessalines to the English-language genre of the slave narrative. Daniel Desormeaux, for his part, placed the memoir written by Louverture shortly before his death within the literary tradition of French memorialists. Léon-François Hoffman, best known for works on Haitian literature such as *Le nègre romantique* (1961), applied his skills to the emergence of national myths like the Bois-Caïman ceremony. Further afield, political philosopher Susan Buck-Morss traced the origins of Friedrich Hegel's master–slave dialectic back to reports on the Haitian Revolution published in the German press.[25]

Setting out to write a history from below does not guarantee that one will succeed in doing so; Fick's book, despite its title, was largely a top–down account of the political and military careers of famous Haitian revolutionaries. In two areas, however, careful use of existing sources has allowed scholars to make significant progress. The first is the history of free people of color, a group that was unusually large and powerful in Saint-Domingue. John Garrigus, Stewart King and Dominique Rogers have done important work on this community immediately prior to the Haitian Revolution by dissecting notarial records. Aside from underlining the group's embrace of the French colonial model and the entrepreneurship of free women of color (often derided as mere courtesans in contemporary chronicles), they showed that, even as discrimination increased in the late eighteenth century, wealth and family networks often trumped race as the most relevant social marker.[26]

A second area in which social history has made important strides is gender history, more specifically the politics of sex on the plantation. The prevalence of cross-racial sexual intercourse in Saint-Domingue is generally accepted, but its significance remains controversial. Was sex within the framework of an exploitative labor system intrinsically a form of rape, as argued by Dorris Garraway? Or, leaving aside our present-day moral standards to study gender relations as they were understood by contemporaries, could sex with a master be a deliberate, even empowering strategy on the part of a slave to gain freedom for herself and her mixed-race offspring, as shown by Arlette Gautier and others? The implications of the masters' libertine ways for third parties (female planters and male slaves, in particular) remain less studied, as are the rare, but fascinating examples of cross-racial sex involving a female planter and a male slave.[27]

In the English language, the single most active area of research in recent years has been the impact of the Haitian Revolution overseas, and particularly in the USA. The reason for this trend is probably practical: for a US scholar eager to enter the field, studying a US connection is the most readily accessible topic. An unfortunate result is that the quantity of the scholarship is not always matched by its quality: some authors utilize virtually no French-language sources (even printed ones) and make important factual errors when describing Haitian events. Misspelling Dessalines and Louverture's names or confusing Saint-Domingue with Santo Domingo (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic, respectively) is not uncommon.

Historically, the first US academics to work on the Haitian Revolution were traditional diplomatic historians like Rayford W. Logan and Alexander DeConde who, working in the shadow of the first US occupation of Haiti, retraced Saint-Domingue's importance to early US foreign policymakers. Generally respectful of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, they presented their foreign policies as well-minded attempts to defend US national security and economic interests. But a rethinking of the Founding Fathers' careers after the 1960s led to a wave of critical works by Douglas Egerton, Tim Matthewson and Gary Wills that described US foreign policy, particularly Jefferson's, as racially motivated and needlessly hostile toward the Haitian Revolution. The pendulum is now swinging back: some of the more recent books, including a solid overview by Gordon Brown, have tried to rehabilitate Jefferson and to underline the extraordinary ambivalence of a US political establishment torn between idealistic sympathy for fellow Atlantic revolutionaries, commercial interests, security fears and sectional disputes. The scholarship on this issue is now quite mature; the main area of concern is the lack of attention paid to Haiti's own foreign policy interests by US scholars, who are so focused on Adams and Jefferson that they fail to recognize their Haitian partners as statesmen in their own right.[28]

Scholars have recently expanded their research interests to examine the overall effects of what Alfred Hunt has dubbed the 'slumbering volcano' of the Haitian Revolution: the fears of the US plantocracy, the fate of Dominguan refugees in US ports, the appeal of the Haitian Revolution to African Americans and black emigration to Haiti in the nineteenth century.[29] The Dominguan communities in Philadelphia and New Orleans have been particularly well studied.[30] But US academics have far from exhausted other topics, partly because unchallenged assumptions abound. A 2010 collection of essays on *African Americans and Haiti* edited by Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon generally took for granted that the Haitian Revolution had been a defining moment for African Americans, but one of the essayists noted that he had been unable to find evidence of public commemorations of the Haitian Revolution among nineteenth-century African Americans. Similarly, a 2010 study by Ashli White concluded that, contrary to what is commonly thought, US planters were quite confident that a slave revolt akin to the Haitian Revolution could not take place on US shores.[31]

Because of a lack of research into French and Haitian archival sources, two issues of great relevance to US historians have not yet been adequately studied. The first is the failure of migration schemes from the USA to Haiti in the nineteenth century.[32] The

second is the Haitian Revolution's role as an inspiration for slave revolts in the USA. Scholars frequently mention contemporary accusations by US planters that various uprisings and plots (from the Gabriel conspiracy to the German Coast rebellion) were masterminded by 'French Negroes', but rarely double-check such claims in Haitian sources.[33] More generally, an in-depth study examining whether Haitian revolutionaries had messianic ambitions would be of great interest as it would speak directly to the Haitian Revolution's global significance. Haitians like to emphasize their ancestors' assistance to other revolutionary movements, particularly in Venezuela, but Louverture and Dessalines actually portrayed themselves as isolationists to avoid upsetting their diplomatic partners. More research is needed to assess whether Haitian leaders truly attempted to export their revolution, and more generally explain why the Haitian Revolution remained contained to the shores of Hispaniola.[34]

Taking a larger view, three solid collections of essays edited by David Geggus have examined the repercussions of the Haitian Revolution from Cuba to Germany. These led Geggus to a surprising conclusion: though the Haitian Revolution was well known to whites and blacks alike, its actual impact (beyond the symbolic) on the crusade for abolition was limited and possibly counter-productive.[35] This approach, which ties the Haitian Revolution to other islands to reach general conclusions about causality and exchange, is a rare example of a truly Atlantic approach to the Haitian Revolution. Another is the study of the deportation of political deviants and Caribbean rebels to and from France and the Caribbean during the revolutionary era, a topic that is at once historically significant and fascinating from a human-interest perspective.[36]

Though Saint-Domingue was once the crown jewel of France's colonial empire, French scholarship on the Haitian Revolution was long limited, possibly because it did not fit the glorious narrative of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era: French academics were more eager to study battles won in the name of *liberté* and *égalité* than the loss of a colony founded on the twin pillars of *esclavage* and *racisme*. The study of the Haitian Revolution was accordingly relegated to the less glamorous field of colonial history, where scholars like Debien (and later Pluchon and Jacques de Cauna) toiled in virtual anonymity for years.

As befits a country in which official celebrations are a major part of the process of historical memory, widespread scholarly interest in France only began with the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989. The year 1994 (the 200-year anniversary of the French law that first abolished slavery) was marked by several conferences and collections of essays on French revolutionaries' equivocations on human bondage. By 2002 (the 200-year anniversary of Napoléon Bonaparte's restoration of slavery), the trickle of French scholarship on the Haitian Revolution had turned into a flood. These works, by Marcel Dorigny and Yves Wanquet notably, enriched a field that had been too focused, at least in the English language, on the British abolitionist movement, even though its French counterpart was initially more successful.[37]

Because free people of color failed to obtain equal rights in 1789–1792, and because universal emancipation was not even seriously discussed until 1794, French academics' inquiries led them to re-evaluate the political profiles of supposedly radical figures like Maximilien de Robespierre who lagged behind in the fight for racial equality. Another

prominent casualty was Bonaparte, traditionally revered as the most famous figure in French history, and now depicted (at best) as a deluded leader afflicted with 'colonial dementia' in a book by Yves Bénot and (at worst) as a genocidal precursor of Adolf Hitler in a polemical but widely read book by Claude Ribbe.[38] The political intensity of these debates went far beyond academia, particularly in the overseas *départements* of France, where the bicentennial of Bonaparte's 1802 restoration of slavery touched a raw nerve. In 2001, at the behest of Guianese deputy Christiane Taubira, the French National passed a law declaring the slave trade a crime against humanity, and in 2005 President Jacques Chirac chose not to celebrate the bicentennial of the battle of Austerlitz to avoid honoring a tainted historical figure. Meanwhile, plaques honoring Louverture and the Guadeloupean icon Louis Delgrès were added to the Panthéon, while 10 May became an annual day of remembrance on slavery and its abolition.

French scholars' language skills and easy access to colonial archives have allowed them to produce well-researched works. The main issue has been one of focus. Too often, in the USA, the Haitian Revolution is studied inasmuch as it informs African American history or controversies on Jefferson; too often, in France, the Haitian Revolution is studied inasmuch as it informs the political history of the French Revolution or controversies on Bonaparte. Studying the Haitian Revolution for its own sake is less common; in the arena of military history, for example, Bernard Gainot has chosen to concentrate on the fate of the Caribbean-born officers of color who served in the French army.[39] It thus took a US scholar, Jeremy Popkin, to describe the French abolition law of 1794 as a direct consequence of the events in Saint-Domingue rather than the logical endgame of French Enlightenment ideals (despite its Dominguan-centered approach, Popkin's book is unlikely to please Haitian nationalists either: it attributed the abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue to Franco-French street fighting in Cap-Français, not the slave rebels' activism). From a methodological standpoint, Popkin's book also made an intriguing description of the Haitian Revolution as an 'accidental' event whose course was far from pre-ordained, rather than an unstoppable march toward freedom in the Hegelian model.[40]

Such scholarly interest on the part of US and French scholars is welcome. The unfortunate result, however, is that more research is presently being done on the Haitian Revolution's repercussions in the USA and France than on the Haitian Revolution itself. Because Saint-Domingue's slaves, after they were freed, were forced back into a semi-free labor status, the Haitian Revolution was to some extent a 'revolution' in the astronomical sense, which ended its course near its starting point. But it can also be compared to a 'black hole' whose gravitational pull on nearby objects has been measured precisely by scholars, but which has yet to be directly observed.

Many aspects of the Haitian Revolution have still not been examined in sufficient depth, starting with a deceptively simple question: when did it begin? The most frequently employed date references the massive slave revolt that ravaged the plain of Cap-Français in August 1791 and is favored by all those who want to emphasize the role played by the black rank-and-file. But mixed-race Haitians like to mention the October 1790 uprising by Vincent Ogé to highlight the contribution of their mixed-

race ancestors (Ogé was actually a moderate figure defending the rights of mixed-race militiamen, according to recent research by Garrigus).[41] But Popkin's emphasis on white infighting points to an even earlier possible date: 1789, when the aftershocks of the French Revolution reached Saint-Domingue. Beyond this simple issue lies a more profound debate on the origins and nature of the Haitian Revolution: was it an offshoot of the French Revolution, a struggle for racial equality by elite Creoles or an Afro-Haitian revolt against slavery?

Despite its prominence, the August 1791 slave revolt remains understudied. Geggus and Hoffman have shown the extent to which the famous Bois-Caïman ceremony of August 1791, during which the revolt was allegedly plotted, is surrounded by layers of mythmaking.[42] Even more importantly, we still do not know what prompted the slaves to revolt in the first place (contrary to popular belief, loyalty to Louis XVI, not universal freedom, was their main motto until at least 1793). Contemporary conspiracy theories attributed the revolt to outside agents like the British, the Spanish, the Société des Amis des Noirs and royalists. It is now politically correct to emphasize the agency of the slaves who began the revolt, but documents exist that link Ogé to British abolitionists and slave rebels to Bourbon loyalists, so conspiracy theories should not be dismissed out of hand.

The British invasion of Saint-Domingue in 1793–1798 was studied extensively in a 1982 book by Geggus. So has the Leclerc expedition of 1802–1803.[43] But the third major foreign invasion, by Spain in 1793–1795, has not yet been retraced, even though it relied extensively on Dominguan rebels like Jean-François Papillon, Georges Biassou and Louverture.

The cultural and social life of Saint-Domingue also needs further attention. Freemasonry has been relatively little studied even though it was a crucial locus of sociability in colonial society.[44] Despite its centrality, Vodou (a.k.a. Voodoo, Vodun) has also been overlooked, in part because written sources on this topic are exceedingly few, even today.[45] Ever since Suzanne Sylvain's pioneering 1936 work on Haitian Kreyòl, linguists have done considerable work on the syntax and vocabulary of French-based Creoles, but there has been no equivalent interest on the part of historians to uncover early Kreyòl texts and settle a central debate: how did French-based Kreyòl languages emerge?[46] Placing Saint-Domingue within a history of science and the Enlightenment is another angle of approach.[47]

Historians' failure to properly connect Haitian revolutionaries to their African roots remains one of the biggest blank spots in the historiography. Saint-Domingue was a relatively new, rapidly growing colony, so approximately two thirds of the slaves were African-born when the Haitian Revolution began. But African connections have generally been downplayed, even in Haiti, where educated elites long preferred to see themselves as heirs to French civilization than to African 'barbarism', to the point where Dessalines may have been wrongly listed as a Creole.[48] In addition to French and Caribbean political and social norms, scholars thus need to integrate African notions on kinship, kingship and slavery in their understanding of the world of the Haitian revolutionaries, particularly at the grassroots level. Only then will the historiography of the Haitian Revolution become truly Atlantic.

Scholars' efforts to lift oppressed groups from obscurity, however commendable, have had an unexpected consequence: surprisingly little has been done on the white planters of Saint-Domingue. In the field's pioneering days, Debien uncovered and published numerous papers by Dominguan planters.[49] Little progress has been done since, aside from a 2009 book by Jean-Louis Donnadieu on the Comte de Noé, the planter who owned part of the plantation on which Louverture's family was enslaved.[50] The documentary base, both archival and published, is plentiful on both sides of the Atlantic, so the reason for this oversight is probably political: scholars, drawn to the study of the Haitian Revolution because it stands as a symbol of black accomplishment, are understandably reluctant to appear sympathetic to racist exploiters by presenting their point of view (the few scholars to focus on white planters are always careful to distance themselves from their subjects).[51] But the field can yield unexpected findings. White planters were surprisingly close to some elite slaves and free people of color; they were also deeply indebted to European merchants, which raises some intriguing questions about the profitability of the plantation economy. Though exiled planters are often blamed for inciting Bonaparte to restore slavery in 1802, they were a pragmatic group that mellowed considerably as the Haitian Revolution progressed.[52] After uncovering the diversity of black revolutionaries' political views, scholars should now do the same for white planters.

Economic history is another untapped field. Though every book on the Haitian Revolution makes an obligatory reference to the centrality of Saint-Domingue in the Atlantic economy of the 1780s, very few have taken the time to explore the long-distance trading networks that linked French ports to Saint-Domingue in the pre-revolutionary era, then the collapse of French maritime commerce during the Revolution.[53] The simultaneous growth of US exports to Saint-Domingue is better known to US scholars, but questions remain, for example on the extent of US merchants' support for Haitian rebels during the war of independence.[54] Many scholars also take for granted that Haiti was cut off from international commerce after independence, when in fact there was only a brief and ineffectual US embargo in 1805–1809.[55]

The difficult and incomplete transition from slave to free labor on Saint-Domingue's plantations after the 1793 decree of emancipation – which lends itself well to comparative analyses with similar processes in the rest of the New World – has only been studied in some detail by Robert Lacerte.[56] Though scholars often take at face value Louverture's claims that he had managed to revive the colony's output of tropical produce by 1801, Saint-Domingue's recovery from the shock of emancipation is far from proven.[57] More generally, whether colonial exploitation is the root cause of Haiti's current economic woes is a hotly debated question, with the two most recent general histories of Haiti taking opposing sides on the issue.[58] A related topic, of great importance to Haitians today, is whether the indemnity paid to France in 1825 in exchange for the recognition of Haiti's independence bankrupted the young Haitian state (a detailed study by François Blancpain instead points to gunboat diplomacy and financial mismanagement to explain Haiti's insolvency).[59]

Regional studies are another underserved area. Saint-Domingue was large enough for regional differences to be notable: the South, for example, was more Frontier-

like in its conditions, less focused on the manufacture of sugar and closer geographically to Jamaica. But so central was the plain around Cap-Français in the events of the Haitian Revolution that other provinces have been comparatively ignored. Particularly little has been done on the revolutionary period in Santo Domingo (a.k.a. the Dominican Republic), which was officially annexed to Saint-Domingue in 1795. For example, the emancipation of Santo Domingo's slaves (generally attributed, without evidence, to Louverture's invasion in 1801) has yet to be investigated. That we do not even know whether Haiti's most famous revolutionary figure abolished slavery in the country's immediate neighbor is symptomatic of the amount of work that remains to be done.[60]

Archival resources

Archival resources on the Haitian Revolution are plentiful but not easy to access. Documents are in French, English and Spanish, as well as (more rarely) Kreyòl and Dutch. They are spread on both sides of the Atlantic and split between governmental, university and private collections; some have been lost to neglect, theft or revolutionary violence. Collections are often haphazardly organized and cataloged. Digitization is the exception rather than the norm, so a lengthy visit to the archives will remain an absolute necessity for the foreseeable future. With a few exceptions, important papers have not been edited and published, even in Louverture's case.[61]

The governmental archives of the former colonial power, France, are the best place to start any research project on the Haitian Revolution.[62] In Paris, the Archives Nationales' sprawling collections include isolated papers that pertain to the Haitian Revolution (AB/XIX series); official correspondence between French authorities and colonial agents (AF series); private papers of some relevant figures (AP and T series); the archives of bankers and merchants (AQ series); a vast collection on the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution (DXXV series); police files on Louverture's family and others (F7 series); and detailed accounts of the pensions paid to exiled planters (F12 series). The Archives Nationales d'Outremer in Aix-en-Provence hold the official correspondence sent to France's colonies (B series) and received from them (C series, particularly CC9) as well as special files on colonial troops (D series) and notable individuals (E, EE and APC series). Of particular note are the vast collections assembled by the colonial legist Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry (F3 series), documents on the 1825 indemnity to France (7SUPSDOM), and the extensive notarial and church records that document the daily lives of free people of color (1DDPC, Gr and NOTSDOM series).

The naval section of the Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes houses the documents related to the naval expeditions sent to Saint-Domingue (BB4 series). In the army section are 27 boxes on the military aspects of the Leclerc expedition (B7 series), the personal files of various officers, including Louverture (7Yd series) and crucial memoirs by French generals like Donatien de Rochambeau (1M593).[63] The Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris houses Louverture's correspondence with the commissioners Etienne Laveaux and Léger-Félicité Sonthonax (fr series) and

important personal recollections on the revolution (NAF series). The archives of the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, split between Nantes and the Parisian suburb of La Courneuve, are also useful since many people transited through the USA on their way to Saint-Domingue and French consuls played an important role as political informants for the French government.[64]

The regional network of the Archives Départementales holds some important and rarely used documents, particularly when a given area has a historical connection to Haiti. Worth mentioning are documents related to Louverture's captivity at the Archives du Doubs (M696), the Marcel Chatillon and Gabriel Debien collections at the Archives de la Gironde (61J and 73J), the Bayon de Libertat papers at the Archives de la Loire Atlantique (E691), and a memoir by Charles de Vincent at the Bibliothèque François Villon in Rouen (MS 619).[65] Private collections are occasionally helpful; a particularly valuable trove of Rochambeau's papers was auctioned off in 2008.[66]

Because of Britain's deep involvement in Dominguan affairs, especially during the British invasion of Saint-Domingue, the British National Archives in Kew hold numerous relevant documents by Britain and Jamaica's colonial, naval and military authorities (CO, ADM and WO series). Spain, equally involved in Dominguan affairs, has vast and well-organized collections at the Archivo General de las Indias in Seville and the Archivo General de Simancas in Valladolid, which are partly available online.[67]

Some of the collections in Britain and Spain duplicate those of their colonial outposts, which are now independent and have their own archives such as the Institute of Jamaica in Kingston (Nugent Papers; Ms 36 series) and the Jamaican Archives in Spanishtown.[68] Haiti's turbulent history, unfortunately, has not been kind to the country's Archives Nationales in Port-au-Prince (a few documents are available through the Digital Library of the Caribbean portal). Some documents have survived in private Haitian collections, such as the Bibliothèque des Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne, but a full mapping of these resources has yet to be done. The private collection of the Haitian historian Auguste Nemours, who studied Louverture's family and captivity, has now been donated to the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras, along with rare portraits of Henri Christophe and his son. The papers of the Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James are at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine.[69]

The richest collections on the Haitian Revolution outside France are in the USA, but – as is the norm – they are widely dispersed and disparate. At the official level, letters by US consuls in Cap-Français are held at the National Archives in College Park (Record Group 59), with the exception of those of Sylvanus Bourne, which are kept at the Library of Congress, along with some rare letters by Louverture and the French commissioner Philippe Roume (Manuscript Division). Reports by US Navy captains, who were very present on Saint-Domingue's coast during the period of the Quasi-War and Haiti's War of the South, are in the National Archives' Washington, DC location (Record Group 45).[70]

The largest non-governmental US deposit is the University of Florida in Gainesville, which houses 24 boxes on the Leclerc expedition (Rochambeau collection), five

microfilm reels of now-lost Haitian documents (BN08268–BN08272), and various notarial documents (Jérémie papers). Other US collections, often accumulated by private collectors of autographs and other curiosities, are rich but sundry, often extending well into the nineteenth century. For example, the documents amassed by the Austrian ethnologist Kurt Fischer are now split between Howard University and the Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library, which also owns a variety of Haitian public documents from the Revolution and the nineteenth century (Sc Micro R1527 and 2228, Sc MG 119, 140, 714).[71] The Boston Public Library holds a similar smorgasbord of letters by various Haitian leaders (Ms. Hait.), as does the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is not rare for a US university to own a handful of rare revolutionary documents (Harvard University's Houghton Library owns a unique 1798 letter to Dessalines in Louverture's own hand, for example), so an online search through library catalogs is always a fruitful endeavor.

Other US archival deposits are more focused on specific individuals – typically Dominguan refugees and US merchants involved in the Saint-Domingue trade. In Louisiana, Louisiana State University (Mss 2246, 2590), the Louisiana Historical Center and the Historic New Orleans Collections (85-117-L and MSS 125) own the papers of several exiled planters (the Center for Louisiana Studies in Lafayette also has microfilm copies of French and Spanish archival collections). In Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society houses the extensive papers of the French banker and merchant Stephen Girard, while the Historical Society of Pennsylvania holds letters signed by the black entrepreneur Marie Bunel (Phi1811) and accounting ledgers by Louverture's commercial agent Etienne Dupusch (Phi1602). The Library Company next door also has a rich collection of early Dominguan imprints, as well as the Du Simitière collection on the colonial Caribbean (978.F).[72]

Lack of sources is often a problem when retracing the history of slave societies but, with hundreds of thousands of pages of documents spread between dozens of archives, archival resources on the Haitian Revolution are better described as plentiful, even overwhelming. More than ever, one must keep in mind Louverture's favorite proverb: 'doucement va loin, et patience bat la force'.

Notes

[1] Francis Alexander Stanislaus Wimpffen, *A Voyage to Saint Domingo in the Years 1788, 1789, and 1790* (London: T. Cadell, 1797), 43, 206, 223, 335.

[2] Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995). On the historiography on the Haitian Revolution, see also John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 9–16.

[3] For standard political and military histories in French, see Pamphile de Lacroix, *La révolution de Haïti* (1819; reprint, Paris: Karthala, 1995); Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 3 vols. (Port-au-Prince: Courtois, 1847); Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haïti, suivies de la vie du général J-M Borgella*, 11 vols. (Paris: Dezobry et Magdeleine, 1853–1860); Auguste Nemours, *Histoire militaire de la guerre d'indépendance de Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols. (Paris: Berger-Levrault,

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[4] Cyril Lionel Robert James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

[5] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). On citizenship, see Laurent Dubois, '"Citoyens et Amis!" Esclavage, citoyenneté et République dans les Antilles françaises à l'époque révolutionnaire', *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58, no. 2 (March–April 2003): 281–304; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). For other English-language histories of the Revolution, see Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914); Thomas Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789–1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973).

[6] For early critical works, see Antoine Dalmas, *Histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols. (Paris: Mame frères, 1814); Jonathan Brown, *History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: William Marshall, 1837); R. Lepelletier de Saint-Rémy, *Saint-Domingue: étude et solution nouvelle de la question haïtienne* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1846); H. Castonnet des Fosses, *La perte d'une colonie: la révolution de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Faivre, 1893). For early celebratory works, see Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti* (London: Albion Press, 1805); Antoine Métral, *Histoire de l'insurrection des esclaves dans le nord de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Delaunay, 1818). For recent celebratory works, see Denis Laurent-Ropa, *Haïti: Une colonie française, 1625–1802* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993); Pat Chin et al., eds., *Haiti, A Slave Revolution: 200 Years after 1804* (New York: International Action Center, 2004); Wiener Kerns Fleurimond, *Haïti, 1804–2004: le bicentenaire d'une révolution oubliée* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

[7] For early works critical of Louverture, see Louis Dubroca, *La vie de Toussaint Louverture, chef des noirs insurgés de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Dubroca, 1802); Cousin d'Avallon, *Histoire de Toussaint Louverture, chef des noirs insurgés de cette colonie* (Paris: Pillot, 1802). For early works celebrating Louverture, see Joseph Saint-Rémy, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Moquet, 1850); Alphonse de Lamartine, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Levy, 1850); John Relly Beard, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture: The Negro Patriot of Hayiti* (London: Ingram, Cooke and Co., 1853); Thomas Gragnon-Lacoste, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Durand, 1877); Victor Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Ollendorf, 1889); H. Pauléus Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint Louverture*, 3 vols. (Port-au-Prince: Héraux, 1920–1933); Alfred Nemours, *Histoire de la captivité et de la mort de Toussaint Louverture: Notre pélerinage au fort de Joux* (Paris: Berger Levrault, 1929). For recent celebratory works, see Ralph Korngold, *Citizen Toussaint* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1945); Stephen Alexis, *Black Liberator: The Life of Toussaint Louverture* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); Faine Scharon, *Toussaint Louverture et la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols. (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1957); Roger Dorsinville, *Toussaint Louverture ou la vocation de la liberté* (Paris: Julliard, 1965); Wenda Parkinson, *'This Gilded African:' Toussaint L'Ouverture* (London: Quartet Books, 1978); Aimé Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture: La révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981); Alain Foix, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

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[9] For Pierre Pluchon's works, see Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture, de l'esclavage au pouvoir* (Paris: L'école, 1979); Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture, fils noir de la révolution française* (Paris: Ecole des loisirs, 1980); Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Fayard, 1989). For Geggus' works, see David Geggus, 'Toussaint Louverture and the Slaves of the Breda Plantation', *Journal of Caribbean History* 20, no. 1 (1985–1986): 30–48; David Geggus, 'Les débuts de Toussaint Louverture', *Généalogie et histoire de la Caraïbe* no. 170 (May 2004): 4172–3; David Geggus, 'Toussaint Louverture avant et après l'insurrection de 1791', in *Mémoire de révolution d'esclaves à Saint-Domingue*, ed. Franklin Midy (Montréal: CIDIHCA, 2006), 113–29; Geggus, 'Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution', in *Profiles of Revolutionaries in Atlantic History*, ed. R. William Weisberger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 115–35.

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[11] Madison Smartt Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007). On Louverture, see also Philippe Girard, *Toussaint Louverture and the Dilemma of Emancipation: A Biography* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013).

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[13] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 105.

[14] On the Haitian flag, see Luc Dorsinville, *Jean-Jacques Dessalines et la création du drapeau bleu et rouge haïtien* (Port-au-Prince: Les Presses libres, 1953); Hénock Trouillot, *Le drapeau bleu et rouge: une mystification historique* (Port-au-Prince: Théodore, 1958); Michel Aubourg, *Le drapeau dessalinien: Contribution à l'histoire d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1964); Claude and Marcel Auguste, *Pour le drapeau: contribution à la recherche sur les couleurs haïtiennes* (Québec: Namaan?), 1982; Odette Roy Fombrun, *Le drapeau et les armes de la République d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince: Deschamps, 1987); Laurore Saint-Juste, *Les couleurs du drapeau national* (Port-au-Prince: L'imprimeur II, 1988); Girard, 'Birth of a Nation: The Creation of the Haitian Flag and Haiti's French Revolutionary Heritage', *Journal of Haitian Studies* 15, no. 1–2 (2009): 135–50.

[15] Vertus Saint-Louis, *Système colonial et problèmes d'alimentation: Saint-Domingue au XVIIIème siècle* (Montréal: CIDIHCA, 2003).

[16] On Bunel, see Girard, 'Trading Races: Joseph and Marie Bunel, A Diplomat and a Merchant in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue and Philadelphia', *Journal of the Early Republic* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 351–76; Ronald Johnson, 'A Revolutionary Dinner: U.S. Diplomacy toward Saint-Domingue, 1798–1801', *Early American Studies* (January 2011). On Raimond, see John Garrigus,

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[17] Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

[18] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 40.

[19] Gérard Barthélémy, *Créoles, bossales: conflit en Haïti* (Petit Bourg, Guadeloupe: Ibis Rouge, 2000). On the racial divide in Haiti, see also David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Michael Largey, *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art Music and Cultural Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[20] Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla l'oncle, essais d'ethnographie* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de Compiègne, 1928).

[21] Jean Fouchard, *The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death* (1972; reprint, New York: Edward Blyden Press, 1981).

[22] Geggus, 'Sex, Ratio, Age, and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records', *Journal of African History* 30, no. 1 (1989): 23–44; Geggus, 'Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint-Domingue', in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 259–78; Geggus, 'The French Slave Trade: An Overview', *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 119–38.

[23] Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (1995; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). For other works, see Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

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[25] Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Daniel Desormeaux, 'The First of the Black Memorialists: Toussaint Louverture', *Yale French Studies* no. 107 (2005): 131–45; Léon-François Hoffman, 'Mythe et Idéologie: La Cérémonie du Bois-Caïman', *Études créoles* 13, no. 1 (1990): 9–34; Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

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