‘A Stranger in a Strange Land’: Re-Conceptualizing the Presence of foreign-born Nationals in Nineteenth-Century Haiti Using the Port-au-Prince Marriage Registries’

Introduction:

Despite its hard won independence in 1804 and the profound effects of a prolonged revolutionary war, Haiti’s port cities continued to bustle with a variety of activities in the aftermath of colonial control. The revolution had, however, ended the political and economic primacy of the colony’s northern port of Cap Français (undoubtedly one of the most important cities in the Americas at the height of its plantation economy), and Port-au-Prince emerged as the principal maritime gateway into the fledgling republic. There is little question that the volume of trade experienced

1 This is a selected portion of one of my dissertation chapters of the same title.
2 This title is taken from the writings of Mohammah Gardo Baquaqua. It was a description of his feelings upon arriving in Port-au-Prince in 1847 as he walked through the city with another refugee slave. The phrase is from the Old Testament of the King James Bible, Exodus 2:22: “And she [Zippo’rah] bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.” The reference is powerfully apt given Baquaqua’s former enslavement. The phrase is also used by J. Montague Simpson to describe his travels in Haiti, specifically his recounting of events surrounding time spent with Protestants in Port-au-Prince. See J. Montague Simpson, Six Months in Port-Au-Prince and My Experience (Philadelphia: GS Ferguson, 1905), 73. For a detailed analysis of Baquaqua’s travels see Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds. The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 180.
4 For a more detailed perspective on the political, cultural, and economic timbre of the pre-revolutionary era in Le Cap, see James E. McClellan III. Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime (Baltimore: Johns hopkins University Press, 1992). On the colony’s port cities and their respective decline see David Geggus, "The Major Port Towns of Saint Domingue in the Later Eighteenth Century." In Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850, edited by Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, 87-116 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 111. As Geggus notes, “The slave revolt of 1791 in large measure ended commercial activity in Cap Français until the
during the French colonial regime declined significantly following independence. Nevertheless, the city remained a Caribbean hub of smuggling, immigration, emigration, and a general point of transit. That this would be the case is not surprising given the country’s location in the geographic centre of the Greater Antilles, and its short distance to Cuba, Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico (not to mention its shared border with the Spanish side to the east), all of which maintained their own systems of slavery. And, as would be expected with a series of coastal cities and towns with corresponding hinterlands, foreign nationals from around the Atlantic passed through their ports.

Indeed, from the beginning of the new republic, foreigners—whether white, black, or brown—came and went. The only group that had serious difficulty in Hayti were white French citizens, especially since Jean-Jacques Dessalines, like the majority of the newly independent nation’s population, had little affection for anyone who was a blanc and hailed from the Hexagone, but it wasn’t a situation that would last, and is

achieved.

The trade of Port-au-Prince fared somewhat better thanks to the British occupation of 1793-98. Neither port, however, would regain its former volume of trade. While Le Cap became the capital of Henry Christophe’s short-lived northern kingdom (though not the royal residence), after 1820 it was relegated to provincial mediocrity. Overshadowed by the burgeoning national capital, which belatedly expanded to fill its ambitious grid plan, Le cap preserved only a proud insularity still expressed in its own dialect of Creole.”

As did its other ports, notably Jacmel, Les Cayes and Jérémie in the South; St. Marc and Gonaïves in the West; and, Port-de-Paix in the North. A number of historians have commented on the immediate economic aftermath of independence, arguing that whether legal or contraband, the ports were thriving. See Alain Turnier, Les États-Unis Et Le Marché Haïtien (Montréal: Imprimerie Saint-Joseph, 1955). On the importance of contraband and smuggling in the nineteenth-century economy see Brenda Gayle Plummer, "The Metropolitan Connection: Foreign and Semiforeign Elites in Haiti, 1900-1915." Latin American Research Review 19, no. 2 (1984): 119-42, esp. 122; Madiou, Histoire d’Haïti, III, 227.

On the economic, political, and cultural meanings of port-cities see Philip Curtin, "Preface." In Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850, edited by Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), xv. As he states, “Intercultural relations are especially important in port cities because these are places where strangers met out of necessity. They are places where people of differing culture not only exist in the same narrow geographic setting but come to do business with one another.” Leyburn also admits to the cultural contact that Haitian ports afforded during the nineteenth century. Leyburn, The Haitian People, 108. “Others point out the difference between the lower-class Negro of the large commercial towns and black peasants who live in the plains and mountains. The former, in contact with the roughest of white sailors, are a disgrace to any people, while the country folk seeing only a select few of the whites, appear “to have an innate idea of the white man’s superiority,” and so treat him with respect.”
generally more complex than commonly believed. After the general massacres of French whites, those of nationality other than French, such as the English and Americans, continued on in the country after independence (Robert Sutherland being an excellent example). Not only did he and others like him experience few problems, they in fact had direct access to the seat of power. Moreover, constitutional exemptions for citizenship were given to a number of white Europeans, including members of the Polish army who fought for Haitian independence with the indigene army. In effect, then, Haiti was not, contrary to much opinion, a homogenous black nation exclusively inhabited by people of African descent; exceptions were numerous.

More importantly, as a free republic that had abolished slavery and institutionalized political rule by non-whites, Haiti became a beacon in the Caribbean, beckoning the enslaved and free people of colour from proximate islands, and locales further afield, to reach its shores and find haven from the tyranny of slavery and racism.

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7 It is commonly believed that Dessalines massacred all the whites. This is false. See Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti, Tome III*, 148, 178. As Boisrond Tonnerre read on January 1st, 1804: “Paix à nos voisins; mais anathème au nom français, haine éternelle à la France: voilà notre cri.” Importantly, Dessalines’ “pitiless” massacres of white French citizens following independence certainly did not endear him to historians or any number of other racist writers. Although obviously reprehensible, particularly the slaughter of innocent children, he did nothing that the French, particularly the atrocities committed by General Rochambeau (not to mention the decades of enforced labour under slavery), had not done first. See Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 155-158. For the planning of the massacres and the heated discussions prior to its execution, See Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti, Tome III*, 148-152.


And, by 1825, there could be little doubt that the ‘Black Republic’, and Port-au-Prince in particular, had attracted a significant population of political refugees. As British consul Charles Mackenzie noted on his initial arrival into Haiti, “It is a certain fact that a very large proportion of the population of this city consists of refugee slaves from the British colonies.”11 His observation gives pause as to Haiti’s situation for the first thirty-plus years of its independence: It was, in effect, a de facto maroon territory, a quilombo or palenque writ large.12 Or at least in the Americas, since, as Robin Law has shown, Africans did control important areas of the slave trade in Africa. And where they did, it was impossible for the Europeans to resist African sovereignty. Thus, for European traders and their governments used to dealing on both sides of the Atlantic, the idea of a Black, or African, controlled polity, and their deference to them, was de rigueur.13

At the same time that refugees from the British colonies were escaping to Haiti, as well as from other French and Spanish islands, the government of Jean Pierre Boyer actively pursued the promotion of African American immigration from the United States. Indeed, during the 1820’s approximately 13,000 American Blacks left the United States for Hispaniola, risking the vagaries of the tropics for a chance to live outside the purview of white supremacy.14 The promotion of African-American migrants would occur again

11 Charles Mackenzie, as quoted in Nicholls, From Dessalines to Duvalier, 62.
12 Bolster, Black Jacks, 157.
14 The actual numbers who came aren’t clear. The number 6000 is repeated regularly, but this may be due to the fact that Boyer himself wrote that he wanted a total of 6000 African Americans to emigrate and relocate in as many as 18 different areas. See Daniel Loring Dewey, "Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti, of the Free People of Colour, in the United States. Together with the Instructions to the Agent Sent out by President Boyer." (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824), 27. Bird, writing in the 1860’s
officially in 1859 and 1861 under the regimes of Soulouque and Geffrard, respectively. But their relative success at relocating and integrating the immigrants has generally been viewed as equivocal at best and an outright failure at worst.\textsuperscript{15}

By 1850, however, it became evident that men and women from all over the Atlantic were coming to Haiti and marrying into Haitian kinship groups, particularly into the petit and grande bourgeoisie. In that very year, according to the Port-au-Prince marriage registries, men and women born in the United States, Germany, France, Martinique, and Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), married in Haiti’s capital city.\textsuperscript{16}

Their presence in the marriage registries demonstrates that the in-migration of foreigners—importantly not limited to whites—was part of a continuous and steadily increasing pattern that would continue well into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{17}

And, although there has been general agreement among contemporary writers and later historians that foreigners were present in Haiti throughout the nineteenth century, the meanings attached to that presence have varied, as have questions regarding their size, “complexion”, and socio-economic impact. Indeed, the commentary has generally ranged between two radically divergent interpretations: on the one hand are those who believe that the immigration and the presence of foreigners has tended to be a relatively

\textsuperscript{15} For more on the African-American immigrations see Chris Dixon, \textit{African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century} (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002); and Léon Dénius Pamphile, \textit{Haitiens and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope} (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001). However, John Baur’s work seems to suggest the opposite, with interesting implications. See Baur, “Mulatto Machiavelli”, 327, 328.

\textsuperscript{16} See Archives Nationale d’Haïti (hereafter cited as ANH), \textit{Régistre de Mariage, Port-au-Prince}, 1850.

benign phenomenon, or at least minimal in its impact; the second tends to the belief that Haiti has been little more than a pawn in larger imperialist projects, with foreign residents—and particularly white Europeans—cynically manipulating the politics of the Black Republic for their own enrichment.

The most obvious examples of the first perspective are James Leyburn and Léon-François Hoffmann. Leyburn, while comparing the numbers of white foreigners present in 1930 to that of the nineteenth century, states that they were more or less reflective of the period from 1804 to 1915, having little real effect on Haiti culturally, politically, or economically:

Contacts of the Haitian people with the outside world between 1804 and 1915 were meagre. The slaughter of whites by Dessalines, the economic decline of the country, unwillingness of white nations to treat with a Negro state, the schism in the Catholic church, restrictive legislation against white foreigners, general illiteracy of the people—all these shut Haiti off from the world. Christophe, it is true, invited in a few English schoolmasters and agricultural experts, but these remained only a short while and had little influence even among the elite. For a century Haiti saw no foreigners except the few traders at seaports, an occasional Wesleyan missionary, a limited number of consuls and ministers, certain travelers interested in odd corners of the earth, and, after 1860, Catholic priests and sisters.  

As the above quote makes clear, Leyburn saw Haiti as having little contact with foreigners up to the 1915 U.S. occupation, and that contact as negligible. Importantly, however, his operating assumption (as is the case with other historians) is that foreigner meant “white”. Thus, while European immigration, or even transiting-through, has been limited (although this point is contestable), non-white foreigners are, for the most part, a

19 Leyburn, The Haitian People, 105. He notes, however, that during the U.S. occupation the military barracks were significant sites of cultural dissemination: “Wherever Marine barracks were located, there were centres of cultural dissemination which was bound in the long run to affect Haitian ideas and practices. Automobiles, radios, amusements, even the daily conversation of the Marines, all left their mark upon a people who had been effectively isolated form the world for more than a century.”
neglected aspect of discussions of nineteenth-century history. The most recent incarnation of the Leyburn thesis—which will be directly challenged by this chapter—is Hoffmann’s most recent treatise on creolization and national identity in Haiti, which provides a socio-cultural overview of the post-independence period. He argues that it is primarily the lack of white immigration that has directly impacted, and ostensibly retarded, any meaningful creolization in Haiti:

Now, if we define creolization as a process of differentiation from the metropole through the development of a specific view and way of life, it is obvious that the Haitians have completed the process—indeed, were the first nation in Latin America to have done so. Except that they called it haitianization. And except that it differed significantly from creolization elsewhere. For in other lands creolization meant, and means, not only the differentiation from the original settlers, but the amalgamation of all the cultures that different immigrant groups brought in through the years. In Haiti, to all intents and purposes, both European and African immigration came to a halt in 1791. The white power elite disappeared; later immigration by Germans, Italians and Near Easterners is statistically negligible; there was no immigration from the Indian subcontinent (as in Guadeloupe, Trinidad and Guyana), nor from China (as in Cuba and elsewhere), nor from Japan (as in Brazil). The national motto of Jamaica, “Out of many, one people,” would therefore make no sense in Haiti. And the amalgamation of cultures which accompanies integration is limited in Haiti to the partial absorption of aspects of the African-derived popular culture by the French-derived culture of the elite.

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20 In fact, Leyburn’s position has since morphed into an ongoing and powerful meta-narrative of post-independence Haiti: isolation. Sidney Mintz, in the introduction to the 1966 reprint emphasized Leyburn’s argument, which also became one of the centerpieces of Mintz’s description of the nineteenth century: “The Haitian People enjoyed immediate success. One of the very few books to deal with that country’s crucial century of isolation (1804-1915), it is distinguished by careful scholarship, restrained interpretation, and a refreshing modesty; in these regards it differs from nearly every modern work written on the Republic of Haiti.” See Sidney W. Mintz, "Introduction to the Revised Edition.” In The Haitian People, edited by Sidney W. Mintz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), v. Since then, the isolation thesis has played a prominent role in the historical analysis of nineteenth century Haitian history. See Thorald M. Burnham, “Challenging the Haitian Isolation Thesis: Reconceptualizing Nineteenth Century Historical Interpretations of the Black Republic”, (Forthcoming).

For Hoffmann, then, what makes Haiti unique and different from the rest of the Caribbean is the quantitative absence of white immigration during the nineteenth century, a reality directly connected to Haiti’s ostensible non-Creole status. And, furthermore, is his implicit assumption that “Black” immigration was homogenous, if it was important at all.

Other historians (in contrast to Leyburn and Hoffmann), such as André Georges Adam and Barbara Plummer, have argued that the presence of foreign nationals—in particular white Europeans—during the nineteenth century (specifically consuls and merchants), was anything but benign, the two authors differing only on when the white foreign merchant elite became dominant in Port-au-Prince and other port cities. Other historians (in contrast to Leyburn and Hoffmann), such as André Georges Adam and Barbara Plummer, have argued that the presence of foreign nationals—in particular white Europeans—during the nineteenth century (specifically consuls and merchants), was anything but benign, the two authors differing only on when the white foreign merchant elite became dominant in Port-au-Prince and other port cities.\footnote{André Georges Adam \textit{Une Crise Haïtienne1867-1869 Sylvain Salnave (Port-au-Prince: Henri Deschamps, 1982); Barbara G. Plummer, \textit{Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902-1915} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). See also Michel-Rolph Trouillot, \textit{Haiti, State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism} (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990).}

Plummer, for her part, locates the final loss of control in the years before the U.S. occupation:

\begin{quote}
The foreign and semiforeign elites emerged early in the 1800s and reached the height of their influence as agents of metropolitan power in the early twentieth century, before World War I. The American occupation of Haiti (1915-34) altered these groups, but did not destroy them.\footnote{Plummer, "The Metropolitan Connection: Foreign and Semiforeign Elites in Haiti, 1900-1915." \textit{Latin American Research Review} 19, no. 2 (1984): 119-42, 119.}
\end{quote}

Plummer’s assessment, then, is that European immigration and intermarrying led to the creation of an elite focused on foreign trade to the detriment of the national interest, a practice that undermined Haitian sovereignty and ultimately ushered in foreign occupation.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, 127,128. Foreign-born Europeans marrying into Haitian kinship groups plays a significant part of her discussion.}
André Adam—while agreeing with Plummer on the primacy of white European interventions in Haitian affairs—argues that the question of foreign dominance had been settled during the brief presidency of Sylvain Salnave (over thirty years earlier than Plummer’s argument), wherein France, Britain, and the United States competed for imperial control:

Le gouvernement de Salnave, on le verra, ne ressemble ni à ses prédécesseurs ni à ses successeurs. La crise de 1867-1869 est une crise “totale, globale” qui affecte tous les aspects de la vie nationale de l’époque. C’est l’un des moments le plus critiques de notre histoire. Bref, l’intérêt de cette tranche historique vient du fait qu’elle se situe à un carrefour tant sur le plan national que sur le plan international. Il y a des experiences qui sont finissantes, il y en a d’autres qui sont commençantes.25

Adam’s argument, like Plummer’s, is that the great powers at play in Haiti seriously menaced Haitian sovereignty. But, unlike Plummer, Adam argued that the question had been settled long before the arrival of the United States Marines in 1915. He thought that the balance had tipped considerably in the 1860’s with the emergence of the United States and its competition for market share of Haitian imports.26 Thus, although differing from Leyburn and Hoffmann on the impact of European in-migration, Plummer and Adam seem to agree that the most important aspect of their presence in Haiti was on the battlefields of imperial economic competition.27

Apart from the discussions and commentary on the activities of white Europeans, the other subject of discussion concerning the foreign element in nineteenth century Haiti has taken two directions: the focus on African-American emigration before 1865 and the Levantine incursions beginning in the post 1880 period. In the first instance, the vast majority of the scholarship has focused on the emigration of American blacks as a

25 Adam, Crise, 11.
26 Ibid., 38.
27 The other group of cursory interest has been African Americans, which will be addressed below.
function of U.S. black nationalism, typically always in relation to the United States and the realities of slavery and white supremacy there. In the second instance, the arrival of the Syrio-Lebanese immigrants beginning in the 1880’s has been seen as part of, yet still separate from, the European and American interventions. In this case, the interesting aspect here is that while France and Germany (Britain to a lesser extent), had white representatives in the country, the United States had far fewer. As a result, they then chose to use the Syrians to their economic and political advantage since the group sold the bulk of U.S. metropolitan goods in Haiti. Yet, rarely has the discussion focused squarely on the Haitian perspective with the questions of American, or other nation’s histories, at the periphery.

Discussions of the impact of the nineteenth century foreign nationals aside, calculating the actual sizes of the various ex-patriot populations in nineteenth century Haiti appears quite problematic, with little agreement among scholars. Leyburn, for his part, believed that the number was less than three thousand, fewer than at the time of his writing in the late 1930’s. Simpson, writing in 1937, speculated that the “The total


30 Franklin Knight’s discussion of historical perspective in the 2nd edition to his book is enlightening. Responding, no doubt, to criticism of his unapologetic Caribbean viewpoint he remarked in the preface: “It is, of course, valid to view Caribbean history from the political and economic perspective of Africa, Europe, or mainland America—especially for Africans, Europeans, and mainland Americans. But the validity of that view cannot, and should not, invalidate the local perspective. This is the only conscious “slant” that this history provides: to look from the inside out (for someone on the inside) is not only legitimate, it is the only view. “ See Knight, *The Caribbean*, 2nd ed., xv.

31 Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 309. The full quote is revealing: “Haiti, because she is a colored nation in an white Western World, has been even more isolated than she would otherwise have been, even with her island position and her economic poverty. Except for the presence of American marines for nineteen years
number of foreigners in Haiti probably does not exceed four or five thousand at the present time.” But, he did acknowledge their role in commerce and retail in the urban centers during the nineteenth century. Mark Baker Bird, writing in the 1860’s also hinted at numbers by offering a religious census (of sorts) of the protestant population in Haiti during the 1860’s, which tended to be heavily invested with foreigners, or at least those born elsewhere. Plummer, however, does the most to bring together the disparate estimates of foreign penetration at various times between the 1860’s and 1930’s, but even then she is primarily concerned with French, German, American, and Syrian incursions and the British to a lesser degree. But, as she noted, “The foreign community in the black republic never exceeded ten thousand persons, including those who claimed dual citizenship.” Nonetheless, it is clear that Plummer’s “foreign and semiforeign” elites are predominantly European in their “cosmopolitan” maritime culture, especially since there has been little cultural contact with outsiders, and hence little cultural conflict. It is generally estimated that there are not more than three thousand white people living in Haiti, and these mostly in the capital city. Throughout the nineteenth century it is likely that there were fewer.”

32 George Eaton Simpson, “Haiti's Social Structure.” American Sociological Review 6, no. 5 (Oct., 1941): 640-49, 643. The exception being, however, the foreign consuls and the German merchants (sometimes one and the same), who seem to be especially singled out as the most successful integrationists in the nineteenth-century. We do know, however, that there was, by the time of the U.S. intervention in 1915 a sizable and powerful German colony, not to mention the number of French nationals and the Americans as well. And certainly the Syrio-Lebanese contingent was recognized as economically significant, if not socially exclusive.

33 See Mark Baker Bird, The Black Man; or, Haytian Independence. Deduced from Historical Notes (New York, 1869), 152-153. His assessment of the initial immigration of Americans under Boyer: “It would appear, however, that this difficult undertaking, although well meant and commenced in all good faith on the part of the Boyer Government, upon the whole, was not well managed, for, notwithstanding many respectable people came, with ample means, who were of great use to the country, it must be admitted that many came who were a perfect misfortune to themselves and the community which they had come to join. Some even died of grief, and many returned; the entirely military character and habits of Hayti were unsuitable to the American immigrants; many, however, remained and became respectable and useful in various branches of industry. Some who persevered in remaining became ministers of the Gospel, and proved to be of sound character, both of the Methodist and Baptist denominations. Small churches therefore soon sprung up, both in the French and Spanish part of the island.”

34 Plummer, “Foreign and Semiforeign Elites”, 125. Citing other secondary sources she notes that the French Antillean community numbered 1500 by 1910; Syrio-Lebanese were 6000 in 1903; Italians 300 in 1914.

35 Ibid., 125. However, there is some confusion and overlap concerning the way in which Plummer classifies dual citizens and Europeans, particularly around questions of colour.
her estimate of 10,000 is so clearly challenged by the numbers associated with Afro-
American emigration in the 1820’s, a subject she tends to ignore. Furthermore, Plummer
is clear on the importance of marriage and its use in the late nineteenth century to
undermine Haitian sovereignty. 36

This, however, is not surprising in light of the contemporary post-independence
discussions amongst Haitians themselves (and the odd foreign observer), on the question
of immigration. As David Nicholls has argued, whether or not to officially sanction and
encourage white immigration, and other immigrations (whether Indian or Asian or
African), caused heated debate throughout the century. Indentured immigration was
discussed as one means of alleviating the labour shortage on the idle plantations, but the
ramifications of supporting large-scale immigration of whites was seen as far too risky,
and with good cause. And, once again, the focus was on whites, which has tended to
obscure a number of other in-migrations that seriously impacted the small nation. 37

However, an examination of the Port-au-Prince marriage registries between the
period 1850-1871 (specifically focusing on those marriages that include at least one
spouse who was born outside of Haiti), indicates that the immigration and emigration
patterns into and out of Haiti were much more complex and dynamic than a series of
European in-migrations, or the occasional putatively unsuccessful African-American
colonization project. Indeed, the foreign-born element in the marriage registries, which
appears to be a sustained, Atlantic wide phenomenon, demonstrates clearly that the
nineteenth-century period up to the 1915 U.S. occupation is clearly much more than a

36 Ibid., 127,128.
37 David Nicholls, Economic Dependence and Political Autonomy, the Haitian Experience, Occasional
Paper Series, No. 9 (Montreal: McGill University Centre for Developing-Area Studies, 1974), especially
24,25.
series of rebellions and revolts and base internecine warfare.\textsuperscript{38} Immigration into Haiti appears to have been steady, with no large waves of new immigrants, as was the case with the large countries and territories of the Americas. Rather, the continuous influx, albeit diffused along the coastal cities of Haiti, if considered cumulatively over time, does indeed represent a significant in-migration of foreign-born nationals. However, no single wave of immigration was large enough to displace the local population culturally, economically, or racially, but there may be evidence enough to conclude that total immigration into Haiti during the 1804-1904 period was similar to that of Trinidad and British Guyana. The fundamental difference, however, was that this immigration has neither been considered in the aggregate, nor in light of the complicated nature of large scale out-migration of the lower social classes, and the continuing engineering of exile by the elite. Thus, it may be less a question of integration or assimilation, than the reality that small quasi-exclusive communities did exist over the long-term. However, the in-migrations possessed neither the size, nor momentum to do any significant damage to the established dominant culture in place since the colonial regime.\textsuperscript{39}

Thus, in direct opposition to Leyburn and Hoffmann, and with the intent of complicating the respective positions of Adam and Plummer, I will argue that the immigration of foreign-born nationals into Haiti was much more complex than has been previously understood. Indeed, the Port-au-Prince marriage registries for the period 1850-1871 offer, in effect, a “window” through which this aspect of the social history of

\textsuperscript{38} I’m thinking here specifically of the common notion that between 1843-1915, little else but political intrigue occurred. See Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl. \textit{Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 180. As they argue, “Such was to be the framework of Haitian politics for the next seventy-five years: intrigue, conspiracy, treachery, violence, coups, caste against caste, color against color, regions against region.”

\textsuperscript{39} This seems to follow the examples of the Chinese in British Guyana. See Brian L. Moore, \textit{Cultural Power, Resistance, and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900} (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).
nineteenth-century Haiti can be better understood. Therefore, it is the contention of this paper that the presence of foreigners between 1804-1904 has been quantitatively underestimated and qualitatively misunderstood.

That there has been a quantitative omission and qualitative elision is evident in three important ways: 1) first, the numbers of foreign-born spouses in the period between 1850-1871 indicates that immigration was much more complex, nuanced, and numerically significant than previously believed. The marriage registries demonstrate that the numbers and origins of foreign-born spouses forces a re-consideration of that period specifically; 2) secondly, if the numerical and qualitative complexity of the 1850-1871 period is used as a window through which to examine the rest of the post-independence period as a whole, the quantitative importance of in-migration becomes apparent. This is particularly true when the registries are combined with other primary and secondary sources—such as birth and death registries and travel accounts—for the rest of the nineteenth century; 3) and finally, as the window is used to quantitatively revise immigration levels, it is impossible not to reconsider the qualitative impact that this migration has had.

Thus, while the impact may not be as measured or profound as the Indian or Portuguese migrations into the British Caribbean and French Caribbean, or the Chinese and European immigrations into Cuba, dismissing the cumulative quantitative in-immigration into Haiti, and its accompanying qualitative impacts, ignores a crucial component of Haiti’s nineteenth-century social history.

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40 I’m using “window” in a similar manner to Lovejoy’s use of export statistics. “Export statistics across the Sahara and across the Atlantic or Indian oceans can be used as a “window” into the economies of Africa.” See Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Volume of Salt Production in the Central Sudan.” Paper presented at the Symposium on the Quantification and Structure of the Import and Export and Long Distance Trade of Africa in the 19th Century (c. 1800-1913), St. Augustin, 3-6 January 1983, 600.
I.) Framing the Window: Foreign-Born Spouses, Populations, and Places, 1850-‘71

In terms of immigration, the period between 1850-71 is almost exclusively associated with the African American movements in the early 1860’s (to a lesser extent the 1859 attempt to promote the relocation of free blacks and coloureds from New Orleans), and the successful penetration of European whites, particularly German merchants, into the commercial sectors of the urban milieu in the post 1860 period. In the case of the former, most historians view the attempts at colonization as failures, given the high mortality rates and the propensity of many of the adventurers to return to the United States with little cultural, political, or economic impact on their temporary host country. With respect to the latter, much ink has been spilled on the imperial adventures of European merchants who funded revolutions and rebellions and generally contributed to the “inevitable” occupation of U.S. marines in 1915. Further, as Nicholls has noted, the discussion of white immigration was heated and long standing, with property rights and the possibility for naturalization and citizenship the dominant themes. The marriage records reveal, however, that immigration was not confined to these two groups, nor was it principally a question of foreign—meaning European—whites. Rather, the records

44 One of the most forcefully written polemics concerning foreign domination, manipulation, and coercion—the dominant trope of Haitians as victims being front and center—was written by Paul Farmer. See Paul Farmer, The Uses of Haiti (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1994).
45 Nicholls, Economic Independence, 26.
reveal patterns of migration and transit that are Atlantic in nature, multi-racial, and multi-
lingual. Indeed, the period that spanned the political regimes of Soulouque, Geffrard, and
Salnave demonstrate a depth, breadth, and complexity of immigration that has, for the
most part, been ignored or overlooked.

By focusing on the numbers of foreign-born spouses who marry in Haiti during
the 1850-1871 period, it is possible to see how the data create a window through which to
view the rest of the post-independence period, both before 1850 and after 1871. First, and
most importantly, however, are the yearly percentages of foreign-born spouses between
1850-1871. These numbers are impossible to ignore because they empirically establish a
sustained and significant\textsuperscript{46} foreign presence in Haiti much earlier than is believed. Having
established this continued presence it is possible to frame the rest of the “window”, as it
were. In effect, the marriage registries demonstrate four (certainly not an exhaustive list
of possible interpretations and revisions), important ways in which the “window” into the
rest of the period can be framed and the analysis extended into the rest of the nineteenth-
century: 1) First, the marriages reveal that the in-migration of white Europeans was in
fact less than other groups such as African Americans and other Caribbeans; 2) Second,
the registries show that the African American immigration was consistent and long term,
rather than several separate and distinct episodes; 3) Third, a numeric assessment of
regional origins demonstrates that the Caribbean in-migration was by far the largest
portion of the period; 4) Fourth, and finally, is that the presence of foreign-born spouses
points to a larger Atlantic pattern of trans-national migration, highlighting the importance
of Atlantic port-cities and the possibilities of uncovering new links within that system,

\textsuperscript{46} Certainly the foreign-born element in the marriage registries is significant. Expanding this as a window
into the rest of the period will be contentious. See note 31 above.
such as that between Canada and the Caribbean generally, and between Canada West and Haiti specifically.\footnote{Certainly this is not an exclusive list. While there are hints of Caribbean colonization movements into the island during the nineteenth century, more research is needed to establish the breadth and depth of these movements from the rest of the archipelago.}

**Conclusion**

While these numbers detailing the national origin—or birthplace—of the foreign-born spouses in the Port-au-Prince marriage records indicate an Atlantic dimension to the social history of Haiti that is often overlooked, the numbers by themselves can only demonstrate the extent to which men and women from those countries came to Haiti and married. Determining why they might be in Haiti, their motivations for marriage, or their connection to larger currents of migration requires, obviously, a much clearer understanding of who these men and women were.\footnote{This analysis is complicated further by the fact that families emigrated together. And, as such, numbers of children are difficult to assess.} That they are present is evident, but the interpretations based on their presence in Haiti requires correlating information relating to religion, marriage strategies, commercial alliances, and kinship arrangements, to name just a few.

Nonetheless, this stark Atlantic component obliges a re-conceptualization of our notions of the Caribbean as little more than the islands.\footnote{The “exact” boundaries of the Caribbean is a vexing question, to be sure. While Franklin Knight has declared that, “Political boundaries do not necessarily make, or conform to, cultural boundaries”, the designation of one territory as Caribbean and another as not is certainly contentious. See Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: the Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xv,3-5. On the contentious issue of just what constitutes the Caribbean, see Andres Serbin, "The Caribbean: Myths and Realities for the 1990s." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 32, no. 2 (1990): 121-41.} Canada West and Quebec must be seen in this light, as well as the countries all along the outer rim of the Caribbean basin. Venezuela, for example, while often viewed as a cursory connection to Haiti...
through Bolivar, experienced an influx of Haitian migrants in the twentieth century. But the marriage registries show the connection was probably much older, evidently continuing on well after the Latin American revolutionary Simon Bolivar’s brief sojourn on Haitian shores. This complex array of foreign-born spouses demonstrates the possibility that one of the main routes of transmission of Atlantic cultures was through the kinship networks. In effect, then, the marriage registries between 1850 and 1871 allow for a multi-dimensional analysis of the Atlantic systems component of nineteenth-century history. They clearly demonstrate that Haiti was, contrary to other’s opinions, an active and dynamic node of commerce, migration, and transit. Moreover, they form an integral part of a theoretical framework by which to examine the quantitative and qualitative interpretations of Haiti’s post independence period.

Overall, then, using the data on foreign-born spouses in Port-au-Prince demonstrates the need to completely re-assess the 1850-1871 period in terms of immigration. The exclusive focus on the numbers of Europeans or African Americans needs to be re-considered in light of the larger migrations from within the Archipelago. Furthermore, African-American immigration appears to have been much more than a series of brief waves; it was, rather, steady and long term. And, finally, there can be little doubt that the registries indicate a solid Atlantic component, proving not only that Haiti

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was not an isolated backwater during the 3rd quarter of the nineteenth century; it was very much a Caribbean and Atlantic hub of activity.

This re-conceptualization of the period is also, in effect, a framework through which it is possible to view the rest of the period, both before 1850 and after 1871. By linking the marriage registries to larger patterns, a clearer picture of the social history of nineteenth century Haiti will become apparent, permitting, at least initially, two major conclusions: first, that the quantitative assessments of immigration into Haiti need to be considered in light of the records; and, secondly, that this quantitative re-assessment must, logically, be followed by qualitative re-assessment of post-independence period.