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The naming of Haiti

When St. Domingue declared its independence it was renamed Haiti, an Amerindian name. Author explores what the founding fathers of Haitian independence might have known about the Amerindian past in the Caribbean and in South America. He also raises questions about ethnicity and identity in 19th-c. Haiti.

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## THE NAMING OF HAITI

When the first modern black state declared its independence on January 1, 1804, it adopted an Amerindian name, though its population was overwhelmingly African and Afro-American, and it had been ruled by Europeans for three centuries. The renaming of French Saint Domingue as "Haïti" remains the only case of a Caribbean colony undergoing a radical change of name on achieving independence.<sup>1</sup> Apparently meaning "rugged, mountainous" in the Taino Arawak language, the word was assumed to be the aboriginal term for the island Columbus christened "La Española."<sup>2</sup> The choice of name raises interesting questions about ethnicity and identity, and historical knowledge in the Caribbean, yet the circumstances surrounding its selection have gone entirely unrecorded. Haiti's earliest historians, Vastey (1969:44) and Madiou (1987-89, III:140-52), were able to reveal little on the matter. Modern historians have found almost nothing new to add (Fouchard 1984b:13-17).

Having fought an extremely bitter war to expel French colonists and British and Spanish invaders (1791-1803), Haiti's victorious ex-slaves and mixed-race elite evidently wished to emphasize symbolically their break with Europe. After completing the massacre of the remaining colonists in April 1804, head of state Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed that no European would ever again be a proprietor in Haiti, and declared enigmatically "I have avenged America!"<sup>3</sup> There are few clues, however, as to how the decision was made in Dessalines's entourage of black and colored generals to anchor the new state to an American and non-colonial past. Historian Thomas Madiou (1987-89, III:131) merely tells us that, when the last French troops left in December 1803,

People immediately thought about giving a new name to this land that formed the new state. On everyone's lips was the name of *Haiti*, a reminder of the island's native inhabitants, who had been wiped out defending their freedom. It received an enthusiastic welcome, and the local people called themselves *Haitiens*.<sup>4</sup>

One might wonder why a place-name that had scarcely been used for three centuries came so spontaneously and universally to mind in an almost entirely illiterate population that had had little leisure for investigating the past. Those accustomed to thinking of the Taino Arawak as helpless victims of genocide also might be surprised to find them symbolizing violent resistance for the first black Haitians. This article seeks to explore what the makers of Haitian independence might have known of those past victims of European imperialism whose patrimony they came to inherit.

#### HAITI AND AFRICA

First, it is not entirely surprising the founding fathers did not pick an African name for their state. Dolores Yonker (1989) points out that "ayi" is the word for "earth" in Fon, a language that has left a marked imprint on the lexicon of Haitian voodoo. However, her claim that this was the source of Dessalines's inspiration has little linguistic or historical basis. The "y" in the Fon word is usually a consonant; the "y" used interchangeably with "i" in the state's name is a vowel.<sup>5</sup> The state was not called "Hayiti"; nor "Ayi," of course. And at no time do Haitians ever seem to have believed their state to have an African name. Aja-Fon, furthermore, constituted no more than 15 percent of Saint Domingue's African slaves in the later eighteenth century. Though half or more of Haiti's population had been born in Africa, they spoke dozens of different languages, which rendered difficult the choice of an acceptable term.<sup>6</sup> A decision to name the country something like "Nouveau Kongo," building on nostalgia for a prestigious African state, the homeland of close to half the Africans in Saint Domingue, would have had little appeal for the other half of the African-born population, and probably would have been offensive to locally-born Haitians.<sup>7</sup>

Most important, few of Haiti's most prominent leaders were African. Though some hostile commentators identified Dessalines and other ex-slave leaders of the Haitian Revolution as African-born, they used the term indiscriminately as a pejorative.<sup>8</sup> African guerrilla leaders in the mountains – often called "Congos" – had played critical roles at different stages of

the Revolution, but their power had been broken by the Creole (i.e. locally-born) generals of the colonial army, who were backed, so Madiou claimed, by the Creole population of the plains. According to him, this had been a precondition for achieving national independence.<sup>9</sup>

Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre, who wrote the declaration of independence, was passionately anti-European but, Paris-educated, of mixed racial descent and several generations removed from slavery, he had little personal connection to Africa (Boisrond-Tonnerre 1981:viii-x). Dessalines entrusted him with writing the independence proclamation on December 31, after rejecting as too staid an earlier attempt by another French-educated mulatto, Charéron. Boisrond supposedly declared, "To draw up the act of independence we need the skin of a whiteman for parchment, his skull for an inkwell, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for a pen" (Madiou 1987-89, III:145). He sat up all night to work on the document. On the morning of January 1, 1804, before the proclamation was made public in the seaport of Gonaïves, a group of senior military officers met to swear support for independence and to name Dessalines head of state. "They were agreed," Joseph Saint-Rémy (1956, IV:5) tells us with tantalizing imprecision, "on giving back to the country its aboriginal name of 'Haïti'."<sup>10</sup> Of the thirty-seven officers who signed the declaration of independence, more than two-thirds were of mixed racial descent, and none was African (Madiou 1987-89, III:150).<sup>11</sup>

#### RACE AND COLOR

The Haitian Revolution had never been just a revolution of slaves, and with a near monopoly on literacy the former "free colored" minority of colonial times was disproportionately represented in the new state apparatus.<sup>12</sup> This was the milieu that had to validate, and very probably suggested, the new state's name. Spokesmen of this new ruling class tended to share European deprecation of African and African-derived culture (Nicholls 1979:11-12; Hurbon 1987:128-29). Voodoo was repressed; Christianity was the only religion recognized by the state.<sup>13</sup> Dessalines's courtiers danced minuets and gavottes, along with the local carabinier, but not the calenda or chicha. And no one seems to have suggested that Creole, the language of the masses, replace French, even though Dessalines himself did not speak it.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Haitian spokesmen did assert that the racial identity of all Haitians was African, and this unifying emphasis on a shared racial heritage served to counteract mutually reinforcing divisions of class and

color (Nicholls 1979; Trouillot 1986:98-99). Léon-François Hoffmann (1994:30-33) observes that mixed-race Haitians seem very rarely to have disowned their African ancestry by substituting a supposed Indian ancestry, as, he says, their Dominican neighbors have done.<sup>15</sup> A few sought to do so in court cases of the colonial period in order to be classified "white," just as others bogusly claimed pure European descent (Debbasch 1967:58-69; Bonniol 1992:101) but after the Revolution began, the opposite occurred: certain white allies of the black revolutionaries claimed to be of mixed racial descent.<sup>16</sup> The constitution of 1805 defined all Haitian citizens as "black" and banned the use of colonial terms denoting phenotype (Janvier 1886:32).

Nevertheless, appeals to "blackness" seem to have been rare during the Revolution. In a mixed-race, color-conscious population they were potentially divisive. In Paris in 1789 a group of free blacks seemingly excluded from the activities of "colored" activists had criticized the latter's "bastardized" origins while vaunting their own racial "purity" (Geggus 1989:1298-99).<sup>17</sup> Haitian ethnographer and statesman Jean Price Mars (1945:7-17) argued "sentiment de race" motivated revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture, and that he wanted to make blackness a subject for pride. I would contend Toussaint fought to remove the stigma attached by Europeans to blackness by pointing out that race does not determine behavior, rather than by valorizing biological attributes.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, after Dessalines's assassination in 1806, the article defining Haitians as "black" was dropped from all subsequent constitutions.

#### HAITI AND THE TAINO

Amerindian symbolism provided a sort of neutral, non-European reference point for a diverse population, some of whose most influential figures had every reason to hate Europeans but who, in ancestry as well as culture, were much more European than African. Though light-skinned Haitians have rarely claimed Amerindian ancestry, it is generally they who have shown most interest in their country's Native American past. From the beginning of the Haitian Revolution mixed-race activists, but not their black counterparts, called themselves "Americans."<sup>19</sup> Dessalines adopted the name "Haïti," but it was the 1816 constitution of Alexandre Pétion, leader of the former free coloreds in the War of Independence (1802-1803), that admitted to Haitian citizenship all African and Amerindian migrants (Janvier 1886:117).<sup>20</sup> Whether or not the choice of an Amerindian name had especial appeal for Haitians of mixed racial descent, it surely

was valued by a ruling class that rejected both African culture and European rule and which was charting unknown terrain in a difficult search for national identity. There are strong reasons therefore for thinking the preponderant influence in the naming of Haiti came from members of the mixed-race elite and that part of the name's attraction was that it was neither European nor African.

Even so, if we believe Madiou's account, the name must at least have resonated with a large section of the population. But what can the mainly African ex-slaves have known of a world that collapsed at the time of Columbus? Some modern Haitian scholars such as Jean Fouchard (1972: 157-65) and Louis Elie (1944-45, I:201-08, II:258-59) have suggested Taino Arawaks or their descendants survived in numbers into the late colonial period (also Charles 1992:115-223). Along with others, like Jean Price Mars, godfather of the Indigenist movement, they have argued for a Taino cultural influence in Saint Domingue down to the Haitian Revolution (and beyond), claiming certain voodoo chants of the revolutionary period to be Arawak war chants. One chant was supposedly written by the ruler Anacaona executed in 1504.<sup>21</sup>

Price Mars's source for attributing a late colonial voodoo chant to the Taino was apparently the mid-nineteenth century work *Histoire des caciques d'Haïti* by Emile Nau. Nau, however, stated that this linking of the voodoo chant with the Taino was a fiction. It had been invented, he claimed, by courtiers of King Henry Christophe (1811-1820) to flatter the monarch, who liked hearing stories about his namesake, Enrique, a sixteenth-century Taino leader who fought against the Spanish (Nau 1963, II:67-68). Unknown to Nau, the chant was genuine, but of African origin; the proposed translation, "Death rather than slavery," was false and taken from an earlier French author.<sup>22</sup> The story thus provides further evidence that elite Haitians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have sometimes been attracted by Hispaniola's Arawak past, but it is not proof of Taino traditions continuing through the time of independence.

In more recent years, Hungarian ethnographer Maya Deren (1975:68-74) and other scholars have suggested a more encompassing Amerindian influence on Haitian voodoo.<sup>23</sup> Part of Deren's case rests on general similarities between African and Native American religions, which she acknowledged to be merely similarities rather than products of diffusion. Her argument is centered, however, on an outmoded understanding of voodoo's violent Petro cult as being an American rather than African creation. An ethnographically and historically more plausible interpretation of Petro sees it as related to the huge influx of Kongo slaves into Saint Domingue in the late eighteenth century (Janzen 1982:273-92; De

Heusch 1989:290-303; Geggus 1991:21-50). Many of its deities, its drumming, dances, and magical accoutrements seem related to the Congo region. Deren was clearly wrong to derive the Kongo words "zombi" and "Simbi" from the Arawak "zemi."<sup>24</sup> Even those who regard Petro as a New World creation, tend to see its violent features as a reaction to enslavement, rather than a product of Amerindian influence. The same can be said of voodoo's decentralized nature, which Deren also linked unconvincingly to the Arawak past. Finally, the inclusion of Taino axe-heads and figurines among the sacred objects of some voodoo temples does suggest an awareness among Haitians of the vanished Amerindians, but it is not evidence, as Louis Maximilien (1992:171-84) claimed, of Arawak influence on the formation of voodoo.<sup>25</sup> Voodoo has no counterpart to the Brazilian Candomblé Caboclo (Valente 1977:60-67; Bastide 1978:173-219).

Nothing is known for certain about the ex-slaves' knowledge of Native American culture. The sixteenth century no doubt saw some cultural transmission between the last survivors of the pre-Columbian population and the first generations of African slaves, though the two groups tended to live in separate locations. Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain (1937, I:xxiii-xxiv, II:275; 1992:155-57) stated in the 1930s that 10 percent of Haitian folktales were "clearly of Indian origin." However, she acknowledged the paucity of sources available to her concerning Caribbean Indians, and other folklorists have seemed less convinced (Courlander 1964:113). Moreover, while traditional foodways or fishing techniques may have been transmitted, directly or through European intermediaries, there seems less reason to think a redundant place-name would have been preserved among the enslaved blacks.<sup>26</sup> Above all, such Amerindian-African contact as occurred on sixteenth-century Hispaniola was likely to involve Indians other than the aboriginal Taino, who numbered fewer than one thousand by 1550, and only a few dozen in the 1560s, when the black population was estimated at between 12,000 and 25,000 (Andrews 1978:15). By that time, Hispaniola's colonists had imported, according to Carlos Deive (1995:11, 359, 367-68), tens of thousands of Indian slaves from all round the Caribbean, and also Mexico and Brazil. By the time the French began large-scale importations of black slaves in the late seventeenth century, the native Arawaks had been almost extinct for about one hundred years.<sup>27</sup>

Dominican ideologues have obviously exaggerated when they denied any Amerindian input into the creation of the Haitian people (Rodríguez-Demorizi 1955:50-52, 62). Early French censuses record small numbers of enslaved *sauvages* and *Indiens*, notably on the neglected south coast, though they were probably not descendants of the pre-Columbian

Taino.<sup>28</sup> Like the Spanish before them, the French enslaved other Amerindian peoples and brought them to the colony. It is true that in the pre-Columbian Caribbean use of the term "Aytí" was probably not confined to the Taino.<sup>29</sup> However, the few *Indiens* who appear in plantation inventories and colonial newspapers in the eighteenth century were likely to be Natchez and others deported from Louisiana, Canada, and South America, or Asian Indians shipped through Isle-de-France (modern Mauritius) (Peytraud 1897:27-29; Moreau de Saint-Méry 1958, I:83, 89, 94-95; Debbasch 1967:65, n.3).<sup>30</sup> By the 1780s, even with their mixed-race descendants (*mulâtres indiens*), they represented a small fraction of one percent of the slave population.<sup>31</sup>

#### BOYÁ AND ENRIQUE

Nevertheless, there were some Indians on Hispaniola in the eighteenth century who apparently did claim descent from the original Taino. They were found not in Saint Domingue but in the neighboring Spanish colony of Santo Domingo. From 1519 to 1533 the cacique Enrique and a small band of followers had waged a successful guerrilla war against the Spanish, and forced them to pass the Americas' first maroon treaty (Fernández de Oviedo 1959, I:124-39; Las Casas 1986, III:chs. 125-27; Herrera 1934, IV:357-62, X:113-22, 355-66). In an embroidered account of these events, written around 1730, the French historian Charlevoix claimed Enrique had subsequently settled with the last of the Tainos in the village of Boyá some forty miles north of Santo Domingo city, where they were granted extensive autonomy. Charlevoix (1733, II:219-322) added that down to the beginning of the eighteenth century the head of the Boyá community had used the title "Cacique of the Island of Haiti."<sup>32</sup>

The modern Spanish/Dominican historian Utrera (1973:24, 457-61) has shown there were in fact no historical links between Enrique and Boyá, which was founded years after the cacique's death. Moreover, the village's original inhabitants seem to have died out in the 1650s and been replaced by a small group of Campeche Maya rescued from the French of Tortuga.<sup>33</sup> By the 1700s residents of Boyá were mainly mestizos and numbered fewer than one hundred by 1720, and only twenty-five or thirty in the 1780s. Several eighteenth-century writers recognized they were not descended from the Taino, among them the French colonial lawyer Moreau de Saint-Méry. He observed, nonetheless, that in 1744 several Indians in the frontier town of Hinche had legally proved their descent from the followers of Enrique, and that the inhabitants of Boyá continued to

exhibit extreme pride in their supposed heritage (Charlevoix 1733, II:322; Sánchez Valverde 1971:150; Moreau de Saint-Méry 1796, I:59, 162-63).

This community clearly caught the imagination of Philippe-Rose Roume, a prominent official of the French Revolutionary government who served in Saint Domingue from 1791 to 1801. After Santo Domingo was made a French colony in 1795, he was posted there for eighteen months. He never visited Boyá nor saw any of its residents, whom he thought reclusive. Yet in a report of October 1797, he recounted the story of Enrique and added,

Thus it might be possible that, despite considerable decline, these men may have passed from father to son some tradition regarding the former state and history of the Haitians. This information would be very important to philosophy, and if the Indians have been able to keep their secrets from the Spanish, they will certainly reveal them to the French. (Cited in Rodríguez Demorizi 1958:282-83)

Inspired by revolutionary egalitarianism, the Noble Savage, and the Black Legend, Roume called for French officials to carry out the "sweet and sacred duty" of extending the benefits of republican rule to "the wretched remains of a simple and virtuous people," while resisting the temptation to exact on the Spanish Creoles the vengeance that their conquistador ancestors had merited. The local Spanish governor, who remained in office after the French takeover, intercepted this report. Forwarding the report to Madrid, Governor García denied the Boyá mestizos were descendants of Enrique, or that they were reclusive. "He who seeks tradition among them will find less than among any other people" (Rodríguez Demorizi 1958: 282-83). Anxious to present the colonial population as loyal Spanish subjects, he claimed the mestizos were better off simple and ignorant without having the French awaken in them ideas of tradition and history.

Whatever the truth about the Boyá community of the late eighteenth century, there is a possibility that it served as a source of inspiration for Haitian revolutionaries. Though situated more than 200 kilometers from the colonial frontier, indirect knowledge of it might have come through the enthusiastic conversations of Agent Roume, or through the black rebels earlier recruited as soldiers by the Spanish for their failed invasion of Saint Domingue in 1793-1795.<sup>34</sup> The blacks' invasion and occupation of Santo Domingo under Toussaint Louverture (1801-1802) could conceivably have resulted in some direct contact. Yet surely the likeliest source of knowledge about Boyá and Enrique for residents of Saint Domingue were the same books that no doubt provided Roume himself with much of his information – Charlevoix's 1730s *Histoire*, which was

reprinted in the 1780s, and Moreau de Saint-Méry's, *Description de la partie espagnole*, published in French and English in 1796.<sup>35</sup>

The reason many Haitians, from Dessalines's secretary Juste Chanlatte<sup>36</sup> to the twentieth-century Indigenists, have viewed the Taino as a symbol of resistance has much to do with the personal epic of Enrique and his long campaign in the mountains of Baoruco. More generally, as David Lowenthal (1972:108) remarks, the Caribbean Indians' rapid disappearance has helped foster in the region a romantic stereotype of a population that preferred death to slavery. Enrique's story, however, was particularly apt for Haitians, as he was apparently joined in his mountain retreat by African fugitives from the first generation of plantation slaves.<sup>37</sup> Africans and Indians resisted slavery together, wrote Beaubrun Ardouin (1958, VI:7) in the mid-nineteenth century, seeking to explain the naming of Haiti. "The African and the Indian held hands together in chains," observed his contemporary Emile Nau (1963, I:12). Such knowledge of the Arawak past in Haiti seems to have had little to do with the survival of a Taino population into the eighteenth century or the continuous transmission of ancestral traditions, as Fouchard, Maximilien, and Elie apparently believed. No Haitian scholar of the early nineteenth century adopted such an interpretation, and Madiou (1987-89, II:451) and Nau (1963, I:12) explicitly denied there were any biological or cultural links between the pre-Columbian and modern Haitian populations.<sup>38</sup>

#### HAITI AND THE INCA

The name of Haiti was surely transmitted through written sources, to which only a minority of the new elite could have had access. Not only the rapid demise of the Taino population, but also the change in pronunciation between the Taino and French versions of the word, points to this conclusion.<sup>39</sup> Another reason is the curious and temporary adoption of the name "Incas" by the black insurgents at the outset of the final phase of the War of Independence. According to Madiou (1987-89, II:451, 472), when Dessalines went into revolt in the fall of 1802 he "gave to the people that accepted his authority the name of Incas or children of the sun." For some months his soldiers called themselves "Sons of the Sun," until these terms were abandoned in favor of the word "indigène" meaning "native." One surviving letter by the black general Capois offers evidence of this practice.<sup>40</sup> Although it remains an obscure episode, rarely mentioned in modern histories, this use of Amerindian symbolism prior to adopting the word "Haïti" seems to show Dessalines's desire to identify

with an Amerindian past even in the absence of reliable information about that past.

It may be, as Jean Fouchard (1984b:14) argued, that the insurgents were remembering news of the 1780-1781 uprising in the Andes of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari. Though an attractive hypothesis, this seems unlikely. The uprising received very little mention at the time in the colonial press, and more than twenty years had passed. It is more probable that the Taino were thought to be descendants of the Incas. Evidence for this comes from the novel *Zoflora ou la bonne négresse*, published in Paris in 1799. Its author, J.-B. Picquenard, who had spent a short time in Saint Domingue, suggested that Hispaniola's aboriginal population had come from Peru (Picquenard 1799, II:209).<sup>41</sup> He claimed, moreover, that pre-Columbian underground burial chambers still survived in the Artibonite plain, which is where Dessalines made his headquarters. Whether or not *Zoflora* reflected ideas already popular in the colony, the book surely must have reached Saint Domingue during the period 1799-1803; it was one of the first novels written about the Haitian Revolution. Alexandre Pétion and other free colored exiles who reached France in 1800 and returned in 1802 in the Napoleonic invasion fleet could well have encountered the book in Paris or in the hands of fellow officers.

As Pétion broke with the French at the same time as Dessalines and joined him in the Artibonite in late November 1802, it is tempting to believe that he played a major role in choosing the term "Government of the Incas." The term probably derived from literary sources. Dessalines was illiterate, yet Pétion, his second in command, had received at least a basic education (Saint-Rémy 1956, I:11-12).<sup>42</sup> However, he was not an intellectual. It may be significant that the term "Incas" was dropped some time after July 1803, the month that Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre was recruited from his home on the south coast to be Dessalines's secretary (Boisrond-Tonnerre 1981:ix). He and Juste Chanlatte are generally recognized as the most learned of early Haitian political advisors (Trouillot 1986:90; Madiou 1987-89, III:183).<sup>43</sup> They were the most able to point out the awkwardness of the Inca trope. Since Chanlatte did not return from exile until the end of the War of Independence, one suspects here the influence of Boisrond-Tonnerre.

As Boisrond-Tonnerre also wrote the declaration of independence, one might assume he chose the state's name as well. If that were the case, however, he could be expected to have mentioned it in his *Mémoires*.<sup>44</sup> Madiou seems quite clear that the name was chosen before Boisrond was asked to draw up the document on December 31. Joseph Saint-Rémy, writing slightly later, implied the name was formally approved only after

the declaration was written, but no more than Madiou did he attribute the choice to Boisrond. It remains possible that Boisrond's great unpopularity with the mulatto elite caused successors to minimize his role in the founding of the state. But it may well be the obscure figure Charéron had already used the word in his draft declaration of independence that Dessalines rejected on December 31. On balance, it would appear that the name "Haïti" enjoyed a certain currency among the men surrounding Dessalines and that no one person was responsible for its selection.

#### HAITI AND QUISQUEYA

This directs attention to the survival of the word in printed texts since the fifteenth century. Columbus never used it in his writings. Peter Martyr, the court cleric who interviewed returnees from the Americas through the 1490s, recorded three terms he thought the Taino had used in succession: "Quizquella," "Haïti," and "Cipango" (Columbus 1969:71, 80, 85, 116, 142 and 1989:132; Martir de Angleria 1989, I:351, 354). In a classic study of the early contact period, geographer Carl Sauer (1966:45) implied "Haiti" referred not to the whole of Hispaniola but to only one part of it. He noted that the pilot/cartographer Andrés Morales, who surveyed the island in 1508, applied the term to a region approximating the modern Montes Haitises in the eastern Dominican Republic. He added that Morales's report, as recounted in Peter Martyr's *Third Decade* (published in 1516) represented "the first appearance of the name 'Haiti'." This is true, however, only as regards publication. Dr. Chanca, the official physician on Columbus's second voyage, had written to the Seville cabildo in 1494 that "Haïti" was the easternmost province of Hispaniola (Columbus 1969:142).<sup>45</sup> Ramón Pané (1988:26), a friar who lived among the island's natives in the mid-1490s, recorded that they called the whole island "Ahití."<sup>46</sup> Since he was one of the first Europeans to learn an Amerindian language, and he lived among both Arawak and Marcorix speakers for several years, his testimony carries weight. Bartolomé de Las Casas, it is true, cast aspersions on his linguistic knowledge, but he, too, believed "Haïti" was the aboriginal term for Hispaniola (Las Casas 1992:27; Columbus 1989:132).

Las Casas's first-hand experience of the island dated from nearly a decade later, but his knowledge of the Taino was probably unrivalled among his European contemporaries. Neither he nor the chronicler Oviedo used the term "Quizquella," which some modern scholars consider bogus (Fernández de Oviedo 1959, I:27, 32, 143; Las Casas 1986, I:chs. 45-48;

Tejera 1945:216-21 and 1977, II:1148-49). Nevertheless, from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, European writers tended to record "Quisqueya" and "Haiti" as alternative aboriginal names for Hispaniola (Herrera 1934, I:23; De Laet 1633:5; Charlevoix 1733, I:4-5). In the course of the eighteenth century, however, "Haiti" began to emerge as the preferred of the two terms. Raynal did not mention "Quisqueya" at all in the three editions of his *Histoire des deux Indes* (Raynal 1774, III:13; 1780, III:346). Nor did Antonio Alcedo in his *Diccionario* of 1786-89 (cited in Tejera 1945:220). Moreau de Saint-Méry (1958, I:266 and 1796, I:1) and Sánchez Valverde (1971:7, 27), also writing in the 1780s, mentioned the two alternatives but tended to privilege "Haiti."<sup>47</sup> In his novel *Zoflora*, J.-B. Piquenard (1799, I:v, 48), referred to "the former island of Ohaiti now called Saint Domingue."<sup>48</sup> Much more striking, in a letter to the Archbishop of Santo Domingo of July 1796, the Civil Commissioner Roume referred to the ex-slaves as "the new French of Haiti," as if the colony had already changed names (Incháustegui 1957, I:275).

Yet the most remarkable usage of the word came in an obscure, anonymous pamphlet published in 1788, supposedly at Les Cayes on Saint Domingue's isolated south coast (*Essai* 1788:9, 12). It was a plan for colonial reform written probably by a lawyer. This region had a tradition of autonomist, even secessionist, leanings among its planter class (Frostin 1972). Besides advocating a system of representative government for the colony, this pamphlet suggested the renaming of colonial place names. "Saint Domingue" was to become "Aïti," which the writer thought to be the aboriginal name of northern Hispaniola, and a new capital city was to be called "Royal-Aïti." As in Spanish America, a degree of indigenism was perhaps emerging among some of the colony's white creoles disgruntled with metropolitan rule. Along with printed works, such colonists might have been another source of influence for south-coast free coloreds like Boisrond-Tonnerre.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suppose that, even if literate *ancien libres* suggested the new state's name, its adoption was predicated on some wider, if more vague, awareness of a vanished civilization among the ex-slave population. This is because of the visibility of Taino physical remains in many parts of Saint Domingue. In his three-volume *Description* of the colony, Moreau de Saint-Méry made frequent references to Arawak rockcarvings, tombs, earthen mounds, and artefacts that were strewn on the ground.<sup>50</sup> Slaves who worked the land and hunted in the woods could hardly have ignored them. Dessalines, born on the border of Dondon parish, must have known of its caverns with their petroglyphs and burials, fetishes and axe heads. Of Limonade parish, in the plains below, Moreau

wrote that "Every step you take, there are the remains of Indian utensils" (Moreau de Saint-Méry 1958, I:212). Thirty years later, extensive remains of a large Amerindian settlement still surrounded the town of Gonaïves, where national independence was proclaimed (Hoffmann 1987:9). The baron de Vastey (1814:2-3), a leading statesman of the new Haiti, began his *Système colonial dévoilé*, published in 1814, with a long reflection on the fate of the Tainos.

O soil of my country! ... Is there another whose unhappy inhabitants have experienced greater misfortune? ... Everywhere I tread or cast my gaze, I see shards, jars, tools, figurines, whose form bears witness to the infancy of art, [and, in mountain caverns, whole whitened skeletons] these remains that attest the existence of a people who are no more.

The few Amerindians that slaves encountered in colonial times may have served a similar function to these archaeological remains. Though not Tainos themselves, such Indians still provided a living reminder of the Caribbean before the Europeans came, and enabled Africans and Afro-Americans to visualize their distant predecessors. The new nation's name was thus perhaps more meaningful to its inhabitants than were "Colombia" or "Venezuela" to the Indians and blacks of northern South America.

#### CONCLUSION

The choice of the Taino name "Haiti" for the new state probably derived from literary sources, and the colored elite must have played a preponderant role in its selection. It had little to do with the survival of Arawak culture, or of an ancestrally Taino population. One may suppose, however, that the widespread physical remains of the vanished civilization and the continued presence of isolated Amerindians and mestizos in Hispaniola's population created among the mass of former slaves a vague awareness of their Taino predecessors, and that the choice of name probably was predicated on this awareness.

The Haitians of 1804 were not alone in their symbolic manipulation of the Taino. Even before Dessalines declared "I have avenged America!" and before early nationalist writers presented the slave insurgents as avengers of the Arawak (Madiou 1987-89, I:viii-ix; Juste Chanlatte cited in Hoffmann 1994:26; Nau 1963, I:12-13), certain English writers had employed the same conceit, depicting the black revolutionaries as punishing the cruelties of the conquistadors (Geggus 1982:129, 146, 242). For the Haitians, it was a rhetorical device that amplified their indictment of impe-

rialism and added legitimacy to their cause. For their English contemporaries, it was a way to criticize Britain's French and Spanish opponents simultaneously; and for proslavery apologists among them, like Bryan Edwards, it helped obscure, via a flashback to the sixteenth century, the planter-slave conflict at the heart of the Haitian revolution.

For some Haitian intellectuals, the Taino have tended to symbolize resistance, embodied in certain individuals like Enrique and Caonabó.<sup>51</sup> In the Spanish Caribbean their image has been similarly celebrated, as well as appropriated to sell products associated with strength (e.g. Hatuey beer in Cuba and the Dominican Republic). North Europeans, on the other hand, in their desire to emphasize the evils of the Spanish conquest, have tended to overlook Enrique and to stress the Tainos' pacific tendencies.<sup>52</sup> A peculiarly idiosyncratic version of this trope appeared in the published reminiscences of a former French colonist who wrote in the aftermath of the slave revolution,

The French creole was born in Saint Domingue under the influence of these innocent martyrs [the Taino] ... His heart was compassionate and sensitive ... The black is lazy and a thief; he used to get beaten sometimes; but in France didn't schoolboys used to get beaten? (Mozard 1844:22).

After the Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo during the period 1822-1844, an interesting reaction took place among scholars in the neighboring Hispanic population. Until the Haitian invasion of 1822, Spanish writers had freely accepted "Haití" as an indigenous term for Hispaniola. Thereafter, "Quisqueya" became the preferred term, and some claimed that in pre-Columbian times it had referred specifically to the eastern end of the island (Angulo y Guridi 1866, cited in Tejera 1945:220; García 1867, I:12). This was despite the absence of any supporting evidence, the presence in the Dominican Republic of several local place names incorporating the word "Haití," and the letter of Dr. Chanca cited above.<sup>53</sup> This post-facto rationalization was nonetheless subsequently accepted by several Haitian writers.<sup>54</sup> Dominican antipathy for the word "Haiti" became publicized in the early 1930s, when the United States adopted "Hispaniola" as the name for the whole island. Haitians and Dominicans both objected, preferring national alternatives. However, the Academy of History and the National Teaching Council of the Dominican Republic each issued statements to the effect that "Hispaniola" would be preferable to "Haiti," which would be unacceptable to most Dominicans (Mangonès 1934:6-9).

The relationship between the color question in Haiti and interest in the country's Amerindian past remains controversial. From the writings of Juste Chanlatte to the government of Jean-Claude Duvalier, which at-

tempted to establish a national Day of the Indian in 1983 (Fouchard 1984b:16; Hoffmann 1994:32), concern with Amerindian symbolism has tended to come from the light-skinned elite. Yet it has rarely been attached to claims of biological descent in the manner sometimes attributed to Dominicans and Cubans.<sup>55</sup> Such cases have existed, doubtless reflecting the impact of scientific racism; historian Louis Elie is the notable example, and Emile Roumer devoted a poem to the subject.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, according to Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain (1992:156) the contrary tendency has been more pronounced, that of individual Haitians refusing to acknowledge their Indian ancestry for fear public opinion would perceive it as an attempt to minimize their African heritage. Moreover, it would seem that popular (as opposed to elite) attitudes in Haiti link Amerindians with weakness and primitivism.<sup>57</sup>

Henock Trouillot (1986:113) saw the Amerindian vogue in Haitian literature as a way of avoiding the color question. Léon-François Hoffmann (1994:23, 31) disagrees, noting that many of its protagonists did stress blackness as a component of Haitian identity. Indeed, even a prominent noirist like Lorimer Denis claimed an Amerindian heritage for modern Haitians. Haitian "indianism," however, doubtless has reflected national tensions related to color. It is probably not accidental that Emile Nau's *Caciques* and Joseph Saint-Rémy's *Pétion* appeared simultaneously. Both works, published in the mid-1850s, gave non-black national icons to a light-skinned elite suddenly forced to come to terms with the aggressive "black" populism of Emperor Faustin Soulouque, whose rule was widely ridiculed abroad. The indianist writings of Henri Chauvet and Arsène Chevre around 1900 also might be related to the elite's loss of control of the presidency in those years to black military figures. Evocations of the Indian past were an indirect way of insisting that Haiti was not just a black or neo-African state.

One could further read a rejection of the homogenizing claims of *négritude*, ascendent after the 1930s, in the concern with Amerindian heritage expressed by a Louis Elie or a Jean Fouchard, or in the claims of others that the Haitian Carnival or the Creole language reflect strong Amerindian influence (Faine 1936:2; Elie 1944-45, I:201-08, II:258-59; Fouchard 1972:157-65 and 1984b:13-17; Charles 1992:115-223). Writing of "our Indianness," Toussaint Desrosiers ([1984]:iii, 7, 28-29, 34) recently contended that common French words of African or Asian derivation, such as *igname* or *sucre*, in fact have an Arawak origin. And Michelson Hyppolite (1989:106) pleads that Haiti's Indian heritage is in some way authentic, whereas affiliation with both Africa and Europe evinces "Bovaryism." Such romantic speculations in the more inclusive spirit of

*antillanité* seem to reflect a desire to reduce Haiti's exceptionalism, claiming for it a closer affinity with the states of Latin America that traditionally have shunned it. They no doubt have been reinforced by a reluctance to locate the origins of the national culture solely within the dismal boundaries of the slave plantation.

In 1803, the Haitian revolutionaries' revival of the Tainos' name for their most important settlement betokened above all a rejection of Europe and its colonial claims. It was a legitimizing link with the pre-Columbian American past, of which all Haitians could approve and which resonated with people of all social levels. However, for Haitians of partly European ancestry – who played a dominant role in the name's selection – Amerindian symbols had perhaps a special appeal. People of mixed heritage risked a sense of alienation or marginalization in state where African descent was the basis of national identity, and all citizens (temporarily) were defined as "black." They thus may have welcomed an alternative construct that defined Haitians as successors of the Taino.

Whatever sectional interests have been reflected in Haitians' concern with the Amerindian past, the men of 1804 clearly chose well when naming their new country. Through scission, secession, and the rise and fall of republican and monarchical regimes, the name has survived, suggesting its validity in the eyes of a broad spectrum of the population, even if it has not meant exactly the same thing for all Haitians.

## NOTES

1. The name first officially appears, without explanation, in the text and at the head of the proclamation of independence made January 1, 1804 at Gonaïves. An earlier supposed declaration of November 29, 1803, stated only that "L'indépendance de Saint-Domingue est proclamée," and its authenticity has been challenged (Madiou 1987-89, III:125 n.1, 150). Belize exchanged its colonial designation for the name of a local river; most other states have kept their colonial name, whether or not it corresponded to an aboriginal term.

2. Its etymology is discussed in Tejera 1977, II:754-58. Whereas the Spanish rendering of the word "Haiti" preserved the Taino stress on the final syllable, the French and Creole versions stress the second syllable, which was to entirely vanish in the American English version.

3. Archives de la Guerre, Vincennes, MS 597; Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, CC9B/23, proclamation of April 28, 1804. Exceptions were made for certain whites who had allied themselves with blacks. In the constitutions of 1805, 1806, and 1816 the ban on Europeans was rephrased to exclude "whites of whatever nation," but it was omitted in the 1807 and 1811 constitutions of Henry Christophe, ruler of northern Haiti (1807-1820) (Janvier 1886:30-144).

4. This and other translations from French and Spanish are mine. Baron de Vastey (1969:44) was even more laconic: "The name of the island was altered, and the St. Domingo of the French was superseded by the original name of Hayti."
5. The supposed addendum "ti" also lacks a plausible explanation. If the creole word for "little," it would have preceded the noun.
6. On the ethnic composition of the slave population, see Geggus 1993:79, 81.
7. "Congo" has acquired the meaning "traitor" in Haitian Creole, either because of the ethnic politics of the revolution, or a supposed propensity for acculturation to European norms under slavery (Montilus 1982:164-5; below, note 9). For different reasons, it is also an insult in Jamaican Creole (Cassidy & Lepage 1980:118).
8. Dessalines was born at Cormier in Saint Domingue's northern mountains in 1758 (Fouchard 1984a:7). Evidence suggests other similarly identified leaders, such as Biassou, Moïse, perhaps even Boukman, were also locally-born.
9. Madiou 1987-89, II:395-6; Auguste 1990:11-42. Tensions between African and Creole insurgents went back to the beginning of the revolution. They were aggravated by Toussaint Louverture's reopening the slave trade, and continued after independence (University of Florida Library, Gainesville, Special Collections, Rochambeau Microfilms, lot 132, Roume to Forfait, 3 vendémiaire an X; Archives de la Guerre, Vincennes, MS 601).
10. A younger, more partisan but more meticulous, contemporary of Madiou, Saint-Rémy similarly collected the reminiscences of participants in the Revolution.
11. The 1847-48, 1904, and 1922 editions of Madiou's history contain an appendix identifying the phenotype of prominent individuals. Even General Yayou was born in the colony (Auguste 1990:29).
12. Archives de la Guerre, MS 601. See also the essays on leading administrators in Léon (1945, I:1-115).
13. Though Dessalines's constitution of 1805 admitted no dominant religion, he sent Haitians to Rome to be ordained as priests. The constitutions of 1806, 1807, and 1816 gave Roman Catholicism a privileged position (Janvier 1886:30-144). All heads of state repressed voodoo (Leyburn 1966:139-40; Trouillot 1986:50; Madiou 1987-89, II:112).
14. However, some historians have suggested that certain leaders' unorthodox French was a means of expressing contempt for the language (Léon 1945, I:129). Dessalines spoke no French and liked Boisrond-Tonnerre partly because of his ability to speak a vulgar Creole (Trouillot 1986:90).
15. He characterizes the position of the Indian in Haitian literature as shifting in this century from an object of parallelism to one of identification, with biological descent only rarely being claimed. In the Dominican Republic mulattoes have, at least in the twentieth century, officially been called "mestizos" or "indios." Some say this is merely an evocation of the aboriginal past, not a sign of false consciousness, but others decode it as deliberate obfuscation, an attempt to lay claim to a bogus ancestry and to reclassify African cultural retentions as Amerindian (Franco 1973:98; Fenne-ma & Loewenthal 1987:25-30, 61-64; Benítez-Rojo 1992:50; Sagás 1993:1-5; below, note 55).

16. Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen, Ms. Leber 5847, f.62.
17. The slave general Georges Biassou was perhaps expressing similar feelings when he informed the governor of Santo Domingo, "I like only solid and natural colors that nothing can change": Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo (SD) 956, García to Acuña, November 25, 1793, encl. no. 6.
18. After the revolution, however, King Christophe's spokesman, Baron de Vastey, did note that in keeping with universal prejudices blacks considered themselves more beautiful than others, and that Haitian artists depicted God and the angels as black, and devils as white (Nicholls 1991:116).
19. The free colored political club formed in Paris in September 1789 by Julien Raimond and Vincent Ogé (both "quadroons," as was Boisrond-Tonnerre, according to some) took the name "Société des Colons Américains." It appears initially to have had no black members (Debbasch 1967:144-66). The term was used freely by Jean-Baptiste Chavannes, who rebelled with Vincent Ogé in October 1790, Archives Nationales, Paris, Section Moderne, Dxxv/58/574, "Interrogation de Vincent Ogé." In the autumn of 1791 free colored insurgents in north-eastern Saint Domingue called themselves "L'Armée américaine": AGI, SD 954, García to Bajamar, November 25, 1791, encl. Y and Z.
20. Son of a white man and mulatto woman, Pétion "with his smooth hair could have been mistaken for an Indian" (Saint-Rémy 1956, I:11).
21. See also *Aia bombé, Revue Mensuelle* (Port-au-Prince) 1 (1946), p. 32; Price Mars 1928:113-14; Elie 1944-45, I:197; Desrosiers: 7, 28-29.
22. On the chants see Geggus 1991:24-31.
23. In Hurbon (1995:31), one reads "the surviving Carib Indians" contributed to voodoo's formation.
24. Also, the name of the agricultural deity Azaka can be traced to an African rather than a Taino source (Montilus 1981:73-84).
25. Hyppolite (1989:103) aptly calls voodoo priests "Haiti's first archaeologists."
26. Of course, innumerable Amerindian place-names have survived to the present. The point here is that the Amerindian term for the island was immediately and successfully supplanted by European terms.
27. Official head counts indicated a decline in the Amerindian population from 60,000 in 1509 to about 11,000 in 1518, when imports from Africa were authorized. Modern estimates of the pre-conquest population have ranged from 60,000 to eight million (Henige 1978:217-37).
28. The 1681 census recorded 480 mulattoes and Indians, all slaves. The south had 128 Indians in 1631 and 83 in 1713 (Moreau de Saint-Méry 1958, I:84, III:1164-65).
29. Its usage by Amerindians near Cumaná was recorded in the 1540s (Loven 1935:68). Seventeenth-century Dominican Caribs also used the word (Tejera 1977, II:754).
30. In 1731, 500 Natchez were deported to Saint Domingue. Moreau also mentions

deportations of Fox (Renards), though this is not confirmed by Peyser (1989-90:83-110).

31. See the samples of more than 30,000 plantation slaves cited in Geggus 1993, and more than 5,000 slave fugitives listed in the colonial newspaper *Affiches Américaines*, 1788 and 1790.

32. The book is based on the notes of fellow missionary father Le Pers, who later criticized the use Charlevoix made of them.

33. This indispensable work makes extensive use of archival sources, but errs in making Sánchez Valverde the first to link Enrique with Boyá.

34. They, however, remained in the frontier region and many emigrated in 1796 (Geggus 1995:120-22).

35. The basic printed source on Enrique is Oviedo's *Historia*, which was published in French as early as 1555. Charlevoix's *Histoire*, reprinted many times in the 1730s and 40s, and again in 1780-81, was the first work to link Enrique with Boyá. Sánchez Valverde's *Idea del valor* was also published in French in Saint Domingue itself some time before 1802. Moreau de Saint-Méry mentioned Enrique only briefly, as if he was well-known to his readers. Las Casas's account was not published until the nineteenth century.

36. Juste Chanlatte (wrongly) depicted Enrique dying in battle against the Spanish in a poem cited in Hoffmann (1994:26). He was the author of the April 28, 1804 proclamation (above, note 3) that spoke of avenging "America," and also of the free coloreds' bloodthirsty call to arms of November 1791 (Madiou 1987-89, I:114, III:183).

37. Although not recorded by Las Casas or Herrera, such cooperation is briefly mentioned in Oviedo and Charlevoix, which nonetheless give as much attention to Enrique's subsequent agreement to hand over black fugitives to the Spanish and have them hunted for bounty, along with (non-Taino) Indian slaves. In this way the accord of 1533 prefigured many later maroon treaties. According to Utrera (1973:27, 39), African slave rebels destroyed Enrique's Baoruco settlement in 1547.

38. Louis Elie (1944-45, II:259) argued that in the 1520s the two groups intermingled leaving apparently numerous mixed descendants.

39. See above, note 2.

40. Camus (1983:71), contains a letter of July 3, 1803 apparently headed "Armée des Incas." However, the writing in the original is unclear, and the term was interpolated into the printed version by the journal editor, Jean Fouchard. Personal communication from Michel Camus.

41. Various errors suggest the author did not reside long in the colony.

42. Dessalines supposedly offered the supreme command to Pétion at this time (Boisrond-Tonnerre 1981:xviii-xix).

43. Chanlatte was raised in Paris and spent the period 1798-1803 in the United States. Boisrond was educated in Paris, and lived there approximately from 1792 to 1800, when 16-24 years of age (Saint-Rémy 1956, IV:11, 19; Boisrond-Tonnerre 1981:introduction).

44. He mentions the extermination of the Tainos on the first page, but no more than that.
45. This lends some support to the idea of a regional rather than island-wide application, but the region in question is flat not mountainous; Chanca did not record a native name for the whole island.
46. Long unpublished, Pané's memoir apparently was completed in 1495.
47. Moreau's books were published in the 1790s but written in the previous decade.
48. The curious form "Ohaïti" suggests some confusion with Tahiti, then called "Otaïti."
49. However, the National Union Catalog and Bissainthe (1951:397), attribute this work to one Charles-Jacob de Bleschamp, who was a lawyer and French naval bureaucrat, at that time Intendant de la Marine at Le Havre.
50. Moreau de Saint-Méry 1958, I:163, 265, 285, II:617, 625, 635, 656, 786, 807, 814, 898, III:1212, etc. Cf. Dr. Arthaud's account of stone phalluses found in northern caves: Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-mer, Aix, F3/267, ff. 208-211.
51. A parallel tendency, long established in Haitian letters, has been to claim Caonabó as a Carib (a people far more bellicose in reputation), or to describe the pre-Columbian population as a mixture of Taino and Carib (which is plausible), or simply to call them "Carib." Edmond Mangonès (1934:58) argued "Haïti" was a Carib word and "Quisqueya" Taino.
52. He is not mentioned in any edition of Raynal's *Histoire philosophique*, nor in Sauer's *Early Spanish Main*, which also presents Caonabó and Hatuey in a rather pacific light.
53. A map dated 1630 showing Quisqueya in the south and Haiti in the north is reproduced in Hurbon 1995:18-19. Adolfo Mejía Ricart (1948, I:35-38) commented that the association with the east was erroneous, but he (wrongly) thought it due to an error by Ramón Pané.
54. See the 1893 introduction to Nau's *Caciques*; Jean-Baptiste Dehoux, *Etudes sur les aborigènes d'Haïti*, cited in Tejera 1945:220; Elie 1944-45, I:86.
55. Note, however, that Záiter Mejía (1996) does not mention Amerindians, although the author does observe many Dominicans have difficulty accepting the nation's multi-ethnic, "fundamentalmente mulato" identity (p. 92). Silvio Torres-Saillant (1996) observes that, "in the minds of most Dominicans who use it" the term *indio* "merely describes a color gradation." Cf. above, note 15. On Cuba, see Duharte Jiménez 1992:162.
56. "L'historien Thomas Madiou affirme dans son Autobiographie qu'il descend d'une indienne. Des milliers et milliers d'Haïtiens sont dans le même cas." "On a remarqué, durant la traite [d'esclaves], de nombreux métis de Maures et de Nègresses ayant les traits fins de l'Européen. Leur langue, à peine corrompue, témoignait réellement de leur ascendance semitique ... le pays n'a pas été peuplé seulement de primitifs incultes" (Elie 1944-45, II:140, 259). Cf. Lowenthal 1972:185; Comhaire-Sylvain 1992:156. In a highly polemical exchange with Haitian scholars, Dominican historian Rodríguez Demorizi (1955:51) mocked certain Haitian intellectuals' at-

tempts to "remontar su historia a los días del descubrimiento, y no a las selvas africanas."

57. In the 1940s Kléber Georges-Jacob wrote that most Haitians believed that Dominicans were inferior because of their Indian ancestry (Rodríguez Demorizi 1955:55). Cf. Hyppolite 1989:107, 112.

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