

1-1-1983

# Slave Resistance Studies and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt: Some Preliminary Considerations (Paper #4)

David Geggus

*University of Florida, Department of History*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/laccops>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Geggus, David, "Slave Resistance Studies and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt: Some Preliminary Considerations (Paper #4)" (1983). *LACC Occasional papers series (1981 - 1990)*. 3.

<https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/laccops/3>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC) Publications Network at FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LACC Occasional papers series (1981 - 1990) by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [dcc@fiu.edu](mailto:dcc@fiu.edu).

SLAVE RESISTANCE STUDIES AND THE SAINT  
DOMINGUE SLAVE REVOLT: SOME  
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

David Geggus  
Department of History  
University of Florida

#4  
Winter 1983

Published by the Latin American and Caribbean Center  
of  
Florida International University

Editor: Lowell W. Gudmundson  
Department of History

Associate Editors: Jorge Salazar-Carrillo  
Department of Economics

William T. Vickers  
Department of Sociology/Anthropology

The insurrection that broke out in the French Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue in August 1791 was the greatest and sole really successful slave revolt there has ever been.<sup>1</sup> Eventually to destroy what was then probably the wealthiest colony in the world, transforming it into Haiti, the Tropics' first post-colonial state, it has been largely ignored by the current spate of research into "slave resistance." This has tended to concentrate on English-speaking societies and Brazil, or on aspects of resistance other than armed revolt. While the Saint Domingue Revolution, broadly described, has itself given rise to a very considerable body of literature, much of it is superficial and even its best examples have used only a small part of the relevant documentation. Our knowledge of the slave revolt, in fact, has progressed little since Pauléus Sannon's account of 1920, or even Beaubrun Ardouin's of 1853.<sup>2</sup>

This paper is an attempt to examine some of the ideas and concepts generated by studies of slave resistance in general, and to bring them together with some preliminary findings of my own continuing research into the Saint Domingue slave revolution.

### Culture and Resistance

Slaves' resistance to slavery covered a broad spectrum. Armed revolt was only one extreme of a continuum which stretched from satire, lying, feigning illness and working slow, through tool-breaking, theft, flight and strikes, to self-mutilation, suicide and infanticide, arson, poisoning and physical assault. Of course, one may question the unity of such a diverse range of activities, and different historians have analysed them according to different criteria. In order to exclude accidental or venal actions, Frederickson and Lasch defined "true resistance" as overt, communal and systematic. Individual, sporadic and clandestine activities they defined as "intransigence."<sup>3</sup> For Orlando Patterson, the basic division was between violent and passive resistance, although he did not consider violence to property.<sup>4</sup> Eugene Genovese, however, found a "qualitative leap" between nihilistic acts of "naively directed" violence and those acts of rebellion and flight which represented a bodily rejection of slavery.<sup>5</sup> Gerald Mullin similarly distin-

guished "inward" from "outward" resistance, drawing attention both to its physical location and to its psychological implications for the slave.<sup>6</sup>

Such distinctions, however, are difficult to maintain. It is not easy to see that the flight of a solitary and selfishly-motivated maroon was more "political," or a more effective challenge to the slave regime, than the reckless murder of a hated master. Nor need it have been more "self-enhancing" than an act of sabotage. In the same way, a midwife's systematic acts of infanticide could well be regarded as more, or less, politically mature or self-enhancing than a workforce downing tools to get an unpopular overseer dismissed. Armed revolt, furthermore, although regarded as the "highest" form of resistance, was almost invariably futile and self-destructive, often confused in purpose and not always aimed at overthrowing the slave regime.

Perhaps this is why Genovese has subsequently tended to stress the breadth and continuity of resistance within slavery. "Everyday forms" of resistance, even if simultaneously expressing accommodation, nurtured a collective spiritual life which spawned the more dramatic acts of rebellion.<sup>7</sup> Along with writers like Lawrence Levine and Albert Raboteau,<sup>8</sup> he has extended in new and subtle ways our understanding of resistance to show how, even under the very restricted conditions of United States slavery, resistance permeated the culture of the slaves. This trend is what appears to have caused Michael Craton to rethink his work on West Indian slave rebellions and to see them as basically determined by a "culture of resistance."<sup>9</sup>

Lying behind these questions of culture is the difficult subject of the "slave personality." It is Genovese again who, in suggesting a Freudian rather than a Behaviourist model, would appear best able to resolve the contradictions of the master-slave relationship and to explain how subordination and resistance could co-exist so perplexingly in a slave society.<sup>10</sup>

These developments in the historiography of slavery are helpful when confronting what is the major, but little explored, paradox of the Haitian Revolution--that the greatest of all slave revolts took place in a colony where previous overt resistance had been comparatively slight.<sup>11</sup> By stressing that resistance was a subtle, omnipresent phenomenon that could co-exist with

accommodation in the same person, in the same act even, one can understand more easily how the "loyal slave" became a rebel and how a relatively stable society could collapse like a house of cards.

While one may thus see resistance as part of the general cultural context of the slave's life, it is less certain that one can link it more specifically with the slaves' degree of cultural autonomy, which seems to be the thrust of the work of such scholars as Edward Brathwaite and Monica Schuler.<sup>12</sup> Writing of Jamaica's slave elite and free coloured community, Brathwaite has argued that it was because they rejected their own folk culture that they failed to become a self-conscious and cohesive group, "and consequently perhaps" to win their freedom "as their cousins in Haiti had done."<sup>13</sup> This surely exaggerates the political implications of cultural distance. As the example of Jamaica well shows, a creolized, Christianized slave culture could indeed be a vehicle for rebellion.<sup>14</sup> It also seems to misconstrue, as regards these two social groups, what was for them the most common nexus between culture and political action. Caught between two worlds, was it not precisely their marginality that caused them to produce the bulk of all slave rebel leaders? As with the d'Antons and de Robespierres of Ancien Regime France, would-be aristocrats who became radical revolutionaries, surely it was their rejection by those with whom they identified that heightened their self-awareness.

Moreover, as Mullin points out with respect to Virginia, the slave elite's ability to resist was enhanced by its familiarity with the ways of white society, and this is what accounts for its prominence among slave run-aways. Acculturation, he argues, led to resistance.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, it was the most assimilated slaves who were the most likely to respond to news arriving from abroad, and who were best able to profit from political divisions in the master class. While it has been suggested that Martinique survived the French Revolution better than did Saint Domingue because its slave population was more creolized,<sup>16</sup> it may on the contrary explain why during 1789-90 Saint Domingue's slaves remained passive through two years of turmoil, while those of Martinique rebelled on hearing the first news from France.

This is not to deny, however, that ethnicity was frequently a vehicle for revolt (notably in Jamaica and Brazil), or that newly-arrived Africans were

probably the most rebellious of slaves, (if not necessarily for strictly cultural reasons). A common culture, especially language and religion, were clearly very important in the organization of resistance. But that culture could as easily be European-oriented as African. For slaves or free coloureds, culture was scarcely a vital factor in the shaping of a sense of separate identity. Otherwise, it would seem difficult to explain why Saint Domingue's revolutionaries, both slave and free coloured, came from the most assimilated, Europeanized segments of non-white society.

### Maroon Studies

The study of slave fugitives, especially as regards Saint Domingue, has been strongly marked by divergent ideological perspectives. Among the main questions at issue are the motivation of slaves in running away, the extent of marronage, the maroon's relations with colonial society and the connections between marronage and slave revolution.

(i) Central to the debate on the maroon's motivation, as to any assessment of slavery, is the question of the slave's attitude to freedom, perhaps the trickiest problem that confronts historians of the institution. For the Haitian school of historians, and for certain French scholars such as Gaston-Martin and Lucien Peytraud, it was the slave's desire for liberty that marronage quintessentially expressed. Such writers, or those of them who have felt the need to defend this opinion, tend to appeal to the "logic of Haitian history" or the "nature of Man" for supporting evidence, as well as to the fact that it cannot be disproved.<sup>17</sup>

Other historians, however, apparently more empirical in approach, have attempted to relate the incidence of marronage to ad hoc, everyday causes, such as the standard of food supply, changes of plantation overseer, the desire to visit friends or relatives, the fear or resentment of punishment, or of demotion within the plantation hierarchy. These writers represent marronage not as a militant rejection of slavery but as a safety-valve within the system. They stress the short duration of most runaways' absence and the planters' seeming lack of concern with the phenomenon. Yvan Debbasch, the most extreme exponent of this interpretation, argues that a desire for free-

dom, before the nineteenth century, was not an important cause of marronage, and Gabriel Debien also doubts that it motivated most cases of flight.<sup>18</sup> Debien, however, concedes that some slaves fled without any apparent reason, and notes that sometimes good masters had more runaways than did bad masters. This point is also made for the Haitian school by Jean Fouchard, although the examples he gives actually undermine the argument.<sup>19</sup> Fouchard, for his part, allows that incidental causes had some part in motivating fugitives, and even Debbasch accepts that slave artisans who fled to the towns to work were seeking a higher social position. The two schools, therefore, are not necessarily so far apart.

Their differences are to some extent merely a matter of terminology. The short-term absenteeism with apparently easily identifiable causes, which Debien observes was very much the most common variety, is excluded by Fouchard from his definition of marronage altogether. He claims, as does Barry Higman in respect of Jamaica,<sup>20</sup> that such cases were rarely those advertised in the newspapers. Debien replies that the published lists of recaptured maroons reveal that the usual period of absence was counted in days or weeks, or at most a few months. Obviously, what is needed here is an attempt to quantify different types of marronage.

For colonial Virginia, Gerald Mullin has estimated that a third of all runaways mentioned in the newspapers were seeking to visit relations, and therefore represented "little more than truancy." As another third were artisans and waitingmen seeking an independent life in the towns, he concludes that field slaves "rarely rejected slavery completely" by absconding. Newly arrived Africans, however, "often" fled.<sup>21</sup> In Saint Domingue, on the other hand, even in 1790-91 when they were infinitely more numerous than ever before, new arrivals accounted for only a small if slightly disproportionate percentage of the fugitives advertised.<sup>22</sup> Because of the hopelessness of many new arrivals' attempts to escape, Debbasch regards such maroons as "sick." Rather more usefully, Debien points out that the ethnic groups most associated with marronage in Saint Domingue were also those reputed by the planters to adapt best to slavery--the "Congo" and "Mozambique." Fouchard notes that they accounted for over half of all the advertised maroons. On the other hand, the

ethnic groups with the most rebellious reputation prone to both revolt and flight were among the rarest in the colony--the "Canga," "Miserables," "Bouriquis" and, one might add, the "Caramenty."<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to see the flight of newly-arrived Africans as anything but a total rejection of slavery, albeit frequently ineffective and not really predicated, as Mullin observes, on any actual experience of slavery.

Although it is fundamental to the study of slavery, and of all political and social subordination, it is tempting to dismiss the controversy about the desire for freedom as both inadequately articulated and beyond resolution. One should surely ask: what sort of freedom? and take account of varying geographic locations, social positions and political possibilities. For many slaves, the life of a fugitive would have meant not "freedom" but a diminution of what liberties they enjoyed. John Blassingame, for example, seems to find no difficulty in asserting that the United States slaves constantly "yearned for freedom," while attributing their acts of marronage to ad hoc causes.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, for present purposes, one should remember that among those slaves who "pulled foot" on the arrival of a new overseer and then returned voluntarily was Nat Turner, later to lead North America's most destructive revolt.

(ii) It has always been an article of faith for the Haitian school that Saint Domingue contained several thousands of maroons and that their numbers went on increasing up to the Revolution. While Jean Fouchard is the only historian seriously to attempt to quantify the phenomenon, his use of figures lacks rigour and is on occasion fanciful and prone to large errors,<sup>25</sup> though in no other work has marronage been so vividly depicted. Using the lists of runaways published in the colonial newspapers, he claims to show that marronage increased steadily during the last thirty years of slavery and sharply in the period after 1784. However, he does not allow for the advertisements being duplicated in different newspapers, nor, it seems, in successive issues of the same newspaper. Neither does he distinguish between notices of flight, recapture or subsequent sale, and obviously cannot allow for the increasing use of the press by the planters or the colonial authorities, nor as Debien suggests, for the increasing efficiency of the rural police.<sup>26</sup> Hence one cannot be sure even that marronage was increasing at the same rate as the



slave population. All one can be sure of in fact is that, as new settlements cut deeper into the mountains and forests, the area remaining where maroons could move freely was steadily diminishing. However, this might simply have meant that the maroons became more dependent on the plantations for subsistence.

Few plantations seem to have avoided the loss of runaways. Some even had four or five per cent of their workforces missing at any one time. This would indeed suggest a figure of several thousands at large in the colony. However, mortality was probably high amongst maroons and many were re-employed covertly by other slaveowners, especially in the towns. The best known and longest lived maroon band, the Maniel, were thought to number in 1778 at most 700-800, and in 1785 a census revealed, after many had died of smallpox, only 133, not the "several thousand" mentioned by Eugene Genovese.<sup>27</sup> A valuable and neglected source in this connection is a pamphlet by the liberal planter Milscent de Musset, who acquired a high reputation as a maroon fighter, leading units of free coloureds. Public opinion, he said, always greatly inflated the numbers of maroons operating in bands. People in the towns spoke of 10,000 where there were really only 300.<sup>28</sup> This was the strength of Canga's band of the 1770s, (though perhaps only its armed men). It appears to have been Saint Domingue's strongest maroon band. Perhaps a little small by the standards of the Guianas, it nonetheless compares favourably with the average Brazilian mocambo, Palmares excepted, and with the Jamaican Maroon Towns during their militant period. Considering the problems of subsistence, the colony's size and density of population,<sup>29</sup> it is probably unrealistic to expect larger units to have existed.

Whether the activity of these bands was increasing or not in the 1780s would seem impossible to say with any certainty. On an impressionistic level, maroon activity certainly appears to have been more considerable in the 1770s, both in the North and the West, or even earlier in the century. Although M. Fouchard's 'Historique du marronage' conflates all manner of disparate events, it is conspicuously thin on material for the 1780s.<sup>30</sup> It was then that the colonial administration and the Maniel maroons made peace.

(iii) According to Edner Brutus, marronage was an "insurrectionary movement." "Flight," in the words of Leslie Manigat, "led to fight." Arson and the attempted murder of whites, he claims, were among the "normal, if not frequent, actions of maroons throughout the eighteenth century."<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly, such violence was as old as marronage itself, but was it a typical characteristic? The number of whites killed by maroon raiders in Saint Domingue seems to have been actually very small. Raiders usually sought to carry off foodstuffs, female slaves or livestock, notes Debien, and rarely attacked whites. Even if a planter lost twenty runaways, he claims, it was regarded by him as an economic loss and not as a danger.<sup>32</sup> The "Congoes," who constituted most of Saint Domingue's slave fugitives, and were thought to be the ethnic group most prone to marronage, were also regarded by the planters, rather curiously, as the most tractable or "docile" or Africans.

Colonial administrators, on the other hand, had to adopt a broader, less plantation-centric view and always tended to regard maroon bands as a potential source of revolt. The militia colonel, Milscent, it is interesting to note, regarded marronage as an alternative to conspiracy and rebellion. He thus explained the lull in maroon activities in the 1750s, the period of the Macandal poisoning plot.<sup>33</sup> When he heard the news of the 1791 uprising, he regarded it, just as do the Haitian school, as part of a continuing tradition, though in this he was entirely alone among the planters of Saint Domingue.

There was another side, however, to maroon-slave relations. Just like the maroons of Jamaica and Suriname, the Maniel made a treaty with the colonial authorities to capture and return runaway slaves; some they kept as slaves themselves. Writing of the "parasitic economies" of the Bahian mocambos in Brazil, Stuart Schwartz observed that some enjoyed a degree of co-operation with white society, did not seek to overthrow the slave regime and in their depredations preyed more on the slaves than on the whites. Mullin has stressed similar aspects of marronage in the British Caribbean, and Debien also has noted hostility between slaves and runaways in Saint Domingue.<sup>34</sup> The political consciousness and militancy of even organized groups of maroons can certainly be questioned. According to Yvan Debbasch, maroons normally sought to avoid clashes with white society, and in Jamaica the best-organised maroon

groups certainly sought to minimise friction with the planters, even forbidding the killing of whites.<sup>35</sup> Sylvia de Groot observes that in Suriname acts of revenge by maroons "were not rare," but in general she places their attacks in the context of a need for commodities unavailable in the forest. The account of Johannes King, moreover, appears to present the maroons' hostilities as retaliation for those of the whites, and the same has been said of the quilombolos of Palmares.<sup>36</sup> In Jamaica, both the beginning of maroon hostilities in the 1670s and the two Maroon Wars of the following century have been viewed as responses to white encroachment, rather than autonomous acts of aggression.<sup>37</sup> Such developments do suggest, nevertheless, that the expansion of coffee cultivation in the mountains of Saint Domingue during the 1780s could have had far-reaching repercussions.

(iv) Slave revolts in Jamaica, Surinam, Saint Domingue and elsewhere, writes Eugene Genovese, "accompanied and followed large-scale maroon wars." As regards Saint Domingue, however, it is not at all clear of which "large-scale war" he could have been thinking.<sup>38</sup> For the Haitian school, too, it is axiomatic that the 1791 revolt was inspired and led by maroons, and that it developed out of a burgeoning swell of marronage. But this has yet to be proved. The only efforts to substantiate this thesis empirically have been those of Jean Fouchard, and they form perhaps the weakest part of his work. He begins by presenting a list of rebel chiefs of the mid-1790s as being already active maroon leaders in 1789, but of this he provides not a shred of evidence. He thereafter designates all rebels, unless they were free coloureds, as maroons, and he also includes among them such figures as Jean Kina, who was not a maroon and who actually fought for the white planters.<sup>39</sup>

In a suggestive and well-received conference paper, the Haitian Leslie Manigat points out that Fouchard simply equates maroons and rebels, but he, too, ends up endorsing the Haitian thesis by appealing to "the logic of historical reasoning."<sup>40</sup> It is perfectly logical, Debien agrees, that maroon bands already in existence would have joined in the 1791 revolt. But, he observes, there is no evidence of it.<sup>41</sup> The only band that we know of, the Maniel/Dokos, kept aloof for several years, and subsequently played a rather

ambiguous role, fighting for Saint Domingue's Spanish invaders and keeping or selling their black captives as slaves.<sup>42</sup>

One might add that those areas where maroon bands were said to have been active on the eve of the Revolution,<sup>43</sup> were not those where the slave revolt broke out and were frequently those parts of the colony where the plantation regime was to suffer least.<sup>44</sup> During the Revolution, moreover, the colonists continued to distinguish between "marrons" and "insurgés," and in the areas where slavery survived "petit marronage" persisted.<sup>45</sup>

What of the leaders of the slave insurrection? Boukman, Jean-François, Biassou and Jeannot, the first four to achieve prominence, are generally asserted by historians to have commanded bands of maroons, although no proof of this seems to have been put forward. M. Fouchard, it is true, has found an intriguing advertisement for a "fierce-looking" maroon named Bouquemens, dated 1779. However, the name was not all that rare among the slaves, and if this was the real Boukman, at 5'3" tall he was clearly not the colossus of traditional accounts.<sup>46</sup> Contemporary descriptions, however, mention not Boukman's height but the size of his head and they could well match up with the 1779 description. In any case, there is in the Archives Nationales, Paris, an early nineteenth century memoir by the son of a former owner of Boukman, which describes him as "a very bad slave. . .who continually went on the maroon and used to return at night to steal even from his comrades." Apparently, he was caught and sold several times before being bought by a M. Clément, whom he killed at the beginning of the uprising.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in the archives of Seville there exists a letter by Biassou of November 1793 which mentions that Jean-François was a fugitive at the start of the revolt.<sup>48</sup> Hence a connection can be established between the revolutionary leadership and an experience of marronage. However, there is no suggestion that either man was a member of, still less the leader of, a band of maroons. The documents, in fact, tend to imply the contrary. Furthermore, such evidence as there is also suggests that Boukman and Jeannot, and probably Biassou, were all residents on their plantations at the time of the uprising. It very much seems that it was organized from within the system and not from outside it.

## Typologies of Slave Rebellion

### (i) Rising and falling expectations

A sense of relative deprivation, caused either by worsening circumstances or by heightened expectations, has long been a common element in the analysis of the causes of revolution. Among the "four situations conducive to slave rebellion" put forward by Michael Craton in 1974, we find not surprisingly "conditions of extreme repression" and the "frustration of slave expectations."<sup>49</sup> Eugene Genovese also states that slave revolts generally occurred where slavery was commercial rather than patriarchal in ethos and where economic distress was intense.<sup>50</sup> Insurrections certainly seem to have been linked, and not least in Saint Domingue, with areas of sugar rather than of coffee or of other staple production. However, this might have had less to do with differing degrees of hardship than with plantation size and ease of communication. C.L.R. James's point about the "industrial" character of the sugar plantation has a lot to be said for it, (although he himself has abandoned it on what seem to be erroneous grounds in the recent edition of The Black Jacobins).<sup>51</sup>

Marian Kilson, in fact, has argued that most revolts in the United States took place not in the Lower South, where the slave regime was harshest, but in the areas of slavebreeding and diversified agriculture.<sup>52</sup> Although this needs to be qualified, it does seem that it was the fact of change rather than the conditions themselves which was the important factor. But the evidence is not at all clear. While the Nat Turner revolt may be seen against a background of economic depression in a backward area of Virginia, the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy of 1800 is set by Gerald Mullin in a context of economic expansion and amelioration of the slave regime, particularly for the elite slaves involved.<sup>53</sup> Resistance, according to the former slave Frederick Douglass, resulted more often from indulgence and rising expectations than from severity.<sup>54</sup> The great majority of rebel leaders, at least, both in the U.S. and the Caribbean, came from the ranks of the better treated slaves, though this is also true of the traitors who betrayed slave conspiracies.<sup>55</sup>

In the British colonies, the picture is no more clear cut. The three largest revolts in the British Caribbean, those in Barbados 1816, Demerara

1823, and in Jamaica 1831, took place in a period of falling sugar prices and declining profits for the planters. The great Christmas Rebellion of 1831 coincided with the lowest sugar prices for 100 years. However, one cannot simply assume what sort of impact such trends had on the lives of the slaves. Barry Higman has shown how demographic changes resulting from the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 restricted the upward mobility of slaves in Jamaica. "The resulting stress," he argues, "was a basic cause of the rebellion of 1831," in which elite slaves were for the first time prominent.<sup>56</sup> This may well have been so; the argument is compelling. However, one should note that the slave elite in Jamaica was already being associated with conspiracies as far back as 1791 and 1776<sup>57</sup> when the causative factors that Higman adduces were not present. Moreover, the theory that Jamaican slaves were actually being worked harder in the nineteenth century, to which both Higman and Craton give some support,<sup>58</sup> has been convincingly challenged by J.R. Ward. He claims that after 1800 "slaves were better fed, less severely worked and enjoying a higher rate of reproduction."<sup>59</sup> Not all of his arguments appear sound (for example, those concerning the use of livestock and ploughs), but his data on the increasing average height of creole slaves, the reduction in the amount of cane-planting performed and the increase in fertility rates would seem eloquent.

As regards Saint Domingue, it is really too soon to generalize about changes in any aspect of slave conditions. Gaston-Martin wrote thirty years ago that towards the end of the colonial period slaves were treated worse, specifically worked longer, because of incipient soil exhaustion, increasing demand for colonial products and the clearing of new land.<sup>60</sup> However, he made no study of the problem, and if his assertions are correct, the factors he mentions would apply primarily to the coffee-growing regions, least affected by the Revolution, and not to the great sugar estates that were its heartland. Hence a causal connection between increasing workload and rebellion would seem difficult to establish. My own research is beginning to suggest that, in the 1780s, sugar plantation slaves may indeed have been worked harder in the North than elsewhere in the colony,<sup>61</sup> but whether this was a recent development it is as yet impossible to say.

Gabriel Debien, in fact, has written of the growth after 1770 of a more humane attitude on the planters' part, which was underpinned by the rising cost of slaves and sensitivity to anti-slavery propaganda. The sick, the newly-arrived and the pregnant were the chief beneficiaries, but a general improvement in food supply and housing sometimes also resulted.<sup>62</sup> Manumission, the freeing of slaves, was also more common, and all contemporaries agreed that outright cruelty was much rarer than in the past. In 1789, things still had a very long way to go, but the Revolution itself caused the planters to tread more carefully.<sup>63</sup>

In one crucial respect, it may be that conditions actually were worsening. The expansion of coffee cultivation in the mountains, together with soil erosion, was reducing the amount of food crops grown in the colony at the same time as the population was increasing at a fantastic rate.<sup>64</sup> Yet one should not draw hasty conclusions, for food imports from North America were also increasing in this period, facilitated by a new free port decree. So far, we have no evidence that Saint Domingue was suffering a subsistence crisis, though droughts were frequent in the 1780s and they created havoc in the colony. But then again, the South and West were affected no less than the North. Some said that in the North the slaves were better fed, but not everyone agreed. The situation, then, was complex and many more plantation studies are needed.

Whether or not, however, conditions on the plantations were substantively improving or declining, it does seem possible to speak of rising expectations among the slave population. In the first place, even if the movement to improve conditions affected very few slaves directly, it may still have been sufficient to sharpen among the rest a sense of relative deprivation. This movement, moreover, was given legislative expression in a number of controversial royal decrees during the years 1784-86. Most importantly, these envisaged that slaves would denounce instances of mistreatment to the colonial authorities--according to the whites, an extremely dangerous innovation. The decrees were bitterly resisted and apparently never really enforced, but the excitement they created in the northern plain was said to have caused considerable unrest, that is self-assertion, among the slaves.<sup>65</sup> It is in

this context that one should see the notorious Lejeune incident of 1788. Lejeune was a planter denounced by his workforce for torturing some of his slaves to death. The colonial authorities attempted to prosecute him, but gave up in the face of white hostility and obstruction by the courts. Usually cited to show the persistence of barbarous behaviour in the colony, the case is probably more significant as evidence that new standards were being applied, and that the slaves were responding to them.<sup>66</sup>

With the outbreak of the French Revolution, the traditional sources of authority in the colony (Governor, Intendant, Superior Council), were assailed and overthrown, or, like the forces of repression (army, militia, maréchaussée), progressively paralyzed. By the end of 1789, slaves in Saint Domingue were being overheard discussing "the revolt of the white slaves in France," who had divided up the land.<sup>67</sup> The efforts of the Amis des Noirs to abolish the slave trade also became known. A common feature of slave revolts in the Abolitionist era was the claim by insurgents that their masters were withholding from them an act of emancipation (sometimes only partial) granted by the metropolitan power.<sup>68</sup> In certain earlier rebellions, too, similar claims were made. Whether an astute ploy or a genuine belief, it is hard to say. In Saint Domingue, however, in the two months before the slave revolt broke out news spread through the colony of a National Assembly decree giving political equality to certain free coloureds. Such reports could easily be misconstrued, or deftly exploited, by slave malcontents, especially as the white colonists were preparing to resist the decree with force. At the secret meeting at which the August uprising was planned, bogus "official documents" were read out which announced that the French king had granted the slaves three free days per week.<sup>69</sup>

(ii) Religious, secular, millenarian

From the Santidade of late 16th century Brazil to the Black Baptists of the Christmas Rebellion in Jamaica, religion provided slave rebels with leaders, organization, ideologies and a community of feeling. In comparing the three best known United States rebellions or conspiracies, both Gerald Mullin and Eugene Genovese have contrasted them according to their religious content, although in quite different ways. All three made use of



religious meetings and invoked religious sanction, but to differing degrees. According to Mullin, the conspiracies of Denmark Vesey and, particularly, of Gabriel Prosser failed because they were too secular in approach. Unlike Nat Turner, they couched their appeal in political not religious terms and Prosser, especially, neglected to use either the "African wizards" or the methodist camp meetings to appeal to the rural blacks.<sup>70</sup> Genovese, on the other hand, contrasts the "messianic," "apocalyptic" and suicidal revolt of Nat Turner with what he sees as the better organized, more realistic attempts of Vesey and, with some reservations, Prosser. In their political maturity, he suggests, they approached the stature of the Dominguan leader, Toussaint Louverture.<sup>71</sup>

As regards Brazil, however, it is precisely the meticulous organization of the religiously inspired revolts of 1807-35 that is stressed by Edison Carneiro, who contrasts them with the secular, anarchic and ineffectual insurrection of Manuel Balaio.<sup>72</sup> Michael Craton, on the other hand, makes no such distinction when discussing the three most important rebellions in the British Caribbean. He points out that, while Christian revivalism played a vital role in two of the great nineteenth century uprisings, it was totally absent from the Barbados rebellion of 1816. He concludes it was not a necessary condition for revolt.<sup>73</sup>

How usefully the "religious" revolts may be termed millenarian is a question that Craton has pondered in a number of articles. Although tempted, along with other writers, to apply Norman Cohn's well known formulation, he has now concluded that it is too "Eurocentric" and "formulistic" to fit the facts of Afro-Caribbean revolt.<sup>74</sup> If, as he argues, the "late" rebellions were specifically characterized by moderate aims and methods, then millenarian would indeed seem an inappropriate description for them.<sup>75</sup> According to Eugene Genovese, the "revolutionary millenialism" of Nat Turner was a rarity in North American slave culture and in traditional African religion as well, although Monica Schuler strongly disagrees. "Even in Haiti's great revolution," Genovese observes, "millenialist and messianic prophecy played only a fleeting role."<sup>76</sup>

When the aims of slave rebels are so difficult to appraise, even in a well documented insurrection like the Christmas Rebellion, the historian obviously has to tread carefully in applying such terms as millenarian or in denying their validity. With the Saint Domingue revolt, the problems are greater than usual. Lasting so much longer and covering a far greater area than other revolts, it involved many diverse elements, secular, religious, perhaps millenarian. A particular problem is the unscrambling of its voodoo and Christian components. This may seem unnecessary to anyone familiar with the interpenetration of voodoo and Christianity in contemporary Haiti. Yet, some scholars writing about the Revolution have depicted them as antitheses and mutually hostile. Widely quoted, for instance, is an anti-Christian speech supposedly made at the meeting which organised the August uprising. Our earliest version of it, however, appears to be the one published in Pauléus Sannon's Histoire of 1920, 130 years after the event. Howard Sosis, whose thesis argues that eighteenth century voodoo was very little influenced by Christianity, comments on the printed speech: "it is not possible to consider it contemporary with the 1791 meeting."<sup>77</sup> It may, in fact, tell us more about Haitian nationalism and négritude in the twentieth century than about voodoo during the Revolution.

Similarly, while the voodoo chant "Canga bafio té" does indeed date from the eighteenth century, it is usually accompanied in the historical literature with a translation - "We swear to destroy the whites," etc.--that is entirely inaccurate.<sup>78</sup> During the Revolution there is no evidence of damage to churches by the insurgents, nor even of theft of sacred vessels from them in the areas the blacks controlled: far from it. The colonial priests were always spared and they were sufficiently well treated to have left the reputation, fostered by the planters, who hanged one of them, of being the rebels' active collaborators. The curious case of the shaman Romaine la Prophétesse, who claimed to be in touch with the Virgin Mary and to be inspired by the Holy Spirit; or of the voodoo priest Hyacinthe, who sought priestly absolution and blessing for his followers, and the existence of other houngans with names such as Sainte-Jésus and la Vierge<sup>79</sup> suggests in

fact that considerable syncretisation between voodoo and Christianity had already taken place.

With the triumph of the black revolution, we know that leaders such as Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines tried to suppress the voodoo cult, as had the French authorities. This doubtless testifies to its subversive potential, for while Christian sensibility might have been a motive as regards Toussaint, this could not possibly have been so in Dessalines's case.

Although Monica Schuler has eloquently complained that scholars have neglected the political functions of Afro-American religion, emphasising instead its cathartic/escapist aspect,<sup>80</sup> this has never been true of writings about voodoo in Saint Domingue, which has always been presented as a vehicle for revolution. It is of course essential to portray the development of a pan-African cult in slave society as a potentially subversive institution, overcoming previous barriers to cooperation. Yet one should also point out that the development of voodoo, by enriching the cultural life of the slaves in Saint Domingue and adding meaning to their existence, presumably also helped to defuse anomic tensions and add to the stability of the regime. At least, it was not a one-sided development. A useful antidote to the tendency to polarize these particular opposites is the case of the voodoo priest Hyacinthe, who indeed led slaves into battle invoking the protection of magical charms, but as an ally of the white planters. Moreover, one of these planters, Hanus de Jumécourt, was reputed (admittedly, by his enemies) to have participated in voodoo.<sup>81</sup> For the same reason, one cannot accept Schuler's argument that the persistence of an African religious perspective, specifically the slave's tendency to see his master as a sorcerer,<sup>82</sup> necessarily meant a refusal to accept slavery, when the opposite could easily have been the case. In Saint Domingue, it was said that the black population regarded not only the rebel chiefs but also the white Civil Commissioners as sorcerers and therefore invulnerable.<sup>83</sup> This may also have been the basis of de Jumécourt's reputation among the blacks of Port au Prince and the Cul-de-Sac as the "man who knows all things." It is the same question of culture and politics mentioned above.

To return to the revolt of August 1791: tradition holds that the meeting of elite slaves at which the uprising was organised was either followed by, or was itself, a voodoo ceremony, held in the Bois Caiman. It was apparently presided over by a priestess and the first leader of the insurgents, Boukman, and the rites celebrated seem to have been those of the Petro cult. While this seems perfectly probable, one should note that the historicity of the Bois Caiman ceremony hangs by quite a slender thread. There is a contemporary document, a deposition by one of the conspirators, which provides basic details of the meeting of the organizers but it mentions nothing about a religious ceremony.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps one should not expect it to. The earliest mention of the Bois Caiman ceremony appears to be in Dalmas' Histoire published in 1814, though said to be written in 1793. It makes no reference to a priestess nor to Boukman. They only appear in Ardouin's Etudes nearly forty years later. Thomas Madiou, writing in Haiti in the 1840s, had not mentioned the ceremony, despite an evident desire to spice his narrative with examples of "African superstition."<sup>85</sup> That Boukman himself was actually a houngan is not obvious from these accounts. Moreover, in view of Charles Malenfant's assertion that creoles were rarely adepts of voodoo,<sup>86</sup> and given what we know of other leaders such as Jean-François and Toussaint, one might be a little surprised to find this gathering of elite slaves built round a voodoo ceremony. But then again, it was a Petro ceremony, which is probably a creole cult, and the mambo officiating was said to be a green-eyed mulatress, daughter of a Corsican, and therefore presumably a different sort of priestess from the African Malenfant saw in the Sainte-Suzanne mountains with gum and resin covering her frizzy coiffure.<sup>87</sup> Then, as now, voodoo doubtless catered for a very diverse range of participants.

What no account of the slave revolt has so far attempted is to show how the voodoo element meshed in with a Christian element, rather neglected by historians and somewhat surprising to find in view of the stress usually laid by historians on the lack of religious instruction given to the slaves in Saint Domingue. Boukman may indeed have been a voodoo priest. We can surmise that he was both widely and deeply revered among the rebels, to judge from their reaction to his death and from a moving testimony written by one of his

subordinates a few years later.<sup>88</sup> Such prestige might indicate that he was already well known before the revolt, and this could perhaps suggest the role of houngan, though it would be the merest speculation. When he died, however, it seems that Mass was said for him in the rebel-occupied areas. Several priests continued to function in the occupied zone, and a few years later Spanish officers fighting alongside the blacks were to complain that it was a "war of Pater Noster and Ave Maria."<sup>89</sup>

Jean-François, Boukman's successor, was especially deferential to priests (including French ones and not only those of his Spanish allies), and his and Biassou's proclamations frequently made religious references. Biassou had been a slave belonging to a hospital run by monks. Madiou described him as being advised by sorcerers and surrounded by "fetishes," but this is not corroborated by any of the contemporary descriptions of his camp. The sadistic Jeannot, too, was said by Madiou to have been under the influence of sorcerers. Yet even he was also observed to act with some deference towards priests; he agreed not to hold executions on Sundays, and he asked to attend church before his execution.<sup>90</sup> One would not like to stress the matter too much, however, for the priests in the rebels' camps appear to have enjoyed a rather precarious existence, and raison d'état could easily explain the rebels' relations with them. Jeannot's attitude, at least, was reportedly expressed as, "Obey the priest in church, but if he interferes outside it, cut off his head!"<sup>91</sup>

### (iii) African and creole

In his Sinews of Empire, Michael Craton put forward a tripartite sequential model to describe rebellions in slave society: beginning with those "of a maroon type," progressing to those led by unassimilated Africans, and culminating in the late rebellions led by the creole slave elite. He has subsequently noted that such neat distinctions were much more blurred in reality, and that as regards chronology the model is misleading. However, he still maintains that with respect to "leadership, aims and tactics, creolization brought significant changes" in the nature of slave rebellion.<sup>92</sup> In the British West Indies, he adds, the French Revolutionary period coincided with a transitional phase from one type of revolt to another, and the

surprising absence of any uprising during these years he attributes specifically to "a confusion of aims and ideology" resulting from this transition.<sup>93</sup> The model is a suggestive one, but even the examples Craton uses raise doubts both about the distinction between "African" and "creole" types and as to whether their "confusion" can be considered an inhibiting factor.

While all African-led revolts, Craton argues, were aimed at exterminating the master class and destroying the plantation regime, the late creole rebellions aimed at achieving freedom alongside or within plantation society, mainly through passive resistance with a limited use of violence. Creoles were liable to be "horrified" by "senseless" destruction such as took place in Saint Domingue.<sup>94</sup> However, of the three "late" rebellions in the British Caribbean, Craton has to admit that the 1816 revolt in highly-creolized Barbados was "necessarily bloody" and aimed at "the complete overthrow of the plantation system and the eradication of the whites."<sup>95</sup> Contrarily, the more moderate Demerara rebellion of 1823 occurred in a colony where Africans made up half the population,<sup>96</sup> and one of the leaders was an African. The Christmas Rebellion, too, had at least one African ring-leader, while a substantial proportion of the rebels were also Africans.<sup>97</sup>

Of the two "mixed" conspiracies that Craton examines, it is not apparent that either failed owing to African-creole tensions. The "essentially African" Antigua plot of 1735 was betrayed by Africans and failed to reach fruition mainly through ill-luck. The Jamaica 1776 conspiracy was timed to follow the departure of one of the local garrison's regiments, which was detained, however, at the last moment. This was also true of the Second Maroon War of 1795. It was the military factor, I have argued elsewhere, not African-creole tensions, that was probably the most important factor inhibiting the outbreak of slave revolts in the British West Indies during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.<sup>98</sup> In Jamaica, both the slave elite and the Coromantee community responded positively to news of the Saint Domingue slave revolt, and an uprising was prepared for Christmas 1791. However, the militia then turned out for the first time in nine years and the size of the garrison, already at a record level, was soon doubled. In fact, it was precisely the

period 1776-1815 that saw British garrisons in the Caribbean at their strongest. Anthony Synnott, in his excellent thesis, has linked this increased military presence to the trend to non-violent resistance in the British colonies in the nineteenth century.<sup>99</sup> Yet, as Craton himself notes, the three late rebellions followed on the reduction in size of the West India garrisons after 1815.

When one turns to the Saint Domingue revolt, these doubts about the African/creole distinction are reinforced. To begin with, it is not at all clear into which category the revolt should fit. Craton appears to regard it as an "African" rebellion, and there is no doubt that the majority of the insurgents were Africans, since they formed the majority of the adult population. On the other hand the revolt broke out in one of the most creolized parts of the colony, while the most Africanized parts were usually the slowest to rebel. The Jamaican planter Bryan Edwards, who visited the colony at the beginning of the outbreak, was struck by the number of the most trusted elite slaves involved, as were the Dominguan whites themselves.<sup>100</sup> From what is known of the organizers of the insurrection, none appears to have been African. They were commandeurs, coachmen, a cook, mulatto slaves and at least one free coloured.<sup>101</sup> Boukman's origins do not appear to be known, but as a sugar plantation coachman it would be very rare if he were not creole.<sup>102</sup> And to look forward several years: very few Africans were to gain prominence as leaders--Pierrot, Pierre Michel, Laplume, were among the handful to gain more than a local and fleeting reputation. Dessalines and Moise are sometimes referred to as Africans but were almost certainly born in Saint Domingue.<sup>103</sup>

Even so, it would be wrong to discount the African factor. Most commentators have rightly stressed the high ratio of Africans to creoles and the large number of recently arrived Africans in the colony. Their anomic energies were doubtless what the creole organisers were counting on to carry through their plans. As for the rebels' aims, these appear to have varied through time and probably from group to group, and so could be viewed in Craton's terms as either creole or African. The rebels' tactics, too, could be classed under either heading, the initial massacre and destruction giving way to a more flexible stance. It seems then, that this most successful of

slave rebellions was a thorough mixture of both creole and African elements. This tends to undermine the hypothesis that the tension between the two "ideologies" was so nugatory as to be able to account for the total absence of rebellion in a "mixed" society. But this need not be so. The Saint Domingue slave revolt certainly did exhibit tensions between creole leaders and African masses, which impeded its progress. Its success in overcoming them might simply testify to the strength of the other factors working in its favour. On the other hand, there could be something precisely in the mixture of African and creole elements--perhaps the combination of a suicidal fervour in battle with a sophisticated leadership--that goes a long way in explaining its success.

Michael Craton has further characterised the late, creole rebellions in the British West Indies as "proto-peasant."<sup>104</sup> He draws attention to the slaves' known attachment in the late slavery period to their individual provision grounds, on which they worked at week-ends, often in family groups, growing crops both for their own consumption and for sale in the local markets, which they dominated. Freedom to become independent small farmers, Craton concludes, was the aim of these nineteenth century rebels. This was no doubt true. Less certain, however, is whether such aspirations distinguished these revolts from earlier ones. The system of individual provision grounds and marketing by slaves went back to the seventeenth century, although the growth of family ties probably had to await the balancing of the ratio between men and women after 1800. Craton's own position is unclear. While he relates the slaves' peasant activities to their African roots, he also in one instance contrasts the "proto-peasant" rebellions with the 1776 Jamaican conspiracy, in which some rebels sought "return to African styles under their chosen chiefs--either as Asante-like warrior bands, or as self-contained Ibo-like villages deep in the forest."<sup>105</sup>

There seems to be a confusion here between political institutions and socio-economic structures, not a comparison between like and like. While the "proto-peasant" formulation appears to have no political content, the socio-economic form that post-revolutionary African "ethnic autocracies" would have adopted is largely a matter of conjecture. The Maroon communities presumably



provide a clue, but as Craton confusingly observes, they tended to serve as an example to the slaves of an independent peasantry.<sup>106</sup> Considering that one of the defining characteristics of the late rebellions was the willingness of the rebels to continue working part-time on the plantations as wage-earners,<sup>107</sup> one wonders if the term "proto-peasant" is not more applicable to the rebellions of the eighteenth century than to those of the nineteenth century. After all, it was a predominantly African Saint Domingue that produced the classic "proto-peasant" revolt.

(iv) Restorationist and bourgeois-democratic

The only scholar who has so far attempted to incorporate the Saint Domingue revolt into a general analysis of slave rebellion is the distinguished Marxist historian Eugene Genovese. In From Rebellion to Revolution, he argues that the revolution in Saint Domingue represented a new type of slave revolt. Whereas previous insurrections were restorationist, aimed at withdrawing from colonial society, not at overthrowing it, the French Revolution ushered in a period of revolts which demanded slavery's abolition and "increasingly aimed not at secession from the dominant society but at joining it on equal terms." While "challenging the world capitalist system," they did so "with bourgeois-democratic slogans and demands and with a commitment to bourgeois property relations." In Saint Domingue and elsewhere, however, these bourgeois-democratic slave revolts were "strangled early on," and in a "grimly ironical counter-revolution," the mass of ex-slaves were transformed into conservative peasants.<sup>108</sup> Slave resistance is thus incorporated into a programmatic history of world revolution.

Though characteristically challenging, Genovese's analysis seems to have a number of flaws. Insofar as it relates to Saint Domingue it is chiefly concerned not with the actual slave revolt of 1791-93, but with the following period when the French Republic had already declared slavery abolished and the ex-slaves fought in its name to repel foreign invaders.<sup>109</sup> Prior to the ascendancy of the remarkable Toussaint Louverture, which began in 1793-94, the commitment of the black leaders (Toussaint included) to the overthrow of slavery was rather ambiguous and rarely expressed in idealistic terms. It did not prevent them from selling slaves themselves, nor from seeking a compromise

peace on more than one occasion.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, far from using bourgeois-democratic slogans, the rebels of 1791 identified not with those they contemptuously called "les citoyens" but with the Counter-Revolution. Their adoption of a conservative, "Church and King" rhetoric may have stemmed partly, even primarily, from political convenience. But rarely, if ever, during the first year of the revolt do they seem to have mentioned the Rights of Man. As Genovese concedes, "the mechanics of ideological transmission remain obscure."<sup>111</sup>

Even with regard to the later stages of the Haitian Revolution one has difficulty in recognising a "challenge to the world capitalist system" and "commitment to bourgeois property relations" in the black leaders' attempts to maintain an export economy with forced labour and largely state-owned property. Somewhat surprisingly, it is the regime of President Pétion, which divided up and redistributed the landed estates, that is described as counter-revolutionary.<sup>112</sup> Pétion, moreover, though a mulatto born free, was the only revolutionary leader to show interest in extending slave emancipation beyond his own shores.<sup>113</sup> Genovese asserts that "Toussaint dreamed of leading an invasion of Africa to destroy the slave trade,"<sup>114</sup> but this is just a story later told by one of Toussaint's children. We know with rather more certainty that in 1799 Toussaint betrayed to the British authorities, in the interest of encouraging foreign support, a French attempt to raise the slaves of Jamaica.<sup>115</sup> Finally, there is a danger in overstressing the policies of Toussaint Louverture. Partly because they were not the sole expression of the Haitian Revolution, and met with opposition from other of its leaders as well as from the mass of ex-slaves. But also because it is now known that Toussaint was not a slave at all when the revolt broke out, and had been free and a slaveowner for at least fifteen years.<sup>116</sup>

With respect to the slavery question in French Revolutionary politics, the contrast Genovese draws between Jacobin idealists who won over Toussaint Louverture and the "colonialist," "counterrevolutionary" Girondins, whom the blacks helped destroy, seems rather excessive.<sup>117</sup> In the Legislative Assembly, the deputies from the Gironde and their allies were in fact the foremost opponents of France's white colonists. It was they who introduced

racial equality into the West Indies. In the persons of Guadet and Garran-Coulon, they included the first politicians to speak in favour of the abolition of slavery.<sup>118</sup> Commissioner Sonthonax, who issued the emancipation decree of August 1793, belonged to the same faction. Though invariably depicted as a Jacobin in English works, his recall and return to France during the Jacobin ascendancy almost cost him his life. Conversely, when the Jacobin-controlled Convention passed the emancipation law of February 1794, it was guided at least as much by realpolitik as by idealism. Some Jacobins such as Amar secretly opposed the measure, while Danton, ostensibly a proponent, tried to get it amended in committee.<sup>119</sup>

Turning to the broader context of Genovese's analysis: both his bipartite model and the chronology he associates with it seem open to certain objections. Under the heading of "restorationist" he has subsumed two aspects of revolts perhaps best kept separate--the rebels' aims with respect to the slave society (in this case, withdrawal from it), and the form of social organisation they proposed to adopt after the revolt (maroon societies). This is to blur an important distinction that Monica Schuler, Anthony Synnott and Michael Craton have all felt it necessary to make between escapist rebellions and those aimed at destroying the colonial system, whether or not the envisaged post-revolutionary society was archaic or in some sense modern. These writers see a shift from rebellion to revolution considerably pre-dating the Age of Revolution, a shift which Synnott convincingly relates to the diminishing opportunities for establishing new maroon communities as colonial frontiers closed.<sup>120</sup> Thus, Tacky's rebellion in Jamaica in 1760, or Cuffee's in Berbice in 1763, were not aimed at withdrawal from the colonial society but at overthrowing it. It is true that some eighteenth century rebels intended to enslave those blacks who did not join them - Tacky's Coromantees, for example. But before one can say with confidence that not until the Saint Domingue Revolution did slaves demand the abolition of slavery, we need to know a lot more about these earlier insurrections.

On the later slave revolts, Genovese says relatively little, other than to observe that they occurred "within the context of the bourgeois-democratic revolutionary wave." "Restorationist" rebellions, he admits, did not

dissappear. Whether he considers the nineteenth century Brazilian revolts as "bourgeois-democratic" is not clear. He does include under this heading the Prosser, Vesey and Turner conspiracies in the United States, but also notes that their aims "remain debatable" and that they may have been directed towards establishing maroon enclaves. When dealing with the Christmas Rebellion, Genovese de-emphasises its non-violent, accommodationist aspects, stressed by other writers, and observes somewhat fancifully that it "represented the culmination of a new stage, in which the slaves could look forwards to independence in a world of modern nation states."<sup>121</sup> While the Christmas rebellion is no doubt susceptible to differing interpretations, no evidence is put forward to support this particular analysis.

Genovese's overriding concern with ideology thus leads him to see increasing radicalism in slave rebellion, whereas Craton and Synnott, concerned with methods as well as aims, see increasing moderation. For the latter writers, the dynamic for change came from within slave society, (creolization, the closing frontier). Genovese acknowledges the importance of these factors, but believes that ideas external to the slave system were the chief influence in fashioning new forms of armed resistance. It is, of course, not the first occasion when he has championed the role of ideas against the scepticism of non-Marxist historians. Whether one approach is more successful than the other, it is obviously too soon to say, when so much remains obscure about individual revolts.

At present, we know too little about the structure of slave societies in which revolts took place, and about the changes they were undergoing, material or otherwise. In particular, there is a need to investigate the impact on slave communities of the libertarian ideals of the Age of Revolution. The influence of ideas needs to be distinguished from the weakening of the forces of social control that sometimes accompanied them. The aims of rebel leaders further need to be delineated, and distinguished if necessary from those of their followers. The relation between marronage and revolt, and the role of religion in slave resistance are other notably murky areas. The comparative analysis of slave resistance has thrown up a number of useful hypotheses, which draw attention to similarities and contrasts in the history of servile

rebellion. The time would now seem right for a return to more empirical investigations that will serve to evaluate and ultimately extend those hypotheses.

## NOTES

1. The number of rebels probably reached ten thousand within one or two weeks, while after three months at least 100,000 slaves had become involved.
2. H. Pauléus Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint Louverture (Port au Prince, 1920-30); B. Ardouin, Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haïti (Paris, 1853). Cf. D. Geggus, "Unexploited Sources for the History of the Haitian Revolution," Latin American Research Review, 18 (Spring, 1983).
3. G.M. Frederickson and C. Lasch, "Resistance to Slavery," Civil War History, 13 (December, 1967).
4. H.O. Patterson, The Sociology of Slavery (London, 1973), pp. 260-283.
5. E. Genovese, In Red and Black (New York, 1971), p. 137, and Roll Jordan Roll (New York, 1974), p. 598.
6. G. Mullin, Flight and Rebellion (Oxford, 1972), pp. 35-38.
7. Roll Jordan Roll, p. 598.
8. L. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness (Oxford, 1977); A. Raboteau, Slave Religion (Oxford, 1978).
9. "The Passion to Exist: Slave Rebellions in the British West Indies, 1629-1832," Journal of Caribbean History, 13 (Spring, 1980); pp. 2, 18-19.
10. "Towards a Psychology of Slavery," in A.-T. Gilmore (ed.), Revisiting Blassingam's "The slave community" (Westport, 1978).
11. D. Geggus, Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793-1798 (Oxford, 1982), pp. 26-29.
12. For recent work, see their contributions to Michael Craton (ed.), Roots and Branches: Current Directions in Slave Studies (Toronto, 1979).
13. The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820 (Oxford, 1971), p. 308.
14. Jamaica's Christmas Rebellion of 1831 was popularly called "The Baptist War." Certainly, the "native" or "Black" Baptists, who were apparently the most prominent in the revolt, blended African with European practice and belief. However, I think Brathwaite goes too far in suggesting that the rebel leader and deacon Sam Sharpe was an obeah-man simply because he was indicted for being an "oath-swearer." See Craton (ed.), Roots, p. 154. The conspirators swore their oaths on the Bible. Brathwaite's earlier statement that Sharpe was "condemned by all for administering

- dreaded African and obeah oaths and sealing them with gunpowder and blood" seems to be unsupported by any evidence: "Caliban, Ariel and Unprospero in the Conflict of Creolization," in V. Rubin and A. Tuden, Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies (New York, 1977), pp. 53, 57.
15. Mullin, Flight, p. 34-38, 81-82. Cf. D. Littlefield, Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina (Baton Rouge, 1981), p. 133.
  16. F. Parker, "Political Development in the French Caribbean," in A. Wilgus (ed.) The Caribbean (Gainesville, 1958).
  17. The most prominent representatives of the Haitian school, which is by no means monolithic, are Edner Brutus, Jean Fouchard and Gerard Laurent. The Haitian expatriate Leslie Manigat adopts a critical stance towards the school but displays distinct affinities with it both in methodology and ideology.
  18. Y. Debbasch, "Le marronage: essai sur la désertion de l'esclave antillais," Année sociologique (1961, 1962); G. Debien, Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises aux 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles (Basse Terre, 1974), ch. 19.
  19. J. Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté (Paris, 1972), pp. 159-162. On the Bréda estate at Haut de Cap, the humane Bayon de Libertat had in fact ceased to be the attorney in the period Fouchard refers to here: Bréda papers, E 691, Arch, dept. Loire-Atlantique, Nantes. As for the famous Galliffet plantations, the expression "heureux comme nègre à Galliffet" dates from the very beginning of the eighteenth century, while Odelucq, the estate's attorney during the 1780s was according to some a harsh master: H. Brougham, An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers (Edinburgh, 1803), vol. 2, p. 458, Cf. the anonymous denunciation of him in Galliffet Papers, 107 AP 128/2, Arch. Nat., Paris.
  20. Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834 (Cambridge, 1976), p. 178.
  21. Mullin, Flight, pp. 34-38, 81-82.
  22. In two joint studies by Fouchard and Debien, runaways unable to speak creole accounted for respectively 15% and 20% of two samples taken from the period 1790-91: "Le marronage autour du Cap," Bull. Instit. français de l'Afrique noire, ser. B (1965): 794; "Le petit marronage à Saint-Domingue autour du Cap," Cahiers des Amériques latines (1969): 55. Slaves usually learned creole inside a year. Annual imports of slaves were then equivalent to about 7% of the slave population, at least a quarter of whom were too old or too young to run away.

23. Debien, Les esclaves, pp. 466-7; Fouchard, Liberté, p. 438. D. Geggus, "The Slaves of British-Occupied Saint Domingue," Caribbean Studies, 18 (1978): part 2, 16-22, 30, Fouchard and Debien, "Petit marronage," 57, quote the colonial writer Moreau de Saint-Méry to the effect that "Mozambiques" were noted for resisting slavery, but that is not in fact what he wrote: M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, Description .. de Saint-Dominique [1797] Paris, 1958 edn.), vol. 1, p. 54.
24. The Slave Community (New York, 1979), ch. 5.
25. Fouchard, Liberté, pp. 124-5, 197-8, 218-9.
26. Debien, Les esclaves, p. 467.
27. Ibid., p. 420; "Lista de los negros...en el Maniel," Aud. Santo Domingo 1102, Arch. Gen. de Indias, Seville; E. Genovese, From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World (Baton Rouge, 1979), p. 51.
28. C.L.M. Milscent de Musset, Sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue (Paris, 1791), pp. 1-12, Cf. Debien, Les esclaves, p 421; Moreau de Saint-Méry, Description, vol. 2, p. 1135.
29. Smaller than modern Haiti, the colony measured less than 10,000 square miles, and by 1789 the population was approaching 600,000. Many fugitives crossed into the neighboring Spanish colony of Santo Domingo.
30. Fouchard, Liberté, pp. 474-525. Cf. Milscent de Musset, Troubles, pp. 1-12; Debien, Les esclaves, p. 419.
31. E. Brutus, Révolution dans Saint-Domingue (np. nd), vol. 1, p. 70; L. Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and...Revolution in Saint Domingue-Haiti," in Rubin and Tuden, Perspectives, p. 432.
32. Debien, Les esclaves, p. 466; G. Debien, Plantations et esclaves à Saint-Dominique (Dakar, 1962), p. 72.
33. Milscent de Musset, Troubles, p. 5. Macandal was a fugitive who passed rapidly into legend. Before his betrayal and execution in 1758, he is believed to have spent eighteen years at liberty, moving freely among the slave population, encouraging the poisoning of white colonists. Surprisingly, there seems to be no evidence that he actually conspired with other maroons. He thus lies somewhat outside the tradition of marronage. Cf. C. Fick, "The Black Masses in the San Domingo Revolution, 1791-1803" (Concordia Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1980), p. 57; but also Fouchard, Liberté, p. 495.
34. S. Schwartz, "The Mocambo," in R. Price (ed.), Maroon Societies (New York, 1973), pp. 218-9; M. Mullin, "Slave Obeahmen and Slave-Owning



- Patriarchs," in Rubin and Tuden, Perspectives, p. 482; G. Debien, op. cit., pp. 435-6.
35. Debbasch, "Marronage," part 1, p. 102; Barbara Kopytoff, "The Early Political Development of Jamaican Maroon Societies," William and Mary Quarterly XXXV (1978): 297, 306.
  36. See Price, Maroon Societies, pp. 181-2, 298-9; Rubin and Tuden, Perspectives, p. 456; C. Degler, Neither White Nor Black (New York, 1971), p. 48.
  37. Rubin and Tuden, Perspectives, p. 410; Brathwaite, Development, pp. 248-9; Patterson, Sociology, p. 269.
  38. Jordan, p. 591, Cf. Genovese's later statement in From Rebellion to Revolution, p. 86, "The revolutionaries had behind them knowledge of protracted maroon warfare in the eastern part of the island." Though rather more cautious, even this seems very unlikely. It surely cannot refer to first-hand knowledge, though the reader might think so. It presumably refers to the raids, during the period 1776-81, of the Maniel. They lived in the south-east about 100 miles from the centre of the 1791 revolt, from which they were separated by several mountain ranges and a broad swathe of Spanish territory. Their exploits may have been known in the North but I think it is improbable. However, the accompanying assertion that, "The early leaders of the black revolution in the north, Jean-François and Biassou, had established careers in the military campaigns on the Spanish border," is without question the result of some confusion.
  39. Fouchard, Liberté, pp. 524, 534, 540, 453-4, 462. On Jean Kina, see D. Geggus, "Slave Soldier, Rebel: The Strange Career of Jean Kina," Jamaican Hist. Rev., 12 (1980) and "Soulèvement manqué d'esclaves ou manifestation de gens de couleur?", Annales des Antilles (1983).
  40. Manigat, "Relationship." Although he sets out ostensibly to examine the connection "if any" between marronage and revolution, Manigat explicitly assumes a direct link and, spurning "unconditional obeissance to empirical data" ignores Debien's pertinent question, as have all other writers: When and in what manner did the revolutionary leaders command bands of maroons?
  41. Debien, Les esclaves, p. 468.
  42. Aud. Santo Domingo 1031, Archivo Gen. de Indias, Seville, and ibid.
  43. Port de Paix, Gros Morne, Le Borgne, Mirebalais, Arcahaye, Grand' Anse, the south-east and north-east. See Fouchard, Liberté, 524; Debien, Les esclaves, p. 421; Milscent, Troubles, pp. 6, 12.
  44. Ibid.

45. Debien, Les esclaves, p. 469; Geggus, Occupation, pp. 308-310.
46. Liberté, p. 527.
47. "Notes de M. Leclerc," Cols., CC9A/5, Arch. Nat., Paris.
48. García to Acuña no. 152, enclosure no. 6, Aud. Santo Domingo 956, Arch. Gen. de Indias, Seville.
49. Sinews of Empire (New York, 1974), pp. 226-237.
50. Roll, pp. 590-1.
51. C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins (London, 1980), introduction and pp. 85-86; "...working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugarfactories which covered the North Plain, [the slaves] were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time." The average sugar plantation in the plaine du Nord had about 250 slaves, probably less, of whom only a small number would work in the boiling house or "factory." However, sugar production did demand an intense discipline and organisation on a scale far greater than that of other staples. In the mountains, moreover, the slaves of the small coffee estates had far fewer opportunities to meet at urban markets.
52. Marion Kilson, "Towards Freedom: An Analysis of Slave Revolts in the United States," Phylon xxv (1964).
53. Mullin, Flight, pp. 124-142.
54. Cited in Frederickson and Lasch, "Resistance," pp. 132-3.
55. Blassingame, Community, p. 221; A. Synnott, "Slave Revolts in the Caribbean" (London University Ph.D. thesis, 1976), pp. 348-55, 364-5.
56. Higman, Jamaica, p. 232.
57. D. Geggus, "Jamaica and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt, 1791-93," The Americas, 38 (Oct. 1981): 223-4; Craton, "Passion": 9-10.
58. Higman, Jamaica, pp. 214, 223; M. Craton, Searching for the Invisible Man (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp. 99, 109, 113, 143.
59. "The Profitability and Viability of West Indian Plantation Slavery," Caribbean Societies Seminar Paper (Feb., 1980), Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.
60. Gaston-Martin, Histoire de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises (Paris, 1948), p. 165.

61. This is using as indices of workload ratios of slaves to caneland and fertility ratios. See, D. Geggus, "Les esclaves de la plaine du Nord à la veille de la Révolution française," Revue de la soc. haitienne d'hist., July and Oct. 1982, and forthcoming.
62. Debien, Les esclaves, ch. 20.
63. Ibid. Michael Craton's comments in S.L. Engerman and E. Genovese, (eds.), Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies (Princeton, 1975), p. 273, n. 54, give a rather misleading impression of one of Debien's studies.
64. F. Théseé and G. Debien, Un colon niortais à Saint Domingue (Niort, 1975), pp. 44-45. Between 1786 and 1790 slave imports averaged at least 30,000 p.a.
65. Ibid, p. 41; M. Begouen-Demeaux, Stanislas Foäche (Paris, 1951), pp. 110-111.
66. Cols., F3/150, pp. 78-83, 88-93, Arch. Nat., Paris. In another case, the Governor and Intendant managed to jail and deport a planter who had been denounced by his slaves, and the decision was upheld by the Minister of the Marine: ibid, pp. 62-63, 85.
67. Geggus, Occupation, p. 38.
68. Cf. Michael Craton's perceptive comments on "the rumor syndrome" in J. Walvin (ed.), Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846 (London, 1982), pp. 105-6.
69. "Extraits des détails authentiques....," Cols., F3/197, Arch. Nat.
70. Mullin, Flight, pp. 159-160.
71. Genovese, Roll, pp. 592-5.
72. E. Carneiro, O quilombo dos Palmares (Rio de Janeiro, 1966), p. 3.
73. Walvin (ed.), Slavery, p. 117.
74. M. Craton, "Christianity and Slavery in the British West Indies," Historical Reflections, 5 (1978): 156-7; "Passion," 14; "Proto-Peasant Revolts? The Late Slave Rebellions in the British West Indies, 1816-1832," Past & Present, 85 (Nov., 1979): 115; Walvin (ed.), Slavery, p. 117.
75. As Mary Reckord (now Turner) pointed out in her pioneering article "The Jamaica Slave Rebellion of 1831," Past & Present, 40 (July, 1968): 123. Both writers, however, note divergent attitudes among the rebels.

76. Genovese, Roll, pp. 271-9, 728; Craton (ed.), Roots, p. 130, n. 20.
77. Pauléus Sannon, Histoire, vol. 1, pp. 98-99; H. Sosis, "The Colonial Environment and Religion in Haiti" (Columbia Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1971), ch. 10, notes 50 and 51.
78. The chant is in Kikongo. I am grateful to Dr. Hazel Carter for its translation.
79. Dossier 11; Dxxv/1, see Arch. Nat., Paris; A. Métraux, Le vaudou haïtien (Paris, 1958), p. 39, Nouv. acq. fr. 14878, p. 145, Manuscrits, Bibl. Nat., Paris.
80. In Craton, Roots, p. 130.
81. C. Malenfant, Des colonies modernes (Paris, 1814), p. 18; Geggus, Occupation, pp. 312-3.
82. See Craton (ed.), Roots, pp. 131-3.
83. WO 1/59, p. 376, P.R.O., London.
84. See above, n. 69.
85. A. Dalmas, Histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue (Paris, 1814), pp. 117-8; Ardouin, Haïti, vol. 1, pp. 228-9; T. Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti (Port au Prince, 1847).
86. Colonies, pp. 215-9. He added that creoles and the creolized tended to mock what they regarded as superstition.
87. Fouchard, Liberté, p. 528, n. 3; Malenfant, Colonies, p. 219.
88. Gros, Isle St. Domingue, Province du Nord. Précis Historique [Paris, 1793], p. 14; Gabriel Bellaire to Joaquín García, no date, Aud. Santo Domingo, 1031, Arch. Gen. de Indias, Seville.
89. C. Ardouin, Essais sur l'histoire d'Haïti (Port au Prince, 1865) p. 55.
90. Madiou, Haïti, vol. 1, pp. 72-73; G. Laurent, Quand les chaînes volent en éclats (Port au Prince, n.d.), p. 202; above, note 47.
91. Laurent, Chaines, p. 205.
92. Sinews, pp. 226-37; "Passion," 2, 5; "Proto-Peasant," 116.
93. "Passion," 11.
94. "Passion," 8, 11, 16; "Proto-Peasant," 118, 121.

95. "Passion," 16.
96. Africans constituted 51% of the slave population in 1820 and 46% in 1823: Parliamentary Papers, 1833 xxvi (700), "Slave Population," p. 13.
97. See Higman, Jamaica, 227-32.
98. Occupation, 87-92, 413. This would also seem true of seventeenth century Barbados: Jerome S. Handler, "Slave Revolts and Conspiracies in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," Nieuwe West-Indische Gids, 56 (1982): 5-42, 25 and passim.
99. "Revolts," pp. 370, 378.
100. B. Edwards, Historical Survey of the Island of St. Domingo (London, 1801), p. 16.
101. Cols., F3/197 and CC9A/5, Arch. Nat., Paris; Arch. Gen. de Indias, Seville, various documents, Aud. Santo Domingo, 954.
102. Cf. Geggus, "Slaves," part 4, 31-33, and "Les esclaves."
103. See J. Fouchard, G. Debien, M.A. Menier, "Toussaint Louverture avant 1789," Conjonction, 134 (June, 1977).
104. Craton, "Proto-Peasant."
105. "Passion," 8, 10, 15; "Proto-Peasant," 120.
106. "Passion," 15.
107. "Proto-Peasant," 118, 121-2; Walvin (ed.), Slavery, pp. 117-9.
108. Genovese, Rebellion, preface and pp. 88-89.
109. By June 1793, the invading Spaniards had declared free all rebel slaves who would join their army. In July, the French Civil Commissioners in Saint Domingue were forced to follow suit, and in August they declared a general emancipation. This was extended to all France's colonies by the Convention in Paris the following February.
110. Geggus, Occupation, pp. 43, 302-5.
111. Genovese, Rebellion, p. xx.
112. Ibid., pp. 88-90.
113. D. Nicholls, From Dessalines to Duvalier (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 46-47.
114. Genovese, Rebellion, p. 124.

115. Co 245/1, p. 34, P.R.O., London.
116. It was previously thought that he had been a privileged slave, enjoying an informal freedom but still living on his master's plantation. Fouchard, Debien and Menier, "Toussaint," states that he was freed in 1776. It is clear, however, from one of the documents that they publish that Toussaint was already free and a slaveowner before that date.
117. Genovese, Rebellion, pp. 90-96, 124.
118. It was Guadet, as early as February 1792, who presented a report by the absent Garran-Coulon calling for the eventual abolition of slavery: Le Moniteur Universel, vol. 11, p. 512. In The World the Slaveholders Made (London, 1970), pp. 44-48, Genovese does note Bordeaux's split with the colonists over racial equality but implies, I think unreasonably, that the Jacobins wished to destroy economically "the Atlantic-oriented bourgeoisie" and would have abolished slavery even if there had been no slave revolt or war with England and Spain. As the Girondins fell in May 1793, there seems no way of knowing whether they would have taken a different line to that of the Jacobins or not.
119. See J. Garran-Coulon, Rapport sur les troubles des Sant-Domingue (Paris, 1797-99), vol. 4, p. 567; J. Morse Stephens, Speechs of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution (Oxford, 1892), vol. 2, pp. 281-2.
120. Synnott, "Revolts," pp. 234, 367-70. cf. Handler, "Barbados," 31. Genovese acknowledges that the Jamaican Maroon Treaty of 1739 was a turning point, hindering the establishment of further maroon settlements and so forcing subsequent rebels to attempt to overthrow the system, but he comments that "this tendency did not mature until the interrelated revolutions in France and Saint-Domingue created a new system of international power and a more coherent revolutionary ideology." Rebellion, pp. 35-36.
121. Genovese, Rebellion, pp. 36, 44-50, 101-4.