

Chapter 1 : Haiti " History and Culture

I read this article due to an earthquake in blog.quintoapp.com for such an informative, organized and very helpful article being a blog.quintoapp.com is so good and easy for me to share and explain the culture, religion and history of Haiti to the Pakistani peoples.

Part I-Haitian Vodou I have decided to share a bit about the history and development of Vodou both in Haiti and in Louisiana in this first installment of a series of articles of Vodou culture and history. Vodou is a monotheistic religion. As I have stated many times in my writings, I am not an expert or practitioner of Haitian Vodou and my knowledge is limited to my interactions with Haitian people and from academic sources. So, I do apologize if any information given is erroneous or incomplete and I welcome comments from those more familiar with the religion in Haiti. I am however an experienced priest of New Orleans Vodou and I possess a vast knowledge of the rites, traditions and practices of Louisiana Vodou and there is no denying that the influences from Haitian Vodou run deep in New Orleans and for that reason I feel it is necessary to begin our journey on the island of Hispaniola during colonial times when a variety of West African spiritual practices fused with Catholicism to create the religion of Vodou. Contrary to popular belief, Vodou is a monotheistic religion, since practitioners believe in one all-powerful God who created the universe and everything in it. It is a common misconception that Vodou is a polytheistic religion. Why then do so many assume Vodou to be a polytheistic religion? Vodou is essentially an African spirit religion that has found a home in the Caribbean. The religion in Benin and Togo was suppressed first by Christian missionaries and later by the socialist regimes that ruled from until Today, Christianity and Islam are the dominant faiths in West Africa, yet in many rural areas as well as throughout the Caribbean the rich legacy of traditional African spirit religions remain prevalent to this day. Columbus set foot on the western side of Hispaniola on December 5th, in what is today the Republic of Haiti. Shortly after the arrival of these first Europeans, the native population died out due to diseases such as small pox and diphtheria to which they had no immunity, and left the island essentially deserted. The Spanish explorers quickly lost interest in the island following the discovery of vast deposits of gold and silver in the Mexico and South America, and what few settlements they had there were concentrated on the eastern side of the island that is today the Dominican Republic. It was not until the end of the 17th century when the western third of the island was ceded to France and the massive production of sugar began under French colonial rule. The colony of Saint Domingue prospered. In order to supply a labor force for the massive scale plantation economy, the French began importing boatloads of slaves from West Africa. These slaves, along with their music, languages and food preparation techniques, also brought to Saint Domingue their religion: Rarely did the African population receive any formal religious instruction, and therefore they did not learn or fully understand the faith which they were told they must practice, and often times they maintained their traditional African beliefs and practiced them alongside the Catholicism of their white captors. The most widely accepted theory regarding the crystallization of the Vodou religion in Haiti is that the slaves continued to venerate the spirits of their native land, but prayed to them in secret, hiding them behind Catholic iconography as not to be discovered by the French clergy. This was most likely true in the early days of colonization, but I personally feel that Caribbean slaves overtime accepted many aspects of the Catholic faith and began to pray to European saints alongside their traditional African spirits. Hence the syncretism between Vodou spirits and Catholic saints, which does not exist in Africa. This is an example of the acceptance of the Catholic faith on the part of practitioners of Vodou. Such an assumption is logical if one takes into account the fact that by their very nature African religions borrow and incorporate elements of other faiths such as can be seen in the veneration of Yoruba and Congolese spirits in Vodou despite its obvious origins in West Africa. Any claim that Vodou survived without Catholic influence in the Caribbean is most likely an attempt to decatholize the religion by New Age practitioners in the United States. Practitioners can call upon the lwa for favors and blessings to improve their state of life and one may communicate with the lwa by means of possession through an initiated priest or priestess. The roles of Vodou initiates will be detailed below. The Rada lwa are the original spirits that came from Africa and which are still venerated there today.

The Petro lwa are the angry, fiery aspects of the Rada lwa. A great storm arose and the Petro lwa were born and empowered the slaves to bring their captors to their knees. A Voodooist would invoke a Rada lwa and a Petro lwa for help in the same dominion, but for a different reason. One might call upon the Rada lwa Erzulie Freda for help in finding a lover, and one might invoke the Petro aspect of the same lwa, Erzulie Dantor, to punish an abusive husband or get revenge on an unfaithful lover. So, both aspects of Erzulie deal with love, but under different circumstances. The third group is the Ghede lwa who are the lwa of death. The idea of death is important in Vodou since death is the gateway through which we must all pass in order to enter into the spirit world to be with our ancestors and God. In Vodou, the spirit world, much like the Christian heaven, is called Guinea, which is no doubt a reference to the ancestral homeland. The Ghede lwa are important because they assist people on their final journey into the spirit world and retrieve them from the lake of death and welcome them into the eternal paradise of Guinea. The Ghede lwa can also be called about to assist in the preparation of magical charms and spells by Voodoo priests. Voodooists serve, but do not worship, the lwa. They believe that the lwa will grant them material blessings in this world, but only faith in Almighty God can bring them a happy afterlife. For example, a child of Erzulie Freda may be physically beautiful, flirtatious and enjoy owning exotic and expensive items. There are several hundred lwa, and more are invented all the time as the need or desire arises. A Vodou practitioner may even serve a lwa known only to him and his family. In the next installment I will share some of the names and attributes as well as a variety of other information about some of the more widely known lwa. Thank you again for checking out my blog and may your life be filled with abundant blessings!

Chapter 2 : Haitian Family Values, Religion, and Superstitions | LoveToKnow

Culture and Customs of Haiti begins with an overview of the mountainous island that seemed forbidding to European colonizers. Historical periods, including French colonization, U.S. occupation in the early 20th century, Independence and the Duvaliers' reigns, until today, are reviewed and provide the framework for the volume.

Haiti's history and culture are unique for many reasons, a facet which contributes to its rich and dynamic culture compared to other Caribbean nations. It was the second country to become a republic in the Americas when it gained independence following a year-long slave rebellion, making it the first republic in the world to be led by people of African descent. It is one of the most heavily populated Caribbean islands and the largest French-speaking nation in the Americas. Unfortunately, despite its proud origins and ensuing culture, Haiti remains one of the poorest nations in the world and was subject to a tyrannical regime from the Duvalier dictatorships for most of the 20th century. It also has a history of destructive earthquakes, which continues to mar development efforts. Three weeks later, his ship continued to the site of the present-day Cap-Haitien. Before that, the island of Hispaniola, which Haiti forms one-third of, was populated by native Taino Indians. The Spanish wanted the island for its gold, but later the French colonists introduced sugar and tobacco plantations as export crops. The location of the island made it a haven for pirates, who would use the country as a base to loot passing ships traveling through the Caribbean en route to Europe. Many sought out Tortuga, a notion which has gone down in literary and romantic history. By the 17th century, French buccaneers had begun to settle in Hispaniola, causing conflict between France and Spain. By 1763, the island had been divided in two, and Haiti was ceded to France. They brought over slaves to work on the plantations and continued to rule for another 100 years. Inspired by the French Revolution of 1789, the slaves rose up and demanded to be freed. After a year-long rebellion, the country finally gained independence in 1804. It was hailed a republic and was the first country to be governed by people of African descent in the world. The ensuing years of the 19th century saw a power struggle, and by 1820, the US military took Haiti in an attempt to restore political stability. Their presence lasted until 1825. Francois Duvalier had formerly been the Minister of Health, a position which earned him his nickname, Papa Doc. Initially he was popular among the Haitians, but his use of state-terrorist tactics to control the population turned him into an evil dictator until his death in 1971. Both the Duvaliers used elements of voodoo to instill fear and oppression in the people, and were despised as leaders. The army was disbanded and even today Haiti lacks an official military. The earthquake has not helped efforts to maintain stability and it was one of the most destructive ever recorded, leaving 1,000,000 people dead and 1 million homeless. This tragedy dealt a big blow to the already poverty-stricken country, although international support to rebuild Haiti has been steady and successful. Culture The culture of Haiti has its roots in West Africa, and to this day many of its inhabitants feel more aligned to Africa than they do to the Caribbean or Americas. In fact, in 2000 Haiti announced its intention to join the African Union, a political entity representing the continent. Since Haiti was a former French colony, elements are still evident in culture, particularly in music and the language. Haiti adopted Roman Catholicism from its former French colonizers, although more famously the practice of Voodoo is observed. Voodoo has its roots in West Africa, but encompasses aspects of many religions, and is combined with traditional folklore and tales that have been passed down through the generations. West African culture has also influenced Haitian art work and jewelry.

Chapter 3 : J. Michael Dash: Culture and Customs of Haiti

J. Michael Dash's book is one of the best overviews of Haiti today I have ever read, and the next time I teach a course on Haiti this will be a central text. Dash's treatment comes in 8 chapters. First is a chapter called "context" in which he lays out the basic history of Haiti. Next he deals with.

Society The Haitian People: Their culture is a fusion of Caribbean, African, and French customs. A traditional "voodoo" doll. Haitian culture fuses Caribbean customs with those brought by African slaves and the French masters they overcame. **Description** The Spanish killed the original inhabitants of Haiti, the indigenous Taino people, soon after Christopher Columbus claimed the land in the name of Spain in French colonists and other European settlers later set up plantations, bringing over huge numbers of African slaves. Because the Taino were decimated, Haitian people are not mestizo. Most are black, while most others are mulatto or white. Some 10 million people live in Haiti, situated on the western third of Hispaniola and smaller surrounding islands. Over a million Haitians live in other countries as well, such as the United States, Canada, and France. The primary official language of Haiti is Haitian Creole, which is based on Eighteenth-century French mingled with influences from Taino, West African languages, other European languages, and English. French was the primary language until, but it is mainly associated with elites today. English is displacing French as the secondary language, in light of increasing migration to the US and exposure of Haitians to American media. Commissioned by Henri Christophe, a slave rebellion leader and then President and self-ordained King, these fortresses symbolize post-independence freedom. In cities, Haitian architecture involves a tradition of colorful, ornate "gingerbread"-style houses, which were a focus of post-earthquake restoration efforts. At the same time, over half of the Haitian populace lives in impoverished rural areas, typically in two-room mud or bamboo shacks. **Cuisine** With French and Creole lineage, Haitian cuisine gravitates toward spices, herbs, and peppers. Breakfast might be coffee and bread, or a distinctive kind of spaghetti dish. Main meals revolve around starches, especially rice, beans, corn, millet, yams, and cassava. Diri kole ak pois rouge, or red beans and rice, is the national dish. Cooks who can afford it use pork, goat, red snapper, and seafood. **Cultural Significance** Haitian art is both joyful and spiritual. Haitian music is vibrant, drawing from French, African, Spanish, and Taino influences, and sometimes traces of Voodoo ceremonies. While most Haitians are Christian, Haitian life and art often allude to Voodoo, a set of practices and ideas drawn from many of the traditions intertwined with the complex cultural history of Haiti. Western images of Voodoo as a kind of vengeful witchcraft are inaccurate and stigmatizing. While it does have darker elements, Voodoo encompasses a larger span than malicious acts, and has joyous and loving facets as much as any other set of beliefs. Threats Haitian culture is characterized by resilience in the face of slavery, extreme poverty, natural disasters, and displacement, as well as ongoing political corruption and violence. The country is not immune to natural disasters either, as attested to by the earthquake that devastated galleries, museums, theatres, historic buildings, and marketplaces throughout much of the country. International interventions have been made attempting to support Haitians to protect and restore their culture, which remains beleaguered by a number of complex factors. This page was last updated on April 25,

Chapter 4 : Haitians | blog.quintoapp.com

Some of the most representative customs of the Haitian culture are Voodoo religion and the Carnival. Due to its colonial history, the customs of Haiti draw from a mixture of influences, including Spanish, French, African and Caribbean cultures.

The southern peninsula boasts the Massif de la Hotte and Massif de la Selle. The highest peak, Pic la Selle, is located in the Massif de la Selle and rises to 8, feet 2, meters. The mountains are punctuated by hills and valleys, where most people live and work. Most of the trees cover that existed prior to European colonization has been removed due to farming and production of charcoal fuel for cooking. Spring and autumn are rainy, whereas December through February and June through August are dry. July is the driest summer month. The hurricane season lasts from June to October, but sometimes it last a little longer than that. The country has a high birthrate, but emigration due to high unemployment rate. The majority of the population lives in poverty. Most Haitians are descendants of African slaves who came to the island beginning in the 16th century. Throughout the s, the majority of the Haitians who traveled to the Dominican side of the island worked in the agricultural industry, specifically with sugarcane Nan Batey. As sugarcane profits began to decline, increasing numbers of Haitians began to migrate to urban areas in the Dominican Republic; the government there has passed on many occasions new immigration laws in an attempt to regulate immigration and has carried out mass deportations of Haitian immigrants, which has fueled a never ending conflict between Haitians and Dominicans who share the same island. Only educated adults or secondary school students speak French, though with varying levels of fluency and accuracy. Knowledge of French has become a sign of social class in Haiti; those who speak French may shun those who do not. It is similar to creole spoken on some other Caribbean islands, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique. Because of the U. Religion the majority 80 percent of Haitians are Catholic. While some people regularly participate in religious services, others only draw upon their Catholic identity in the case of marriages, funerals, or other rites of passage. Protestants claim 16 percent of the population. The largest denominations are Baptist, Pentecostal, and Seventh-day Adventist and mormon as well. Perhaps as important as organized religion is Vodou voodoo , which is practiced to some degree by a majority of Haitians. It was given legal status equal to other religions in . While official Catholicism opposes its practice, Vodou includes the worship of Catholic saints and other Catholic rituals. Vodou ceremonies and rituals, held in temples, usually are performed at night and weekends. Adherents believe that during the temple ceremonies, a Vodou god inhabits the body of a believer. Not all Vodou adherents practice the religion openly. Still, certain Vodou temples are the focus of annual pilgrimages. Haitians are warm, friendly, and generous. Haitians are very proud of their culture and history. Some claim this is because the present offers no heroes, but others believe the past gives hope for the future. Everyday life is hard for most people, so parents strive to send their children to school, though it is very expensive, trusting that an education will give the next generation a better life. There is an extremely large income gap in Haiti. Rural and middle-class urban people have different perspectives on life, as their cultural practices and attitudes vary significantly. Urban elites consider themselves to be more European or cosmopolitan than people from the countryside. People living in rural areas value their traditions and slower pace of life. Haitians from lower classes often claim a historical connection to Africa, while upper-class Haitians may feel closer to France, Canada, or the United States. Haitians from the upper classes may have business ties in the Dominican Republic, and those from the lower classes may take short-term trips to the Dominican Republic to buy and sell wares. Haitians living on the border often have friendly social and economic interactions with Dominicans. Urban Haitians prefer to wear Western-style clothing. Women may wear pants or colorful skirts. Some wear a headdress to match their outfits. Young people like to wear shorts. They also follow the latest North American fashion trends American style. Sandals are the most popular footwear. Government officials and businessmen wear suits and ties. Rural men wear T-shirts and shorts or pants when working. Rural women wear dresses and head scarves, but they rarely wear pants due to their tradition. Men may wear gold jewelry with status symbols. Personal greetings are very important to Haitians. When entering a room or joining a group, a person is expected to physically

greet each individual. Everyone else, from relatives to friends and casual acquaintances, receives a kiss on each cheek. The most common verbal greeting is *Bonjou, kouman ou ye? Sakapfet or Sak pase?* The response usually is *M pa pi mal, e ou menm?* Haitians address superiors or persons of status by title *Monsieur, Madame, Doctor, etc.* At such gatherings, people engage in loud conversation and laughter. Hand gestures usually accompany discussion or storytelling. If one is too busy to talk, one will greet a passerby by nodding the head up. Visiting is a national pastime. Friends, neighbors, and relatives are welcome in the home at any time of day until about 8 p. It is not necessary to call ahead. Visitors arriving during a meal may be asked to wait in another room until the family finishes eating. It is also acceptable for guests to decline refreshments. Hosts typically offer fruit juice or soda. In addition to impromptu visits, Haitians enjoy inviting friends over for an evening of socializing or for dinner. When a visit ends, hosts accompany guests to the door. Rather than leaving, however, Haitians frequently extend their visit for a while by standing and talking with their hosts depending on how comfortable they feel with that person. Special occasions also call for visits. Guests take gifts to hosts celebrating a communion, baptism, graduation, or wedding—occasions for which many organize elaborate parties; in order words Haitians love to party. Haitians who can afford it eat three meals a day per tradition. Per tradition, the family gathers at the table for the main meal, which is usually at midday in cities. However, economic pressures and varied school and work schedules mean that families are increasingly eating at staggered times or separately. Diners take their portions from serving dishes on the table. If guests are present, they are given first opportunity to serve themselves. When no guests are present, family members often wait for the mother or the head of the household to begin eating before they eat. Usually, only the upper classes go to formal, enclosed restaurants on a regular basis. There are, however, a large number of small eateries where workers can go for a noontime meal, in case they do not have the opportunity to eat at home. Urban families might have three or four children, while rural families have ten or more. The basic unit of society is the extended family. Grandparents may act as parents in place of an absent or working mother or father. Relatives may also fill the role of godparent, which entails responsibility for a child if a parent dies. Children from cities may be sent to live with relatives in the countryside during summer vacations, and children from the countryside may be sent to live with relatives in cities to attend school. Married couples usually live close to their families. In urban areas, the father, if present in the home, is head of the household and responsible for earning an income. Mothers are responsible for cooking, cleaning, and teaching their children religion and morality. Middle-class urban families may have a servant to cook and do other chores. Rural men work their fields, while women sell produce in the market and care for the household and children. Single-mother households are very common, as men typically have children by more than one woman. In such households, mothers often rely on older children and relatives to help earn income and to care for younger children. In wealthier families, children may be responsible only for keeping their rooms clean; in poorer families, chores include cooking, laundry, and cleaning. Some families can afford to send only one child, usually the oldest or the boy, to school while the other kids especially girls, are expected to do housework. Educated children are expected to better the social and financial status of the family, providing for parents or less fortunate siblings later in life. Other children are expected to help more around the house or with the family business, which could simply mean being a street vendor. In wealthy families, parents establish goals for their children to become doctors, lawyers, or entrepreneurs who will expand the family business. After retirement, parents often move in with one of their married children. For example, wives who murder their unfaithful husbands face harsher punishment than husbands who murder their unfaithful wives. A growing number of women from all social classes hold jobs, own their own businesses, and participate in government, though less than 5 percent of national legislative seats are held by women. Houses are built with whatever materials are available. In Port-au-Prince, cement buildings are common.

Chapter 5 : Culture of Haiti - Wikipedia

Haitian Culture and Traditions The culture of Haiti is the fusion of the African, West Indian, and French cultures. The national language of this country is 'Creole', and this language is widely used in arts, literature, drama, music, and dance.

In the family structure , men are considered the head of the house and are typically responsible for making money to support the family. However, it is the women that are the true decision-makers in a Haitian household. While they have less equality in society, women typically make the decisions for the family and especially the children. Important decisions will also be discussed with the elder family members as well. Additionally, in a single-mother household , the woman will make all the decisions concerning financial or family-related matters. Children Haitian children are considered gifts from God. Haitian parents teach their young to protect the family structure and privacy. Most Haitian parents leave their children equal inheritances, not favoring sons over daughters. At the same time, children are expected to care for their parents and elders when they can no longer take care of themselves, both physically and financially. Elderly In the traditional Haitian household, especially in the rural areas, the extended family lives together. This could mean they all live under the same roof or they live in different structures on a shared property. The elderly are respected and thought to have wisdom and experience from which the rest of the family can learn. The senior generation is a regular part of daily life and usually helps raise the children as well. Community Support Raising a child is considered a family affair. Not only that but the community is involved as well. This means that families are typically very close. Additionally, according to the State University of New York , respect and obedience are instilled into children early. From a young age, children are taught to respect their elders and never show anger toward elders. They must also be obedient to community members as well. Not only can it affect your status in Haitian culture but the respect of society. Additionally, families are a unit. Therefore, the wrongdoings of the child could affect the perceptions of the family as a whole. This can extend to not only to parents but grandparents and other extended family members. Religions There are three major practiced religions in Haiti: Catholicism, Protestantism, and Vodoo. Catholicism Catholicism was first introduced to the island nation by the Spanish in the s and then the French Capuchins and Jesuits helped establish it as the main organized religion during that time period. Protestantism Several different Protestant denominations were introduced to the Haitians in the early 21st century. Vodoo Vodoo is the oldest and most dominant religion in Haiti and is frequently practiced alongside Christianity. This religion is often misunderstood, and many Haitians have taken great pains to hide it from outsiders. Practicing Voudons believe there is a life force that connects all living beings and that everything and everyone has a spirit, including animals and elements in nature. One of the main components of this religion is the practice of healing rituals done by Vodoo priests, or shamans. There are different types of Vodoo in Haiti, such as Rada and Petro, considered white and black magic , respectively. Superstitions Most Haitians are superstitious and believe that many events or occurrences are connected to future events. They believe in good and bad luck associated with these events. A lot of Haitian superstition goes back to their religious beliefs. Pregnancy Superstition dictates some areas of pregnancy and birth. For instance, many believe health care decisions like pregnancy are decided by God ; therefore, contraceptive use is low. After birth, infants may wear special beads to ward off evil spirits and cloths around their middles for strong bodies. Additionally, it is thought that eating things in pairs will increase the likelihood of twins. Decision-making Superstitions can affect specific big life decisions like what to wear on your wedding day or how to rear your child. For example, some Haitians will not allow their infant to cry at night because it is believed zombies will snatch their soul. There are the small decisions dictated by superstition as well, like eating sitting down because eating standing up will give you a swollen leg. Everyday Superstitions Numerous superstitions also affect everyday life. There is a specific way things are done to avoid bad luck. For example, in one wedding superstition , a bride will use her thumb to block the wedding ring going over her knuckle to avoid the man dominating the relationship. People will also not attend funerals if they are ill to avoid the next one being their own. For example, it is believed that if you eat the top of a

grapefruit or watermelon, your mother will die. Many turned to their faith to get through the tragedy. Some Haitians have become more steadfast in their beliefs, while others have adopted new values and stronger religious views. Was this page useful?

Chapter 6 : Culture of Haiti - history, people, clothing, traditions, women, beliefs, food, customs, family

Guide to travel, doing business, and studying in Haiti - culture, greetings, gestures, etiquette, taboos, negotiations, gift-giving, and more.

Haiti, a name that means "mountainous country," is derived from the language of the Taino Indians who inhabited the island before European colonization. After independence in 1804, the name was adopted by the military generals, many of them former slaves, who expelled the French and took possession of the colony then known as Saint Domingue. In 1804, 95 percent of the population was of African descent, and the remaining 5 percent mulatto and white. Some wealthy citizens think of themselves as French, but most residents identify themselves as Haitian and there is a strong sense of nationalism. Haiti covers 10, square miles 27, square kilometers. It is located in the subtropics on the western third of Hispaniola, the second largest island in the Caribbean, which it shares with the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic. The neighboring islands include Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. Three-quarters of the terrain is mountainous; the highest peak is the Morne de Selle. The climate is mild, varying with altitude. The mountains are calcareous rather than volcanic and give way to widely varying microclimatic and soil conditions. A tectonic fault line runs through the country, causing occasional and sometimes devastating earthquakes. The island is also located within the Caribbean hurricane belt. The population has grown steadily from 1,000,000 at independence in 1804 to the estimate of 6,000,000. Haiti is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Until the 1950s, over 80 percent of the population resided in rural areas, and today, over 60 percent continue to live in provincial villages, hamlets, and homesteads scattered across the rural landscape. The capital city is Port-au-Prince, which is five times larger than the next biggest city, Cape Haitien. Over one million native-born Haitians live overseas; an additional fifty thousand leave the country every year, predominantly for the United States but also to Canada and France. Approximately 80 percent of permanent migrants come from the educated middle and upper classes, but very large numbers of lower-class Haitians temporarily migrate to the Dominican Republic and Nassau Bahamas to work at low-income jobs in the informal economy. An unknown number of lower-income migrants remain abroad. However, the language spoken by the vast majority of the people is kreyol, whose pronunciation and vocabulary are derived largely from French but whose syntax is similar to that of other creoles. With the adoption of a new constitution in 1987, kreyol was given official status as the primary official language. French was relegated to the status of a secondary official language but continues to prevail among the elite and in government, functioning as marker of social class and a barrier to the less educated and the poor. An estimated 5-10 percent of the population speaks fluent French, but in recent decades massive emigration to the United States and the availability of cable television from the United States have helped English replace French as the second language in many sectors of the population. Residents attach tremendous importance to the expulsion of the French in 1804, an event that made Haiti the first independently black-ruled nation in the world, and only the second country in the Western Hemisphere to achieve independence from imperial Europe. The presidential palace is also an important national symbol. History and Ethnic Relations Emergence of a Nation. Hispaniola was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and was the first island in the New World settled by the Spanish. By 1500, the indigenous culture of the Taino Indians had vanished from the island, and Hispaniola became a neglected backwater of the Spanish Empire. In the 1600s, the western third of the island was populated by fortune seekers, castaways, and wayward colonists, predominantly French, who became pirates and buccaneers, hunting wild cattle and pigs unleashed by the earliest European visitors and selling the smoked meat to passing ships. In the 1600s, the French used the buccaneers as mercenaries freebooters in an unofficial war against the Spanish. This area became the French colony of Saint Domingue. By 1700, the colony had become the "jewel of the Antilles," the richest colony in the world. In 1789, revolution in France sparked dissension in the colony, which had a population of half a million slaves half of all the slaves in the Caribbean ; twenty-eight thousand mulattoes and free blacks, many of whom were wealthy landowners; and thirty-six thousand white planters, artisans, slave drivers, and small landholders. In 1791, thirty-five thousand slaves rose in an insurrection, razed a thousand plantations, and took to the hills. Thirteen years of war and pestilence followed. Spanish,

English, and French troops were soon battling one another for control of the colony. The imperial powers militarized the slaves, training them in the arts of "modern" warfare. Grands blancs rich white colonists, petits blancs small farmers and working-class whites, mulâtres mulattoes, and noirs free blacks fought, plotted, and intrigued. Each local interest group exploited its position at every opportunity to achieve its political and economic objectives. From the mayhem emerged some of the greatest black military men in history, including Toussaint Louverture. In 1804, the last European troops were soundly defeated and driven from the island by a coalition of former slaves and mulattoes. In January the rebel generals declared independence, inaugurating Haiti as the first sovereign "black" country in the modern world and the second colony in the Western Hemisphere to gain independence from imperial Europe. Since gaining independence, Haiti has had fleeting moments of glory. An early eighteenth century kingdom ruled by Henri Christophe prospered and thrived in the north, and from 1804 to 1820 Haiti ruled the entire island. The late nineteenth century was a period of intense internecine warfare in which ragtag armies backed by urban politicians and conspiring Western businessmen repeatedly sacked Port-au-Prince. By 1914, the year in which U.S. troops arrived, the century of relative isolation that followed independence, the peasantry developed distinct traditions in cuisine, music, dance, dress, ritual, and religion. Some elements of African cultures survive, such as specific prayers, a few words, and dozens of spirit entities, but Haitian culture is distinct from African and other New World cultures. The only ethnic subdivision is that of the Syrians, the early twentieth-century Levantine emigrants who have been absorbed into the commercial elite but often self-identify by their ancestral origins. Haitians refer to all outsiders, even dark-skinned outsiders of African ancestry, as blan "white". In the neighboring Dominican Republic, despite the presence of over a million Haitian farm workers, servants, and urban laborers, there exists intense prejudice against Haitians. In 1937, the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered the massacre of an estimated fifteen to thirty-five thousand Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. The contemporary rural landscape is dominated by houses that vary in style from one region to another. Most are single-story, two-room shacks, usually with a front porch. In the dry, treeless areas, houses are constructed of rock or wattle and daub with mud or lime exteriors. In other regions, walls are made from the easily hewn native palm; in still other areas, particularly in the south, houses are made of Hispaniola pine and local hardwoods. When the owner can afford it, the outside of a house is painted in an array of pastel colors, mystic symbols are often painted on the walls, and the awnings are fringed with colorful hand-carved trimming. In cities, early twentieth century bourgeoisie, foreign entrepreneurs, and the Catholic clergy blended French and southern United States Victorian architectural styles and took the rural gingerbread house to its artistic height, building fantastic multicolored brick and timber mansions with tall double doors, steep roofs, turrets, cornices, extensive balconies, and intricately carved trim. These exquisite structures are fast disappearing as a result of neglect and fires. Today one increasingly finds modern block and cement houses in both provincial villages and urban areas. Craftsmen have given these new houses traditional gingerbread qualities by using embedded pebbles, cut stones, preformed cement relief, rows of shaped balusters, concrete turrets, elaborately contoured cement roofing, large balconies, and artistically welded wrought-iron trimming and window bars reminiscent of the carved fringe that adorned classic gingerbread houses.

Food and Economy

Food in Daily Life. Nutritional deficits are caused not by inadequate knowledge but by poverty. Most residents have a sophisticated understanding of dietary needs, and there is a widely known system of indigenous food categories that closely approximates modern, scientifically informed nutritional categorization. Rural Haitians are not subsistence farmers. Peasant women typically sell much of the family harvest in regional open-air market places and use the money to buy household foods. Rice and beans are considered the national dish and are the most commonly eaten meal in urban areas. Traditional rural staples are sweet potatoes, manioc, yams, corn, rice, pigeon peas, cowpeas, bread, and coffee. More recently, a wheat-soy blend from the United States has been incorporated into the diet. Important treats include sugarcane, mangoes, sweetbread, peanut and sesame seed clusters made from melted brown sugar, and candies made from bittermanioc flour. People make a crude but highly nutritious sugar paste called rapadou. Haitians generally eat two meals a day: The afternoon meal always includes beans or a bean sauce, and there is usually a small amount of poultry, fish, goat, or, less commonly, beef or mutton, typically prepared as a sauce with a tomato paste base. Fruits are prized as between-meal snacks. Non-elite people do

not necessarily have community or family meals, and individuals eat wherever they are comfortable. A snack customarily is eaten at night before one goes to sleep. Food Customs at Ceremonial Occasions. Festive occasions such as baptismal parties, first communions, and marriages include the mandatory Haitian colas, cake, a spiced concoction of domestic rum kleren , and a thick spiked drink made with condensed milk called kremass. The middle class and the elite mark the same festivities with Western sodas, Haitian rum Babouncourt , the national beer Prestige , and imported beers. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. It is a nation of small farmers, commonly referred to as peasants, who work small private landholdings and depend primarily on their own labor and that of family members. There are no contemporary plantations and few concentrations of land. Although only 30 percent of the land is considered suitable for agriculture, more than 40 percent is worked. Real income for the average family has not increased in over twenty years and has declined precipitously in rural areas. Since the s, the country has become heavily dependent on food importsâ€”primarily rice, flour, and beansâ€”from abroad, particularly from the United States. Other major imports from the United States are used material goods such as clothes, bicycles, and motor vehicles. The Haitian has become primarily domestic, and production is almost entirely for domestic consumption. A vigorous internal marketing system dominates the economy and includes trade not only in agricultural produce and livestock but also in homemade crafts. Land Tenure and Property. Land is relatively evenly distributed. Most holdings are small approximately three acres , and there are very few landless households. Most property is privately held, though there is a category of land known as State Land that, if agriculturally productive, is rented under a long-term lease to individuals or families and is for all practical purposes private. Unoccupied land frequently is taken over by squatters. There is a vigorous land market, as rural households buy and sell land. Sellers of land generally need cash to finance either a life crisis event healing or burial ritual or a migratory venture. Land is typically bought, sold, and inherited without official documentation no government has ever carried out a cadastral survey. Although there are few land titles, there are informal tenure rules that give farmers relative security in their holdings. Until recently, most conflicts over land were between members of the same kin group. With the departure of the Duvalier dynasty and the emergence of political chaos, some conflicts over land have led to bloodshed between members of different communities and social classes.

Chapter 7 : Culture and Customs of Haiti by J. Michael Dash

Haiti has a vast and diverse cultural heritage, drawing from French, Spanish and African traditions as well as its Caribbean island culture. The earthquake profoundly affected daily life in.

Haitian art A large sequined Vodou "drapeau" or flag, created by artist George Valris. Big, delectable foods and lush landscapes are favorite subjects in this land of poverty and hunger. Going to market is the most social activity of country life, and figures prominently into the subject matter. Jungle animals, rituals, dances, and gods evoke the African past. Artists paint in fable as well. People are disguised as animals and animals are transformed into people. Symbols take on great meaning. For example, a rooster often represents Aristide and the red and blue colors of the flag of Haiti, often represent his Lavalas party. Jacmel, the colonial city that was tentatively accepted as a World Heritage site, is reported to be extensively damaged by the Haiti earthquake. With damages at an estimated 10 million dollars, architectural measures were taken immediately. Directly after the earthquake Article 25 of the UK gained about architects in looking to help rebuild Haiti. There was also great effort made by the U. The architecture style became very reasonable and involved minimalistic and functional style to help rebuild the damage in the most efficient way possible. There has also been a strong initiative to build more open-air clinics that are designed with health precautions as a huge priority. Haitian cuisine The French influences in Haiti are present in their cuisine, but more so it is representative of their location in the Caribbean. They do however have their own flavor as a result of the lack of Spanish influence on their island compared to others in the Caribbean. The cooking style used in Haiti is predominately Creole and includes heavy use of pepper in the majority of their dishes. A main staple in Haiti is starch, and many of their dishes include potatoes, rice, corn, beans, and plantains. There is also a strong presence of tropical fruits in their cuisine due to their ability to grow in the tropical climate. This includes pineapples, coconuts, mangoes, and other fruits that are used for many dishes and beverages. Food also has importance in religious and status-symbol type forms. Foods that are considered delicacies in Haiti include French inspired cheeses and meats and are a symbol of money and power. Typically these types of meals are only served in the richest part of Haiti, namely in the capital of Port-au-Prince. Quadrille dress In Haiti, the quadrille dress is called a karabela dress. Traditional male attire for dances, weddings, and other formal wear is the linen shirt jacket. The festivities start in February. The cities are filled with music, parade floats, and people dancing and singing in the streets. Carnival week is traditionally a time of all-night parties and escape from daily life. This is a significant time for Haitian musicians for an opportunity to showcase their talents and expand their audience by performing for Carnival crowds. Rara, a festival which occurs before Easter, is celebrated by a significant number of the population as well, and its celebration has been led to it becoming a style of Carnival music. Many of the youth also attend parties and enjoy themselves at nightclubs called discos, pronounced "deece-ko" not like the discos of the U. S., and attend Bal. This term derives from the word ballad, and these events are often celebrated by crowds of many people. Folklore and mythology[edit] Main article: Haitian mythology Haiti is known for its rich folklore traditions. The country has many magical tales that are part of the Haitian Vodou tradition. Since then, Haitian literary culture has been ever-growing and vibrant, recognized both at home and abroad with award-winning authors and large-scale literary events locally [5] and internationally. Music of Haiti Haitian music combines a wide range of influences drawn from the many people who have settled on this Caribbean island. It reflects French, African rhythms, Spanish elements and others who have inhabited the island of Hispaniola and minor native Taino influences. Very popular today is compas, short for compas direct, made popular by Nemours Jean-Baptiste, on a recording released in It involves mostly medium-to-fast tempo beats with an emphasis on electric guitars, synthesizers, and either a solo alto saxophone, a horn section or the synthesizer equivalent. It is commonly spelled as it is pronounced as kompa. In the case of Vodou, the religious experience of spirit possession is usually accompanied by dancing, singing, and drumming. Carnival and rara celebrations feature exuberant dancing and movement in the streets. Dancing is also a social activity, used for celebrations such as church socials and informal parties, as well as evenings out with friends. In small restaurants, social dance music is provided by relatively small

twoubadou groups, while larger clubs with big dance floors often feature dance bands reminiscent of the American big bands in size. Social dance music has been one of the most heavily creolized music forms in Haiti. European dance forms such as the contradanse kontradans , quadrille , waltz , and polka were introduced to white planter audiences during the colonial period. Musicians, either slaves or freed people of color , learned the European dance forms and adapted them for their own use. A small population of Muslims and Hindus exist in the country, principally in the capital of Port-au-Prince. The exact number of Vodou practitioners is unknown; however, it is believed that a large amount of the population practice it, often alongside their Christian faith. Some secular Christians also have been known to participate in some rituals, although indirectly.

Chapter 8 : Culture and Customs of Haiti - J. Michael Dash - Google Books

The culture of Haiti is an eclectic mix of African, Taino and European elements due to the French colonization of Saint Domingue and its large and diverse enslaved African population, as is evidenced in the Haitian language, music, religion.

Check new design of our homepage! This article provides more information about the same. Historyplex Staff Last Updated: It is believed that the first known settlers were the Ciboneys, who occupied the country in AD. On December 5, 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered this nation during his voyage. The Spaniards who came later killed the Arawaks, and for many years, this island had no human population. Towards the mid-17th century, the French colonized Haiti, and during the reign of France, it was one of the most popular islands of the Western Hemisphere. The main source of wealth came from coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, and cotton. The French brought the Afrikaners to work as slaves on these plantations. In 1791, the slaves revolted against the French rule and attained freedom in 1804. Haiti became the first independent black nation and was headed by General Jean-Jacques Dessalines. In 1820, it was divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The citizens are known as Haitians, and they are very creative and artistic people. Works of art from Haiti are recognized worldwide because of their unique features and colorful portrayal. Music is a part of Haitian culture and is influenced by French, Spanish, and American music. The drum is the most important musical instrument. The famous and world-renowned music is known as the Haitian Compas or Kompa Direk. This country did not have any recorded music until the year 1944. A Haitian Jazz musician Guignard, first recorded the music in 1944. The music of this country is very unique and is taken from the Vodou ceremony and traditions. It involves medium-to-fast tempo beats accompanied by electric guitars, saxophones, synthesizers, and a horn. The festivities begin in the month of February and are known as the Carnival or Kanaval in Creole. At the time of festivities, people get away from their daily routine and are on the streets, dancing and singing. There are parade floats accompanied by music during the festival season. A musical festival known as Rara is celebrated before Easter with great pomp and show. The religion practiced by the Haitians is Christianity, and most of the natives are Roman Catholics. An ancient religion known as Vodou is still practiced in many parts of the nation. This religion has many traditions and customs that are a fusion of Central and Western Africa, Europe, and Taino religions. The information about Haitian culture would be incomplete without mentioning the cuisine. Like its arts and religion, the cuisine of this nation is also widely influenced by the cuisines of Africa, Taino, and Europe. The staple food is rice and beans. The other dishes are Griyo, i. The dessert consists of sweetened milk and rice, and banana fried in butter. The arts and crafts made here are very much in demand in the international market. The art works of Haitian artists are colorful and world famous. Some of the craft works include needlework, embroidery, leather goods, papier-mache, pottery, sequin flag-making, and metal crafts. Haiti is, indeed, a magic land that is rich in culture.

Chapter 9 : Haitian Culture and Tradition

Located in the Caribbean, Haiti is an independent nation that shares the second largest island in the region with the Dominican Republic. Ninety-five percent of Haitians are of African descent because the island was originally used as a port for the North American and South American slave trading industry.

The Republic of Haiti is the second-oldest independent nation in the Western Hemisphere, and it is the only one with a French-Creole background and an overwhelmingly African culture. It is 90 kilometers southeast of Cuba, kilometers northeast of Jamaica, and about 1, kilometers from Florida. Its topography ranges from flat, semiarid valleys to densely forested mountains; about one-third of its area lies to meters above sea level, and the remaining two-thirds is covered by three mountain ranges. The highest point of elevation is La Selle Peak 2, meters. Temperature decreases three-quarters of a degree per meters of elevation. Port-au-Prince, with an elevation of 40 meters, has a mean temperature of Demographic information is at once scarce and unreliable. According to educated estimates, the total population of Haiti is about 6. The single recent census for which information is generally available was conducted only in urban centers in ; a 10 percent sample survey was used to estimate the population in rural areas. The total population calculated from that census was 4,, The language spoken by all Haitians is usually referred to as Haitian Creole. For most of modern history, however, the official language of government, business, and education has been French. At best, only about 8 percent of the population, the educated elite, speaks French wellâ€™and then only as a second language. Another 2 to 7 percent uses French with a lesser degree of competence. Traditionally, the elite has used the requirement of fluency in French to exclude the general population from competing for positions in government and business. Haitian Creole, which has often been seen as a nonlanguage in which sophisticated thoughts cannot be expressed or, at best, as a poor imitation of French, is coming into its own, and the prestige of French is rapidly declining in Haiti. History At the time of European contact, anywhere from 60, to 4 million Indians inhabited the island of Hispaniola. The indigenous population rapidly succumbed to the ravages of disease, slavery, and brutality, and the Europeans soon had to look to Africa for the labor they needed to work their plantations. In the colonial period â€™ sugarcane plantations were established and slavery instituted in Saint Domingue, as the French called their territory on Hispaniola. A series of minor uprisings culminated in the slave revolt of August By , White supremacy was at an end, and within the framework of the French Republic, Black rule was established under the leadership of a former slave, the charismatic Toussain Louverture. In Napoleon sent 28, troops under his brother-in-law, Gen. Charles Leclerc, to retake the colony and reenslave the Blacks. In the postindependence period Haiti became a focal point of debates about the effect of emancipation and the capacity of Blacks for self-government. Many slave insurrections in the southern United States were consciously modeled after the Haitian example. The major, though certainly unintended, results of the occupation were the increasing Black consciousness of the elite, the suppression of peasant movements, the training of the army, and the concentration of sociopolitical power in Port-au-Prince. The postoccupation period was characterized by a succession of undistinguished administrations, with one notable exception: Important developments during his presidency were the entrance of Blacks into the civil service, increased pride in the African heritage, greater interaction with other Caribbean nations, the beginning of peasant integration into the national polity, and, especially, the rise of the new Black middle class. Duvalier carried out a brutal campaign of oppression against his opponents, and Haiti was increasingly isolated from the international community. With little gain from fourteen years of rule by a second Duvalier, Haitians finally reached the end of their patience and overwhelming public protests led to the ouster of Jean-Claude on 7 February Henri Namphy, took charge. Elections for president and for seats in the national assembly, set for 29 November, were aborted by army-sponsored violence. On 17 September Namphy was forced out of the National Palace and leadership was handed over to Lieut. The military ousted him a little more than seven months later, but no state except the Vatican recognized the military government. After considerable vacillation, the administration of U. Settlements With 75 to 85 percent of the population living in a rural setting, the majority of Haitians can be classified as peasants: Scattered within these villages are huts of

wattle and daub surrounded by gardens, fields, and outbuildings. Regional centers once had considerable cultural and commercial importance, but since the first U. Economy Subsistence and Commercial Activities. About 65 percent of the labor force are small landowners engaged in agriculture one of the highest proportions of peasants in any country ; only about 7 percent are in manufacturing. One percent of workers are involved in construction and 27 percent in other sectors. Agriculture is precarious because the countryside is 95 percent deforested, and 25 percent of the soil is undergoing rapid erosion. Its light manufacturing enterprises produce shoes, soap, flour, cement, and domestic oils. Its export industries produce garments, toys, baseballs, and electronic goods for the U. The current instability of the government is having deleterious effects on the national economy. Many people engage in part-time craft work, particularly in the manufacture of wood utensils, tools, and furniture. Formerly, many of these items were destined for the tourist trade. Most commercial exchange is carried out in open-air markets. The market women are justly famous both for carrying heavy loads of merchandise and for bargaining with great skill. In rural areas, men generally handle agricultural production, and women take charge of the produce. The women depend on the men to provide a product to sell, and the men depend on the women for domestic labor. A crucial problem facing the newly independent Haiti was access to land. Having failed in its attempt to reinstate the plantation system of colonial Saint Domingue, the government distributed much of the land among the former slaves. Currently, from 60 to 80 percent of the farmers own their own land, although few have clear title, and the plots are fragmented and small. Fairly large plantations do exist but not nearly to the same extent as in Latin American countries. The state owns land, but the government has rarely shown a sustained interest in agriculture. Kinship, Marriage, and Family Marriage. The plantation system and the institution of slavery had a profound influence on domestic entities. Additionally, the laws of the early republic reinforced the tendency of the rural population to avoid legal and church marriages. The most recognizable kinship pattern in rural Haiti is the somewhat patrilineal extended family living in a cluster of households linked through legal, ritual, consanguineal, and affinal ties and headed by the oldest male member. In addition to conventional church weddings, longterm monogamous unions, and neolocal nuclear-family households, there are socially accepted unions without formal sanction, couples who do not coreside, fathers who do not participate actively in rearing their children, and households without a nuclear family at their core. In writing about Haiti, anthropologists often avoid the word "family"; instead they use "household," which embraces the wide range of relativesâ€”direct and collateral, on the sides of both parentsâ€”that the Haitian "family" typically includes. The complexity of the domestic unit and the varieties of household types do create inheritance problems. In general, all children from all the varieties of conjugal unions have equal rights of inheritance, but, in practice, residents, contacts, and personal feelings are important determinants of who inherits. Because both adults and children may change residential affiliation with relative ease and frequency and enjoy a variety of temporary residential rights, children often come into contact with a relatively large number of adults who may discipline and train them. In general, a great deal of emphasis is placed on respect for adults, and adults are quick to use corporal punishment to ensure that they receive it. Fewer than half of the rural children attend school, and only about 20 percent of those complete the primary grades. Sociopolitical Organization In Haiti was in the process of reestablishing its political and social institutions under a democratic administration. Agreements with the U. This elite also practiced the religion of the slave owners, Roman Catholicism. Driven by fear of a renewed French occupation, the bulk of the population retreated into the mountainous interior, inside a ring of magnificent forts. What emerged from these displacements was a nation with a very small European-oriented, Roman Catholic, mulatto elite residing in several coastal urban centers and a large, scattered Black population that farmed the interior and worshiped in the ancient African manner. The largely Black peasantry has always regarded the government as having little relevance to their lives. Arrondissements consist of several communes, which usually coincide with church parishes. The limited contact rural Haitians normally have with the government is, for the most part, with the chef de section. Criminality is rare, and, for the most part, the rural population, in deference to village elders, polices itself. The urban areas have police and courts, mainly modeled after the French system. Governments in Haiti have been run primarily by members of the elite, and despite the early and heroic independence of Haiti from France and the elimination of slavery, the

attitude of the elite classes of Haiti has traditionally been a neocolonial one. Nativism, negritude, and the increasing use of Creole have made all Haitians more aware of their Haitianess, but tensions exist between the affluent city dwellers and the poor peasants and shantytown residents. Aside from a very small but moderately influential group of Middle Eastern merchants, the population of Haiti is exceptionally homogeneous, both culturally and linguistically. Religion and Expressive Culture Religious Beliefs. Although the majority of the population is nominally Roman Catholic and although Protestant missionaries have won a number of converts in the poorer rural areas, the religion of Haiti is still Vodun, an ancient religion that focuses on contacting and appeasing ancestral spirits lwa , which include both distant, stereotyped ancestors and more immediate relatives, such as dead parents and grandparents. Vodun is a particularly egalitarian religion; both men and women serve as priests ouganyo and manbo-yo, respectively; sing ougan and manbo. As many of its rituals are performed in the context of sickness and death, Vodun is primarily a system of folk medicine that attributes illnesses to angry ancestors; it consists of appeasement ceremonies, including divination rites, which are used to find the cause of illnesses; healing rites, in which a Vodun priest interacts directly with sick people to cure them; propitiatory rites, in which food and drink are offered to specific spirits to make them stop their aggression; and preventive rites, in which ancestors are offered sacrifices to help head off any possible future trouble. In the s Haiti burst into the consciousness of the art world with an astonishing display of paintings, and its artists received worldwide attention for their so-called primitive or naive art. Haiti is also renowned for its literature, despite its high rate of illiteracy 85 percent. Major themes include concepts of negritude, which foreshadowed the Black Power and post- World War II anticolonial movements, and Vodun. Although Western medicine has been available to the urban elite since the early s, there were only physicians in Haiti in Wilke , Table In the rural areas, curing depends on a rich body of folk knowledge that includes herbal medicine and Vodun. The peasants nevertheless suffer from malnutrition and many diseases. Measles, diarrhea, and tetanus kill many children, and the daily per capita caloric intake for has been estimated at 2, Wilke , Table Only about 38 percent of the population has access to potable water. Tuberculosis is the most devastating disease, followed closely by dysentery, influenza, malaria, measles, tetanus, and whooping cough. Eye problems are endemic in Haiti; the chief causes of blindness are cataracts, glaucoma, pterygium a growth over the cornea , and scarring of the cornea. Bibliography Courlander, Harold The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.