

Voices of Liberty: The Haitian Revolution Begins

The god who created the sun which gives us light, who rouses the waves and rules the storm, though hidden in the clouds, he watches us. He sees all that the white man does. The god of the white man inspires him with crime, but our god calls upon us to do good works. Our god who is good to us orders us to revenge our wrongs. He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites who has often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the hearts of us all.¹

Boukman Dutty, August 1791

This prayer is said to have been spoken by Boukman Dutty at the Bwa Kayman (Bois Caïman) ceremony of August 1791 when he, the *mambo* priestess Cécile Fatiman, and delegates representing the enslaved masses from plantations across the northern plain plotted the demise of the sugar plantation economy and outlined the terms of their liberation. The ritual component of the gathering drew on a combination of Bight of Benin and West Central African spiritual practices and deities, which ideologically and militarily cemented solidarity between Saint-Domingue's ethnic groups. There has been some scholarly debate about the date and location of the ceremony, whether or not Boukman was present, and if this prayer was actually said; however, historical validity aside, the prayer articulates a distinctive difference between the worldviews of the insurgents and those of their oppressors, and in so doing it issues a derisive critique of Western modernity. This contrast in worldviews is instructive for approaching an understanding of the insurgents' perspective on the material conditions in which they lived and the rationale for their rebellion. Indeed, the Christian "god of the white man" – more pointedly represented by members of the

Catholic Church, missionaries, priests, and slave owners eager to convert their human chattel – provided the ideological foundation that ushered in the racialization of non-Christians and non-whites, facilitated and christened the transAtlantic slave trade, and actively supported the slavery-based economic regime in the Americas. Surely the role that the Catholic Church played in weaponizing Christianity against people of African descent was not lost on Boukman Dutty and the Bwa Kayman participants. The prayer, fabled or factual, speaks to racialized spheres of collective consciousness and diverging ontological understandings about the nature of God *and* the character of God-inspired human action. What would it have meant for the god of enslaved people to “direct . . . and aid” them, for the masses of Saint-Domingue to “revenge wrongs” and to actualize listening to “the voice of liberty”? Whether divinely inspired or not, they took steps, small and large, to reverse the conditions of their enslavement based on their ontological understanding of themselves as free and of the plantation system’s nature as unjust. By rebelling against the plantation system, the revolutionaries of 1791 and maroons who largely functioned outside of system subverted the mode of Western modernity in which they lived – which functioned through racism, violence, forced religious indoctrination, and economic exploitation. Their actions opposed Saint-Domingue’s systems of domination and expressed an alternative understanding of their humanity.

As I argued in Chapter 1, enslaved people’s collective consciousness emerged from their common experiences as victims of the transAtlantic slave trade and survivors of the Middle Passage. Centralized political and economic power was increasingly associated with slaving, greed, injustice, and witchcraft, spawning forms of resistance that critiqued social, economic, and spiritual imbalances. Marronnage, open warfare, and religious consolidation proved to be effective means of resisting the slave trade in West Central Africa, Senegambia, and the Bight of Benin. Africans carried these socio-political critiques and tactics with them across the Atlantic Ocean to Saint-Domingue, where African political thought, warfare strategies, marronnage, and the early coalescence of Haitian Vodou informed the revolutionary struggles of 1791. This chapter focuses on the masses of formerly enslaved people who embodied ideals that pushed forward even those who were considered most radically progressive at the time, such as Toussaint Louverture and other leaders of the Haitian Revolution. At various stages, leaders who became part of the military elite either failed to advocate for abolition, continued to rely on harsh plantation regimes to maintain Saint-Domingue’s

economic prowess, or repressed the masses of African rebels, maroons, and ritualists. This continued until it became clear that racial equality, full emancipation, and national independence hinged on the mobilization of the former slaves and the solidarity between them, black military officers, and free people of color.

Marronnage was not just an act of escaping slavery, it was a process of reclamation, an organizing structure, and a socio-political critique of the plantation system that, over time, “would converge with the volatile political climate of the time and with the opening of a revolution.”² It entailed individuals not only removing themselves from plantations, but various levels of actions and behaviors that either directly countered the logic of the plantation system or stood in contradistinction to it (Casimir 2001, 2015). Though most enslaved people did not participate in marronnage, the tactics and strategies they employed before and during the Haitian Revolution reflect characteristics of marronnage presented in the current and previous chapters. I have developed a framework of actions and patterns of behaviors associated with marronnage that inform how enslaved people operationalized oppositional consciousness based on Black Studies and social movements’ theoretical insights and analysis of archival findings. What follows is theoretically and empirically informed, yet broad enough to perhaps be considered a framework for a more general understanding of how the structural positionality of African descendants under racial capitalism shapes Black mobilization at the micro-level. The tenets of marronnage include:

- reclamation of the Black self as a commodified source of capital, and reclaiming and redirecting time, energy, and effort toward individual, familial, or collective needs and interests;
- creation of networks composed of maroons, free, and enslaved people who share social positions and/or liberatory goals;
- networks often characterized by movement or transience, having network nodes that are linked by women;
- appropriation and subversion of material goods and technologies that are typically used as apparatuses of racial capitalism;
- experiencing geographic, social, economic, and political marginalization, and disempowerment and disenfranchisement from centers of power and capital, yet creating spaces organized around communal principles;
- drawing on intimate knowledge of land, space, and ecologies for immediate or long-term survival;

- using coded forms of communication and systems of protection to enhance solidarity and to avoid surveillance or betrayal by racialized or non-racialized beings whose socio-economic mobility hinges on figurative or literal forms of re-enslavement;
- developing rituals to orient collective ontology, to affirm collective identity, and to build community;
- reimagining, subverting or rejecting, and traversing hegemonic identities, gender norms, and socio-political borders;
- developing self-defense or direct-action fighting techniques and tactics, such as martial arts, bearing arms, or adopting militaristic strategies to contest repression;
- disruption of capital accumulation processes that seek to and do extract resources from Black spaces.

These dimensions of marronnage help to clarify dynamics of mobilization during the early days of the Haitian Revolution uprising. Most participants of the massive revolutionary insurgency, especially its women fighters, did not leave behind records attesting to their thoughts, motivations, strategies, or inner workings. But it is possible to link pre-revolutionary rebellion to the August 1791 uprising through the lens of marronnage and by tracing social and spatial ties. I follow recent shifts in the sociology of revolutions that move from macro-level analyses absent of micro-level theorizing (Tilly 1978; Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991; Skocpol 1994; Beck 2017) toward emphases on networks, individuals' and small groups' agency, ideologies, and cultures to highlight the means of action (Foran 1993; Selbin 1997; Goldstone 2001; Sohrabi 2005; Selbin 2010). Rather than center rebels' actions taking place in the north as the origins of the mass revolt, as is typical historiographical practice, the chapter instead follows the processes related to marronnage as a socio-political critique and a form of collective action that were simultaneously localized in the colony's southern, western, then northern departments. This geographic re-adjustment of the narrative surrounding rebellion in the years before the Haitian Revolution lends to the understanding of insurgency as a practice that is grounded in social networks and place-based politics (Gould 1995; Creasap 2012). I am not suggesting that the Haitian Revolution started, historically speaking, in a specific place and time (i.e. the colony's southern department on a specific date) and then moved to the west and then north; but that it started, sociologically speaking, within the social, economic, cultural, religious, geographic, and political processes and formations that black people in

Saint-Domingue constructed and re-constructed over the course of several centuries since the first *Ayitian* Revolution. In each of the southern, western, and northern departments, I detail evidence of the connections between enslaved people, maroons, and free people of color during revolts and ritual gatherings that helped the beginnings of the Revolution. I recount mobilizations that occurred in Saint Domingue's southern, western, and northern departments and attempt to identify evidence of racial, gender, and labor politics that would inform post-independence refusals to be enslaved or exploited by either Europeans or the creole elite.

RUNAWAY AND PLANTATION REBELS

The South

Though some from the Bight of Benin and West Central Africa who were taken to Saint-Domingue were former soldiers, military slaves, and war captives, the vast majority of slave trade victims were distanced from spheres of economic, political, and military power. Fishermen, gold and salt miners, agriculturalists who cultivated crops that would later become slave society staples, pastoralists, priests, merchants, and textile producers made up a large proportion of Saint-Domingue's enslaved population. Having access to land through marronnage allowed runaways of African ancestry to reclaim those labor skills – as well as the skills they were forced to acquire on plantations – and use them for subsistence farming and other forms of self-directed work. Maroon communities in the south took up space on abandoned plantations, on the outskirts of larger estates, or on unsettled lands that were largely inaccessible to colonists and enslavers where they enacted their own sense of work, trade, and division of labor. Even a planter named Friedmont acknowledged in 1767 that land ownership for enslaved people would end marronnage by restoring a sense of dignity to enslaved people. He indicated that enslaved people had an attachment to the land and the idea of proprietorship, which led them to escape in search of autonomy.³ For the enslaved, freedom and independence did not necessarily mean a life without labor, but rather subverting colonial enslavement's violent, involuntary, and unremunerative nature by appropriating oppressive technologies as tools for their sustenance on their own terms. Runaways in Cayes de Jacmel formed their own economic mode of production based on the technologies previously used for their oppression. It is possible that the Cayes de

Jacmel maroons sold their products to the Spanish – or to the remaining Neybe maroons nearby – for provisions. Moreau de Saint-Méry claimed that between Cayes de Jacmel, the Baoruco, and Pointe Beate, there were two tracts of land appropriate for cultivation – one measuring over 170 square miles and the other over 270 square miles. He suggested that these lands, both plain and mountainous, could potentially hold several sugar and coffee plantations.⁴ It was in these areas that enslaved Africans from Saint-Domingue organized self-sufficient work regimes away from the domination of white planters.

A group of seven runaways from the Vedel plantation in Sale-Trou, a neighborhood of Cayes de Jacmel bordering the Spanish territory and the Baoruco mountains, escaped in early spring 1787. The fugitives included Valentin, creole; Paul, creole, 26; Jupiter, Kongo, 35; Coacou/Coucou, creole; Lafortune, Kongo, 22; and Andre, a Mina man, and Marianne of Kongo, both aged 55 and in chains. Instructions in the LAA advertisement directed that Lamothe Vedel should be notified if any of the runaways were identified or located.⁵ Four of these fugitives – Paul, Coucou, LaFortune, and Andre – were either captured or returned to Vedel voluntarily; however, they did not remain at his plantation for long. They were part of another group of 16 runaways who escaped Vedel's plantation on August 16, 1788, during a hurricane: Andre, a Mina; Paul, Coffi, Coucou, Jacob, and Tranquillin, all creoles; Cabi, Valeri, Sans-Nom, Casimir, LaFortune, Basile, Phanor, Hilaire, Catin, and Urgele, all Kongos; and Justine, a creole *mulâtresse*.⁶ The second group of escapees fled to the heights of Pic de la Selle, one of Saint Domingue's steepest mountains in the parish of Cayes de Jacmel. Based on what we know about African inter-ethnic solidarity in runaway communities of the Americas, runaways tended to elect representatives from their respective ethnic group who then collaborated on strategies of rebellion. The composition of the Vedel maroons indicates that Paul, Coucou, and Lafortune, part of the 1787 contingency of runaways, acted as representatives who recruited members of their ethnic group to escape again in 1788. Paul and Coucou were both creoles and they brought more creoles with them; and Lafortune was a Kongolese man who mobilized others who also were from the Kongo. The absence of the 16 maroons from the Vedel plantation was causing a delay in productivity; and since the runaways were armed, they posed a threat to Vedel and other planters in Selle and Sal-Trou.

A Kongolese woman named Rose was found on the Lillancourt property after having recently left the runaways led by Andre, Coucou,

Lafortune, and Paul. Rose admitted to working with two other women, one named Nangout, under the direction of a black man named Lafoucault at Lillancourt, where she planted coffee, cotton, corn, and other crops. Rose's testimony confirmed previous suspicions that other enslaved people on the Lillancourt coffee plantation were sheltering the Vedel runaways, but Vedel's previous attempts to pinpoint their location and return had them somehow failed. The fugitives were growing coffee and cotton, which had become Saint-Domingue's fourth agricultural crop. Cotton was often illegally sold to Jamaicans, who had begun "free trading" at the ports of Jérémie and Cap Tiburon.⁷ The day after Rose was questioned, Justine was also captured at Lillancourt but quickly escaped again. Another woman, named Heneriette, a maroon for three years, was found during a search of the Lillancourt property; a valet named Zephir had given her shelter. After Henriette was questioned, undoubtedly under duress, and after hearing her statements, Vedel and M. Noel, provost of the *maréchaussée*, marched off to Lillancourt. The rebel band was angered at the news of Henriette's capture and prepared themselves for a confrontation with Vedel and Noel. When the two men arrived, they encountered Andre – the Mina man who escaped in the spring of 1787 and again in summer 1788 – armed with a machete and a gun, raising his gun to shoot at Vedel. Unarmed, Vedel called for Noel to retrieve his gun. By the time Noel returned, Andre was already out of sight.⁸

Not far from the mountains where the Vedel maroons settled, the Maniel maroons occupied the Baoruco mountains between the southern and western departments of Saint-Domingue, and leveraged geopolitical tensions between French and Spanish colonists to make their own demands for land, freedom, and independence. After years of negotiations with colonial officials and priests, over 130 members of the Maniel maroons came to a treaty agreement with the French and Spanish to cease their plantation raids and settle on cultivable land in Saint-Domingue. Despite the terms of the agreement, many of the maroons hesitated or outright refused to claim their property due to mistrust of the French and better relations with the Spanish.⁹ Several letters surfaced claiming that these maroons were still problematic; not only were they not cultivating the lands distributed to them, but they were carrying out raids on plantations that required joint military action to address.¹⁰ They spied on and plundered plantations, and other enslaved people, such as in the case of Kebinda and Anne (Chapter 6), were included in the bounty by being held in captivity and subjectivity to the maroons.¹¹ Despite the

treaty with the smaller group labelled the “Maniel,” it was reported in August 1786 that there were still maroons living in the Baoruco mountains near Neybe. There were an estimated 1,500 at another site called Christophe, which was outside of Port-au-Prince between the mountains and under Spanish control; Moreau de Saint-Méry also suggested that the number of Maniel maroons was thought to be as high as 1,800.¹² That same month, two other letters – one apparently addressed to the royal government seat in Versailles – appeared, similarly complaining about the maroon problem and stating that fugitives from the Spanish territory were still invading Saint-Domingue.¹³ The Maniel finally agreed to settle at the town of Neybe, just north of the Baoruco mountains, where they would be governed by the Spanish and baptized as Catholics.

The theme of land rights and self-initiated, self-organized work continued to shape revolt, especially in the south, well into the years of the Haitian Revolution and the immediate post-independence era. For example, a maroon-styled insurgency led by Jean-Baptiste “Goman” DuPerrier continued at Jérémie until his death in 1820. The Grand Anse region was a base of maroon organizing for livable work conditions and land ownership during the Haitian Revolution. Port-Salut, just southeast of Jérémie, became the site of a large revolt conspiracy in January 1791 when rebels armed with guns, machetes, sticks, and other handheld weapons galvanized forces in the area, and neighboring Les Cayes, to join them. Led by representatives from each plantation, they decided on the night of January 24 to collectively demand the three free days per week they believed the French king promised based on a rumor that had spread through the colony. To further their cause, they kidnapped a *commandeur* and three other enslaved people from one plantation. This revolt conspiracy was discovered and the leaders were captured and sentenced. One of the leaders, Dominique Duhard, was arrested, whipped, branded, and sent to the galleys for life; but he somehow escaped and went on to become part of the Platons maroon kingdom the following year.¹⁴

Soon after the conspiracy at Les Cayes, hundreds and eventually thousands of enslaved people fled southwestern plantations and formed the Platons Kingdom maroon settlement in the mountains in the summer of 1792. Many enslaved people in the south received arms from free people of color who were fighting for political equality, but after the April 4, 1792, decree granted those rights, the enslaved and maroons continued to take up arms in their own defense. Maroons negotiated with André Rigaud in July 1792, making demands that echoed those of the

Port Salut rebels: three free days per week and the abolition of the whip as a means of social control and punishment. Though some members of the Platons community negotiated their own emancipation, many did not accept the terms of manumission and continued to follow Armand, Bernard, Marechal, Formon, Gilles Benech, and Jacques, who led the defensive fight against advances by governor Blanchlande's troops. The maroons withstood incursions for several months, with the help of plantation slaves, raiding plantations for provisions. Though the vast majority of those at Platons were eventually defeated or gained their freedom through negotiation, maroon leadership outlined terms that predated those issued by the general emancipation in 1793, therefore providing a lens through which we can better understand the ways that rebellion among maroons and their enslaved co-conspirators pushed forward their own notions of freedom in ways the French had not yet conceptualized.¹⁵ Veteran rebels of the Platons Kingdom, like Gilles Benech, Nicolas Regnier, and Jean-Baptise "Goman" DuPerrier, went on to mount the pivotal southern resistance to the 1802 LeClerc expedition, helping to pave the way for Haitian independence from France.¹⁶

The West

In the western department, politics around race led to pre-revolutionary solidarities between free people of color, enslaved people, and maroons. The repeal of the rights and privileges of *gens du couleur* to hold *calendas*, to practice law or medicine, to have French citizenship, or even to visit France contributed to an overall sense of dissatisfaction and frustration about discrimination and tightening restrictions on their social mobility and rights in the colony and the metropole.¹⁷ Free people of color traveled to the National Assembly in France in October 1789 to agitate for citizenship, and their ideas were thought to be spreading among the enslaved population; rumors of the "rights of man" swirled the Atlantic world, foreshadowing impending revolt.¹⁸ Some colonists even went so far as to attempt to incite a rebellion in order to justify maintaining enslavement and the colonial order, while another colonial official stated in July 1789 that the denial of legal freedom would contribute to a swell of runaways.¹⁹ Indeed, 1789 saw the highest numbers of marronnage overall and the longest duration of escapes from plantations (Figures 7.1 and 5.1). While some freemen in the north were sympathetic and in favor of abolition, *gens du couleur* of the west generally sought to protect their interests – which largely included slavery, since many mixed-race

individuals were landowners and owned and traded slaves as property. Though most free people of color did not identify with the enslaved population or their African cultures, they were not opposed to mobilizing (and, during the revolution, coercing) slaves for their own benefit.

In early 1791, 35 free people of color – led by Buisson Desmarres, Renaud Robin, the Poissons, and the Bauges, and several of their slaves and family members – were charged and sentenced for the death of three white men.²⁰ Buisson Desmarres and his white neighbor got into an argument about Desmarres' animals crossing over onto the man's property and when confronted, Desmarres lost his temper and physically attacked him – a grave mistake for a freeman of color. The white man furiously left for Port-au-Prince and recruited 20 other whites to assail Desmarres for daring to raise his hand to a white person. Knowing that he would soon need to defend himself, Desmarres called his in-laws the Bauges, Renaud Robin, Jean Poisson, several of their slaves, and two other friends and neighbors. The African descendant rebels, free and enslaved, attempted to block the way from Port-au-Prince back to Fonds-Parisien by setting fire to the road. Before the 1,500 strong vigilante band of whites arrived to Desmarres' house, he and his followers had already abandoned their lands, leaving the whites to burn the plantations owned by Desmarres, the Poissons, and Renaud Robin. The blacks and freemen followed the same path that maroons had taken for generations to find freedom in Spanish Santo Domingo, where they were welcomed in Neybe. They wrote to the governor asking for asylum and were told they could become subjects of the crown if they remained in Spanish territory.²¹

Historian Thomas Madiou suggested that the fugitives remained in Santo Domingo, however other documents indicate they were executed (though possibly in effigy) in Port-au-Prince in February 1791.²² The following were condemned to have their legs, arms, thighs, and kidneys broken alive on a scaffold at the public square: Buisson Desmarres and two of his slaves Jean-François and Jean-Joseph; three men of the Robin family, Renaud, Desruisseaux, and Ferrier; Pierre and Paris Poisson, and two of Paris' slaves Gabriel and David; Jean-François and Jean-Louis Bauge; someone named Aza; and a Spanish black man named Gustine – perhaps the one who provided them shelter in Santo Domingo. Others who were charged were Emmanuel Gonzal, a free black man and keeper of François Boe's plantation at Fond Verette; Renaud Robin's slaves François *dit* Degage, Fatime *dit* Faiman, François *dit* Tout Mon Bien,

and Pierre-Louis *dit* Pompee; Charles and Nago, both slaves of Buisson Desmarres; Jean Poisson and his slaves Marie *dit* Marinette, Suzon, a young girl named Iphigenie, and Nicolas; Marie, slave of Bauge; Marie *dit* Gothon, slave of the widow Borno; Joseph *dit* Boisson, Jean-Joseph *dit* Boisson, and Denis-Victor *dit* Boisson Belleruche; and Jacques *dit* Frere, a free black named Babo, Jacques-Joseph *dit* Falaise, and a free woman named Emilie.²³

Enslaved blacks and *mulâtres* again collaborated later that summer in July 1791 at the Fortin Bellanton plantation in Cul-de-Sac near Croix-des-Bouquets when they killed the *commandeur* for suspecting he was too loyal to whites and likely to betray their plans of a coordinated revolt. This was not the first time the Bellanton bondspeople held a grievance against plantation authorities. Some 20 years earlier, in March 1769, all the people enslaved at Bellanton went to the governor's residence in Port-au-Prince to file a claim against their white manager.²⁴ After the 1791 killing of the *commandeur*, the rebels escaped into the woods where they assembled with 50 other bondspeople from five neighboring plantations who had been reported as runaways. The following day, the *maréchaussée* pursued the band of 60 maroons, all of whom were armed with guns and machetes, following them to the coast. The confrontation between the *maréchaussée* and the rebel band resulted in the execution of nine rebel leaders, with two being broken alive on a scaffold.²⁵ On July 6, the High Court in Port-au-Prince sentenced six others to hang and have their bodies exposed on the Bellanton property for 24 hours as a warning to others.²⁶

On July 18, the Count of Guitton sent a letter confirming that an armed rebellion was growing in Port-au-Prince, Vases, and Mont-Rouis at the plantations of Fortin Bellanton and Poix and Payen. Additionally, the enslaved workers at Trou-Bordet were demanding extra provisions and more time to rest. These conflicts, or "derangements" according to Guitton, were blamed on the influx of soldiers and French citizens who were supposedly imposing their ideas on the enslaved in the absence of the plantation owners.²⁷ Insurrection was about to engulf the Port-au-Prince area, this time at the Fessard plantation in the Montagnes Noires. Fessard was a lawyer in Port-au-Prince and managed the affairs for several planters in the area, including the recapture of runaways. An advertisement was placed for Coucoulou, a Nagô cook aged 27–30; Marc, aged 20–25, a Kongolese *commandeur*; Herode, also Kongolese, and a 35-year-old carpenter; and Desire, a 20–22-year-old creole gardener belonging to Sr. Fessard, who fled the plantation on September 1.

Before the escape, they destroyed several buildings and pieces of furniture and took with them all the guns and ammunition on the property. The four men had initially led 14 others to escape as well, but those runaways returned to report that Coucoulou, Marc, Herod, and Desire would stay put.²⁸ Though the 14 returned to Fessard's land, it seems that this was not the only mass desertion in the plantation's history. On September 17, 1771, almost exactly 20 years earlier, eight men and two women escaped the Montagnes Noires plantation and were suspected of being harbored by free people of color, further suggesting that in the west there had been ongoing collaboration between enslaved people and the *gens du couleur*.²⁹

In late 1791, in the Cul-de-Sac region surrounding Port-au-Prince, white colonists and *gens du couleur* who were in conflict with each other both courted dissatisfied maroons – perhaps including those who survived and escaped the Fortin Bellanton conflict – and enslaved people as auxiliary armed forces, promising freedom or minimally better work conditions and a reduced working week.³⁰ The “Swiss,” the Company of Africans, and Hyacinthe's army fought on both sides of the civil war between the whites and the freemen who took advantage of the already fermenting rebellion among the enslaved people of the region.³¹ Hyacinthe was an Africa-inspired ritual leader whose following was composed of 15,000 people, including lieutenants Garion Santo, Halaou, Bebe Coustard, and Belisaire Bonaire, who emerged at Croix-des-Bouquets in 1792 during the Haitian Revolution.³²

By July 1792, the maroon encampment at Platons in the south was growing larger by the day; and Romaine “la Prophetesse” Rivière, another charismatic leader of a folk Kongo Catholic tradition, and his following of nearly 13,000, had established control over Léogâne and Jacmel.³³ Terry Rey's *The Priest and the Prophetess* (2017) has uncovered new biographical information about Romaine Rivière and the rebellion he led in the central department. Romaine was a free man of color from Santo Domingo who at the onset of the rebellion brought together other freemen, slaves, and possibly maroons in their pillage of plantations in Léogâne and Jacmel. A letter from Léogâne, dated September 27, 1791, attests that “there have formed two camps of brigands of color who have pillaged several plantations.”³⁴ For months, Romaine's band fortified his base at Trou Coffy with arms and spiritual protection from a huge shrine he constructed on his property. Though he was a coffee planter who may have owned slaves, Romaine's spiritual inclinations led him to build solidarities and seek an end to slavery.

The Northern Insurrection

Throughout Saint-Domingue, the foundation for the Haitian Revolution uprising was laid through maroon reclamation, organization, and the embodiment of a socio-political critique of the plantation system. In the south, marronnage was characterized by runaways creating communal spaces and using their intimate knowledge of land, space, and ecologies for subsistence farming. Western department maroons mobilized in part based on solidarity – however fragile – with free people of color. In the northern plain, where the August 1791 uprising began, maroons and enslaved people deployed transience to organize masses in small-scale and larger insurgencies. As the Haitian Revolution unfolded, their networks also appear to have been connected by women who traversed spaces to cultivate relationships, countered colonial codes by posing as the opposite sex, and performed rituals to cultivate shared consciousness and identity. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, maroons increasingly remained in fugitivity for longer periods of time, reclaiming their time and appropriating other resources during their escapes. Here, we see that acts of oppositional behavior and rebellion spread through pre-existing social ties, interpersonal relationships, and spatial connections (Morris 1984; McAdam 1988; Gould 1995).

East of Cap Français, rebellion on the Sicard plantation in Fort Dauphin may have been fermenting since an October 1784 ship revolt. Sicard, an old and wealthy planter, was traveling with a colonist named Lavalette from Martinique back to Fort Dauphin, along with a group of Lavalette's slaves. Sicard's servant Jean-Pierre, aged 14, and Lavalette's captives – all of whom were likely French speakers – successfully conspired to kill their owners and throw them overboard before arriving in Fort Dauphin. Their ship landed on the English island Tortol, where the rebels were arrested and sent to Martinique, then back to Cap Français. Later that month, Jean-Pierre was sentenced to be hanged and burned. The other five, Léveillé, Pharaon, Mercure, Luc and Azor, were condemned to publicly apologize by standing with a sign board describing their crime. Afterward, Léveillé and Pharaon had their right hands cut off, and all five were broken alive on the wheel and burned.³⁵

Word of Sicard's murder and the uprising of his servant Jean-Pierre likely made its way back to Fort Dauphin, which had already been a hotbed for raids by maroon bands. Three years after the 1784 ship revolt, several individuals owned by the Sicard estate, but leased to Madame Sommanvert, escaped; some of them may have fought with the maroon

leader Louis Gillot *dit* Yaya, who, along with several associates, was arrested in February 1787 for pillaging plantations in Fort Dauphin. Yaya's associates, Pierre Sicard, Jean (Louis or François), and Apollon may have been part of a group of seven absconders who escaped the Sicard plantation in Fort Dauphin in late 1786 or early 1787 and were still at large as late as January 28, 1788, months after Yaya's execution, possibly passing for free in Haut-du-Trou, Le Cap, or Limbé.³⁶ Yaya had been a maroon for 10–12 years, or perhaps even longer if he was the same Gillot in a 1766 advertisement describing a “very dangerous” creole man who stole horses and mules from Petite-Anse and sold them to the Spanish.³⁷ Yaya was joined by Narcisse, Manuel Damas, Jean François, Pierre Sicard, Pantaleon, Apollon, Dominique, Jean Louis, and an unnamed *mulâtre* woman. The rebels confronted the *maréchaussée* armed with machetes, and later several of the accused were interrogated repeatedly and dozens of witnesses were interviewed. Yaya was charged for attacking plantations and receiving arms, pillaging plantations in Trou and Terrier Rouge, and public notoriety, crimes for which he was sentenced to execution in September 1787.³⁸ Public knowledge of this group's escape and their open attacks on the plantation system may have influenced enslaved people on their respective plantations. On January 1, 1788, probably during or after New Year celebrations, another group of seven ran away from the Sicard plantation: César, Parisien, Jason, and Marie, all Kongolese, and Marie's creole children Vincent, Scolastique, and Marie-Thérèse.

The influence of Yaya's confrontation with the *maréchaussée* – as well as those by earlier maroon bands led by Noël Barochin, Thélémaque Canga, Isaac Candide, and Pirrhus – may have spread beyond the Sicard plantation to other parts of Fort Dauphin. From early 1787 into 1788, letters between Marie Tousard and her husband, career military officer and recent coffee planter Colonel Louis Tousard, reveal that escapes consistently occurred on their Fort Dauphin plantation that Marie managed while Louis traveled. Louis attempted to support to his wife by advising that they use iron collars as punishment, yet bondspeople on the Tousard plantation continued to escape and steal equipment to sell in town. On January 10, 1787, the colonel wrote to his mother-in-law, Madame de St. Martin, assuring her that though several slaves had escaped, among them Pompice (Pompée) and Antoine, they would be captured soon. She responded in February that she was concerned that the runaways had not returned and that they had traveled to the Spanish territory. By June 21, Louis himself began to worry that the four runaways had potentially reached Santo Domingo. He planned to place an

advertisement for them and to brand Jean-Louis and Michel as punishment upon their return. By July 26, there was no mention of the runaways in the Fort Dauphin jail. Colonel Tousard did eventually place an advertisement for Pierre Loulou, a driver on this plantation; yet, as Marie's letters and the November 17, 1787, runaway advertisement claimed, Pierre was "uncontrollable" and was well known in Maribaroux and Ouanaminthe, where he frequented the Philibert, de Pontac, and de Vaublanc plantations.³⁹

Loulou was eventually returned to the Tousards, though his past escape loomed in their minds. On January 17, 1788, the colonel suggested that Loulou should receive a new coat as a gift to keep him obliged to his owner – but sternly reminded Madame St. Martin that Loulou was to be kept under close watch. Tousard also suggested that another foreman, Jean-Baptiste, needed to be kept in his place because his position afforded him the potential to influence others toward chaos and disorder.⁴⁰ The concerns about Loulou and Jean-Baptiste were well-founded, as they seem to have been intent on freeing themselves by repeatedly escaping. After being captured and returned to Tousard, Pierre Loulou escaped again in August 1788; this time he, Pompée, and Jean-Baptiste managed to evade the Tousards until at least February 1789.⁴¹ Marie sent Antoine to find Pompée, who was a Mandingue and had been missing for a year but was never found. These rebels, especially Loulou, demonstrated consistent hostility at the Tousard plantation, which spilled over into the Haitian Revolution when Loulou became part of the insurgency under Jean-François Papillon in 1792.⁴² Ironically, Tousard and Jean-François' troops became acquainted when the former was dispatched to put down the revolt at Le Cap in the summer of 1791.⁴³ It may be possible that Loulou and Papillon knew each other before the uprising. Two weeks before Loulou's November 1787 escape, Jean-François, an early leader of the 1791 revolt along with Georges Biassou, fled the Papillon property in Le Cap.⁴⁴ That they escaped within weeks of each other (and around All Soul's Day on November 1) may hint at a wider gathering that took place among the future insurgents. It took an additional year after the initial revolt for Pierre Loulou to join Jean-François' ranks. Pierre was a leader in his own right in the areas of Fort Dauphin, Maribaroux, and Ouanaminthe, where he was well known; while Papillon was voted king of the Gallifet plantations closer to Le Cap. During the early years of the Haitian Revolution, Fort Dauphin continued to be an important location for rebels to trade for weapons, food, and resources from the Spanish.⁴⁵

Planters worried that ties forged by runaways could easily facilitate the spread of insurrection from the city to the countryside if measures were not taken to thwart even short-term marronnage. Villevalaix was the lawyer for the Breda plantations surrounding Cap Français, one of which previously held Toussaint Louverture in bondage.⁴⁶ On March 31, 1790, Villevalaix wrote that there had been drought conditions recently and fires started by nearby maroons were destroying plantations in the plain of Le Cap. His account casually acknowledges there was indeed a regular presence of runaway communities just outside the bustling port city. These maroons may have been joined a few weeks later by a young, newly arrived African who escaped the Breda pottery on the night of April 18 or 19.⁴⁷ Nine others escaped Breda after an enslaved man was killed due to violent mistreatment, and they refused to return until they were assured that no punishment would be given. Later in September, the Breda overseer found and arrested 27 runaways at the pottery and others hiding in the slaves' housing quarters.⁴⁸

Lieutenant Milscent's account from 1791 corroborates Villevalaix's mention of maroons gathered around Le Cap to organize a revolt, stating that:

in 1790, being a deputy of the assembly of the north, it was suddenly reported that there was a considerable assemblage of negroes in the mountains of Le Cap, well furnished with guns, canons, etc., which formed the nucleus of a general uprising of negroes in the colony. . . My inquiries taught me that there were about thirty negro maroons of this mountain, armed, some with machetes, others with sickles.⁴⁹

One of these runaways may have been Étienne, a *mulâtre* carpenter and cook who escaped in the summer of 1790 with a brown horse, a gun, and a machete, claiming to be free. While the advertisement for Étienne was placed by Mr. Archambau in Le Cap, Étienne had been seen in multiple locations, including Port-Margot, Gonaïves, Artibonite, and as far south as Saint-Marc, clearly using the horse to reach different parishes. In Étienne's case, his self-identification as a free man may not have been only an individualized posturing to "pass," as was the case for many runaways, but perhaps was a public proclamation and rallying cry to galvanize other enslaved people and runaways in the northern plain for a meeting in or around Le Cap. Étienne's escape was advertised alongside that of a Senegalese woman named Martonne. She had been leased to a surgeon but eventually escaped and was later seen in Grand-Riviere, Dondon, and at Maribaroux on the Philibert plantation – one of the sites

Pierre Loulou frequented while he traversed the north.⁵⁰ The chase that Milscent attempted to organize to re-capture these runaways outside Le Cap never happened, because their camp was informed and scattered before the detachment could reach them.⁵¹

Bwa Kayman and “Zamba” Boukman Dutty

Like *calendas* and *voudoux* ritual gatherings where people like François Mackandal and Dom Pedro were central leaders, the Bwa Kayman ceremony was also a free space where participants assembled outside the scope of colonial surveillance to draw upon spiritual power, strengthen oppositional consciousness, forge solidarities, and incite rebellion (see Chapter 3). There has been some scholarly debate on the validity of the Bwa Kayman ceremony as a historical fact, in addition to some confusion about its actual date and location. While few have argued that the ceremony did not happen, contemporary accounts and oral histories contribute to a consensus that this significant ritual ceremony did take place soon before the Haitian Revolution began and that it was a significant vehicle for mobilizing the enslaved population in the northern plain (Fick 1990; Geggus 2002: 81–92; Beauvoir-Dominique 2010). The Bwa Kayman ceremony is known as an exemplary case within the African Diaspora of ritual influence on impending revolt against enslavement. Less than seven days prior to the August 22, 1791, mass insurgency on Saint-Domingue’s northern plain, two gatherings occurred near the Lenormand de Mezy plantation in Morne Rouge. It is believed that the first gathering was a meeting of creole coachmen, *commandeurs*, and high-ranking slaves on August 14 to outline the strategy for the revolt, and the other was held on August 21 to summon spirits for protection and sacralize the revolt.⁵² However, we lack clarity about the actual date of the ceremony; although the August 14 meeting may have been an organizing meeting, it also coincides with present-day celebrations for *lwa* Ezili Kawoulo and was the feast day for the Notre Dame de l’Assomption, patron saint of the colony. This would have been particularly important to free people of color and enslaved Kongo Catholics who followed the cult of the Virgin. Also, August 15 is the date for honoring Kongo *lwa* in Gonaïves, not far from northern plain.⁵³

Regardless of the ceremony’s date, oral historical evidence suggests that the Bwa Kayman spiritual gathering was the culmination of ritual collaboration between the varying African ethnic groups. Participants sacrificed a pig – which in contemporary Haitian society signifies a militaristic undercurrent of the *petwo* rite – and drank its blood,

indicating a Dahomean oath of secrecy done in conjunction with the *orisha* Ogou.⁵⁴ Spirits from the Nagô and Rada pantheons held more spiritual capital because Bight of Benin Africans were the first ethnic majority in the colony. These spirits were then paired with and/or transferred to the Kongolese rite.⁵⁵ Ethnographic evidence is supported by historical evidence from the Catholic tradition in the Kongolands, where petitions to the Virgin and Saint James were commonplace in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁶ Therefore, we might surmise that a manifestation of the maternal water spirit Ezili, often depicted as the Catholic Virgin Mary, and the *orisha* of war and iron Ogou, appearing as Saint James, were the main forces called upon at Bwa Kayman. Ezili and Ogou from the Bight of Benin merged with the Virgin Mary and Saint James from the Kongo to reinforce the shared bond of the ritual between the two ethnic clusters.

Antoine Dalmas first detailed the Bwa Kayman ceremony; later, Antoine Metral described a woman who performed significant rituals. Then in the 1950s, the grandson of a mixed-race woman named Cécile Fatiman and former Haitian president Jean-Louis Pierrot confirmed to historian Étienne Charlier that Cécile had been the ceremony's main presider.⁵⁷ Along with Fatiman, "Zamba" Boukman Dutty orchestrated the ceremony and directed the initial attacks on the northern plantations from August until his death in November 1791. Boukman was brought from Jamaica illegally, and a lawyer in Limbé, named Leclerc, bought him. Boukman was known as a "bad slave" whose frequent marronnage resulted one night in being caught, shot, then sold to the Clement plantation in Acul, where he was for some reason promoted to either *commandeur* or coachman.⁵⁸ He was reportedly a leader of the ceremony and in Haitian historical memory was a *boko(r)*, someone who does "mystical work through his own strength" rather than through learned rituals.⁵⁹ Further, his experience in an English colony may have contributed to an understanding of inter-imperial geopolitics, providing a basis for knowledge about how to exploit conflicts between the French, English, and Spanish. If a trader brought Boukman from Jamaica during an English blockade against the French, Boukman would have arrived either during the Seven Years War (1754–1763) or during the North American War of Independence (1776–1783). In either case, Boukman probably would have been aware of the Akan-led Tacky's Revolt in 1760 and the subsequent Coromantee Wars.

Additionally, Boukman would have understood the power of African-based sacred practices in bringing together mobilizers. Tacky's Revolt

was organized by *obeahmen* who hid the conspiracy using loyalty oaths and employed ritual packets as protective armaments. However, in the aftermath of the revolt, the Jamaican colonial government increased repression against ritualists, which “threw the direct competition among different forms of sacred authority into stark relief.”⁶⁰ Maroons who allied with Anglo-Jamaican planters eventually betrayed Tacky. Given the conflicts between African ritualists and maroons in Jamaica, Boukman would have understood the importance of pan-African alliances and employed these lessons as he organized the August 1791 insurrection. It therefore should come as no surprise that accounts of the Bwa Kayman ceremony indicate the use of symbols and practices from multiple ethnic backgrounds. Further biographical research is needed to identify when Boukman was taken from Jamaica, then brought to Saint-Domingue. If indeed he was brought after the Coromantee Wars, any connection between these events in Jamaica and the beginnings of the Haitian Revolution would prove compelling.

The attempted killing of Galliffet’s manager at La Gossette, the same plantation that experienced marronnage as labor strikes in 1785 and 1789, triggered the northern uprisings in 1791.⁶¹ It seems clear that the masses of northern Saint-Domingue had for some time been planning the revolt that began on August 22. Georges Biassou, Jean-François Papillion, Jeanot Bullet, and Boukman Dutty were the central emerging leaders, while Toussaint Louverture was likely part of the planning but waited until fall to leave the Breda plantation and join the rebel ranks. Boukman Dutty was not the only rebel leader who recruited sacred power to enhance his ability to command thousands of insurrectionists. Georges Biassou was originally an enslaved person from the hills surrounding Cap Français. His mother was a nurse in a Jesuit hospital, where Toussaint Louverture may have also been employed. Louverture and Biassou had familiarity with one another from their early years, and Louverture would later become the doctor for Biassou’s rebel camp. Georges Biassou was considered one of the more colorful revolutionary leaders, particularly because of his open dedication to African-based practices. His war tent was known to include sacred items and animals. At night, he held ceremonies featuring African dances and chants. Additionally, his military cadre included several religious specialists whom he regularly consulted for advice.⁶² By November, Boukman had been killed in battle while defending his post after several attempts to sack Cap Français, and his body was decapitated and burned. Upon learning of Boukman’s death, insurgents in Jean-François’ camp held a three-day *calenda* in

commemoration. The militaristic rituals of the *calenda* involved mocking enemy forces, as the rebels symbolically proclaimed the death of Colonel Tousard and ridiculed their white prisoners with stories of their battle successes.⁶³ Even after Boukman's death, fighting in the north continued. On July 2, 1793, Duvallon-L'etang sent a letter from Le Cap to his brother detailing the murder of their parents and the apparent kidnapping of their younger siblings, whose heads and hands were the only body parts that remained.⁶⁴ The rebels' persistence in fighting – eventually on behalf of the French against British and Spanish forces – and acts of self-liberation were the singular influences that led to the general emancipation of enslaved people later in 1793.

Women Bridge Leaders

Accounts of women ritualists during the early days of the Haitian Revolution uprising demonstrate that “the subversion of cultural expressions, symbols and aesthetics has been a recurrent theme in African women's resistance across divergent contexts, locations and herstorical moments” (Kuumba 2006: 116). Enslaved African and African-descended women, like the midwife Marie Catherine Kingué and Cécile Fatiman, deployed their spiritual practices to support the liberation struggle. In the weeks after Bwa Kayman, Boukman went on to lead an insurgency of tens of thousands of slaves in systematically pillaging and burning dozens of sugar plantations throughout the northern plain. Accounts from nuns of the Communauté des Religieuses Filles de Notre-Dame du Cap-Français, an expensive boarding school for black and white girls, claimed that rebel band leader Boukman Dutty attempted to capture Cap Français days after Bwa Kayman.⁶⁵ In their letters describing the insurgency's destruction, the nuns describe a former student known as “Princess” Amethyste, a young mixed-race woman who had been initiated into the Arada tradition of *Gioux* or *vaudou* and who had persuaded other students to follow her lead. This group was referred to as “Amazons,” to imply that they were female insurgents that actively assisted Boukman in sacking Le Cap, and that they were members of his spiritual sect.⁶⁶

Besides Cécile Fatiman and Amethyste, women's spiritual role was consistent in facilitating sacred protections for the rebel forces. In February 1792, Colonel Charles Malenfant led a military excursion against a camp in Fonds-Parisien at Cul-de-Sac when he witnessed a *vaudou* ceremony led by a priestess who had placed ritual artifacts along the road to the encampment to block foreign entry. Black and white

chickens were speared on large stakes and trailed along the road, leading to a set of eight to ten large eggs, which created an entryway to an encampment covered in vines. There, over 200 women and a few men, some of whom were from the Gouraud plantation, were found singing and dancing; the militiamen chased them toward the Santo Domingo border, killing 20 women en route. The leader was described as a finely dressed woman from the Boynes plantation, but Malefant's troops executed her without due process. Malenfant was particularly annoyed by the premature killing because he was no longer able to obtain information from her about the nearby rebels. Malenfant discovered another *vaudou* queen in the Sainte Suzanne mountains of Limonade. She was an Arada woman who had recently arrived in the colony and though she spoke no Kreyol, initiates claimed that she was all-powerful. She was questioned in Cap Français and showed interrogators a secret handshake akin to those of the Freemasons, but she never divulged other secrets that would identify other members of the sect – thereby protecting the rebels and any information they might have.⁶⁷

The fear of marronnage as an organizing principle to build a regional or colony-wide network of rebels was legitimate, especially when considering rebels' propensity to use women as bridge leaders: couriers, spies, nurses, and smugglers.⁶⁸ After Jean-François escaped the Papillon plantation at Le Cap in November 1787, his girlfriend Charlotte, a Poulard woman, ran away from the same owner in March 1791. She had been missing for five months before an advertisement for her was placed in *Gazette de Saint Domingue* in early August. It was suspected that Charlotte was abusing the temporary pass she was given and had been moving about in different quarters. By the time the advertisement was published, it was believed that she was in or around Port-au-Prince.⁶⁹ We may never know exactly what Charlotte was doing in those five months, the different parishes she visited, or with whom she was in contact. However, it may be possible that she left in the spring on behalf of Jean-François to help coordinate the rebellions that would begin a few months later. While Charlotte was traveling in the greater Port-au-Prince area, smaller uprisings began there in July that anticipated the August 1791 mass revolt in the northern plain. By September, she was back north with Jean-François, and rebels at the former Galliffet plantation named them king and queen.⁷⁰ The election of kings and queens was common among the rebels in the north and at Platons whenever they gained military control of a parish.⁷¹ There is no direct evidence that Jean-François and Charlotte's coronation was related to the secret *vaudou*

gatherings or Kongo-Catholic confraternity celebrations where kings and queens were the central leadership figures; however, we do know that initiates of the former were asked to perform rebellious tasks such as stealing before they could enter the secret organization. In such a case, we might then think of Charlotte's crowning as a reward for her role in coordinating the northern and western revolts.

Similarly, rebel leader Hyacinthe's partner Magdeleine escaped enslavement in August 1790 – an advertisement suggests he lured her away to the Ducoudray plantation where he was held.⁷² Magdeleine was described as a creole woman who had free family members in Petit Goâve, and transgressed gender norms by dressing in men's clothes. Her apparent eschewal of conventionally gendered activity might indicate that Magdeleine was intentionally hiding herself not just as a maroon but as an active participant during the western uprisings. This supports later reports that women in Hyacinthe's camp commonly ran errands to exchange weapons and food.⁷³ Other women fought and died alongside husbands who were generals in the black military forces. Sanité and Charles Belair, nephew of Toussaint Louverture, were captured during the last days of the Leclerc expedition and were executed together in October 1802. Sanité was known for her hostility toward whites and her fearlessness in facing execution without a blindfold.⁷⁴ At the battle of Crête-à-Pierrot, an important turning point in the final struggle against Leclerc's forces, Marie Jeanne Lamartinière accompanied her husband “and took her share in the defense [*sic*].”⁷⁵ On the other hand, Claire Heureuse, wife of Dessalines, was sympathetic toward opposing forces and attempted to save “many of the French he had ordered massacred.”⁷⁶

MARRONNAGE AND SOLIDARITY DURING THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

The Haitian Revolution, although not wholly dictated by Africa-inspired rituals and marronnage, benefitted from maroon bands and ritual leaders at important moments of its unfolding. The Haitian Revolution was a 13-year struggle that involved a number of divergent groups whose economic and political interests, goals, and solidarities rapidly shifted as events in France progressed and the abolition of slavery became imminent. Saint-Domingue's people of African descent – enslaved continent-born Africans of various ethnicities, colony-born creoles, and free *gens du couleur* and *affranchis* – were not a truly united force until the final movement for independence from France. During and after the 1791 uprisings, rebels were organized primarily by their ethnic or language

group; for example, Toussaint Louverture allied with “Doco” maroons of Mirebalais and their leader Mademoiselle on the basis that many of the Doco and Louverture were of Arada origin and spoke the same language. There was also evidence of racial solidarity in the rebel camps as the revolution unfolded. In 1793, after declaring the abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue, French commissioner Léger-Félicité Sonthonax invited the Nagô leader Alaou and his several thousand troops of Kongoles, Senegambian, Igbo, and Dahomean rebels to meet with him in Port-au-Prince.⁷⁷ Though the army of formerly enslaved masses was largely responsible for defeating Spanish, British, and French forces, and leveraging their own emancipation, the military elite and slave-holding free people of color were slow to join the cause of emancipation and independence.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) has argued that during the Haitian Revolution, a “war within the war” emerged as formerly enslaved and free black and mixed-race military officers elevated their economic and political statuses and diverged from the immediate interests of the formerly enslaved masses. Jean-François Papillon and Georges Biassou accepted a proposal to free themselves and their officers in exchange for putting down the general revolt – an offer that the French subsequently rebuffed, to their own chagrin. Soon after the 1793 emancipation, the other French commissioner, Étienne Poverel, instituted regulations for the formerly enslaved that hinted at the ways they sought to support themselves with subsistence farming. Freed people, then referred to as “cultivators,” were forced to continue plantation work to produce the sugar and coffee that would sustain the colony’s economic viability. They rebuffed the demands on their labor by insisting on having two days per week to farm for themselves. Women likely composed the larger proportion of cultivators and were especially dissatisfied with the new labor codes, which mandated that they would receive less pay than men for performing the same tasks, as they had during slavery. Women vocally protested the gendered pay gap by demanding equal wages, refusing to work, and disobeying plantation authorities.⁷⁸ Some cultivators responded with marronnage by abandoning plantations altogether and staking claims to their own land. Soon these cultivators began conspiring and staging revolts of their own, which were repressed, sometimes brutally, by Toussaint’s army.⁷⁹

It became clear that Louverture would not tolerate challenges to his authority; this may explain his regime’s coercive repression of Africa-inspired rituals and leaders of maroon bands who consistently staged

insurrections and labor protests against the new plantation system. Louverture and future political regimes were aware of the potential political power of marronnage and what became known as Vodou, and they attempted to control oppositional mass mobilization. For example, one *mambo* was executed in 1802 for organizing a ritual dance.⁸⁰ When Louverture's 1801 Constitution militarized labor, women cultivators were specifically targeted and prohibited from entering military camps to prevent disobedience. This restriction on women's movement and religious practices implies there was knowledge and awareness of women's role and significance as organizers of rebellion. After the French captured and exiled Toussaint Louverture, rebel officers like Jean-Jacques Dessalines defected from the insurgent army and sided with the French, but African rebels and maroons continued fighting against French forces.⁸¹ Their military successes, especially in the south, combined with the growing evidence that the French were striving to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue, signaled to black and mixed-race officers the urgency of joining the masses to fight the French for independence. The Bwa Kayman ceremony had spiritually solidified alliances between West Central Africans and Bight of Benin Africans; and the struggle of the formerly enslaved rebels and maroons propelled racial solidarity between Africans, creoles, and free people of color toward independence in 1804. As a result, the first post-independence Constitution declared, "the Haitians shall hence forward be known only by the generic appellation of Blacks," making Haiti the first and only free and independent Black nation in the Americas.⁸²