

Brooke Irvine

Biehl Fellowship- Summer 2015

Education and Agriculture in Rural Haiti

Abstract: This paper is a look at the relationship between agriculture and education in rural Haiti. Because of Haiti's colonial legacy, these two structures have competing ways of determining the status of individuals. Formal education places one into the system of respectability while agriculture is based around reputation. These are not separate or distinct notions, and individuals move back in forth between them. There are certain circumstances where one is dominant over the other. The research was conducted in the central plateau of Haiti, through participant observation, and focused on three families as main informants. In order to gain insight into how agriculture and education relate to one another the paper makes observations about the status of agricultural students who worked as research assistants on the project. These students occupy a liminal position between the worlds of agriculture and education. The paper also explores patterns in teaching and learning, and sees it as a possible connection between agriculture and education. In both of these environments, learning is bodily. Another topic discussed in *kombit* a traditional system of collective labor in Haiti. *Kombit*, once a common practice for rural Haitian farmers seems to be undergoing a change, and perhaps even dying out. *Kombit* relies on the structure of reputation in order to function properly. The increasing prevalence of formal education may be shifting the perspective of farmers from focusing on reputation to focusing on reputation. This makes the practice of *kombit* difficult if not

impossible. Knowledge is passed in very similar ways, with a focus on the body, in both the world of education and the world of agriculture. These two worlds however, have different ways of determining the value of individuals within them.

I. Introduction

Throughout the last half of the 20th century, increasing importance has been placed on education in Haiti. Most see this as a positive trend, and there is much evidence to support this view. Because of the structure of the Haitian education system, quality secondary schools and universities are located primarily in the capital city. Promising students are siphoned from rural areas into the urban centers of the country, and often become a part of the growing Haitian diaspora spreading across the globe. The majority of Haitians living outside of urban areas are considered subsistence farmers. These two facts raised several questions for me. What is the relationship between the formal education system and traditional agricultural lifeways?

The Republic of Haiti has a turbulent history, at times incredibly hopeful, and at others deeply troubled. To quote Mintz (2010; 91), "The national struggle of the Republic of Haiti is the only instance in world history in which slaves rose up and successfully wrested the nation itself from those who owned their flesh." While the revolution was a unique and important event, Haiti was not freed from their colonial legacy. Many of the revolutionary leaders were better educated than the general population, due to their status as gens de couleur (freed people of color). Because they were free before the revolution, some had been educated in France. Much of the power remained in their hands in the following years.

This means that there has historically been a deep and lasting division in Haiti between the literate elite and the rural agrarian population.

I believe that this has created a foundational divide for Haitian farmers. Carolyn Fick (1990; 249) says that, “a personal claim to the land upon which one labored and from which to derive and express one’s individuality was, for the black laborers, a necessary and essential element in their vision of freedom.” Following the revolution, the profitable plantations on which the economy had been based were parceled off to those who had been forced to work them. There was pride in owning and working land for oneself instead of at the behest of French planters.

This divide, between the formal education system, and the traditional system of agriculture is the basis for my research. Here, I am attempting to understand how these two systems relate, specifically from the point of view of Haitian farmers. This is a complicated and difficult endeavor. To begin with, I believe that it is important to know not only how knowledge is transferred inside these systems, but also how status is structured and understood within them.

II. Literature Review

Haiti is a place that has captivated a diverse group of authors throughout its history. The capital city of Port-au-Prince was the backdrop for Graham Green’s book, “The Comedians”. His less than favorable allusions to the countries’ dictator, François Duvalier, gained him and his book a ban from the country. Over the years, novelists, historians, and development workers have written about Haiti. The country itself has produced an

incredible assortment of authors including Marie Vieux-Chauvet, Jaques Romain, and the prolific Edwidge Danticat. All provide enlightening portraits of the harsh and beautiful world floating in the middle of the Caribbean.

In recent years, two authors from the field of anthropology have published very different, yet insightful books on the island nation. Paul Farmer, a physician and anthropologist has written much about Haiti over the last thirty years. In “Pathologies of Power” (2003) Farmer uses his experiences working as a physician in Russia, Peru, and Haiti to explore ideas about human rights and structural oppression. He discusses the relationship between social forces and the spread of diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis. His main focuses are the importance of addressing global human rights, and the unequal access to resources. Most of Farmer’s writing about Haiti comes from a similar perspective, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the structural violence which he sees as responsible for shaping much of Haiti’s history and current circumstances.

Sidney Mintz published “Three Ancient Colonies”, in 2010, towards the end of his life. In the book he draws on his lifetime of fieldwork in order to compare Haiti, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. The book attempts to connect what we know about the histories of these countries with what Mintz was told and observed during his time there. He explores how different aspects of especially the various colonial legacies may have shaped what he observed about things like race or gender. A significant contribution of the book is Mintz’s theory of creolization. He sees the cultures of Haiti and Jamaica as being the result of a creative process on the part of those who were enslaved under colonial rule. He believes

that these cultures are not the muddled result of a passive and inevitable process of contact during colonial rule. Rather, these cultures are something new, created by those who were subjugated in order to replace what had been stripped away through their enslavement.

III. Methods

My research was conducted in the Central Plateau of Haiti. The majority of the work was completed over eight weeks in the summer of 2015. I had made several visits to the region from 2013-2015 while working on another project. I had also spent a substantial amount of time in other parts of the country from 2007-2011, and during this time learned the main spoken language of the country, Haitian Kreyol. I found the years I spent in Haiti previous to this trip to be an invaluable source of insight in conducting this research. I chose to return to the towns of Bois Jolie and Blanchard, where I had previous contacts, to pursue my research questions. There I hoped to find community members willing to help me learn about Haitian agricultural techniques.

Blanchard is a small town on the southwestern tip of Lac Pèligre (Lake Peligre). The lake rose in 1956, after a dam was built across the Artibonite River. It is at one end of this dam that the houses of Blanchard are clustered. Just across the dam is Route National 3, a major artery connecting the capital city of Port-au-Prince to Cap Haïtian, the largest city in the northern province. Many of the residents are farmers, and their fields are scattered between houses and throughout the surrounding area. The town, which includes several churches and a school, only came to be in the late 1950's. Many of the current residents are the children or grandchildren of farmers who lost their land below the rising waters of Pèligre. The lake lies in what used to be very fertile valleys bordering the Artibonite. Many

families lost nearly everything they had, and were forced to essentially become refugees. The hydroelectric dam provides electricity to the capital city. Those who have a house in Blanchard benefit from the electricity produced as well, a very rare luxury in rural Haiti.

Bois Jolie is less a town than a collection of farms scattered throughout a high valley. There are several ways to reach the valley, the most popular being on foot or the back of a mule. It is about three hours walk to the west of Route National 3. The valley is accessible by motorcycle or SUV though it is rare to see one on the white stone road that connects the valley to the highway. The road thins to a footpath shortly after entering the valley. The valley can feel very isolated at times. This is partly due to there being no central meeting place or town square, though there are a few churches and schools scattered across it. Many of the women and children can be found bathing or washing clothes together at one of a few water sources. Church, school, and at the springs seem to be some of the main sources of interaction between the households.

I had to make a series of decisions as to how I would go about my research. My time in Haiti was limited, and for this reason I chose to spend the majority of my time with a small number of informants. I wanted to avoid overly simplistic comparisons, so I chose to work with three families rather than two. Because I was working with a limited number of informants, I chose families which would provide a range of life stages and level of education for both the parents and children, rather than randomly selecting them. I approached three families, two in Bois Jolie and one in Blanchard. All three families quickly agreed to participate. Asking blunt questions about a person's level of education is

considered offensive in Haiti, which made it difficult to determine the different family members' education status to begin with. Even so, I made certain to choose families with some variety.

One family from Bois Jolie was a couple in their 50's, with four in their early twenties and late teens. The father could read, the mother could not, and all four children had attended school at least part time. The second was a couple in their twenties with two young children. Both the mother and father had graduated high school, and the son who was old enough was attending kindergarten. The family in Blanchard was a man in his 50's with a wife in her 40's. They had five children ranging in age from 25-13. Neither parent could read, all of their children had attended school at least part time.

On first approaching the family I explained that I was an American university student, and that I wanted to learn about farming and education in Haiti. I asked if they would be willing to teach me the basics of farming. I told them that if they would allow me, I would like to work in the fields alongside them. As a rule, the farmers responded to this with amusement. Several of the farmers, especially the women told me that I should avoid working in the field because I would get dirty. I responded that I was fine with that, and that it was important for me to learn by doing. I wanted to understand farming techniques as a system of knowledge. I decided that the best way to learn about how this knowledge was shared was to observe the way in which it was taught to me, thus the importance of actually working in the fields. I also wanted avoid emphasizing my position as the foreign

observer, and believed that the best way to do that was by actually taking part in a collective task.

Over the course of my time working in the field, some of the farmers continued to seem uncomfortable with the idea of me getting my hands dirty. In several ways, my choice to participate in field labor was atypical. Being American and enrolled in university, many of the farmers seemed confused with my choice to take part in manual labor. It was not something required of me and went against their understanding of my socio-economic status. I remember telling one farmer that I had grown up working in our family garden; he was surprised and asked about my father's occupation. It seems in Haiti, those who work in fields are expected to be those who do not have another choice. When I asked one woman how she felt about working in the garden, her response was, "I do it because I don't know how to do anything else. I cannot read or sew, so I work in the garden."

When I arrived, the short period of planting had mostly passed, and the fields were not yet ready for harvest. I asked the farmers to describe how to plant and harvest the different crops in order to understand these tasks. The primary activity that I was actually able to participate in was the weeding of the fields. This is the most labor intensive part of farming, and also one of the most crucial. We used hand held sickles to go through the fields and cut down all the grasses, being careful to avoid the crops growing up in their midst. The grasses were left to dry out in the sun, providing the crops with additional nutrients. Towards the end of my time there I was also able to participate in some harvesting.

There were a few different ways in which I gleaned information about attitudes towards education. This part of my research had to be approached with caution, and allowed to develop naturally. I had to wait for information to be volunteered, or become clear through observation. Once I knew whether the children of the family had attended or were attending school, it was natural to ask questions about where. This led to conversations about the choice of schools, and how education has changed over time. These conversations were also possible because of the families' increased level of comfort with me. One woman from Bois Jolie who was in her fifties spoke about how much access to education has changed since she was a child. While she was growing up, the closest school was at the base of the mountain, at least an hour and a half walk. Now, Bois Jolie has two primary schools in town.

IV. Helpful Frameworks

To understand these questions surrounding agriculture and education in Haiti, we must look to our understanding of culture. Some ethnography gives the impression of culture as an interconnected, interdependent web of meaning. I believe that viewing culture as a discrete, static unit will make it more difficult to understand these questions. Within cultures, there can be competing, unresolved models. Seeking to understand culture as competing complexes, rather than as a coherent whole makes it possible to investigate the relationship between agriculture and education in Haiti.

In her book, "The End of the Line", Dudley (1994) describes two competing complexes within a small American town. She frames these as the "culture of the hand", and the "culture of the mind". She shows that education and factory work are complex

competing cultural systems with different ways of assigning value to the people within them. A similar instance of competing systems can be seen in O'Connor's "Rice, Rule, and the Tai State" (1996). In his work, he claims that one can gain insight into Tai culture by viewing wet rice agriculture and the Tai state as autonomous elements which interact with one another, rather than as an integrated whole. Though neither directly compares education and agriculture, they show how one can work within a specific culture, and yet recognize competing cultural systems.

Another theorist helpful in observations specifically of Caribbean culture is Peter Wilson. He wrote about life on the small English speaking island of Providencia. Wilson claims that a set of competing value systems exists all throughout the Caribbean. He framed the value system of the island's residents as being caught in two opposing structures of reputation and respectability. He sees this dual value orientation as being rooted in the colonial history of the island.

Wilson defines respectability as "The dogma or charter that supports and authenticates a class structure, and those who are considered respectable are those who are considered upper or middle class (1974; 113)." To be respectable, one must look, dress, and act in the right way. Most people living in rural Haiti do not fit into the upper or middle class. It is difficult for these people to obtain the qualities necessary to be considered respectable by this definition simply because of the restrictions imposed by their socio-economic status.

Conversely, reputation is about successful adaptation to local realities. One gains reputation by having a family, eloquence, or being knowledgeable about useful skills. The system of reputation is rooted within specific communities. There is no absolute standard, rather one's reputation must be considered in relation to one's peers. As Wilson explains it, "Reputation emphasizes egalitarianism and opposes class hierarchy. It recognizes status differences, but it does not rank one status over another (1974; 117)." In some ways, the system of reputation ties the community more closely together.

The opposition of life as a rural Haitian farmer and a member of the formally educated community parallels the reputation and respectability dichotomy as explained by Wilson. I want to avoid oversimplifying the lives of my informants by forcing them to fit into a specific framework which may not reflect their reality. However, I believe that Wilson's ideas of this competing value system can be a helpful tool in exploring the relationship between agriculture and education in rural Haiti.

V. The Data

Agricultural Students

During my research, I was lucky enough to work alongside agricultural students from a local vocational school. I worked primarily with four male students, all in their twenties. All four were from the Central Plateau area, the farthest from a town about an hour's drive away. Two lived in Blanchard. These students had graduated from local high schools, and were attending The Centre de Formation de Fritz Lafontant (CFFL). They were attending CFFL in order to receive a certificate in agriculture. Working with these students

was illuminating in several ways. I believe that these students are straddling the worlds of agriculture/reputation and education/respectability is a unique way.

Two of the students were the sons of farmers who lived in the same town as one of my informants. They were neighbors, living under very similar circumstances. The other two were from different towns, but were also raised in similar circumstances as the sons of rural farmers. All four were members of the educated community, having graduated from secondary school and in the process of pursuing further training. That this training was in agriculture placed them in some ways as intermediaries, at once a part of the world of formal education and the world of agriculture. The vocational school was run under the joint efforts of Haitian and American instructors. The methods taught were 'modern' and differed distinctly in many ways from those used by the farmers I worked with. This was clear in many of the conversations I observed between the students and farmers, as well as my observations of their school which I visited regularly during my time there.

At every farm we visited, the students would eventually question the farmer on how they cleared their fields. The answer was in almost every case (but one) that the field was burned before it was planted. One farmer said that he used herbicide to clear the field, but that it was expensive as it was imported from the Dominican Republic. The ag students would typically provide an explanation of why burning fields was bad, describing the microbes that lived in the soil which were killed in the process, and the nutrients lost in the smoke. Their suggestion was that fields be cleared by hand with a sickle or hoe, and the ground cover be left to decay and thus replenish the soil. The farmers would typically

respond with something like, “Yes that would be better.” An ambivalent response which hid their skepticism just below the surface, but was outwardly respectful of the agricultural students assumed superior knowledge.

The agricultural students maintained their position within the hierarchy of age. Older farmers they addressed with terms of respect, or more casually by mother or father. They held a superior position socially because of their education level, but their respect for age was clear in their interactions, even when discussing topics on which their opinions differed due to their training. One of the students told me that farming in Haiti is left to uneducated people who follow tradition, “They see others doing something and they pick it up.” He said that he would like to provide training for rural farmers, but that it was important not to “tell them they have to do things a certain ways, just make suggestions and show them that the methods you are suggesting actually work better.”

These students also put a premium on progress. When I asked one why he thought that farmers did not encourage their children to work on the farms he said, “They don’t want their kids to work with a sickle like they did. They don’t want their kids to have the same life. They want them to work with a tractor. They want progress.” Another responded that, “The land doesn’t give as much as it used to. Farming is harder now because of environmental degradation.” These students saw traditional farming as unsustainable. They wanted to see technological progress, something which the farmers never stated explicitly. Perhaps the focus on progress is due to their liminal position between formal education, a world of progress, and agriculture, one dominated in Haiti by tradition.

Learning/Teaching

One important theme I observed while working with the families is how people went about teach and learning. My main conclusion is that in Haiti, both are bodily practices. The Cartesian split between body and mind often taken for granted in the West is less emphasized. How one uses one's body is an essential part of learning both in the fields and in the classroom. Though these fit into separate realms in terms of status being an issue reputation of respectability, bodily learning is a link common to both.

I visited each family as many times as possible over my time there. Typically I would arrive to find someone already at work in the fields. Initially the families were quite formal. As I approached the cleared space surrounding the house I would call out a greeting and wait for a response before continuing on. One of the children would quickly find a chair for me and anyone who had accompanied me, and would then run to tell their parents that I had arrived. The parents, coming from work in the field would take a moment to wash their hands, or even change out of work clothes before coming to greet me. No matter how recently I had seen them, we would take a few minutes to go through the formal reception typical when visiting a home in Haiti, asking after one another's health, and that of our families.

I was unfamiliar with many aspects of this work and asked the farmers to teach me everything they could. At every farm the farmer began by walking me through some of their fields, pointing out the variety of plants growing. Haiti is mountainous and terracing is a common practice in most of the country. Most fields contained several crops which could

grow together. Most often there was either millet or corn with the ground around these taller plants covered by shorter beans. Fruit and shade trees are scattered throughout, while rock terraces and live fencerows of candelabra cactus crisscross and separate the fields.

When we had arrived at the field which needed weeded that day, the farmers would demonstrate the correct method for holding and swinging the sickle. This back breaking work is done with a hand held sickle. The proper technique as shown to me time and time again was to bend at a 45 degree angle with your feet hip width apart. Grasping the grasses an inch or so above the roots, one swings the sickle so that it cuts the roots and enters the soil about a half inch. A field properly weeded is one with shriveled grasses mixed into freshly turned soil, with only productive crops left standing.

The tasks I was learning were physically taxing and required the engagement of the whole body. Very few of the methods were communicated verbally. If they felt I was getting too close to cutting my hand with the sickle, they would say something like "Do this," or "Don't hold the sickle that way, it should be like this," followed by a demonstration of the proper technique. It turns out this fear was a valid one; I came back with a scar from a sickle on my left hand. When describing planting, they would show me the proper length of stride marking the distance between each seed. Teaching and learning agricultural technique is a bodily practice. When I asked one farmer where he learned to farm, he said that his grandfather taught him. When I asked for more detail he said, "You learn by

watching the older people. When you see your parents weeding, you pick up a sickle and try to do it yourself.”

Some ideas were shared verbally, such as information about the insects or plants around us. When there were opportunities to combine verbal and visual explanations, this was often done. For example, when describing a weed with small thorns that I was to be careful of, the woman spent a few minutes finding one so that I could learn to identify it by sight. Pests which lived in the field were often described while I was being shown an example of the marks they leave on plants. When I was told to watch out for red ants, it seems there was no need to find a visual example. Anyone who has been in Haiti has probably felt the sting of a red ant bite, and would do their best to avoid the feeling in the future.

I have visited many Haitian classrooms over the years, including the summer of 2015, and had many discussions with Haitian students about how teaching and learning are done there. When an adult enters a classroom, the students spring to their feet and in unison recite the proper greeting, regaining their seats only when they have been told to. Students are typically very well behaved in the presence of their teacher, which in this case means still and quiet unless otherwise directed. There is a clear expectation that children in this setting will not use their bodies in a disruptive way, with the consequences increasing in severity as students reach higher grade levels. Any time a student recites or reads a passage, they stand; otherwise they are to sit quietly.

A friend once described the process by which her teacher prepared her and her fellow students for the national exam which allows students to enter secondary school. One by one, students would come to the front of the class and either recite their answers, or in the case of math problems, write them out on the board. Mistakes earned a smack on the hand from the teacher's ruler. By the end of the process, she said the students were on their guard and few mistakes were made.

How one uses one's body is an integral part of formal learning in Haiti. The things students learn are different from the tasks learned in the fields, yet there are similarities in the way it is learned. Teachers teach memorization by reading a passage aloud and then directing the students to recite it together until they can each recite it one by one. In recitation, the body is engaged in an expected way. It may not be the difficult labor of the fields, but there is a clear emphasis on how to properly use the body in classroom learning.

Kombit

A very intriguing topic of conversation I pursued with both my main informants and other community members was the changing structure of the traditional system of labor exchange. One can find descriptions of the *kombit* structure in both literature and historical texts (*Le Gouvner de la Rosee* and *Aftershocks of History*). A few of my older informants were able to give me rich descriptions of what they remembered from their fathers and grandfathers *kombit*. Traditionally, when a farmer would call *kombit*, their neighbors would gather early in the morning to help them with whatever project they were working on. It was common to want help with tasks that needed completed quickly, like planting.

The farmers would work in a line often singing together to the rhythm of their hoes. When the work was done, the farmers would gather at the host's house where the family had prepared a meal. This seems to typically have been a very festive time with singing and dancing. This was all done with the understanding that if any of the other neighbors called *kombit* the others would be just as willing to help at their farm.

All of the people that I talked to about *kombit* said that it is next to impossible to get people to come help you these days. They said that many people expect to be paid now. One man said that part of the problem is that even though the workers are all fed, they ask how they are supposed to feed their wife and children that day if you do not pay them. There seems to also be a breakdown of trust. Several of the farmers expressed worry over how hard the others would work. They seemed to think that since there was no guaranteeing that everyone would work as hard as you it was not worth giving up a day's work on someone else's farm if they might not give you back the same amount of work when they came to help you.

One man said that if you call *kombit* now, your neighbors will tell you they will come, and after you buy the food to feed everyone, and your wife begins to prepare it, no one will show up. Another man told me jokingly that the only way to get people to come help was to make sure you served *klarin*, a strong moonshine made from sugar cane, at the meal. All the people I interviewed agreed that *kombit* was much less common now than in what they remembered from their father's or grandfather's lives. I will explore the change

in feelings toward kombit further later in this paper. I believe that there are several possible explanations.

VI. Analysis

Using the framework of respectability and reputation to examine these ideas is a valuable exercise. Life as a subsistence farmer is one in which status is determined by reputation. In rural communities you are known by what you do, your skills and character. Here, status is shaped by a deep personal knowledge of your community. In the world of formal education status relies on respectability. How you appear, what degrees, jobs, or titles you hold decide where you stand in relation to others.

As I mentioned before I was told several times that it would be best not to participate in the work as I would get dirty. One of the agricultural students who accompanied me into the field jokingly told me that I should not work with a sickle as it would give me callused hands I would never find a husband. My choice to work in the fields was contrary to the system of respectability. In this system someone of my socio-economic status needs to be clean and presentable in public. I should not appear as though I had taken part in manual labor as this is not my role. Over time, the farmers seemed to be more comfortable with the sight of my dirt covered hands holding a sickle. I believe this is because I managed on some level to move from the system of respectability to one of reputation.

Essential to reputation is knowledge of a person. The amount of time I spent with the families promoted familiarity. The first time I went into the field with the family from

Blanchard I the man stood back for a moment watching me wield the sickle. He laughed and said in a surprised tone, "She really can work!" I began to be known to this farmer as someone capable. I no longer deserved respect as someone educated, but as someone hardworking. Reputation is not the only world that the farmers exist in. In their immediate communities this value system may take priority, but this does not mean that they do not engage in or understand the system of respectability.

The man from Blanchard told me that he could do little more than write his own name. He said that he "lacked knowledge" and did not want that for his own children. When I asked about what he wanted for his children in the future, he was very insistent that his children should never sell their farm, and yet he wanted them to have more choices than he did. In his explanation, the farm was a way of ensuring that you would eat, but not a way of making enough money to live well. This seemed to be a common theme in answers, owning land was a source of security. If you could do nothing else, the land would help you to eat, it is a source of dignity. Reputation is connected to efficacy, being able to care for one's self and one's dependents. This varied among families in connection to how long they had lived on the land. Two of them had been on the same plots for several generations, and were more insistent that the land be held by their children. One couple had bought the land they were farming after they had married, and they stressed this point less.

Titles and position are a very important in Haitian culture and is part of the prestige around education. Just as in America families make sacrifices to give their children what they see as the best education possible in hopes of giving them an advantage in gaining a

respectable position. Both of the families in Bois Jolie sent their children to schools several hours away from their home. The children actually lived in other towns and only returned to the valley on holidays. I was able to have many conversations with the families as to how they made these sorts of decisions. One mother, when talking about her three year old son, said that they felt an obligation to make sure he went to a good school. They did not consider the one in Bois Jolie to be rigorous enough. She said that even though she missed him throughout the school year, it was important that he get a quality education. This also meant an added expense for the families, making a difficult economic situation that much harder.

When one looks to kombit, there appears to be a shift in value systems. It is possible that this could reflect a change in the structure of Haitian rural communities. As more people leave to pursue other opportunities, are those who stay left with the feeling that their relationships are more tenuous and less trustworthy. Certainly it seems that there is a hesitance to invest in one's neighbor without an immediate assurance of a return of some sort.

Another possible explanation is that people in rural areas today have a greater need for cash than before. Open air markets throughout the country are now filled with factory made goods, while homemade alternatives are becoming harder and harder to find. Every child who goes to school must pay not only their tuition, but to have a uniform made, as well as for books and other supplies. The need for cash in return for labor was something which the farmers themselves pointed out as a reason that kombits were more difficult

now. One man said simply that life is harder now, and that the earth produces less. There is simply less to go around.

Another aspect of life which has changed in the last sixty years or so is the increased presence of the evangelical church in Haiti. There have historically been different moments where either the government or Catholic Church attempted to purge the country of Voodoo, smashing sacred artifacts and prohibiting ceremonies. None of these purges have been nearly as effective as the slow spread of Protestantism. When describing the kombit of their grandfather's there was an emphasis of the songs and drums. The farmers did not explicitly draw a connection to Voodoo here, but simply stated that those things were not around anymore. Reading historical accounts of kombit, the connection to Voodoo is much clearer. The songs which were sung were typically rooted in the tradition of Voodoo, and in fact it seems that kombits were often lead by the local houngan or Voodoo priest. Is it possible that this religious connect was important for securing the debt essential to kombit?

While any of these explanations could be at a factor in the disappearance of collective labor, looking to respectability and reputation is also illuminating. Kombit relies on reputation. If you are going to work on someone's farm with the understanding that the favor will be returned, it is important to know who they are. A person's work ethic and trustworthiness are essential information for engaging in this kind of collective labor. As levels of education increase throughout the countryside it is possible that the system of respectability, tied inextricably with formal education, has become dominant.

VII. Conclusion

The relationship between agriculture and education in lives on rural Haitian farmers is certainly a complex one. Using Peter Wilson's framework of reputation and respectability is a helpful application. Being a part of the world of agriculture at some level means buying into the status system determined by reputation. Formal education places one into a system where status is about respectability.

The position of the agricultural students I worked with was a liminal one. In observing their interactions with the farmers, I think that most often they stayed firmly planted in the realm of respectability. The students rarely picked up a sickle and joined in the work, preferring to keep their hands and clothes clean. They occasionally displayed their formal training in agriculture in conversations about pests or particular techniques, even going so far as to offer suggestions about a better way of doing things. In the world of reputation age, ability, and experience are paramount. The students relied on what they had learned from formal training, the capital of respectability, not reputation.

The ways in which teaching and learning are done is in some ways a link between the two systems. Whether in the field or the classroom, the body takes an important role in learning. Much is taught through example, whether the proper technique for weeding, or reciting lessons. This focus on the body perhaps makes moving through the two systems easier. One may use one's body differently, but watching and mimicking how others use theirs is a clear starting point for integrating oneself into a new setting.

I found the discussions I had about kombit to be incredibly informative. The practice is certainly not dead, but it does seem to be dying. It is very difficult to find those willing to work without a wage. One can no longer rely on deep knowledge of one's neighbors and the ties within the community one as one does with collective labor. Instead, there needs to be a direct return for the time another invests in you.

There is a clear relationship to between this trend and the increase in education. Those who have received an education expect to be paid for their work. Those hoping to send their children to school must have cash to do so, and now have less incentive to work without pay. It is possible that community members have begun to view one another more in terms of respectability rather than reputation. One no longer determines status by what you know of another person's capacity, but rather through symbols of class.

VIII. Work Cited

Dubois, Laurent. *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Metropolitan, 2012. Print.

Dudley, Kathryn Marie. *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America*.

Chicago: U of Chicago, 1994. Print.

Farmer, Paul. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*.

Berkeley: U of California, 2003. Print.

Fick, Carolyn E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from below*. Knoxville:

U. of Tennessee, 1990. Print.

Mintz, Sidney Wilfred. *Three Ancient Colonies: Caribbean Themes and Variations*.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010. Print.

O'Connor, Richard A. "Rice, Rule, and the Tai State." *State Power and Culture in Thailand*.

Ed. E. Paul Durrenberger. New Haven, CT: Yale U Southeast Asia Studies, 1996. 68-99.

Print.

Roumain, Jacques. *Gouverneurs De La Rosée: Roman*. Paris: Editeurs Français Réunis, 1946.

Print