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"Your Majesty's Friend": Foreign Alliances in the Reign of Henri Christophe

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“Your Majesty’s Friend”: Foreign Alliances in the Reign of Henri Christophe

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
History

By

Jennifer Conerly

B.A. University of New Orleans, 2010

May, 2013

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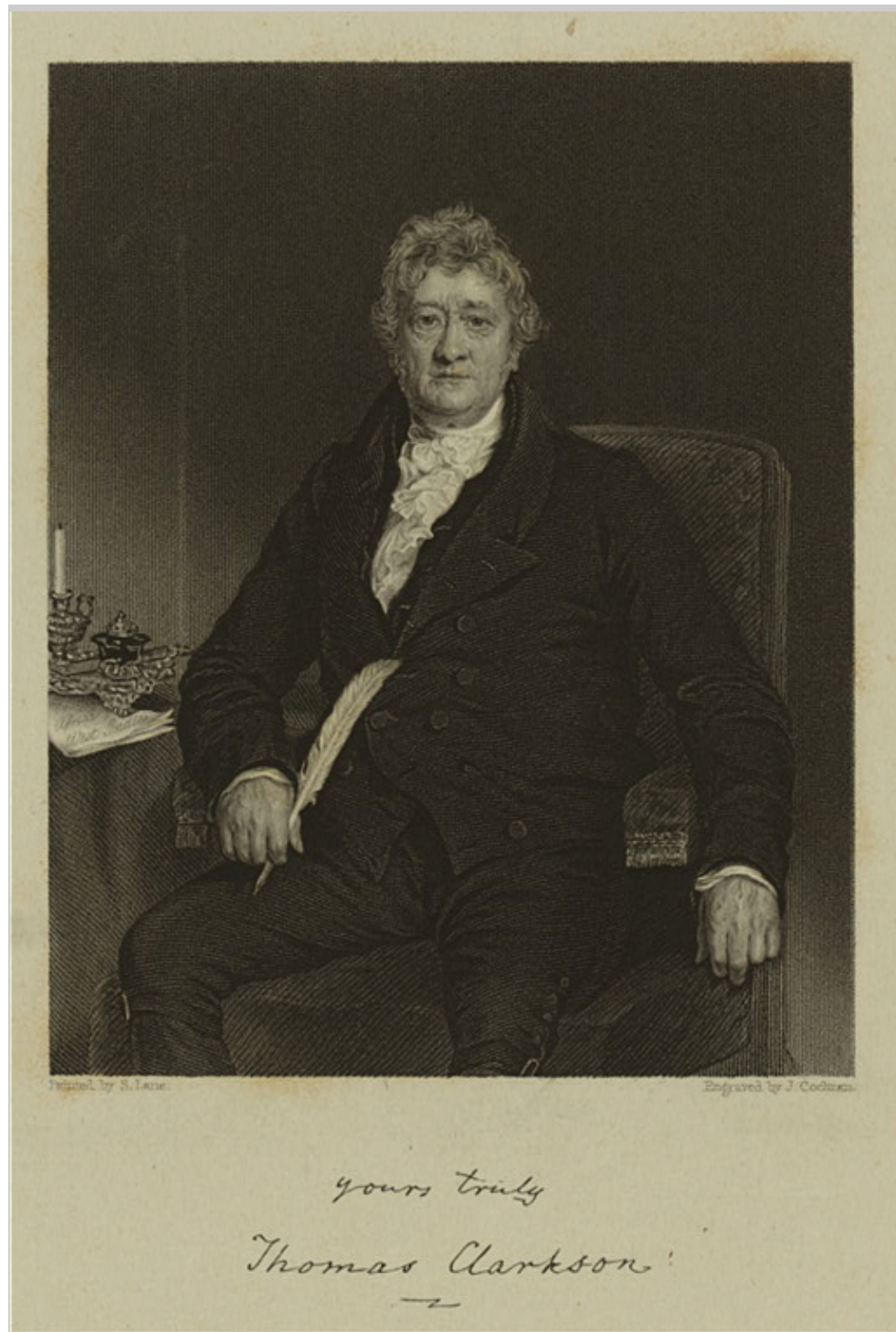
This work is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Estella Yvonne Rohrbacker, for instilling in me a love for the written word and for teaching me the value of education. Without her love and support, this work could not have been possible.

Acknowledgements

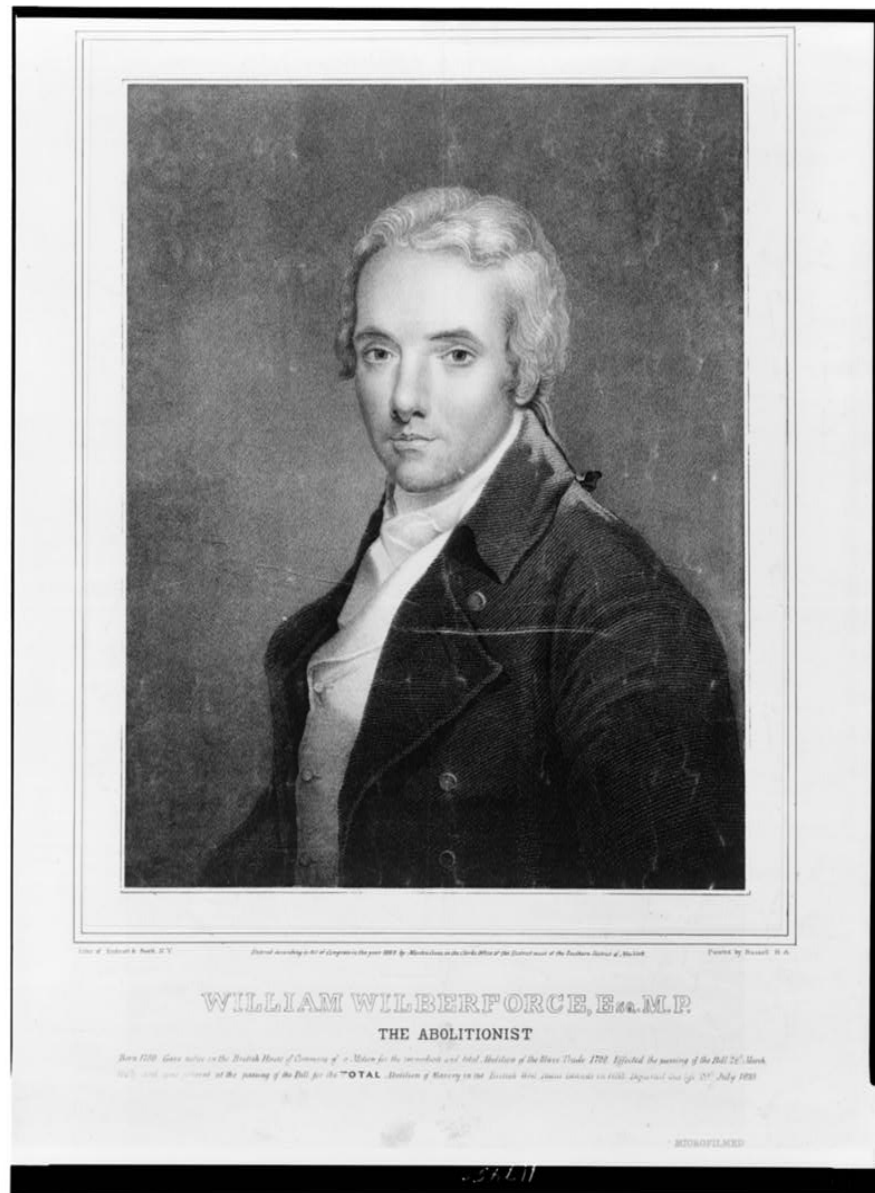
There are many people who helped make this work possible, both personally and professionally. I want to thank my family and friends, who endured my long absences into the world of academia and tolerated my preoccupation with all things related to the Haitian Revolution, the British abolitionist movement, and the life and reign of Henri Christophe. A very special thank you goes to my husband Ronald Conerly, with his very special form of interest and support in this work in its many stages of metamorphosis. You have been my constant companion, my editor, my cheerleader, and my motivator in life and in the process of writing this work. Thank you for loving me during one of my infamous meltdowns, for making dinner when I was too brain-fried to remember how to boil water, and for not turning the TV up during my rambling on post-revolutionary Haiti. Thank you to Kathryn McKee, head of Special Collections at St. John's College Library at Cambridge, UK, for making Thomas Clarkson's Haitian Papers available to me. To the readers of my committee, Dr. Gerald Bodet and Dr. Mary Mitchell: thank you for your support and patience in this project and for tolerating my many drafts. Your invaluable comments on my many drafts helped formulate this work into what it is, and they have contributed a great deal to my own transformation from a student to a scholar. To my chair, Dr. Andrea Mosterman, your support in this project for the past year and a half has been invaluable, and I can hardly find words to show my appreciation. Thank you for always supporting my fascination with Henri Christophe and for making yourself available both personally and professionally in my graduate career. And, last but not least, to my babies, my godsons Kevin and DJ. Hopefully, one day when you are old enough to read this, I hope that you will be proud of your Nanny.

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Thomas Clarkson. Print Collection portrait file. Humanities and Social Sciences Library / Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs ID# 1217516.



"William Wilberforce, Esq. M.P.--The abolitionist." Endicott & Swett, lithographers, painted by Russell R.A. c1884. Lithograph. Library of Congress. Popular Graphic Arts Collection.



Henry Christophe, oil painting by Richard Evans, 1816. *Musee du Pantheon National, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.*

Abstract

In modern historiography, Henri Christophe, king of northern Haiti from 1816-1820, is generally given a negative persona due to his controlling nature and his absolutist regime, but in his correspondence, he engages in diplomatic collaborations with two British abolitionists, William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, in order to improve his new policies and obtain international recognition. This paper argues that the Haitian king and the abolitionists engaged in a mutual collaboration in which each party benefitted from the correspondence. Christophe used the advice of the British abolitionists in order to increase the power of Haiti into a powerful black state, and Wilberforce and Clarkson helped the king position Haiti as a self-sufficient nation to fuel their abolitionist argument of the potential of post-emancipation societies.

Henri Christophe, Haiti, William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, British abolitionist movement, correspondence

Introduction

On November 20, 1819, King Henri Christophe sent for one of his closest advisors. He attempted to shield the anticipation and excitement in his demeanor. As king of Haiti, he demanded the utmost decorum in his dealings with others and showing this kind of anticipation would not do. The Duke de Limonade arrived with paper and a pen. They looked at each other, with a nod of respect and acknowledgement, and Haiti's Minister of Foreign Affairs sat down at the table in the room, ready to write.¹ Christophe walked about the room, his hands behind his back, and dictated his letters, sending British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson the funds necessary to act as his international envoy and travel to Paris to negotiate a peace between France and Haiti.² When the letters were finished, he concluded the correspondence with its final touch: the only word that he, a former slave who had become king, had ever learned how to write: his name.³

By the nineteenth century, the connections between Europe and the New World were more frequent than in previous centuries. The links that connected Europe, Africa, and the New World has been a subject that has long fascinated Atlantic historians. According to Jack P.

¹ Letter from the Duke of Limonade to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, eds, *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 171; Clive Cheesman and Marie-Lucie Vendryes, *The Armorial of Haiti: Symbols of the Nobility in the Reign of Henri Christophe* (London: The College of Arms, 2007), 72.

² Letters from Henri Christophe and the Duke de Limonade to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, Griggs and Prator, eds, *A Correspondence*, 164-177; William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Publishing, 2007), 449; Hubert Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti* (New York: Viking Press, 1967), 254; Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 150; Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of Haiti* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 71; David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Color, and National Independence in Haiti* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 49.

³ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 103, 215; Robert and Nancy Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 147; Job Clement, "History of Education in Haiti: 1804-1915 (First Part)", *Revista de Historia de America*, 87 (Jan.-June 1979), 144, accessed February 6, 2012, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20139316>.

Greene and Philip D. Morgan, two leading scholars of the subject, a major factor that led to what is labeled today as Atlantic history is that “pan-Atlantic webs of association linked people, objects, and beliefs across and within the region. Though always fragmented, the early modern Atlantic world came to be increasingly united through a destiny and variety of connections.”⁴ One of the effects of Europe’s presence in the New World was that it connected people that lived vast distances from each other, and these people exchanged different ideas and beliefs. An increase in literacy and the ability to travel long distances facilitated contact between the two worlds especially through correspondence, and letter writing became the primary form of contact in which people from different sides of the world shared ideas and formed alliances, creating lasting effects on both Europe and the Caribbean.⁵

The letters exchanged between Henri Christophe, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce is a fascinating example of connections in the nineteenth century Atlantic world. The British abolitionists were organizing an attack on the institution of slavery after succeeding in eliminating the slave trade, and the king was implementing new policies to increase Haiti’s economic and diplomatic power to serve as a symbol of black potential. Many historians have either ignored or vilified the king because of his reputation as a stubborn, harsh dictator whose absolutist regime isolated Haiti from the rest of the world, but the king’s letters chronicled Wilberforce’s and Clarkson’s attempts to help him rebuild his country.⁶ Studies on the

⁴ Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, “Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History,” *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

⁵ Laurent Dubois, “The French Atlantic,” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, 150.

⁶ Negative views of Christophe are abundantly addressed in the historiography. In his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot stated that an early biographer “compares Christophe with Nero and Caligula.” He was criticized for his harsh agricultural policies, which were compared to a reinstitution of slavery, and he had a reputation for being a hypocrite that never followed his own laws. In a letter to

relationship between the king and the abolitionists have implied that the king relied on them in order to increase Haiti's economic and diplomatic power, but further analysis of the correspondence indicate a more collaborative approach in which each party contributed to the improvement of Haiti for political ambition.⁷ In the correspondence exchanged from 1816 to 1820, Christophe used the abolitionists' advice on reforms in education, agriculture, and diplomacy to increase his own power by making Haiti a strong, self-sufficient state, and Wilberforce and Clarkson helped the king establish a successful, enlightened state to fuel abolitionist influence in Europe and the New World.

Thomas Clarkson after the king's death, William Wilson, a British teacher in Haiti, wrote of the king: "If he made good laws, he was the first to violate them...He knew how to govern others, but he rarely made an effort to control himself." Focused on maintaining his own power, he refused to acknowledge any correspondence that was not addressing him as a monarch. To escape his harsh regime, his citizens fled into Pétion's Republic of the South and the West. His cruel reputation dates back to his role as a general in the Haitian Revolution, where he was known to order the murders of those who defied him. He disposed of another revolutionary leader, Sans Souci, who refused to join forces with him in resisting the French. Later, during his reign, Christophe erected an opulent and decadent palace, and named it Sans Souci to, according to Henock Trouillot, immortalize Sans Souci's defeat. he also ordered the murder of a French spy who was involved in a plot to restore slavery in Haiti, although it would be reasonable to assume that any ruler would do this, and he commanded the arrest and torture of a political prisoner who possessed papers that stated false news of the king's death. Christophe initially denied his role in the torture of the political prisoner, even though there was written evidence of it. The king had very extravagant tastes: he threw lavish parties, established a nobility and court centered on his wealth and power, and built numerous palaces for himself and the royal family.

For discussions of Christophe's regime, see Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial of Haiti*, 1-3; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 118, 120, 128-130; 191-192, 207-208, 219; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 234, 294; Dubois, *The Aftershocks of History*, 62-64, 79; Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 184; Philippe Girard, *Haiti: The Tumultuous History: From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 67; Philippe Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801-1804* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 341; Heinl, *Written in Blood*, 146, 149; C.L.R James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, Vintage Books, 1963), 147; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 48; 57-60; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press), 1995, 36, 43-44, 59, 61, 65; John W. Vandercook, *Black Majesty* (New York: London, Harper & Bros., 1928), 122-123, 132, 135; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 145; Michelle Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and The Struggle for Hispaniola* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 13. For the letter in which Christophe denies torturing the political prisoner, see King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 105-106, 110. For Baron Dupuy's report, which includes the letter in which the king orders the torture, see Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 273-275. For William Wilson's negative perceptions of the king as a hypocrite, see William Wilson to Thomas Clarkson, December 5, 1820, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 215.

⁷ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 143; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 71.

The future of post-revolutionary Haiti was in jeopardy during Christophe's reign, and this period was crucial to the country's development as an independent nation. The Haitian Revolution had wreaked havoc on the country's terrain and its people, yet the country became the first symbol of anti-colonialism and resistance to slavery.⁸ Scholars such as Laurent Dubois, Philippe Girard, and Carolyn Fick have described the significance of the Haitian Revolution as the definitive moment in which Haiti overturned the system of slavery and became a cultural symbol of black freedom.⁹ In his study of race and nationalism in Haiti, historian David Nicholls discusses the "serious implications" that Haiti had on the Atlantic world and that "just as colonial Saint Domingue had been based on a system of white superiority, so Haiti became a symbol of black power."¹⁰ Seymour Drescher also claimed in his book on worldwide abolition movements that "the creation of a state peopled by citizens of African descent affirmed the possibility of freedom from both slavery and racial inferiority."¹¹ The king recognized the power of what Haiti could have as the first example of black self-rule in the New World, and he used his policies to establish a strong, self-sufficient state of former slaves that was equal with European nations.¹²

⁸ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 148; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 39; Dubois, "The French Atlantic," 144-145; Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 160.

⁹ There are many works that discuss Christophe's career as a general in the Haitian Revolution, and the works listed here have contributed to this study. See Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial of Haiti*, 2-3; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 43-44, 82-88, 100-104, 140, 148; Dubois, *Avengers*, 179, 206, 262-266, 274-276, 281, 287; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 39-42, 55; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 213, 216, 231, 233; Girard, *Slaves That Defeated Napoleon*, 77-78, 88-91, 134-135; 146-147, 275; Philippe Girard, *Haiti: The Tumultuous History – From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation*, (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 51-53.; Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," 543-544; Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 24; James, *Black Jacobins*, 292, 295-297, 325-326, 351-352, 355-357; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 33, 40; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 38-39, Vandercook, *Black Majesty*, 1928, 38-40, 46-50, 59-65, 79-83, 87-89; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 145.

¹⁰ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 35-36.

¹¹ Drescher, *Abolition*, 168.

¹² Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 54. Christophe also utilized educated members of his government to illuminate his ambitions in Haiti. One of the king's advisors, the Baron de Vastey, wrote *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Haiti*, that described the king's reign in a positive light in response to criticism of Haiti's government in French publications. The king's doctor, Duncan Stewart, wrote a letter to Thomas Clarkson

In addition to the future of his country, his own reputation was at risk: if he failed to elevate Haiti to be able to be self-sufficient, it would prove that former slaves could not rule themselves.

The future of Haiti also affected the British abolitionist movement. Haiti's success or failure as a free state would influence the attack on the institution of slavery. The popularity of the movement was dictated by the political environment in Europe at the time, and Haiti stood in the center of the Atlantic conflict between England and France.¹³ England had lost most of its

that describes a king "who from the energy and acuteness of his mind and from an intimate knowledge [of] the character of the people he governs, [was] so well calculated to rule a kingdom as the present King of Haiti." Prince Saunders, an American free person of color who frequently visited Haiti, described the king in his *Haytian Papers* as a ruler "whose sincere desire, and firmly settled purpose, most obviously appears to be the elevation of the characters, and the improvement of the hearts and lives, of all the various classes of society." These examples of propaganda were published to improve the king's image abroad and to illuminate Haiti as a beacon of black power, so it is difficult to determine how accurate these interpretations really were. After Dessalines's assassination, Christophe and Alexandre Pétion engaged in a civil war for control of the country, and both Pétion and his successor Jean-Pierre Boyer published negative views of him to promote their own political power. For the positive press that Christophe generated surrounding his reign, see Duncan Stewart to Thomas Clarkson, December 4, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 183; Baron de Vastey to Thomas Clarkson, March 24, 1819, *Ibid.*, 136. Pompée-Valentin Vastey, baron de. *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Hayti, being a Sequel to the Political Remarks Upon Certain French Publications and Journals Concerning Hayti*, (Exeter, England: Western Luminary Office, 1823); Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, February 20, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 124-125; Prince Saunders, *Haytian Papers: A Collection of the Very Interesting Proclamations, and Other Official Documents, Together With Some Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Kingdom of Haiti*, (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1969), Reprint of the 1816 edition, vi. For negative views of the king generated by his enemies, see W.W. Harvey, *Sketches of Hayti: From the Expulsion of the French to the Death of Christophe* (Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970), reprint of the 1827 edition, 118-119; Girard, *Haiti*, 67. For the civil war between Christophe and Pétion, see Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 145; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial of Haiti*, 3; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 156-189; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), 31-32; Dubois, *Avengers*, 303; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 50-51, 57-62; Vandercook, *Black Majesty*, 94-107, 117; Girard, *Haiti*, 64-66; Robert and Nancy Heinl, *Written in Blood*, 145, 150-151; Girard, *Napoleon*, 338; Patricia Mohammed, "Taking Possession: Symbols of Empire and Nationhood." *small axe* 11 (2002): 39; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 33-34, 40-41

¹³ For a study on the political tensions between England and France, see Robert and Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008). England's relationship with Haiti depended on how it would benefit its own foreign policy and their position in the Atlantic. England supported Haitian independence in order to limit French power in the Atlantic as well as boost their own influence. England occupied Saint Domingue from 1793-1798 in order to take control of the colony from France as well as keep the economy functioning. During the War of Haitian Independence, France was also at war with England, so the British allied with the revolutionaries to increase their own power in the Caribbean. The British navy surrounded Saint Domingue in 1803, preventing French reinforcements and trapping the French on the island. Despite this initial support of Haiti, when the war with France ended, the British withdrew their support of Haiti. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, France and England came to a peace about Haiti: England could trade with Haiti as

influence in the Atlantic world after the loss of the United States, and French Saint Domingue also challenged England's position in the Caribbean.¹⁴ The British feared the spread of revolution to their Caribbean islands, and most of the slaves that escaped from British Caribbean colonies fled to Haiti so they would not be re-enslaved.¹⁵ Although the abolitionists were originally hesitant to promote Haiti due to the bloodshed of the Haitian Revolution, they also acknowledged the power of Haiti as a symbol as a post-emancipation society that could benefit their cause.¹⁶ While proslavery supporters used the violence of the Haitian Revolution as evidence to keep slavery in practice, Clarkson and Wilberforce saw Haiti's potential success as proof of a successful state without slavery.¹⁷ The abolitionists were willing to help Christophe in his development of Haiti because Haiti's success was crucial to their cause.¹⁸ If Haiti failed, then the argument that slavery is not necessary for people of African descent would fail.

There are many outdated works that address the king's life and reign, but they are useful for conducting an analysis of the king's life and his international ambitions.¹⁹ C.L.R. James's

long as they did not interfere with a French invasion of its former colony. See Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," 539-544, Christopher Leslie Brown, "Slavery and Antislavery, 1760-1820," 607.), Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 22-24. For a detailed account of the British occupation of Saint Domingue during the Haitian Revolution, see also David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793-1798* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Burnhard, "The British Atlantic," pg. 120-121, 125; David Hancock, "Atlantic Trade and Commodities, 1402-1815," Nicholas P. Canny and Philip D. Morgan, *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, c. 1450-c. 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 330; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 52-53.

¹⁵ Drescher, *Abolition*, 238; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 62; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 22-23, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 83

¹⁶ Drescher, *Abolition*, 254; Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, "Introduction: The Making and Unmaking of the Atlantic World," *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, 15; Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, 545; Brown, "Slavery and Antislavery," *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, 614.

¹⁷ Drescher, *Abolition*, 168, 172; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 61, Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," 545; Brown, "Slavery and Antislavery," 615.

¹⁸ Drescher, *Abolition*, 248.

¹⁹ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 55. Christophe's reign and his role in history also have a prominent role in contemporary literature. Some examples of literary works that include descriptions of Christophe, his reign, and his role in the Haitian Revolution are Derek Walcott, *The Haitian Trilogy: Henri Christophe, Drums and Colours*, and *The Haitian*

classic work *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolt*, originally published in 1938 and reprinted in 1963, focused on Toussaint's rise to power and described the king's role as the Governor-General's valued second-in-command.²⁰ Authors Robert and Nancy Heinl's *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971*, published in 1978, considered his educational and agricultural policies failures.²¹ There are only two biographies of the Haitian king available in the English language. Both John Vandercook's *Black Majesty: The Life of Henri Christophe* and Hubert Cole's *Christophe, King of Haiti* focused on his administrative policies, but they oversimplified his violent nature.²² David Nicholls's *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Color, and National Independence in Haiti* evaluated the influence that race had on independence in Haiti that can be applied to the king's notions of black power. Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator included a general history that focused on the relationship between the two men in their anthology of the correspondence exchanged between Christophe and Clarkson.²³

Earth, (New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), Covelle Newcomb, *Black Fire: A Story of Henri Christophe*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1940), Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*, (New York : Noonday Press, 1957), Madison Smartt Bell, *All Soul's Rising*, (New York : Pantheon Books, 1995), Bell, *Master of the Crossroads*, (New York : Pantheon Books, 2000), Bell, *The Stone That the Builder Refused*, (New York : Pantheon Books, 2004), Peter Bourne, *Drums of Destiny*, (New York : G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), and Aime Cesaire, *The Tragedy of Henri Christophe: A Play*, (New York : Grove Press, 1969). Walcott and Bell depict Henri Christophe and the Haitian Revolution, Newcomb is a fictional novel of the king's life, and Carpentier contributes to the negative perception of Christophe as he is portrayed in the novel as a tyrant.

²⁰ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolt*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938).

²¹ Robert and Nancy Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978).

²² John W. Vandercook, *Black Majesty*, (New York, London, Harper & Bros., 1928), Hubert Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, (New York: Viking Press, 1967). Vandercook's biography is not technically a work of scholarship, but the author provides primary sources from the period as his source material. Cole's book is the last official biography of Christophe.

²³ Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, eds. *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

Studies of the king are becoming more frequent in recent historiography. Laurent Dubois's *Avengers of the New World* and Philippe Girard's *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801-1804* focused on Christophe's contributions as a general, not his reign.²⁴ Clive Cheesman's and Marie-Lucie Vendryes's *The Armorial of Haiti: Symbols of Nobility in the Reign of Henri Christophe* included a brief introduction to the king's reign in their study of the symbolism in the coat-of-arms of Christophe's nobility.²⁵ In Patricia Mohammed's "Taking Possession: Symbols of Empire and Nationhood," the author described how the king used his wealth, Sans Souci, the Citadel, and the establishment of nobility as symbols of his power over Haiti.²⁶ In his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, which described the process of selective historical memory, Michel-Rolph Trouillot dedicated a chapter to the mystery behind Christophe as well as his hostility toward Sans Souci and he argued that the king created his own power through violence.²⁷ Dubois also addressed the complications in studying his character in *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*: the author addressed the relationship between Christophe and the abolitionists, but he only acknowledged that Wilberforce and Clarkson helped the king prove that Haiti could be successful in economic terms.²⁸ This study is an extension of this theory, in which both parties attempt to secure their ambitions by contributing to Haiti's success.

²⁴ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), and Philippe Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801-1804*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011). The omission of Christophe's reign in these works is not surprising, given that the subject matter is on the Haitian Revolution. The only mention of Christophe's reign comes in the conclusion of *Avengers of the New World*, when the author describes in the context of the effects of the revolution that the former general becomes king and engages in correspondence with William Wilberforce. It is interesting to note that Dubois mentions Christophe's correspondence with William Wilberforce and not Thomas Clarkson, considering that most of the king's correspondence that survived is addressed to Clarkson.

²⁵ Clive Cheesman and Marie-Lucie Vendryes, *The Armorial of Haiti* (London: The College of Arms, 2007).

²⁶ Patricia Mohammed, "Taking Possession: Symbols of Empire and Nationhood." *small axe* 11 (2002): 39-41.

²⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Many studies of Wilberforce's and Clarkson's roles in British abolitionism focused on the moral and religious components instead of the political dynamics of the movement.²⁹ David Brion Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* was a fundamental study on the ever-changing social and political aspects of the abolitionist movement, even though this study disagrees with the author's assertion that Haiti did not affect the abolitionist movement.³⁰ Seymour Drescher's impressive work *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* analyzed the influence that Haiti had on the Atlantic world and the British abolitionist movement.³¹ Adam Hochschild's narrative history *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* addressed the movement as the first grassroots organization based on a moral objection to the slave trade, and it provided biographical discussions of Wilberforce and Clarkson.³² Two important studies are biographies of the abolitionists themselves. William Hague described Wilberforce's religious motivations against slavery in his biography *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner*.³³ Ellen Gibson Wilson's *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* was written over two decades ago, but it provided an excellent discussion of the abolitionist's dedication to the cause that spanned his entire life.³⁴

²⁸ Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

²⁹ There are many works that address the British abolitionist movement, and there are too many to include in this analysis. Therefore, the works addressed here are ones that have been valuable to this study.

³⁰ For the author's discussion of Haiti and the abolitionist movement, see Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 81-83. He claimed two reasons for his assertion: the British fear of control of the Caribbean and Haiti was isolated from Europe with no indications of recognition.

³¹ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³² Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

³³ William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2007).

³⁴ Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

Christophe's correspondence to the abolitionists revealed information about a rarely examined time period important to Haiti's transition from independence to nation. While they have been cited in a variety of works that detail the Haitian Revolution and post-revolutionary Haiti, there is no single collection of this correspondence. Two separate volumes were useful for this study: Earl Leslie Griggs's and Clifford T. Prator's anthology and the first volume of Robert and Samuel Wilberforce's anthology of their father's letters, *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*. From the correspondence that does survive, the letters are vital primary sources that can redefine the king's and the abolitionists' motives regarding their alliances.

Chapter 1: Educational Policies

When Henri Christophe became king of Haiti, he inherited a population of former slaves who were denied education as a condition of their oppression. In the first reform of its kind, the king created the first public school system in the country.³⁵ He prioritized this massive education reform to create a more powerful state of educated citizens, proving that education would create racial equality. Through his reforms, the king proposed that his people could use their education to elevate Haiti to an enlightened nation among nations and it would be the final stage in earning their independence.³⁶

The king's knowledge of the discrimination against people of African descent fueled his desire to educate his people. In 1816, he informed Clarkson of his ambitions regarding his educational policies, stating:

For a long while, my intention, my dearest ambition, has been to secure for the nation which has confided to me its destiny the benefit of public instruction...I am completely devoted to this project....So if God blesses my handiwork, and grants me sufficient time, I hope that the inhabitants of Haiti, overcoming the shameful prejudice which has too long weighed upon them, will soon astonish the world by their knowledge.³⁷

Henri Christophe's doctor and advisor Duncan Stewart also described this racism to the abolitionist: "I know that many of those who wish to befriend this country have formed from inaccurate and contradictory information very erroneous notions of the state of Haiti and that they suppose these people much lower in the scale of civilization and intelligence than they

³⁵ Girard, *Haiti*, 67

³⁶ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 52.

³⁷ Letter from Henri Christophe to Thomas Clarkson, February 5, 1816, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 91.

actually [are].”³⁸ Creating an educated society of former slaves was not enough for the Haitian king: he wanted to prove that education could create racial equality. The king used his reform to reject these racist opinions that people of African descent were too ignorant to be educated and provide the world with an example of a progressive black nation that rivaled white society.³⁹ In a letter dated April 26, 1818, Christophe acknowledges his desire to make Haitians equal with whites in education: “We realize what efforts we in turn must make in order to fulfill your hope of being some day able to raise Africa to the level of European civilization.”⁴⁰ This pressure for nationwide education suggested that he associated education and power and that an educated populous would be the first step in increasing Haiti’s influence in the world.

In his correspondence, Christophe collaborated with the abolitionists on his educational policies in order to make his educational reforms successful, but he mostly relied on Wilberforce’s assistance in this endeavor.⁴¹ The abolitionist was dedicated to public education in England, and he proved to be a valued advisor on this subject, contributing ideas for Haiti’s educational and moral improvement. He contributed ideas of education and morality because Haiti could benefit the antislavery argument if it was the perfect example of an enlightened, moral society to which all other societies should desire to achieve.⁴² Through their correspondence, the king and the abolitionist collaborated on two subjects relating to the Haitian king’s educational policies: the hiring of schoolteachers and positive reinforcement of students.

As the first step in implementing his educational reform, Christophe and Wilberforce

³⁸ Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 183.

³⁹ Heintz, *Written in Blood*, 149; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 119, 229-231, 239-244.

⁴⁰ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 106; also cited in Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 43.

⁴¹ Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 447; Heintz, *Written in Blood*, 150; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial of Haiti*, 4-5; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 145-146; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 72-73.

⁴² Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 253; Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 2007, 448-449.

discussed the possibilities of bringing British teachers to Haiti.⁴³ The abolitionist regretted that it was difficult to find qualified teachers who would relocate to Haiti because “the disinclination of men of good character to go abroad is very great, unless they can find no way of maintaining themselves at home.”⁴⁴ He urged Christophe to hire missionaries as teachers, indicating that they would travel anywhere “there was any want of religious instruction and moral improvement.”⁴⁵ The abolitionist also suggested that bringing female teachers to Haiti could only improve the moral advancement of his people:

the attainment of which would most materially advance the prosperity and happiness of your people, is the advancement of morality, and the improvement and elevation of the female character. To this end education is indispensably necessary; and I shall continue to look out for female teachers whom I can confidently recommend.⁴⁶

Following Wilberforce’s advice, Christophe allowed British missionaries to open schools in Haiti during his reign, and he invited two American women to open a public school for girls.⁴⁷ While this was not the first time that missionaries were in the New World, as the king had previously welcomed them in his country, but this was the first example of a ruler in the New World intentionally importing missionaries to improve educational and moral conditions of his country.⁴⁸

Christophe and Wilberforce also exchanged ideas on the positive reinforcement of

⁴³ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 52-53

⁴⁴ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, October 8, 1818, Robert and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce, vol. 1* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1840), 368-369; Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 448.

⁴⁵ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, October 8, 1818, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 369.

⁴⁶ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, November 27, 1819, *Ibid.*, 389; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146.

⁴⁷ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 240, 256. Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 72; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial of Haiti*, 5.

⁴⁸ Silvia Marzagalli, “The French Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” Canny and Morgan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, 238; For a discussion of missionaries in the Caribbean after the first European contact, Dubois, “The French Atlantic”, 142. For Christophe’s previous acknowledgement and welcome to British missionaries in Haiti, see Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, May 4, 1816, and Henri Christophe to Thomas Clarkson, November 18, 1816, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 94-96, 103.

students in Haiti. This was a subject that both men agreed on, and they shared ideas of how to implement this strategy to encourage the students' educational success. In 1816, the king described to Wilberforce his ideas to use positive reinforcement to the students of Haiti:

You see with what care I hasten to give the benefit of education to my fellow citizens...It is also my intention to deliver prizes to students who have distinguished themselves and each school or college will be a time fixed for the distribution of prizes, such as the independence, my birthday, the queen of my children, and those of other memorable days of our Revolution.⁴⁹

In his plans to use positive reinforcement for the students of Haiti, he pointed that rewarding good students would give them incentive to keep doing well and would encourage other students to do well. Wilberforce agreed with the king's plans, but he encouraged that positive reinforcement could also provide moral instruction for his people that would discard the pro-slavery faction's opinions that blacks were morally inferior to whites.⁵⁰ . The abolitionist sent a variety of books on educational and moral instructions to Haiti, and he persuaded the king to use them to

“be given as presents to those who distinguish themselves most at the public examinations; and also that a certain number of them should be put at the disposal of the several schoolmasters to stimulate or reward the industry of their pupils, or to bring forward such as they may think deserving of more than ordinary cultivation.”⁵¹

By using these books, Wilberforce believed that the students of Haiti would be rewarded not only by receiving the books as gifts, but they would also learn moral lessons from them.

The king relied on the aging abolitionist for advice on educational matters, but he later enlisted the help of Thomas Clarkson when his colleague became too ill to find British teachers

⁴⁹ Henri Christophe to William Wilberforce, November 18, 1816, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 358.

⁵⁰ Drescher, *Abolition*, 218.

⁵¹ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, October 8, 1818, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 376.

that would relocate to Haiti.⁵² In a letter to Clarkson in 1819, Christophe asked the abolitionist to hire two professors for the Royal College of Haiti because the king believed that, due to Wilberforce's illness, he was "the friend best placed to understand our needs in the field of education." The king asked Clarkson to enlist teachers willing to move to Haiti for seven years, insisting that they "will be honorably treated, and will enjoy in Haiti all the consideration which their profession merits."⁵³

Christophe corresponded with the abolitionists on educational matters to improve the king's educational policies in Haiti, but the king used these contacts to create a more powerful nation. While his letters suggested that he was grateful for the educational assistance that the abolitionists provided, stating that "I consider the sending of these masters as the greatest favor my friends have done me," their assistance also served a diplomatic cause.⁵⁴ Christophe used the abolitionists' advice as the first step in forming a political alliance with England. He engaged their support by detailing his generous treatment of the British teachers who arrived in Haiti as well as the spread of education throughout his country. The king offered to pay relocation costs for the teachers and to advance them portions of their salaries in order to help them settle in their new environment.⁵⁵ When Clarkson sent two teachers with good recommendations of being educators "of correct behaviour and moral character" who were "fully qualified for the literary situation which you design them to fill in Hayti," Christophe advanced them three times the salary he originally agreed to, paid for their housing, and made one of the teachers, William

⁵² King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, September 10, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 157.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 157-158. The abolitionist personally interviewed British teachers and hired them himself. See also Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 258.

⁵⁴ Henri Christophe to Thomas Clarkson, November 18, 1816, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 98. Christophe also showed his appreciation to Wilberforce by sending him a portrait of himself and naming a ship after him. See Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 450; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial of Haiti*, 1.

⁵⁵ King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, September 10, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 157-158.

Wilson, the official private tutor of the Prince Royal.⁵⁶ In a letter to Thomas Clarkson in 1819, the king described that he was expanding his education system to make it available to everyone.⁵⁷

Even though the king's educational policies endorsed the British abolitionists' commitment to end slavery and improve the future of former slaves, Wilberforce's status as a Member of Parliament kept him from publicly announcing his collaborations with the Haitian king. He generally refused to speak of his contact with Christophe with anyone other than abolitionists, but in 1817, Wilberforce established his first public endorsement for Haiti by encouraging one of his fellow British politicians, John Shore, the first Lord Teignmouth, to gather political support for the country.⁵⁸

The abolitionist used Christophe's achievements in education to change the British perceptions of Christophe's reign. In his letter to his colleague, he spoke highly of the king's educational success "in promoting the intellectual and moral improvement of the people over whom he presides; and I think it due to him to say, that, to my knowledge, it is not in the present instance only that he has proved himself earnestly intent on fulfilling that sacred duty of a sovereign."⁵⁹ Wilberforce also described how impressed he was with how quickly the Haitian king compensated the abolitionist in his search for teachers to travel to Haiti:

Though I have only been able, in a small part, to accomplish his
beneficent purposes, yet so forward has he been to supply me with

⁵⁶ For Clarkson's recommendations for teachers William Wilson and George Clarke, see Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, January 24, 1820, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 186. See King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, September 10, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 157-158, and King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, April 14, 1820, *Ibid.*, 192.

⁵⁷ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, March, 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁸ Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 448. Author James Vandercook describes that Wilberforce and Clarkson used the king's educational policies as "proof of what negroes could attain to." See Vandercook, *Black Majesty*, 137; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 71.

⁵⁹ William Wilberforce to Lord Teignmouth, June 18, 1817, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 364.

the means of executing his wishes, without any possible inconvenience to myself, that he would not wait for the ordinary commercial means of remittance, but purchased bills of exchange, and has remitted them to my brother-in-law Mr. Stephen and myself, for the beneficent uses above specified, lest his favorite purpose should be delayed.⁶⁰

The abolitionist was amazed that Christophe sent his own money for the purpose of improving Haitian education, and he shared this with Teignmouth in order to deter any opinions that collaborations with Haiti would cost England financially.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 364-365.

Chapter 2: Agricultural Reforms

French Saint Domingue produced thirty percent of the world's sugar export, but the Haitian Revolution proved disastrous for the country's economy.⁶¹ Many sugar plantations were burned down in revolt, so the export system collapsed. During his reign, Christophe instituted a labor policy to increase Haiti's power by creating a self-sufficient economy, and he consulted Clarkson and Wilberforce for advice on how to make these policies successful. These policies improved the Haitian economy: the export market increased, and the benefits funded the military and the building of his lavish castles and the fortress the Citadel.⁶²

His agricultural reforms were not very popular with the Haitian people, but he used his reputation and power to see them realized.⁶³ In a letter to Clarkson, the king described his motivations behind his agricultural policies, stating:

Farming has been greatly extended both by the increase in the number of proprietors and by the steps I have taken against men of no known profession, the idle and the vagabond, who had taken refuge in the cities and towns where they were leading a useless and dissolute existence. By sending them back to the land, I put them in a position to lead a securer life and one more profitable to public morality.⁶⁴

Even though his letter suggests that he enacted these labor reforms for the moral benefit of his

⁶¹ Drescher, *Abolition*, 147, 166; Girard, *Haiti*, 23; Dubois, "The French Atlantic", 139, 143-144; Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 241; Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," 533; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 52; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 53-54; J.H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography From Its Origins to 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 82, 122, 144-145.

⁶² Girard, *Haiti*, 66; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 53; Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 145-146.

⁶³ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 85; Girard, *Haiti*, 65; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 209-210; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial*, 4; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146.

⁶⁴ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 107-108.

people, the content of the letter implied that this was done against the Haitians' will.⁶⁵ He was severely criticized for this reform, and his enemies claimed that he attempted to restore slavery by forcing the people of Haiti to work for free.⁶⁶

From his correspondence, Christophe suggested that his agricultural policies were his idea, but he was actually continuing Toussaint's and Dessalines's economic policies.⁶⁷

Dessalines instituted a policy in which the former slaves would get twenty-five percent of the harvest, but Philippe Girard claims that this was simply a measure to encourage the former slaves to return to the plantations and work the .⁶⁸ All citizens who were able had to engage in a specialized skill, agricultural work, or serve in the military. This allowed Haiti to prosper and made the country productive enough to support the state and provide exports for trade.⁶⁹

Despite these negative reports surrounding his agricultural policies, Christophe claimed he executed these reforms to give the Haitian people a purpose and a contribution to help create a self-sufficient economy.⁷⁰ While these policies were not as successful as his educational reforms, Christophe's labor code did not indicate that he wanted to restore slavery due to the protections and benefits his agricultural policies provided the Haitian people. The workers objected to having to return to work on the plantations, but the laws allowed workers to collect an equal share of what landowners could collect and they were protected against any abuses of power.⁷¹ The protections initially made the reforms successful, but to stimulate agricultural production even more, he collaborated with Wilberforce and Clarkson for advice on two major

⁶⁵ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 54, 64-65; Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 122, 145.

⁶⁶ Dubois *Aftershocks*, 53.

⁶⁷ Girard, *Haiti*, 64-65; Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," 542; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 23.

⁶⁸ Girard, *Haiti*, 65-66.

⁶⁹ Cheesman and Vendryes, *The Armorial of Haiti*, 4.

⁷⁰ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 54, 64-65.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 66-68; Heintz, *Written in Blood*, 148; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 54.

subjects: increasing the amount of property owners in Haiti and the introduction of the plow.⁷²

Part of Christophe's plans in his agricultural reforms was to create a powerful state of landowners. During the revolution, the former slaves created the first black landowning class in the New World by appropriating the lands left behind by French landowners to the people, and Christophe continued this policy during his reign.⁷³ The ability to purchase their own land was extremely successful among the Haitian people, and Christophe shared his excitement of this success with Clarkson, stating that "this measure has already had the most fortunate effects on our agriculture and has fulfilled all my expectations."⁷⁴

Thomas Clarkson was very supportive of this landowning reform, and he encouraged Christophe to invite American immigration of free people of color to Haiti so that they could escape slavery and use their wealth to become Haitian landowners.⁷⁵ After describing the cruel treatment of American free people of color in the United States, the abolitionists suggested "...that the most satisfactory and permanent way of providing for the free people of colour would be to send them to Hayti, provided they were willing to go there and provided your Majesty or General Boyer would be willing to receive them and to grant them lands and citizenship."⁷⁶ Clarkson maintained that inviting the American free people of color would increase "such an addition to your population would strengthen your own Government both at home and in the eyes of foreigners" and would give the king an advantage to northern Haiti that the Republic of the South and West did not.⁷⁷ The idea of increasing Haiti's population of landowners appealed

⁷² Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 73.

⁷³ Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective," 542.

⁷⁴ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 107.

⁷⁵ Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, September 28, 1819, *Ibid.*, 162; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 246-247, 253; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146-147; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 74-75.

⁷⁶ Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, June 28, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 141.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

to Christophe, and the Haitian king welcomed American free people of color in his country, and even offered to pay their relocation costs.⁷⁸

Jean Pierre Boyer continued Christophe's idea of importing American free people of color to improve the economy and to create a middle class, but he did not give Christophe credit for it.⁷⁹ He not only sent government money to the United States for potential migrants and offered plots of land upon arrival, but he also allowed white planters to buy land in Haiti so they could send their slaves to work the land as indentured servants.⁸⁰ Immigration was a welcomed idea, but many immigrants returned home shortly after they arrived because of the conditions of Haiti.⁸¹ David Nicholls suggests that when Christophe and Boyer opened up Haiti to American free people of color, they opened up the possibility of the foreign intervention that plagued Haiti in the 20th century.⁸²

Wilberforce was also supportive of Christophe's attempts to increase the amount of landowners in Haiti, and he suggested a method in which Haitians could benefit other Haitians by allowing landowners to rent their lands to non-landowners.⁸³ The abolitionist described that this method was extremely successful in England for hundreds of years in which it "first led way to the superior greatness and power and comfort of this country, and which it gave a powerful degree of strength and influence far beyond its natural size and population."⁸⁴ Wilberforce

⁷⁸ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, September 10, 1819, *Ibid.*, 157; King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 165.

⁷⁹ For an analysis of Boyer's policies of importing American free people of color, see Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1965-1973).

⁸⁰ Girard, *Haiti*, 69-70; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 166.

⁸¹ Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 170.

⁸² Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 12.

⁸³ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, October 8, 1818, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 385-386.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 386.

hoped that the rental method would make Haiti extremely powerful as a nation of landowners and would have the same effect for Haiti as it did for England.

Wilberforce and Clarkson promoted the use of the plow to increase Haiti's agricultural production, but this suggestion did not have any long-term success in Haiti.⁸⁵ Wilberforce heard of the success of the plow in England and in the British Caribbean, and he encouraged Christophe to introduce it by sending him two plows in order to begin this reform, stating,

“I find that the plough is not in use in Hayti; and I have reason to believe, from information derived from books and men, that it would be likely to be eminently useful in the present circumstances of Hayti...I have therefore taken the liberty of sending two iron ploughs, which I am assured are of the best construction for the intended purpose...Let me beg your Majesty to do me the honour of accepting them, as a slight proof of the interest I take in the internal prosperity of your kingdom.”⁸⁶

Wilberforce was interested in the success of Haiti as a self-sufficient nation, so his gift of two plows was an incentive to help Christophe produce a strong economy in Haiti. Clarkson agreed with Wilberforce's suggestions and supported Haitian economy, but he noticed that British agriculturalists who came to Haiti could not train Haitians to use the plow because of a language barrier.⁸⁷ To rectify this problem, Christophe appealed to Clarkson to send some British farmers who could speak English and French in order to boost agricultural production.⁸⁸

The introduction of the plow is important in terms of why it was introduced and why it did not become more popular in the country. The plow had been used in Europe since the twelfth century, but the technical innovation of the iron plow had made it more productive in the

⁸⁵ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 255-256.

⁸⁶ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, October 8, 1818, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 386-387.

⁸⁷ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 73-74.

⁸⁸ Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, January 24, 1820, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 187.

nineteenth century.⁸⁹ Since most people in post-revolutionary Haiti were imported Africans, they were “heirs to a range of agricultural techniques that layered different crops on small plots, developed over generations to maximize productivity and minimize soil exhaustion.”⁹⁰ The plow was unsuccessful in Haiti because of practical and social reasons: the new technology could not be utilized on specific crops or the people of African descent preferred hand cultivation as ownership of their culture.

Many Africans and their descendants in Haiti attempted to hold on to their cultural ties by using African cultivation techniques. John Thornton asserted in his study of late eighteenth century African agriculture that they were not interested in the new technologies because they had perfected their own system of agriculture and trade that predated the use of the plow.⁹¹ In her study *Black Rice*, Judith Carney indicated that Africans in the New World resisted the use of the plow because they had developed a successful system of rice cultivation that did not need to be improved, and it served an economic and a social need.⁹² Women and families often worked together in the manual cultivation process, and new technologies would have destroyed this aspect of African culture.⁹³

At the time that the plow was introduced, Christophe was increasing the country’s export economy by making Haiti’s agricultural workers cultivate the sugar plantations that survived the

⁸⁹ Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 371.

⁹⁰ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 74.

⁹¹ Thornton, “Precolonial African Industry and the Atlantic Trade,” pg. 5, 13. In his study, Thornton states that even though the numbers that exist are not as high as the European numbers, the African populations were not that high so they did not need to produce more than the Europeans. He also chastises modern scholars for insisting upon quantitative data as the only measurement of African production and relies on primary sources in order to measure African production. He insists that just because the modern technology was not there, or was rejected, did not mean that productivity slowed or stopped.

⁹² Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 97.

⁹³ Carney, *Black Rice*, 26-27, 31, 49-55, 65, 107-141.

Haitian Revolution. Some scholars have conducted studies on Caribbean sugar economies that could explain why the introduction of the plow was not successful.⁹⁴ In his study of the sugar industry, J.H. Galloway suggested the plow was ineffective in sugar cultivation because harvesting the sugar cane was a too delicate.⁹⁵ Slaves had to manually cut the sugarcane for immediate processing in which the cane juice was boiled down and crystallized into processed sugar.⁹⁶ If the people of Haiti were cultivating rice on their own land and not working on Christophe's sugar plantations, Carney claimed in her study that hand cultivation was the only way to ensure a successful rice crop because mechanical plows would break the grains.⁹⁷

Unfortunately, the methods that the abolitionists provided could not be brought to their full fruition before the king's death in 1820. Christophe was eager to increase Haiti's population of landowners by encouraging American free people of color to immigrate to Haiti, but he died before this plan could be finalized.⁹⁸ The abolitionists sent Christophe plows and instructors to help boost agricultural production, but by the twentieth century, Haitians still used crude tools, such as sticks and shovels, in agriculture, which indicated that the introduction of the plow was unsuccessful.⁹⁹ Almost all of the methods that the abolitionists suggested did not affect Haiti's long-term agriculture, but Christophe's labor code stimulated agricultural

⁹⁴ For discussions of Caribbean sugar plantation societies, see Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); J.H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: A Historical Geography from Its Origins to 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁹⁵ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 123. Richard Dunn suggests that another reason that the plow was not a successful venture on sugar colonies is because slaves were denied the modern technology of an animal-driven plow in order to keep slaves productive year-round to prevent rebellion. See Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 198, 200.

⁹⁶ Harms, *The Diligent*, 352-354; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 189-194, Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 16, 67.

⁹⁷ Carney, *Black Rice*, 143.

⁹⁸ Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 75.

⁹⁹ Heinl, *Written in Blood*, 149.

production and it funded a full-time military as well as the opulent palace Sans Souci and the military fortress The Citadel.

Chapter 3: Domestic and Foreign Policy

Henri Christophe sent a very powerful message in 1805 when he began the construction of the Citadel, a fortress built in designed to protect Haiti from a military invasion.¹⁰⁰ Using pieces of old plantations under the Old Regime, the Citadel meant to show the world, especially France, Haiti's resistance of French colonial rule.¹⁰¹ Christophe's commitment to peaceful domestic and foreign policy was the most extensive subject addressed in his correspondence, and he sought to increase Haiti's diplomatic power by negotiating alliances that would protect Haiti from foreign invasion. Wilberforce and Clarkson relied on political stability in Haiti to publicly endorse the country, so they used their status as European diplomats to obtain acknowledgements of Haitian independence from France and other European politicians to increase Haiti's diplomatic power.¹⁰²

It was difficult for Christophe to gather international support for Haiti because European powers feared the spread of slave insurrections and the potential of a nation governed by a former slave.¹⁰³ Even though Haiti had declared itself independent for over a decade, Clarkson explained in his letters to the Haitian king that the French would never "give up the idea of having some right to the advantages of its commerce."¹⁰⁴ France was not prepared to

¹⁰⁰ Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight*, 13-14; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 53-54, Vandercook, *Black Majesty*, 158-160, Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 194-195, 247, Dubois, *Avengers*, 303; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial*, 3; Girard, *Haiti*, 70 Girard, *Napoleon*, 341; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 53; Heinl, *Written in Blood*, 156; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146.

¹⁰¹ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 36; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 53.

¹⁰² Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 12; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 22, 216; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 303; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 81.

¹⁰³ Dubois *Aftershocks*, 53, 63. Haiti was especially vilified in the French press, which contributed to the European fear of Haiti. See Drescher, *Abolition*, 177, 222.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, June 28, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 143; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 78-79.

acknowledge Haiti's independence because it would give its former colony more opportunities for foreign alliances and trade. Even though Wilberforce provided support in domestic and foreign policy, Christophe specifically relied on Clarkson's expertise in European politics in order to establish foreign alliances in Europe and to convince France to publicly recognize Haitian independence. Over the course of their correspondence, the aging abolitionist became Christophe's European advisor in the progression of Haiti through diplomacy, and the king used Clarkson's advice to strengthen Haiti's place in international politics.¹⁰⁵

In his correspondence, the king and the abolitionist addressed the reunification of Haiti in order to create a more stable domestic policy and to enhance its position in international negotiations. Despite the European fear that revolution would spread to their colonies, Christophe maintained that he was committed to peace in his country, stating:

“Since the first Declaration of our Independence, the maxim of the government which preceded mine, as well as my own, has been not to interfere with the internal affairs of our neighbors... We have always believed that we ought to confine ourselves solely to the defense of our own territory...that we should enjoy quietly within our frontiers the liberty and peace which we have bought with our blood.”¹⁰⁶ (98)

The king indicated that he believed the reunification of Haiti under one rule would unite his people, and lamented his unsuccessful attempts to make peace with Pétion:

Knowing from experience that our domestic quarrels would serve only to comfort our enemies...I repeatedly took the initiative and tried to bring General Pétion back to a proper sense of the duty which he owed to himself as well as to his country. Though my attempts to restore peace represented a sacrifice of pride, I felt that the good of my country and the happiness of my compatriots made such action necessary...Each time an absolute refusal on his part to unite with me for the defense of our endangered country, new

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146,150; Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 62, 143-146.

¹⁰⁶ Henri Christophe to Thomas Clarkson, November 18, 1816, *Ibid.*, 98.

insults, threats, and outrages in answer to the most just and honorable proposals which I could offer him.¹⁰⁷

The king felt that the reunification of Haiti would serve his country well because it would give the country more strength diplomatically and physically. In his letters to Christophe, Clarkson is also very supportive of the reunification of Haiti for domestic and foreign policy, urging him to “consider whether a union with General Boyer is practicable.”¹⁰⁸ The abolitionist pressed the king to reunite with Boyer because he could use Haiti as an example that former slaves could successfully govern themselves peacefully without slavery.

Christophe’s military was a point of contention between the king and the abolitionists. He increased the military presence in Haiti as a form of national defense, even though there was no evidence of a French invasion.¹⁰⁹ Even though he claimed that the safety of his people would be compromised, Christophe maintained that an active military would symbolize Haiti as a strong military power that would forcefully defend its independence.¹¹⁰ Clarkson and Wilberforce urged the king to dismiss his military in favor of agriculture, but he disagreed with them.

The abolitionists were anxious for Christophe to dismiss part of his large army. By 1819, both men had publicly endorsed Haiti and aiding a military state would jeopardize their cause. Both abolitionists encouraged the king to promote peace in his realm by disbanding his military

¹⁰⁷ King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, November 18, 1816, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 99-100; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 221-222; Cheesman and Vendryes, *Armorial*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, October 30, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 123.

¹⁰⁹ Girard, *Haiti*, 70. Christophe kept a full-time military on call year-round to be prepared for foreign and domestic unrest, including the Royal Dahomets, imported Dahomey soldiers who served as the king’s personal guard and to enforce his policies. See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 65-66; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 62; Cheesman, *Armorial*, 4.

¹¹⁰ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 108. In this letter, the king suggested that Toussaint was kidnapped by the French because he disbanded his military to enjoy his retirement. See also Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 107-112, 247; Cheesman, *Armorial*, 2.

because it would make other European powers less hostile to the heavily-armed country.¹¹¹

Clarkson stated in his letters that the military could increase the number of landowners, which would benefit the Haitian economy, but it would also allow the king to maintain a militia to ease Christophe's concerns against an invasion.¹¹² William Wilberforce agreed that it was unnecessary to create "a nation of soldiers" and Haiti would benefit from more farmers.¹¹³

The abolitionists' insistence worked, and in 1819 the king eventually disbanded his military and succeeded in "giving all members of the armed forces concessions of lands from the public domain."¹¹⁴ It had been nearly one year since the Clarkson had suggested this plan, which showed the king's hesitation. While letters took a long time to cross the ocean, the king and the abolitionists exchanged other letters during this time period. Christophe's hesitation was due to his concern for his people's safety and his reluctance to relinquish his country's military might, not necessarily because of lengthy amounts of time in between letters.

The king and the abolitionist also debated Haiti's relationship with the present-day Dominican Republic, and it was a situation that jeopardized the country's prospective international reputation, the abolitionist cause, and Christophe's alliance with Clarkson. During his reign, Santo Domingo still participated in the slave trade and encouraged French planters to settle there.¹¹⁵ Christophe feared that French settlers in Santo Domingo would re-enslave the Haitian people, and he asked Clarkson for advice on how to properly manage the situation.

Even though the Spanish on the island still engaged in the slave trade, the king specifically expressed his vigilance against the French settlers in a letter to Clarkson:

¹¹¹ Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, August 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 113-114

¹¹² *Ibid.*; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 215, 245, 253.

¹¹³ William Wilberforce to the King of Haiti, October 8, 1818, Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, 381.

¹¹⁴ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, July 29, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 150-151.

¹¹⁵ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, *Ibid.*, 105.

The French colonists would assuredly use every means within their power not only to perpetuate slavery in the Spanish part of the island, but also to sow the germs of dissension and revolt in Haiti, and by their intrigues to rob us of the peace which we at present enjoy.¹¹⁶

Even though he was surrounded by slave powers, he specifically fears the French colonists, which showed the mistrust and hatred that Christophe had for the French. Clarkson assured Christophe that the Spanish government's invitation to French settlers "was a mere act of colonization without any intention of vexing you," but he understood the king's reactions.¹¹⁷ In order to ease his agitation, the abolitionist suggested that Christophe send ships to Santo Domingo to patrol for illegal slave traders, even though he had no reason to fear the new French colonists because they have abolished the slave trade and would not be able to reinstate slavery on the island of Hispaniola.¹¹⁸ The abolitionist urged Christophe to obtain an anti-slavery guarantee from the Captain General of Santo Domingo, and if he refused to comply, then the king would be justified in declaring war to protect his country.¹¹⁹ Clarkson collaborated with other abolitionists Wilberforce and James Stephen, who were also Members of the British Parliament, who had more influence in determining what side England would choose to support if war broke out between Haiti and France or Spain.¹²⁰

Haiti's relationship with Santo Domingo was one that the abolitionists had to balance very carefully. Although they wanted to help Christophe increase his diplomatic power, friendly relations between England and France prevented the abolitionists from openly opposing French colonization in the New World. When he suggested that Christophe patrol for slave traders to

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, August 26, 1818, *Ibid.*, 114.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹²⁰ Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, August 26, 1818, *Ibid.*, 116-117.

prevent the spread of slavery, Clarkson indicated that this was not an immediate plan and he only suggested patrolling against slavery, not the French. The king acted against Clarkson's warning and immediately began patrolling for slave traders, much to the chagrin of the abolitionist. Clarkson was a well-respected diplomat in Europe who campaigned for the abolitionist cause, and the king jeopardized his reputation.¹²¹ He had planned to openly support Haiti at the European antislavery conference, and he urged him not to do anything that may jeopardize Haiti's standing in the eyes of the world or engage in any act that would be considered hostile to other powers.¹²² He chastised the king, suggesting "it would be wise to suspend all provisions of this sort, till we hear what the Congress have done..."¹²³ The abolitionist warns the king that this effort will give him a bad reputation in Europe as a ruler who is impulsive and defensive, and that he could reverse what Clarkson is trying to accomplish for the future of his country. Despite the tensions that arose between the men on this subject, it showed Christophe's vigilance against the French, and it indicated the level of reliance that the Haitian king had on Clarkson as a political advisor.

One of the most important goals for Henri Christophe in his correspondence was obtaining international recognition. France refused to acknowledge Haiti's independence because it would eliminate any chance to conquer it again and it would set a dangerous example of anti-colonialism to the rest of the Caribbean.¹²⁴ The king relied solely on Clarkson on this subject because of the abolitionist's extensive knowledge of French politics, and the abolitionist

¹²¹ For Clarkson's international reputation, specifically his role in organizing the French abolitionist movement, see Drescher, *Abolition*, 153.

¹²² Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, August 26, 1818, *Ibid.*, 117.

¹²³ Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, October 30, 1818, *Ibid.*, 122-123.

¹²⁴ Drescher, *Abolition*, 175; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 62.

used his reputation to support a strong, diplomatic Haiti.¹²⁵ He became the king's international representative to help Christophe gain alliances in Europe by communicating with European politicians on the possibility of a Franco-Haitian treaty.

Clarkson wrote to his friend and French politician Baron Turkheim to support Haiti's international ambitions. He spoke highly of the benefits Christophe's educational policies have had in Haiti:

...we, who live in England, having better opportunities of knowing his character than you who live in France, have good reason to esteem his talents and his virtues...He has already, in his dominions, Professors of the arts and sciences, Instructors of languages, and Teachers of the youth both in letters and religion; and these are so judiciously distributed that every Haytian, who is now born, will have the opportunity of being able to read and write; and many of being accomplished scholars...¹²⁶

Clarkson acknowledged that the French did not have a positive view of Haiti, but his correspondence with the king allowed him to provide a different view of Christophe. In his letter, the abolitionist also mentioned that the people of Haiti hated the French because of the French cruelty inflicted on Haitians during the Haitian Revolution, but Clarkson's praise of the king's success suggested that France reconsider forming an alliance with its former colony that was quickly becoming more powerful through education and trade.¹²⁷ Despite the tensions between the two countries, he facilitated peaceful negotiations between the two countries by relying on his reputation as an abolitionist and diplomat.

¹²⁵ Dubois, *The Aftershocks of History*, 85-86; Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 1968, 78-79; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 276-277; Cheesman, *Armorial*, 5; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 151.

¹²⁶ Letter from Thomas Clarkson to Baron Turkheim, March 11, 1820, Papers of Thomas Clarkson, St. John's College Library; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 254; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 150.

¹²⁷ Letter from Thomas Clarkson to Baron Turkheim, March 11, 1820, Papers of Thomas Clarkson, St. John's College Library; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 150.

Clarkson also encouraged the Emperor Alexander to publicly support the Haitian king at the European antislavery conference Aix-la-Chappelle.¹²⁸ As the only person at the conference who was allowed a private audience with the Emperor, he described his collaborations with Christophe as well as the king's educational policies to gain the Emperor's support for Haiti's future.¹²⁹ In a letter to Christophe, he describes the Emperor's reaction to Haiti's success:

He had been taught by the French and German newspapers (and he had no other source of information) that Hayti was inhabited by a people little better than savages. He now saw them in a very different light...To see, said his Imperial Majesty, a person rising up in the midst of slavery and founding a free Empire was of itself a surprising thing, but to see him, in the midst of ignorance and darkness, founding it on the pillars of education under Christian auspices was more surprising and truly delightful.¹³⁰

While Clarkson's description of his meeting with the Emperor Alexander illuminated the potential for Haiti to form international alliances, there are many issues with this account. The letter was not a first-hand account of the Emperor's reactions, and there was no indication outside of this letter of how committed the Emperor really was to supporting the new country. While Clarkson referred to this meeting as a victory for the Haiti's future as an international power, and Christophe eventually wrote a letter to the Emperor himself, there is no further indication in other letters between the abolitionist and the king how the Emperor provided any support for Haiti.¹³¹ Despite the many questions that arise from Clarkson's account, this meeting was crucial to Haiti's international position because it was the first diplomatic

¹²⁸ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 250-252.

¹²⁹ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 145, 147, 149; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 71-72.

¹³⁰ Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, October 30, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 121-122.

¹³¹ King Henry to the Emperor Alexander, March 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 132-135.

discussion of Haiti's future by a head of state and it contributed to an international change of opinion of Christophe's reign.

Even though Clarkson enlisted the support of two European politicians, the most important step to building Haiti into an international power was the French recognition of independence. The abolitionist volunteered to be Christophe's international envoy in France to negotiate a treaty between the two countries by using "my own discretion in selecting proper opportunities of making your sentiments known on this subject to persons in authority in France. I may have delicate opportunities to do this, which you cannot have in Hayti."¹³² In order for their efforts to succeed, Clarkson had to endorse Haitian independence and diplomacy because it would add legitimacy to the discussion. The king himself could not engage in discussions with French politicians because they refused to acknowledge him as a monarch.¹³³ The king placed the fate of his country in Clarkson's hands, certain that the abolitionist "will do nothing which will not redound to the profit and honor of my country."¹³⁴

Christophe indicated in his correspondence that he was certain that he could use the lucrative power of his country to dictate terms to the French regarding an alliance. He sent the abolitionist to France with a list of his own demands in the treaty.¹³⁵ The king demanded that France acknowledge Haiti's freedom and refused to give it a monopoly on Haitian trade or pay an indemnity to the planters, ensuring his own notions of his country's influence and his

¹³² Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, September 28, 1819, *Ibid.*, 161; Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, April 28, 1820, *Ibid.*, 196-199.

¹³³ Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, July 10, 1820, *Ibid.*, 202. In his account of his discussions of French recognition, the abolitionist informed the king that the French politicians refused to acknowledge his monarchy, and they continued to refer to him as "General Christophe."

¹³⁴ King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 169.

¹³⁵ Duke of Limonade to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 173-177.

insistence that France would not defeat Haiti economically or politically.¹³⁶ At this point, the king discovered through his collaborations with Clarkson that the French desired Haitian commerce, and the king used this as a bargaining tool. Even though his country needed French recognition to form diplomatic alliances with other countries, Haiti had engaged in lucrative trade relations with England since the Haitian Revolution.¹³⁷ If France wanted Haiti as a trading partner, it would have to acknowledge Haiti as a free and independent state.

The king and the abolitionist also discussed the possibility of a British-Haitian alliance to give Haiti more power and safety internationally.¹³⁸ In order to secure a British treaty, he pressured Clarkson to convince British politicians of his desire for “the independence of Haiti recognized by England prior to French recognition,” but his real goals were to secure British protection from a French invasion or to influence favorable terms in a treaty with France.¹³⁹ Christophe used his military power as an incentive for the abolitionists to pressure England into a diplomatic treaty. In 1818, he promised Clarkson that he would disband part of his military if England would agree to a political alliance with Haiti.¹⁴⁰

Despite Christophe’s pressure for a British alliance, Clarkson convinced the king that a British treaty would follow a French recognition of independence, which would contribute to

¹³⁶ King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 169; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 82-84; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 49.

¹³⁷ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 37, 51, 52; Geggus, “The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective,” 542, Drescher, *Abolition*, 225.

¹³⁸ Christophe’s desire for a British alliance is a major theme throughout his correspondence. See Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 104-109, 128-131, 149-152, 168-170.

¹³⁹ King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, November 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 169-170; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 223-224; Drescher, *Abolition*, 172, 175, 177, 230; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 52.

¹⁴⁰ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, April 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 109.

Haiti's international influence.¹⁴¹ Even though he was not a British politician, supporting a British alliance with a French enemy would jeopardize the abolitionist movement by directly opposing the British government.¹⁴² During their collaborations with Christophe, the abolitionists were beginning their attack on the whole institution of slavery, so alienating a British ally could have been detrimental to their cause. Clarkson maintained in his correspondence that England could only follow France on this issue, and with the promise of an eventual British alliance, the king finally conceded to the possibility of a French alliance. Even with the opportunity of a British protection, he shared his fears of French hostilities with the British abolitionist, saying that he hoped that the abolitionist would:

impart to me those observations which your experience with the policy of the European cabinets may suggest to you, and give me timely notice of any machinations which our enemies may devise against us. I shall always receive with pleasure any advice which had for its object the good of my country.”¹⁴³

In response to his apprehension, Clarkson promised the king that the French will not invade Haiti because they had nothing to gain from it, since there were no resources to fund an invasion in France and the slave trade was abolished.¹⁴⁴

Throughout their correspondence, Christophe grew increasingly reliant on the abolitionist's advice on matters of diplomacy between France and Haiti, and he refused to make peace with the French without his advice. In a letter dated March 20, 1819, Christophe appealed to the abolitionist for advice on how to react to French attempts of diplomacy, stating, “You will

¹⁴¹ Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, July 10, 1820, *Ibid.*, 204; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 71; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 63.

¹⁴² Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, August 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 113.

¹⁴³ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, November 18, 1816, *Ibid.*, 101; Dubois, *Avengers*, 304.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Clarkson to King Henri, August 26, 1818, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 111.

see that the French Government is looking for the means of sounding us out; but, before I undertake any negotiations, I am anxious to have your advice and to profit by your wisdom.”¹⁴⁵

In June of that year, France again attempted to negotiate with Christophe with new conditions of a treaty, and Christophe asked Clarkson’s advice again.¹⁴⁶ The abolitionist advised the king on the steps he should take to ease the situation so that France will eventually acknowledge Haiti’s freedom.¹⁴⁷ He encouraged Christophe to make a treaty with them, even if it means to allow France to have a monopoly on Haitian trade, because Haiti needed allies in commerce for its economic survival. Clarkson strongly urged the king to include his own stipulations to maintain Haiti’s autonomy in this treaty, such as no French troops on the island and no French ships in Haitian ports. The abolitionist maintained that this would be the only way for the king to maintain full control over Haiti’s destiny as an independent nation. It was crucial to Clarkson that the king kept his own power over Haiti. If France retained power over its former colony, the significance of Haiti as a symbol of independence and black power would be destroyed and would be detrimental to the abolitionist cause.

In offering Christophe his advice on Haiti’s negotiations with France, Clarkson discussed Haiti’s future as an independent country with MPs Wilberforce and Stephen. In order to give Christophe the best advice on how to maintain power over his country in a French treaty, the abolitionist needed the advice of British politicians who knew the government’s opinions of Haiti.¹⁴⁸ When Clarkson discovered that France wanted to make peace with Haiti only if the former colony paid an indemnity to the ex-colonists, the three abolitionists encouraged

¹⁴⁵ King Henri to Thomas Clarkson, March 20, 1819, *Ibid.*, 126-127.

¹⁴⁶ King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, June 8, 1819, *Ibid.*, 138-139.

¹⁴⁷ Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 251.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, June 28, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 146.

Christophe to pay the indemnity with the stipulation that France must acknowledge Haiti's independence.¹⁴⁹ Even though peace with France could potentially be detrimental for Haiti at this time because the French government was filled with ex-colonists who had negative opinions of Haiti, the indemnity could provide Haiti with the acknowledgement of independence it needed to form diplomatic alliances with other nations.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, September 7, 1819, *Ibid.*, 156. Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, April 28, 1820, *Ibid.*, 197-199. Dubois, *Avengers*, 303-304, Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 274-275, Girard, *Napoleon*, 342; Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight*, 14; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 84.

Conclusion

Christophe's correspondence with the British abolitionists contributed to building Haiti into an independent, diplomatic nation, and it also revealed the intentions of both sides of the alliance. They engaged in mutual diplomatic discussions in which both sides benefitted from Haiti's position as the first example of black power in the New World. The king utilized the abolitionists' advice on his educational, agricultural, and domestic policies to increase Haiti's power, and Wilberforce and Clarkson used the country as a symbol of potential for the antislavery movement.¹⁵⁰

The letters exchanged between the king and the abolitionists are crucial to understanding the political dynamics between England and Haiti in the post-revolutionary period, but they also complicate the images of the three men. Christophe has a reputation in historical memory as a harsh dictator, but he pursued opportunities to improve his country's welfare by increasing its power.¹⁵¹ His educational and agricultural policies not only increased Haiti's power by creating an educated, self-sufficient nation, but they also contributed to Haiti's international reputation. Despite his insistence in his correspondence that he did not want foreign interference with his country, Christophe's relationships with the British abolitionists encouraged him to form a positive diplomatic relationship with England.¹⁵² In addition with his correspondence with Wilberforce and Clarkson, the king supported a positive relationship with England by promoting

¹⁵⁰ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 12, 46-47.

¹⁵¹ An 1842 earthquake destroyed the Citadel and Sans Souci, which are all that remain from Christophe's reign, ironically built it so no one would forget him. Cheesman, *Armorial*, 5; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 151; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 45, 49. Letter from Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, July 10, 1820, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 208. Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight*, 39; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 86; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 278; Dubois, *Avengers*, 306.

¹⁵² Historians David Nicholls and Laurent Dubois maintained that Christophe was attracted to British culture. See Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 53; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 70.

trade relations and changing the national language to English.¹⁵³

The personal relationships that developed between the men are also very intriguing. Even though Wilberforce was hesitant to share with others that he assisted Christophe in his policies, the abolitionist was sentimental toward the Haitian king and sought to preserve his memory.¹⁵⁴ In a letter to his son in 1825, Wilberforce lamented, “I have often wished, in some way or other, to do a little justice to poor Christophe. I possess letters from him, which would do him great honor.”¹⁵⁵ Despite Clarkson’s abundance of personal assistance that he provided the king, his relationship with Christophe was more tentative. During their correspondence, he signed every letter “Your Majesty’s Friend,” and he mentioned that he would like to move to Haiti due to his poor health.¹⁵⁶ He also wrote in one of his final letters to Christophe that “I should think my life well spent if I could become an instrument under Providence of contributing towards the security, the Independence, and the happiness of Hayti.”¹⁵⁷ Despite these sentimental statements in letters, the abolitionist seemed more dedicated in words than in action. He never moved to Haiti, and after Christophe’s death, Boyer exiled Christophe’s wife and daughters to England, forcing Clarkson to care for them for over a year.¹⁵⁸ Even though he liked them very much, describing them as “their dispositions are so amiable, their tempers under such complete subjugation, and their minds so enlightened, that it is a pleasure to live with such people...,” he

¹⁵³ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 47, 52.

¹⁵⁴ Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 448-450; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146.

¹⁵⁵ William Wilberforce to one of his Sons, March 11, 1825, *Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, 352.

¹⁵⁶ Baron de Vastey to Thomas Clarkson, November 29, 1819, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 181.

Clarkson’s first letter to Christophe that survives was written on May 4, 1816, and the abolitionist signed it “Your Majesty’s Friend.” After the king’s death, Clarkson wrote Jean-Pierre Boyer, but he did not sign any indication of “friend” at all. See Thomas Clarkson to Henri Christophe, May 4, 1816, and Thomas Clarkson to Jean-Pierre Boyer, May 25, 1821, *Ibid.*, 96, 225.

¹⁵⁷; Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, July 10, 1820, *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 78-79; Dubois, *The Aftershocks of History*, 85-86; Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 276-277; Cheesman, *Armorial*, 5; Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 151.

expressed in his letters to Zachary MacCaulay that he felt that he was forced into caring for them.¹⁵⁹ Despite his initial hesitation, he could not ignore them: he could not turn the king's family away after campaigning for Haitian independence.

The efforts made in the collaborations of Christophe and the abolitionists to create a more powerful Haiti ended with the king's death in 1820.¹⁶⁰ When Jean-Pierre Boyer took control of Haiti after Christophe's death, he revoked the king's educational and agricultural policies, distributing all the land to the Haitian people.¹⁶¹ The sugar industry in Haiti collapsed, destroying the economy, and the plots of land were divided up further between families with each passing generation.¹⁶² The new president agreed to pay the French indemnity that Christophe was set against, further destroying the Haitian economy with lasting effects into the twenty-first century.¹⁶³

Haiti had the important role of being the first nation ruled by emancipated slaves in an era of racism and slavery.¹⁶⁴ For centuries, whites considered black skin color a requirement of being a slave in order to keep them enslaved, and portrayed them as "heathen and less than human."¹⁶⁵ Christophe increased the power of his country by proving that a successful economy and an educated population could exist in Haiti, and the abolitionists helped the king build the power of his country to support abolitionist ideology. Unfortunately, Christophe's ambitions for his country went largely unrecognized and did not affect Haiti's involvement with the world

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Clarkson to Zachary Macaulay, November 19, 1821, Griggs and Prator, *A Correspondence*, 237-238.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 34; Drescher, *Abolition*, 179.

¹⁶¹ Clement, "The History of Education in Haiti," 165; Girard, *Haiti*, 67; Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 146

¹⁶² Girard, *Haiti*, 67-68.

¹⁶³ Drescher, *Abolition*, 177-178; Girard, *Haiti*, 67, 71. In 2004, two hundred years after the Haitian Revolution, Jean-Bertrand Aristide made headlines when he demanded that France pay back the indemnity that had bankrupted his country. See Dubois, "The French Atlantic," 137.

¹⁶⁴ Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight*, 81.

¹⁶⁵ Drescher, *Abolition*, 95; Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic World: 1450-2000* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 214.

around it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The unkind legacy that his reign left on Haiti and the abolitionist movement was not his unfavorable reputation, but his desire “to accomplish in one generation what it had taken Europe centuries to achieve.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 146; Dubois, *Aftershocks*, 68-69.

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