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Pratik

Haitian Personal Economic Relationships

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This paper was first given at the American Ethnological Society meetings, then prepared for publication as Mintz (1961) "Pratik: Haitian personal economic relationships," Proceedings of the Annual Spring Meetings, American Ethnological Society: 54-63. It may be of historical interest. The phenomenon it describes was observed during 1958-59, while I was working in Haiti. I am grateful to the Guggenheim Foundation and to the Social Science Research Council for grants, which made the research for this paper possible. Several field workers there now (2010) tell me that the same custom, and others that I have described elsewhere, are alive and well in that suffering country. I have made some small changes in this text – e.g., I continue to use the present tense – but the substance of the paper is unmodified. Readers may be struck by the manifest changes in Haiti since 1958, such as the sharp rise in the percentage of urban population, and so on. January, 2011

THE MOST VISIBLE features of Haiti's internal exchange economy are its market places.[1] In 1954 there were 294 officially recognized and controlled market places in the Republic (Moral 1959: 74). These are the intersection points in the trade network by which the bulk of Haiti's marketed agricultural product and its imports reach their consumers. Retail stores are much less important than the market places, even in the large towns; in the countryside such stores are of little significance in economic life. In the capital, Port-au-Prince, and in large provincial centers such as Cap Haïtien and Les Cayes, storage depots and import houses are tied in with market place trade; but retail stores have limited importance outside the capital.

Trade is carried on by thousands of intermediaries, most of them women. In a population believed to total 3,400,000, Moral's estimates (1959: 84) suggest somewhat more than 50,000 female and 15,000 male traders. These figures are probably too low; omitted are the large numbers of children under fourteen years engaged in petty trade, and the numerous part-time unlicensed intermediaries who slip in and out of trade.

Through the market places, producers and consumers are united in exchange, but few transactions involve only producer and consumer, since intermediaries successfully interpose themselves. Such intermediaries render many different services, including bulking, transport, minor processing and

1 In what follows, Creole words are transcribed in the Laubach orthography, on which see Hall (1953). Creole words are italicized, and distinguished from French words by their orthography. The accent aigu over "e" is as in French. Over "0," the accent grave forms the equivalent of the French open "0." The "ou" is as in French, the "ch" as in English "sh, " and the "j" as in French "z." The circumflex indicates nasalization.

packing, storage, breaking bulk, money-lending, and the provision of short-term credit. They hold their places in the distributive process by offering these services at prices their customers are willing to pay; were they redundant, their customers would circumvent them.[2]

The competition for the privilege of serving as an intermediary is stern, since the Haitian economy has a large supply of labor in all sectors. Accordingly, each market woman seeks to protect her stake within the arena of exchange by various means. A paramount feature of the struggle to secure and to profit from the right to render service is the institutionalized personal economic relationship referred to in Haiti as *pratik.*[3] It is toward an examination of this relationship that the present paper is directed.

Moral writes:

> L 'attrait de l 'argent est si fort dans les compagnes et la circulation monétaire si reduite que le "capitaliste" influent du bourg rural mène la spéculation pratiquement a sa guise grâce à une "clientèle" étendue dont la fidélité est maintenue soit par le jeu compliqué des avances, des engagements et des dettes, soit par le respect qu'impose la réussite, soit encore par la tradition de la "pratique."

And he continues:

> C'est le mot-clé du petit commerce rural. Il désigne a la fois le vendeur et l'acheteur. Il traduit surtout la confiance réciproque et la force de l'engagement oral dans une société où le document écrit est une rareté (1959, p. 70).

That *pratik* means both buyer and seller emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the relationships. Metraux (1951, p. 121) points out that in Haiti "The women who buy and sell are on friendly terms, calling each other *bel me* (stepmother), *ma kome* (gossip) [i.e. "godsib" or ritual coparent] and *matelot* (concubine of the same man)." In the *pratik* relationship, the participants are equals for purposes of trade.

A comparable terminology occurs in Jamaica, according to Katzin:

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2 Bauer (1954) has made the point eloquently for West Africa. Whether the intermediary's rate of profit is "unreasonable" does not appear to be a moral question but an economic one.

3 From Fr. "pratique." A typical definition of *pratik* is the following. "It means that you are selling. I come to buy from you each day. I need credit; you sell to me (on credit); the money is 'content' that you sell to me. I always buy from your hand; I pay you well. That’s what *pratik* is."

> The term "customer" is used by Jamaicans as a generic term applied to anyone with whom one has regular business dealings. Higglers call both those who sell to them and those who buy from them "my customers." One town higgler said: "The house buyers who buy from us are our customers, but country people call us customer and we call them customer. We are really the customer because we do the buying, but I don't know what we would call them, so we still call them 'customer' (1959, p. 19)."

In Haiti, one has *pratik* (*ge pratik)* and makes *pratik (fe pratik).* The degree of intimacy and mutual benefit varies, but since the relationships are intended to stabilize and maintain one's role in distributive activity, they are always built up over time and have economic value for the participants. As such, *pratik* ties add to the regularity and patterning of internal marketing activity.

In an economy typified by smallholder farming, limited technology, inadequate processing and preservation methods, inferior transport and communications facilities, feeble and dispersed demand, and numerous small-scale producers and intermediaries, each with limited means, distribution is likely to have a markedly irregular character. This unevenness is magnified when seasonal variation in the supply of various goods and in income, is often sharp. All of these conditions are characteristic of the Haitian economy. There is, further, some movement of individuals in and out of the distributive system with changes in season, status, and fortune. Under such circumstances, *pratik* relationships stabilize sequences of dyadic economic transactions. Taken together, these arrangements afford greater order to the distributive system as a whole.

The personal element in economic activity is of course not limited to economies of the Haitian sort. But certain features of such economies affect the ways that the relationships are worked out. Haiti is famous for its relatively plentiful supply of labor, its relatively scarce supply of capital, its agrarian nonindustrial character, and its relatively low productivity. On all of these counts it is the poorest economy in the Caribbean area, with the lowest per capita income, and probably the lowest standard of living for the whole of Latin America.

Haiti is rural as well as agrarian. Moral demonstrates that the calculation that 12.6 per cent of the Haitian population is urban is arbitrary in the extreme; at most only approximately 8 per cent of the people live under even remotely "urban" conditions (1959,pp. 29-30). Country towns are above all political administrative centers. To some extent they also serve as regional entrepots for agricultural produce moving out of the surrounding region, and for finished goods moving into it (Mintz, 1960). Contact between the regional administrative centers and their countrysides, and between the various regions and the capital, rests to a considerable degree upon the distributive mechanisms of the internal market system. The sorts of information carried by market women and truckers in the course of their work include marketing intelligence, affecting the rate at which produce flows toward demand areas and probably helping to stabilize prices to some extent. The communication of a remote unsatisfied demand may even affect tendencies in production. In this sense intermediaries help to bring distant areas into firmer contact with the cities and with other regions by their activities. The distances covered in search of profit are staggering; to walk thirty miles in a day to acquire or dispose of stock is not unusual, and some women walk nearly twice that to attend particular market places. Such trips open regions and may increase the likelihood that roads, trucks, and development activity will follow.

The nature of rural production in Haiti is such that relatively little agricultural land is held in large properties. Instead there are long-standing patterns of divided and subdivided small plots, worked by their owners, sharecropped, mortgaged, leased, rented, and held by customary tenure or by squatting. Agricultural production rests on a heterogeneous tenure situation, and is pursued on holdings that are prevailingly small. Farming itself is marked by crop diversification, even on tiny plots, by intercropping, and by successive harvests, up to four in a single year for some crops.

The rationale for maintaining highly diversified farms need not be considered here, but its relation to the distributive pattern is of interest. Rapid and efficient bulking of agricultural products for resale in cities or in other regions occurs readily only where production is quite specialized, or where many individual cultivators in a single sub-region have very similar farm situations. Grapefruit from the north plain, onions from St. Raphael, millet from Fond des-Negres, and rice from the Artibonite illustrate this sort of bulking to some extent. But even in these instances, the intermediaries may buy in relatively small quantities, limited by their available capital and media of transport, and their calculations of demand. Normally, the acquisition of stock by intermediaries for resale is a long, time-consuming procedure, involving personal dealings with a large number of individual producers or with other intermediaries.

Consumption both of finished goods and of agricultural produce exhibits certain parallels to production. The peasants customarily sell much of what they produce, and buy much of what they consume, but both sales and purchases are on a small scale. Whether it be millet, rice, cornmeal, root crops, greens, salt, spices, cloth, kerosene, cooking oils, soap, matches, or anything else, small sums are expended for small quantities. Such buying habits are analogous to the practice of selling off produce irregularly and in small quantities. These transactional habits are a function of the seasonal nature of the agriculture, its diversified character, the chronic shortages of cash, and the lack of adequate means of storage. They may also be conditioned by a cultural preference for small-scale and irregular expenditure of cash assets for consumption. Expectably, the distributive mechanisms tying production and consumption together reflect their character.

Intermediaries are the living links between these two aspects of the economy. On the one hand they bulk produce when buying it up. On the other, they break bulk in resale. They render additional and incidental services at the same time. The presence of an oversupply of individuals always ready to provide such services sharpens the competition between intermediaries, and keeps the costs of these services to the economy as a whole at a minimum. The constant search by large numbers of distributors both for supplies to be bought up for resale, and for loci of demand, helps to keep supply and demand in a more balanced relationship – as reflected in price changes – than would be the case were the number of distributors reduced arbitrarily (Bauer, 1954; Mintz, 1957). It also serves to enhance the importance of the *pratik* relationship, my major concern here.

A *pratik* may be either one who sells to a distributive intermediary or one who buys from a distributive intermediary. Since some products pass through the hands of more than a single intermediary, *pratik* relationships may tie together producer and middleman, or middleman and middleman, or middleman and consumer. For products, which are bulked by an intermediary near the source of supply, and broken in bulk for resale by a retailer, the bulking intermediary may have *pratik* relationships with numerous small-scale producers on the one hand, and with several retailers on the other. Moreover, just as the producers may have *pratik* relationships with more than one bulking intermediary, so the retailers may have *pratik* relationships with numbers of consumers. Hence these ties form webs or networks of economic association.

The rationale behind the establishment of *pratik* is clearly economic in nature. This is confirmed by the results of scores of interviews with Haitian professional market women. Every such woman interviewed stated that she had *pratik;* and all of them made clear that the purpose of forming *pratik* ties is to secure and solidify the channels of trade. In general, the means for creating and maintaining *pratik* is by the granting of economic concessions. But obviously such concessions cannot be granted unilaterally, or they serve no economic purpose for one of the participants. Concessions (in the form of price, quantity, credit, or otherwise) are made by intermediaries both to producers and to consumers, and to yet other intermediaries. The reciprocal reward for these concessions takes the form of more assured pathways to supply and demand. In effect, the intermediary will be seen to be trading some portion of her potential profit in a theoretically random market situation, in return for some measure of assurance that she will be able both to acquire stock and then to dispose of it.

This point deserves some stress if only to clarify the wholly rational economic motives which lie behind *pratik* relationships. These ties are by no means uneconomic, non-economic, or economically irrational. On the contrary, in fact, their existence demonstrates the Haitian market woman's clear recognition of the general character of the economy. Except in the instances of granting credit and lending money, and often, even then, the guarantees that a *pratik* relationship will persist and continue to be mutually beneficial are personal and customary, not legal and contractual. But dishonesty on the part of a *pratik* will end the tie, and women who behave unethically in such relationships soon threaten their own stakes in the distributive process.

No market woman interviewed denied having *pratik* relationships with those who "buy from her hand"; some, however, fail to have these ties with those from whom they buy, if those others are producers. Intermediaries who buy from producers do not uniformly make *pratik* of them. Retailers-intermediaries who sell to consumers-are like intermediaries, between intermediaries, having bilateral relationships. But on the consumer side, the nature of the *pratik* arrangement will differ.

Commonly the *pratik* is defined as a "good customer." When an intermediary has *pratik* among producers from whom she buys, she may theoretically buy at a higher price, accept a smaller quantity for the same price, or advance a loan against a future crop. No one indicated that she bought less of a given product for the same price. The intermediary as buyer is acquiring stock, and wishes to do so to the limit of her capital. She may pay a little more in order to improve her access to more stock in the future. But she will not buy less from a single seller than her capital makes possible at one time, if this means having to seek out another seller of the same produce.

At the other end of the chain, the retailer who has *pratik* with her consumer customers is readier to make small concessions in price -- giving a little more for the same amount of money -- than to give the same amount of stock for less money. Where perishable goods are concerned, the retailer when bargaining will increase quantity rather than lower price as a matter of practice, even when not dealing with *pratik* who buy from her.

Perishability and like considerations such as fragility, short harvests, and high unit costs enter into shaping *pratik* relationships in other ways. The intermediary buying from her producer *pratik* is unlikely to offer to buy at higher than the going price if the product rots easily, as in the case of onions or tomatoes. The producer-seller is going to sell off to the first buyer who comes along and offers the going price. He cannot hold stock of this sort, even for short periods, given his lack of storage and refrigeration facilities. Correspondingly, the buying intermediary wins no future assurance of supply by offering more than the going price precisely because the producer-seller is unable to hold stock for her.

But in the case of relatively more durable stock – unhusked millet or dried corn for instance – the producer-seller may be in a position to retain his supply in anticipation of a price rise. With relatively imperishable stock, particularly rice, this is even more the case. In such instances, and where the buyer-intermediary regularly acquires stock from the producer, she may be willing to pay slightly more per unit of purchase when she buys. Her concessions increase her chances of acquiring stock when goods are scarce and resale profits potentially high.

Generally speaking, relationships with producers based on price concessions develop when such producers have relatively large stocks of less perishable goods. Peasants in this situation are able to “hold back" on two counts: better storage facilities, and more capital available for necessities. Less well-fixed producers, even of imperishable stocks, are more likely to have to sell off to any buyer, much as if their produce were subject to rapid spoilage.

In the case of items that spoil readily, the most common basis for *pratik* with the producer is by loans against a future crop. Such loans are made to either large-scale or small-scale producers of less perishable stock (with large-scale producers also winning concessions in price); but loans, to the exclusion of price concessions, predominate in transactions with producers of perishables.

Loans to producers are made in several ways. In the Saint Raphael region of the north, loans are made to producers of onions, which are subject to rather rapid spoilage, and to producers of rice and tobacco, both less perishable. These loans are paid off in kind rather than in cash. Creditors are entitled to claim their stock at the very start of the harvest, at which time market prices are high. It appears to be the usual practice to estimate the price-to-be of the product and to lend money on these terms. Though some intermediaries claim that they have lost money on crop loans, the opening market prices for rice in the fall and onions in the spring make this unlikely. In the case of tobacco, however, marketing difficulties and the complaints some informants made indicate that they did lose money. Some said they would advance no more money for tobacco crops, and this will probably affect the next year's tobacco crop.

Loans are usually advanced on the basis of acreage, or rather on the estimated yield of a given acreage. The intermediary advances cash against the expected number of barrels of rice, or bags of onions, or bundles of tobacco to be harvested. She will either have some knowledge of the subject herself or depend on her husband or some trusted male friend in making such judgments. These estimates, though, are only a means for putting a reasonable ceiling on the loan, and do not affect the terms. Often the intermediary "buys" the total crop by making a flat cash payment before harvest, and claiming the entire harvest as it ripens.

Since it is likely that the producer who borrows from an intermediary will be turning over his product at harvest at a selling price below what he could get in the open market, it is relevant to explore why peasants make such arrangements. The need for cash in the planting season is sometimes severe, while cash loans or credit are difficult to secure by other means. Loans made by intermediaries, though generally sealed by an informal contract, are generally small. The peasant does not normally put up his land or other real property as collateral, which he would be expected to do if he borrowed from a townsman or from a wealthy farmer. The intermediary who lends him money is probably resident in his community, and though she may handle more cash than he, their class position is not likely to be different. The *pratik* relationship itself is the basis for the loan even though the loan is contractual, and it is a relationship requiring some mutual trust and regard. The lending intermediary in these cases takes two risks: one of crop failure and the other of a market glut. Surely she does her best to protect herself in lending her capital to producers.

At the other end of the chain of intermediaries – that is, as between retailer and consumer – the character of *pratik* is different, both in kind and in scale. A retailer of vegetable produce in Port-au-

Prince, for instance, whether an itinerant house-to-house seller or stall keeper in the large city markets, tries to acquire a group of steady customers. These customers are made and held by price and quantity concessions, but particularly by concessions in quantity. The “extra” – *dégi* or *tiyô* in Creole – is part of many transactions.[4] All grains and legumes, for instance, are sold in units of tin cans of various sizes (Mintz 1961) normally heaped to spilling; the "extra" given in these instances is in excess of the heaped tin. In food measured by the lot or pile, the giving of an extra portion is sometimes more subtle. The Haitian squash (Creole: *militô),* the avocado, sweet potatoes, and many other perishable foods and some other items are sold in small piles. One will see a few such piles spread at the feet of a seller, and the differences between these piles are slight indeed, and difficult to measure. If the item in question varies much in size or quality, each pile will contain an assortment, and the piles are carefully prepared so that this will be so. "Extra" to *pratik* is then given by selecting the better items to make a pile, or by adding one or two additional units for the same price.

On a given day at a particular time in any market, the going price for unit stock of this sort rapidly comes to be relatively uniform. The same is true for dried legumes such as rice, millet, corn and cornmeal, red and black beans, pigeon peas, and so on. Unless there is considerable variation in quality or condition, this uniformity of price will prevail. Prices for particular items take shape in a fashion surprisingly reminiscent of the textbook examples. The seller knows at what price a particular item sold on the previous market day; she also knows at what price she has risked buying. She sets her opening price in line with her expectations. If demand is steady and uncomplaining, she will raise her price but she rarely has to do this, since the asking price usually adjusts downward by small concessions until it becomes stabilized. If demand is slack (and customers voluble in their disdain), and other sellers are doing business at a lower price, she will reluctantly but quickly come down. What is worth remarking is the speed with which these adjustments are made, not over time or uniformly in different market settings, but for a given and particular situation. If there are a dozen sellers of cornmeal or red beans in a given market at ten o'clock in the morning – by which time the market has been in progress and prices have been finding their levels for several hours – it will be difficult to find a single seller whose price varies as much as a penny a unit for the stock in question. Exceptions occur, however, if the stock is very scanty and the demand high; if there are big variations in quality; or if sellers with very small stocks have the need to sell off very rapidly.

4 The same procedure is reported from Jamaica. Katzin writes (1959, p. 87): "Some sellers favor their regular customers in other ways. To give 'brawta' or 'make-up' is the practice, all along the line from rural producer to retail buyer. This is identical with the British and American practice of giving something additional in a transaction."

The implications of price uniformity for the *pratik* phenomenon are interesting. Each of the retailers of a certain product in the market may be expected to have *pratik;* they make these *pratik* and hold them essentially by giving more for less. But they remain in constant competition with other sellers of the same product, in terms of their asking price. Market women do not advertise their *pratik.* The *pratik* buyer comes to his or her *pratik* seller and inquires after the price of a certain good. The price quoted does not vary from that quoted to any other prospective buyer. When the sale is consummated, however, the *pratik* buyer gets the product at a lower price – or else, and more typically, gets a greater quantity for the same price. Since this occurs only with *pratik,* it should not be thought that the intermediary is lowering the going price of her stock on the open market. The going price rises and falls in relation to supply and demand (Mintz, 1959: 24); price concessions of the sort described here are additional to general supply-demand based changes, or they may be thought of as occurring within the field of these wider changes.

The upshot of this is that two sorts of competition, very different from each other, occur in the same setting. The first sort, and more important, is the competition of the open market, revealed by the emerging uniformity of the asking price at anyone time for a given product in a single market. The second sort is the competition for *pratik,* proceeding behind the screen of apparent price uniformity. Not all buying *pratik* are granted the same measure of concession, nor even necessarily the same kind of concession. Intermediaries admit both to having buying *pratik* and to concealing the details of their *pratik* relationships from their competitors; these relationships are pervasive at the same time that they are partly hidden.

It remains to discuss *pratik* relationships between intermediaries. These are various in nature, but only one category will be treated, namely, relationships between wholesalers and retailers of agricultural products. Many agricultural items, such as dried grains, legumes, and fresh fruits and vegetables, are bulked by intermediaries who buy from numerous small producers and wholesale to retailers who break bulk in selling to consumers. Such a series includes a minimum of four participants: producer, bulker, retailer, and consumer. It is to the center of this series that attention is now directed.

Credit extension and concessions in quantity are the major means of tying retailer *pratik* to the wholesaler. Price reductions are also employed. Retailer *pratik* are to be found mainly in the capital, in and around the big markets, and in the provincial cities. Since the bulking intermediaries carry relatively large stocks, they will make *pratik* with numbers of retailers. Though the quantities of anyone item carried by a bulking intermediary and those purchased by any single retailer vary enormously, the relative scale can be suggested. An onion bulker from the north will usually carry from about seven to about twenty sacks of onions to the capital to wholesale. These sacks hold approximately fifteen to sixteen No. 10 cansful of onions when filled to bursting. A Port-au-Prince retailer may purchase one sack, or two, or even six, for resale by the pound or canful. The bulking intermediary will buy onions from the producer at, say, U.S. $7.00 the sack, and resell at U. S. $9.00, if the market is very brisk. For her trade at large, she will reduce the quantity of onions in each sack by one or two cansful, and thus put together enough onions for an extra sack. When reselling her onions at the U.S. $9.00 rate, she may provide her *pratik* with one of two kinds of advantage: reduce the price per sack, or refill the sacks to their original overflowing. She may also be willing to sell to some of her established *pratik* on credit, giving them a week or ten days to sell off and repay her in the form of cash. Sometimes these credit arrangements include a carrying charge or interest. A bulking intermediary with many retailer *pratik* may be able to dispose of half or more of her stock through her *pratik.* Since onions are speculative, yielding good profits sometimes but glutting the markets at others, *pratik* with retailers is decidedly advantageous to the bulking intermediary.

Pratik relationships seem to have a characteristic way of taking shape. A bulking intermediary will call over a would-be buyer unfamiliar to her and invite her to buy. After some talk, if the seller likes the buyer's manner, she will make a very reasonable selling offer. As the sale is consummated, she will ask the buyer if she buys regularly on that day and at that place. If the answer is a friendly affirmative, she will say meaningfully: 'Wait for me. I always come on this day. I come from such-and-such a town. I come here with the truck called so-and-so. I keep my stock here, at the depot of Madame X." With more talk, an understanding begins to emerge. Each woman will carefully watch the other's behavior on subsequent occasions, until there is genuine mutual trust. When vaunting the solidarity of a *pratik,* an intermediary will say: When I go to Port-au Prince, my *pratik* never lets me sleep in the depot -- I sleep in her house." Or: "When X promises to buy eggs for me, she hides them from the other women, and will not consider their offers." A buying *pratik* who knows her selling *pratik* is coming will wait at the proper place and time, refusing to buy stock from others that she is sure her *pratik* is carrying.[5]

5 In this instance, as in several described by Katzin for Jamaica, the economic rationality of such behavior is clearly demonstrated. Such examples make clear that the old woman on her way to market who refuses to sell her stock to a passing stranger at a very favorable price is not in fact behaving irrationally; quite the contrary. Nor does her unwillingness to sell demonstrate that her real purpose in going to market is merely to gossip with her neighbors, a charge which even local city people are fond of leveling at every opportunity. Careful examination of the Haitian

To the extent that her stock is committed in such arrangements, a selling *pratik* will refuse to sell to others until she has met her *pratik* buyer. One may be led to believe that the selling behavior of intermediaries is random or whimsical, and that they may refuse to make certain sales because of some irrational streak.[6] It should be clear, however, that personalized economic relationships, while they modify somewhat the nature of the distributive process, arise precisely because intermediaries understand the basic character of the Haitian economy so well.

A final point may be considered here. In the brief discussion of Haitian agriculture undertaken earlier, nothing was said of the economic and social arrangements by which work is done. Considerable emphasis is put on cooperative work groups by those writing on Haitian rural economy (Metraux, 1951). But I think that in the Haitian countryside there is great economic individualism in agriculture, and in fact relatively little institutionalized cooperation. If this is true in agriculture, it appears to be even truer of marketing. Combines of intermediaries do not exist, and intermediaries do not at present form such combinations in order to bulk produce on a larger scale, reduce overhead, purchase trucks, fix prices, or otherwise act collectively in their own group interest. Intermediary activity has a highly fragmented individualistic character. But the *pratik* custom plays an integrating role. It is built up out of series or chains of dyadic relationships, which persist through time, and are founded on mutual trust for mutual advantage. It may be that some observers of Haitian rural society have not noticed the variety of integrating social forms serving various ends. Ties of the *pratik* kind may be most common in those societies in which more extended formal social devices have never existed or have fallen into disuse. The *kôbit* and *kové* work societies of old have nearly disappeared from Haitian agriculture, to be replaced by day labor in most cases. But overmuch notice is still taken of these disappearing work groups since they have somehow caught the imagination of observers and visiting planners. *Pratik* relationships, partly because they occur mainly within the distributive system rather than wholly within production, partly because they seem socially narrow, fragile, and trivial alongside the work societies, have received little or no attention. It is at least worth considering whether cooperative economic activity in a country such as Haiti might not be strengthened more by careful prior analysis of dyadic relationships, than by the marshaling of nostalgic suppositions about an institution now nearly vanished from the scene.

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situation throws light on James' claim (1942, p. 771) that "The markets which are held throughout rural Haiti, many of them in the open country, are attended primarily for social pleasure, not for buying and selling."

6 This is often misunderstood to be a lack of commercial sophistication. James writes (1942, p. 771): "The average rural Haitian is not a person of great ambition, nor one who takes naturally to the complexities of commercial life."

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