Review Article

Haitian Migrants in the French Overseas Territories of the Caribbean

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Migrations are an essential dimension of the Caribbean region, and this was already the case before the European conquest of the Americas. The region has been an important site for the development and enrichment of anthropological concepts, such as transnationalism and diaspora, related to the movement of people. Numerous studies dealing with the international migrations of Caribbean people to North America or Europe have been conducted, but the study of internal migrations within the region, in
particular to the French territories, has so far been largely neglected. The few articles that have been published have concerned the discriminatory treatment of foreigners, in particular Haitians and Dominicanos, in Guadeloupe. This gap has now been filled with the recent publication of several works by geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, or residents of these territories, contributing to a new field of research in France. Lately, several history and anthropology Ph.D. dissertations have been defended and several calls for proposals by the main research funding agencies such as the ACSE (Agence nationale pour l'égalité des chances et la cohésion sociale) and the ANR (Agence nationale de recherche) have sponsored research projects on migrations.

The volumes under review here concern the French territories of the Americas where the percentage of foreigners is the greatest—both the departments of French Guiana (Guyane) and Guadeloupe, and the overseas collectivity (collectivité d'outre-mer, or COM) of Saint-Martin. The presence of foreigners in these territories is larger than in mainland France. In 2008, according to official statistics (INSEE 2008), it was 5.8 percent in France, compared to 37.2 percent in Guyane and 30 percent in Saint-Martin, but only 4.2 percent in Guadeloupe. Migrations have economic or political origins. The standard of living is much higher in the French Caribbean than anywhere else in the region, which makes these territories attractive to poorer people. Political conflicts such as the civil war in Suriname and political instability in Haiti have devastated the region, drawing the populations of these two countries to other territories. Migrations take different shapes. In French Guiana, they can involve movement back and forth across the Maroni and Oyapock Rivers; elsewhere they can be temporary or definitive. The books under review here belong to an anthropology of space and migrations that can be seen to involve France’s definition of its overseas borders, the migrants’ experience of these territories, and the hosting population’s perspectives on the movement of people.

*Migrants en Guyane*, by Frédéric Piantoni, Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Reims, is a beautiful book of photographs showing foreigners living in Guyane as well as some views of neighborhoods and landscapes. Black and white or in color, shot between 2006 and 2010, the photos were the focus of an itinerant exhibition seen in France, Guyane, Suriname, and Brazil in 2011, the year that the French government dedicated to the celebration of its overseas territories. The book, organized in