

University of New Mexico  
**UNM Digital Repository**

---

Latin American Studies ETDs

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

7-1-2013

# Process of definition and development of the Haitian-Dominican borderland

Carolina Bonilla Elvira

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ltam\\_etds](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ltam_etds)

 Part of the [Latin American Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Bonilla Elvira, Carolina. "Process of definition and development of the Haitian-Dominican borderland." (2013).  
[https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ltam\\_etds/4](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ltam_etds/4)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Latin American Studies ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

Carolina Bonilla Elvira

*Candidate*

---

Latin American Studies

*Department*

---

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Thesis Committee:*

Dr. Judy Bieber, Chairperson

---

Dr. Linda Hall

---

Prof. Moises Gonzalez

---

---

**Process of definition and development of the  
Haitian-Dominican borderland**

**by**

**CAROLINA BONILLA ELVIRA**

**BACHELOR HISPANIC PHILOLOGY**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Masters of Arts  
Latin American Studies**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**Process of definition and development of the  
Haitian-Dominican borderland**

CAROLINA BONILLA ELVIRA

BACHELOR HISPANIC PHILOLOGY

Masters of Arts  
Latin American Studies

**ABSTRACT**

*The borderline that currently divides the island of Hispaniola has undergone a complicated process of definition. Since colonial times, central authorities have claimed the area while contradictorily ignoring the societies that developed in the region. It was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the two countries were officially divided and a borderline was enforced. The massacre of approximately 15,000 Haitians ordered by the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1937 is the event that brought attention to the border nationalization process. In my research I argue that the conflict between the two countries had both an economic and a racial base and that the closure and definition of the border was intended to separate two societies perceived as different by the Dominican authorities, but that in reality constituted a bicultural world.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to all my professors.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	2
<b>The “Abandoned” Island</b> Colonization Philosophies, Landowner absenteeism in Saint-Domingue and Depopulations in Santo Domingo.....	8
<b>Different Land Use Patterns</b> The Plantation System and Haitian Revolution on the West Side of the Island.....	16
<b>The Imagined Nation of Rafael Trujillo</b> The First Seven Years of the Trujillato.....	30
<b>The Haitian Massacre of 1937</b> Simultaneous narrations.....	36
<b>Trujillo’s Colonization of the Dominican Borderlands</b> Agrarian Colonies and the Nationalization Campaign.....	47
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	58

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 Map of Villa Vázquez 2013 .....	49
Fig. 2 Changes in size, nomenclature, and capitals of Dominican border provinces between 1935 and 1950 .....	52
Fig. 3 Growth of Ouananmithe and Dajabón from 1777 an 2004 .....	54
Fig. 4 Haitian Rural House .....	55
Fig. 5 Dominican Rural House .....	55

## INTRODUCTION

Cuando José Arcadio Segundo despertó estaba bocarriba en las tinieblas. Se dio cuenta de que iba en un tren interminable y silencioso (...). Debían de haber pasado varias horas después de la masacre, porque los cadáveres tenían la misma temperatura del yeso en otoño, y su misma consistencia de espuma petrificada, y quienes los habían puesto en el vagón tuvieron tiempo de arrumarlos en el orden y el sentido en que se transportaban los racimos de banano (...).

José Arcadio Segundo no habló mientras no terminó de tomar el café-

-Debían ser como tres mil -murmuró.

-¿Qué?

-Los muertos-aclaró él-. Debían ser todos los que estaban en la estación.

La mujer lo midió con una Mirada de Lástima- «Aquí no ha habido muertos -dijo-.

Desde los tiempos de tu tío, el coronel, no ha pasado nada en Macondo.»<sup>1</sup>

José Arcadio Segundo awakes in the train car, a survivor, and walks along the tracks in the opposite direction until arriving at his village where the massacre of the workers of the Compañía Bananera has been erased. The deaths of the workers at the hands of the army have been excluded not only from history, but also from the memory of the people. "There haven't been any dead here". The same thing has happened countless other times across the geography of Latin America where reality mingles with fiction and history is plagued by surrealism, a few examples are Canudos in Brazil, Guatemala during the Civil War, more recently Acteal in Mexico, and the Haitian population in the borderlands of the Dominican Republic in 1937. A group of people "disappears" and no one remembers how it happened. However, his memory knows to find his hidden corners and walks the torturous path back to return and tell the story.

Existing research into the definition and development of the Haitian-Dominican frontier has highlighted the complicated process leading to what we recognize today as the

---

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad*, (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1978) 281.



border. The research is predominantly concentrated on the 1937 conflict in which hundreds of Dominican troops entered the border region, and proceeded to round up and slaughter with machetes as many as 15,000 Haitians. I argue that the border conflict was rooted in both an economic and racial base and that the closure and definition of the border intended to separate two societies conceived as different by the Dominican authorities, but that in reality constituted a bicultural world. How could such an atrocity of this scale have occurred between these two neighboring Caribbean nations?

A deep historical study of the history of the island of La Hispaniola, where the Dominican Republic and Haiti are located, reveals that the two nations have learned how to live next to each other over time, intermittently fighting, rejecting, or ignoring one another. The historical relationship between the two republics has often been marked by a certain aggressiveness emerging from central authorities but which is most acutely reflected at the border.<sup>2</sup> “As a notable feature of the insular system, the 232.45 mile frontier that today separates the two countries also conjoins them in an often complementary, some times violent, always problematic association.”<sup>3</sup>

La Hispaniola has long been marked by division emerging from central authorities: “The consolidation of Haiti in the west and Santo Domingo in the east under the presidency of Jean Pierre Boyer in 1822; the struggle for Dominican independence that culminated in 1844; the consequent and recurrent border disputes and too-often-bloody battles between

---

<sup>2</sup> María Elena Muñoz, *Las relaciones dominico-haitianas: Geopolítica y migración*, (Santo Domingo: Alfa y Omega, 1995), 209.

<sup>3</sup> Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint, Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 2-3.

the two countries”<sup>4</sup> all transpired around the border area. The name given to part of the region and to one of the rivers following the dividing line is associated with the massacre of thirty French buccaneers by Spanish soldiers in 1728: the Massacre River. Once again, in the twentieth century, the river’s name aligned with its fate when it became the stage on which Dominicans more clearly defined their national identity by distinguishing themselves from Haitians and taking part in another massacre”.<sup>5</sup> Another change in the evolution of the Haiti-Dominican border was Dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo’s frontier nationalization policies. These policies in the Dominican borderlands symbolized a considerable hardening of the border zone and commensurate consolidation of what it meant to be a Dominican citizen. Starting in the mid-1930s and continuing until his assassination in 1960, the policy proposed to stabilize the boundary and to lessen the tensions of what had been “the most volatile frontier in the Americas, to block further occupation of Dominican territory by Haitians, and to foster a strong sense of national identity among the people of the Dominican border provinces.”<sup>6</sup>

The violence of border-making in the Haitian-Dominican borderlands follows the patterns of identity-formation and boundary-consolidation seen along many international boundaries throughout the world. In a transnational sense, borderlands between two emerging states historically tend to be zones of cultural overlap and political instability where national identities and loyalties of the people often blur. In the absence of any sharply defined international boundary or effective political control by the central

---

<sup>4</sup> Jana Evans Braziel, “Diasporic Disciplining of Caliban? Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Intra-Caribbean Politics.” *Small Axe* 12, no.26 (2008), 150.

<sup>5</sup> Mónica G. Ayuso, ‘How Lucky for You That Your Tongue Can Taste the “r” in “Parsley”’: Trauma Theory and the Literature of Hispaniola.” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 30, no.1 (2011), 50.

<sup>6</sup> John P. Augelli, “Nationalization of Dominican Borderlands,” *Geographical Review* 70, no. 1 (1980), 20.

governments, the border proves to be an excellent space where people fall into a pendulum like motion between the two countries. "Border populations are little concerned with jurisdictional limits; residents work out intimate economic and social reciprocity with their neighbors in the adjoining country; and the ties that bind them to their compatriots in their nations center are often tenuous."<sup>7</sup> Historian John Augelli's comments thus accurately describe the region dividing the two nations on the island of Hispaniola before 1937.

This thesis examines the process of re-constructing, re-imagining, and promoting a national identity in the Dominican Republic during the first decades of Trujillo's government, as well as how it influenced the interaction between the two countries sharing the island. I present an overview of their respective histories in order to expose the different ways in which Trujillo's policies dealt with the border, its definition, and development. From a historical and a regional planning perspective, I will demonstrate how the policies directed at the central areas echoed in the border communities, specifically in the agricultural colonies along the border. I will examine how three of the objectives of the Nationalization campaign were achieved: to sharpen the contrast in the landscape between Haitian and Dominican towns; to stop the encroachment of Haitian citizens in Dominican territory while simultaneously solidifying a national identity, and last to help foster the increase of the national agricultural production.

The documents on which I base my argument date from the five years prior to the massacre, 1932-1937, and the later nationalization of the borderlands campaign. They consist of journalistic accounts, diplomatic communications, and official reports from the Department of Agriculture (Secretaría de Agricultura). Additionally I examined a series of

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 19.

diplomatic communications between the United States and Haitian Legations in both countries. They come from the collection “Colección Bernardo Vega” in the Dominican Republic’s National Archive. The third source I analyzed is the collection of official speeches given by Trujillo, published under the title, *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*.<sup>8</sup> In these documents we can delineate the formation of an anti-Haitian ideology influenced by economic factors reflected in agricultural-military campaigns. One of the purposes of the practice and instauration of such a national ideology was the re-construction of a Dominican identity that was built in opposition to what the Haitian people allegedly represented. Traces from these ideas can still be seen in present-day Dominican society and still influence their interaction with the Republic of Haiti and its people. Furthermore, I argue that there is an imagined, ideal nation that Trujillo pretended to install in the Dominican Republic. In accordance with his ideology, the imagined nation of Trujillo should have a fixed official language, and a well-defined territory, which implicitly erased the cultural legacy of the African and Indigenous races.

The events surrounding the 1937 massacre have been studied by a significant number of scholars. Existing research can be divided into several branches, one of which is the analysis of journalistic accounts such as those of Albert Hicks (1946), Manuel García (1983), and Robert Crasweller (1966).<sup>9</sup> Another branch includes the group of scholars that concentrate on the study through diplomatic documents, Bernardo Vega (1988, 1995), and

---

<sup>8</sup> Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*. Vols. I-VI. Santiago: Editora El Diario, 1946.

<sup>9</sup> Albert C. Hicks, *Blood in the streets: The life and rule of Trujillo*, (New York: Creative Age, 1946). García, José Gabriel, *Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo*, (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1983). Robert D. Crasweller, *Trujillo: The life and times of a Caribbean dictator*, (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

José Cuello (1985).<sup>10</sup> Lastly, a more recent branch of scholarship represented by Richard Lee Turits (2002) and Lauren Derby (1994) surveys the relationship of the massacre events in the context of the history of the border. These scholars talk about a bicultural, bilingual, transnational society rather than two distinct peoples separated by a political boundary.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding the social heterogeneity or homogeneity in the border communities, in the literature I reviewed, researchers present contrasting opinions. Scholars like John P. Augelli, in his study "Nationalization of the Dominican Borderlands", talks about the relations between the two countries being stained with racial and cultural hatreds that gave rise to, "savage bloodletting." Even referring to current times, Augelli suggests, "Time has done little to soften the feelings of fear and hatred that the Dominicans harbor toward Haiti."<sup>12</sup> On the other side of the spectrum, Richard Lee Turits proposes instead an antagonism between the Dominican elites of the capital and the Dominican peasants. There was an evident tension between "centralizing forces in opposition to local interests, and following the massacre, a newly hegemonic anti-Haitian discourse in the nation".<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Silvio Torres-Saillant in his study "Dominican Literature and Its Criticism: Anatomy of a Troubled Identity" points out that the Dominican national identity is dependent upon Haitians, against whom Dominicans define themselves, thus constructing "a nation-building ideology based primarily on self-differentiation from Haiti", in which

---

<sup>10</sup> José Israel Cuello, *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937*, (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Lee Turits, "A World Destroyed , A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no.3 (2002). Lauren Derby, "Haitians , Magic , and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no.3 (1994).

<sup>12</sup> Augelli, "Nationalization," 22.

<sup>13</sup> Turits, "A World Destroyed," 593.

"anti-Haitianism becomes a form of Dominican patriotism".<sup>14</sup> Drawing from Turit's theory I explain how the precise biculturalism of the border communities is the fact that interceded with the nation Trujillo had created in his imagination and wanted to embody in the whole Dominican territory.

I conclude my study with the idea of paradoxical borders that are created with the intention of dividing two peoples and by separating create the new means of interaction between the divided communities. I believe such extreme nationalization policies are not the answer to border difficulties. Instead, cooperative programs that appreciate the singularities and benefits of bicultural worlds, which assist both sides of the border, are more likely to help create ideal conditions for communities on the borderlines.

---

<sup>14</sup> Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Dominican Literature and Its Criticism: Anatomy of a Troubled Identity," *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, no.1 (1994).

## **The “Abandoned” Island Colonization Philosophies, Landowner absenteeism in Saint-Domingue and Depopulations in Santo Domingo**

The borderline that divides the island of Hispaniola is one of the few global examples in which separate cultures inhabit the same island: the French and the Spanish. Initially it divided the two colonies of Saint-Domingue and Santo Domingo, whose colonial centers, the city of Santo Domingo in the east and Port-au-Prince in the west, were significantly different from one another. However, the border zone was blurred and mixed.

From the time when the French and Spanish colonies were founded, giving rise to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the isolation of the border region has endowed it with a “socio-cultural logic distinct from either of the two dominant societies, partly due to the peculiarities of the local economy.”<sup>15</sup> Today’s border is what scholars have referred to as a “modern creation,” and its origins can be traced to the European colonial times.

During the first years of the Spanish colonization of the island, the “soon-to-be border frontier served as a haven for runaway Indians. Indigenous *cimarrones* or maroon Indians (...) and countless African slaves fled to the center of the island seeking refuge and freedom.”<sup>16</sup> Gradually, the border region attracted European colonists in search of profits that were outside the taxable domains of the colonial government, and it became a region whose people and activities operated out of the reach of colonial law.

---

<sup>15</sup> Lauren Derby, “Haitians , Magic , and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no.3 (1994), 493.

<sup>16</sup> Lynn Guitar, “Cultural genesis: Relationships among Indians, Africans, and Spaniards in rural Hispaniola, first half of the sixteenth Century”. (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1998) quoted in Edward Paulino, “Erasing the Kreyol from the Margins of the Dominican Republic: The Pre- and Post-Nationalization Project of the Border , 1930 – 1945.” *Wadabagei* 8 no.2 (2005), 36.

During the period from 1492 to 1789, life in the central borderlands was influenced primarily by the decline of the eastern Spanish colony and the rise of the French colonial sugar economy. The frontier was shaped by the increase of the cattle trade along the western border and the development of the French colony of Saint-Domingue on the western third of the island. Following a short period of economic prosperity that lasted until approximately 1530, the Spanish colony declined rapidly due to the collapse of its gold mines and the decline of the Indian labor supply. Starting in the 1530s and lasting throughout much of the initial period from 1492 to 1789, the colony underwent a steady loss of population as settlers moved to Spain's more prosperous territories such as Cuba, Peru and Mexico.

A clear political, religious, and social pattern marked the Spanish colonies and shaped the regional experiences of people in a series of multiple settings. Among the most pervasive was the centralization of government and economy under Crown control, monolithic Catholicism, formalized notions of class and race, and an emphasis on life in towns.<sup>17</sup>

The towns in the Spanish colony were designed according to directions given by the Spanish court. In 1573, these were collected under Felipe II in the *Leyes de las Indias*, (Laws of Indies), a document that was the result of Renaissance thought. Spanish planners divided their towns into *barrios* as was done in the metropolis. "The grid with two main axes intersecting, and the large public square at the intersection, were standard. This *plaza* is key to the entire settlement: its size regulated the makeup of the grid. The blocks

---

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen Deagan, "Colonial Origins and Colonial Transformations in Spanish America," *Historical Archaeology* 37, no.4 (2003), 3.



immediately surrounding the plaza were divided into four equal sections (*solares*) and assigned to the leading settlers.”<sup>18</sup> The city of Santo Domingo was the first planned settlement in the West Indies, it was laid out in 1493 on a grid pattern, which was emulated by most of the towns in the colony.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of the centralized government, by the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century a profitable frontier contraband trade had emerged. In an effort to control the problem, the central colonial government in Santo Domingo, located on the east side of the island, ordered the *depoblaciones* (depopulations) of the northern frontier lands.

Depopulations on the island had been a potential project since the year 1577. Contraband on the northern side was considered a threat to the economy; it was even considered a threat to the Catholic faith, since it meant contact with pagans.<sup>20</sup> By 1603, the authorities of the island ordered the depopulation and transfer of four towns on the northern side: Bayajá, Puerto Plata, Monte Cristi, and La Yaguana. The president of the depopulations commission, Don Antonio Osorio, who was also governor of the island, was very careful to insist on the fact that inhabitants of the four towns should move and settle in the new areas located in proximity to the capital, Santo Domingo. He explained his reasons to the Crown as follows:

“Los grandes inconvenientes que de estos rescates y contrataciones han resultado y resultan, y los mayores que se pueden tener de esta comunicación, y de los libros de sus sectas que les llevan, y lo que se defraudan los derechos reales y el apretado estado que todo tiene por esta causa en esas yslas y comoquiera que por todos los

---

<sup>18</sup> Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped, Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991) 114-115.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed study regarding the depopulations on the island see Concepción Hernández Tapia, “Despoblaciones de la isla de Santo Domingo en el siglo XVII.” *Anuario De Estudios Americanos* 27, (1970), 294-296.

medios que se ha podido se han procurado remediar estos daños, y se ha usado de censuras y enviado jueces para el castigo de los que cometen estos delitos son temor del daño de sus almas, y de la ejecución de tan rigurosas penas como les están puestas, ninguna cosa ha bastado para excusar esta comunicación y trato, y los robos que con esta ocasión hacen en el mar y en la tierra a nuestros vasallos, y las fuerzas que con esto han cobrado los enemigos de nuestra Santa fe católica y nuestros.”<sup>21</sup>

There was a big concern on Osorio's part to ensure that settlers were not moving to the capital or to other colonies. This was a problem because a large percentage of the population had already moved to the region of Báyamo in Cuba. The violent evictions from these towns provoked discontent among landowners. They were forced to abandon their sugar mills, set their cattle loose, and see their slaves run away. They proposed other alternatives to the authorities, for example installing galley ships on the northern coast, given that abandoning the land made it easy for the enemy to invade. Several of the evicted neighbors disobeyed and returned to their lands in the north, and the region remained scarcely controlled by central authorities and inhabited by the two cultures.

The historian Américo Lugo refers to this event as one of the most transcendental that occurred in the northern corridor of the island. The destruction of the four towns was, as Lugo explains, an unwise measure taken by the Real Consejo de Indias against trade between the English, French, and Flemish and the northern island inhabitants.

The flight or depopulation and abandonment of the western and northwestern parts of the island provided the French with the opportunity to extend their influence and ultimately to gain possession of the region. French settlement on the western side of Hispaniola began in 1629 when French and English colonizers established themselves as

---

<sup>21</sup> Américo Lugo, *Historia de Santo Domingo desde el 1556 hasta 1608; edad media de la isla española*, (Ciudad Trujillo: Editorial Librería Dominicana, 1952), 114.

cattle hunters on the northwest coast near the island of Tortuga, and began selling a kind of smoked meat to traders traveling from Spain to the American mainland. “They became known as *boucaniers* or buccaneers, a word derived from *boucan* which referred to the type of fire or wooden frame which they used for curing meat.”<sup>22</sup>

The continental Spanish possessions were constantly gaining importance and attention from the metropolis, and of all the islands in the Caribbean, Cuba had become the most important. “Hispaniola fell into neglect and was relegated to the role of a rest station for Spanish ships en route to Cuba or the American continent.”<sup>23</sup>

In the beginning, the French colonized the Caribbean with the intention of growing tobacco, which remained a main export until the 1680s. Coffee and later sugar were the other two most important export crops. “Smoking pipes and taking snuff became popular among men in Europe, and the tobacco market spread. Coffee was introduced into Europe in 1644 from Arabia by merchants from Venice and Marseilles”<sup>24</sup> only to be introduced later in the American colonies. The geographic characteristics and climate of the Caribbean territories were the most appropriate for cultivating these three new commodities. After 1765, coffee production increased six-fold on the French part of the island, which had received the name “Saint-Domingue.” Sugar emerged as the primary crop years later, but coffee, cotton, and indigo were also important to the French economy and were cultivated on the island.

---

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Charles Palmer, “Land Use and Landscape Change Along the Dominican-Haitian Borderlands.” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1976), 43.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Quinn, *The French Overseas*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), 114.

Some Dominican historians point to the Treaty of Ryswick as the first official agreement between the two colonies to define a boundary; Frank Moya Pons, for example, describes the story of the peace treaty.<sup>25</sup> It was signed between the warring European nations on September 1697 to put an end to the War of the League of Augsburg. However, it was used by the French colonizers to justify the encroachments into Spanish territory. The first border agreement was in fact the Aranjuez Treaty, signed by representatives of the two colonies in 1777, which set the first borderline, using as marks the Dajabon river in the north and the Libon and Artibonito rivers in the south. After this, at least on paper, the island was divided between the French and the Spanish.

Saint-Domingue soon became the main French colony; it was often called “the pearl of the Antilles” or “the Eden of the Western World”, in the Lesser Antilles. Before long, the large plantation system of Saint-Domingue, which functioned with the labor of slaves and indentured servants, surpassed the small plantations elsewhere in number and importance.

The western side of the island held about seven thousand plantations; this tropical setting accounted for 40 percent of France’s overseas trade and “it was the source of two-fifths of the world’s sugar production and over half of the world’s coffee.”<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Saint-Domingue represented two-thirds of all French exports from the West Indies. Such quantity surpassed the combined exports of neighboring British and Spanish possessions. It is important to note that the volume of the French production in the island was only possible because of a substantial slave labor force.

---

<sup>25</sup> For a more detailed explanation of how this confusion was created see the article by Frank Moya Pons, “La primera línea fronteriza”, *Rumbo* Nov. 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Quinn, *The French Overseas*, 83.

“In the 1780 the slave population of Saint-Domingue almost doubled and slave imports averaged 30 thousand per annum in the last years of the decade (...) By 1789 the population of Saint-Domingue had risen to an estimated 30,826 whites, 27,548 free mulattos, and 465,429 slaves, two thirds of the French Overseas Empire’s slave population.”<sup>27</sup>

Seen from the standpoint of the Spanish authorities in Hispaniola, the island was not as prosperous as other territories and, in addition, its border, as has been explained, had become the locus of a struggle to collect the benefits of a quick, largely illegal cattle trade. For the French, this loosely controlled border also posed a problem in that it represented a door for escaped slaves; therefore, the French colonial planter class suffered a constant drain of capital in labor. “The Spanish side of the border was a desirable refuge for runaway slaves, as they were rarely repatriated, manumission was more liberally practiced under Spanish colonial policy, and a life of semi-autonomous cattle herding was less arduous than the backbreaking travail of cutting cane.”<sup>28</sup>

In other words, during the colonial period Saint-Domingue in the west had become France’s most important colony, while Santo Domingo in the east was in a state of abandonment by the Spanish crown. Tolentino Rojas mentions that, for the year 1699, “long before the colony reached its height, no fewer than forty frigates traveled between Saint-Domingue and France, while during the same period the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo was visited by an average of only one Spanish ship every three years.”<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the French colony was not maintained for very long. In some senses it was also abandoned, given that plantation owners were characterized by their

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 83-84.

<sup>28</sup> Derby, “Haitians , Magic , and Money : Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937”, 497.

<sup>29</sup> Vicente Tolentino Rojas, *Historia de la división territorial 1494–1943. Edición del Gobierno Dominicano*, (Santiago, RD: Editorial El Diario. 1944) 35.

absenteeism. Frederick Quinn, in his study of the French overseas empire, explains how France could be a land power or a sea power, but not both simultaneously. France's population was not large, and the people did not really want to go abroad and settle. The high costs of a century of warfare and substantial aid to the American Revolution also left France overextended, which contributed to the problems that led to revolution. The French navy could not adequately supply or protect the country's overseas holdings, which influenced the development of the Haitian Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Quinn, *The French Overseas*, 67.

## **Different Land Use Patterns**

### **The Plantation System and Haitian Revolution on the West Side of the Island**

Spain and France organized their colonies from completely different perspectives. The French set up a system of exhaustive plantations that exported their products directly to the metropolis, while the Spaniards occupied their territory through agriculture based on livestock. The French employed African slave laborers, while slavery was less present in Spanish Santo Domingo. The establishment of a growing plantation economy on the west side of the island influenced the development of a market for the cattle and animal products of the Spanish colony. Even the scant grazing areas on the French side of the island had been turned into cultivated zones, so that trade with the neighboring colony was convenient on both sides. On one hand, Saint-Domingue's landscape was composed mostly of plantation lands, which entailed a singular lifestyle for its inhabitants. On the other hand, the landscape on the Spanish borderlands presented scarcely populated areas predominantly dedicated to the raising of cattle. As a result of the diversity of these societies, the economy of the Spanish colony became dependent on the livestock trade along the western frontier. In exchange for horses, cattle (both for work and slaughter), and smoked beef, the Spanish received stockings, hats, linens, guns, hardware, and clothing, all items of French manufacture.<sup>31</sup>

Along with the growth of the livestock trade came the evolution of *hatos*, grazing ranches, which turned into the most prevalent type of landholding in the Spanish central borderlands. Moreau de Saint-Mery described the *hatos* simply as,

---

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, "Land use and Landscape Change", 50.

"... immense possessions ... where horses and cattle are raised with little care." In addition to grazing land, the *hatos* often included small subsistence agricultural plots, woodlands for supplying timber, palm groves for providing shade and food for the animals, and streams for watering the stock. (...) Each *hato* had to be as self-sufficient as possible."<sup>32</sup>

Economic interdependence resulted from the different land uses of each colony. Gaining independence in 1804, the rich Haitian plantation export economy of 1789 underwent a significant change. First, the newly freed slaves became landholders, even though they lacked technical instruction and capital. Second, the new country had to pay a huge indemnity demanded by France of 60 million francs, money that could have been used to buy the technical skills and the tools required to effect constructive changes in the economy. These two initial factors were combined with "the hostility of neighboring countries [which were still holding slaves and] denied the Haitian produce a market, thus condemning the country to self-sufficiency and commercial stagnation."<sup>33</sup>

The Haitian Revolution brought the end of the plantation system in the French colony, although the first two Haitian rulers, Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines tried to maintain a similar system based on mandatory labor in an effort to renovate the economy and return it to the prosperity it once had. They believed it was "the productive unit par excellence." By the end of the war, in April 1804, most of the land had passed into the hands of the state, affecting the blacks and mulattoes who were expected to

---

<sup>32</sup> Moreau de Saint-Mery *A topographical and Political Description of the Spanish Saint Domingue*. 2 vols. (Philadelphia: by the author, 1796) 1:65 quoted in Ernest Charles Palmer, "Land Use and Landscape Change Along the Dominican-Haitian Borderlands." (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1976), 51.

<sup>33</sup> Raymond E. Crist, "Cultural Dichotomy in the Island of Hispaniola." *Economic Geography* 28 no.12 (1952) 112.



continue working under similar conditions to those of the years before independence.<sup>34</sup> Haitian peasants refused to return to servitude and escaped, as they had done before, to the interior, where they became subsistence farmers. After such initial attempts to maintain the plantation system, the following Haitian presidents, beginning with Alexandre Petion in 1806, followed a policy of distributing state lands in plots of as small as six hectares. Significant changes were made to the landholding patterns. Petion attributed such plots as payment for military service; the leader “sought the sympathy and loyalty of the black and mulatto population by giving land to all his soldiers and officers.”<sup>35</sup> Petion also believed that peace was easier to maintain when the majority of the population were landowners.

Following Petion, President Boyer offered all the farmers entitlement to the lands they had in cultivation. As a single farmer was capable of cultivating only one or two hectares at a time, these land grants were very small.<sup>36</sup> The successive policies of land redistribution primarily affected plantation production. On the one hand, the few plantation owners that were left had problems finding manual labor; on the other, farmers preferred subsistence crops rather than sugar, cotton or indigo.<sup>37</sup> There was a significant decline of all the agriculture products on the island, primarily affecting sugar and cotton but also coffee and cocoa. To compensate for this decline many Haitians started exploiting the forests for precious lumber and dyewood. However, lumber production could not redeem the crisis, and damaged the ecosystem leading to future environmental

---

<sup>34</sup> Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean : plantations, trade, and war in the Atlantic World*, (Princeton : Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), 170.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 170.

<sup>36</sup> James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti, (Saint Domingo) with Remarks on its Agriculture, Commerce, Laws, Religion, Finances, and Population, etc.* (Westport: Negro University Press: 1828) 184 quoted in Gustavo de Pena “The Siblings of Hispaniola: Political Union and Separation of Haiti and Santo Domingo, 1822-1844” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1998), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Moya, *History of the Caribbean*, 171.

repercussions.<sup>38</sup> The early Haitian Revolution changed the social order and the landscape in nearly every possible way, on both sides of the border.

Before the Haitian Revolution started, Spain had ceded to France the entire island by the Treaty of Basel 1795; the new Haitian rulers claimed the political indivisibility of Hispaniola and justified their intervention on the eastern side of the island. “The principle of political indivisibility was stated by Toussaint L’Ouverture in his 1801 invasion, and it was reaffirmed later by Desalines during the Haitian occupation of the former Spanish colony from 1822 to 1844.”<sup>39</sup> From the Haitian perspective, the integration of the island was a logical and prudent response to prevent potential invasions by European colonial powers trying to restore slavery. For Dominicans, and mainly for the white Creole elite, it represented the end of their existence and power. Thus, the 22 years of Haitian domination “became anathema to the Dominican white elite and eventually became etched on the collective memories of Dominicans.”<sup>40</sup>

The Haitian policy towards the Spanish Santo Domingo was created with the objective of unifying the island and stimulating commerce and agriculture on the eastern side. The Spanish colony depended exclusively on the cattle economy; sugar was only produced for domestic consumption and coffee, cotton, and cocoa were scarcely cultivated. With the Haitian Revolution the trade with England and the United States had been interrupted; when the Haitian occupation started L’Ouverture reopened several ports and renewed the cattle trade with the western side of the island. Most important were the

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>39</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization,” 23.

<sup>40</sup> Paulino, “Erasing Kreyol,” 35

changes in the social realm: slavery was abolished and blacks and mulattos were allowed to participate in the army, local government, and public administration.<sup>41</sup>

The ruin of the Haitian economy was already evident in 1826, and the decline of the agricultural exports sugar cane, indigo and cotton brought political instability, devaluation of the currency and economic crisis.<sup>42</sup> By the year 1843 the popular discontent with Boyer's government on the Haitian side of the island concluded with the defeat of the *fuerzas boyeristas*. In March of the same year Jean Pierre Boyer and his family left the island after 25 years of government; the news of Boyer's defeat rapidly reached the eastern region of the island, where an independent movement was already in gestation. The revolutionaries gathered in a town near Santo Domingo, calling themselves the *Sociedad la Trinitaria*. Although this society was secret, the Dominican people knew that they were fighting to separate the east side of the island from Haiti with the purpose of creating a new independent republic – the Dominican Republic. On February 27 the following year, Haitians were expelled from Dominican territory and the island was divided into two independent nations.

Along with the *Sociedad la Trinitaria*, other independent movements coexisted with the aim of separation from the Haitian government with the help of one of the foreign potencies. Frank Moya Pons mentions four of these movements. The first was pro-Spanish, and its members maintained close contact with the authorities in Puerto Rico and Cuba. The second was a pro-British movement that maintained contact with the British consul in

---

<sup>41</sup> Emilio Cordero Michel, *La revolucion haitiana y Santo Domingo*, (Santo Domingo:Taller, 1974), 110.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Moya Pons, "The Land Question in Haiti and Santo Domingo: The Sociopolitical Context of the Transition from Slavery to Free Labor, 1801-1843." *Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish-Speaking Cribbean in the Nineteenth Century* (1985), 206.

Port au Prince. A third group wanted independence without the intervention of a foreign country, and the fourth believed they could attain independence from Haiti with the help of the French government. The new nation declared its independence from Haiti, a former French colony – unlike the Latin American countries, which separated from Spain. In the following years, several battles took place between Dominican and Haitian troops in the border region.<sup>43</sup>

Haiti stopped being a military threat to the Dominican Republic after the 1860s, but Dominicans, nevertheless, continued to define themselves and the nation in opposition to Haiti. Scattered but persistent, anti-Haitian sentiments dominated the island throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even despite Haiti being seen as a historical aggressor in Dominican minds, in practice, and especially along the border, antagonism gave way to a collaborative coexistence between Haitians and Dominicans. Rafael Trujillo, however, starting his government in 1930, would exploit the diffuse anti-Haitian sentiment as part of his overall nation-building scheme to consolidate and modernize the Dominican Republic.<sup>44</sup>

Under President Pedro Santana, in 1861 the Dominican Republic became the “unprecedented example of a former Spanish colony voluntarily reverting to colonial status.”<sup>45</sup> However, there was always a sector of the population opposed to the Spanish Annexation, and the War of Restoration raged from 1863 until 1865. As had happened in the past, revolutionary groups used the southern border region as a zone for barracks. In the north, the border towns of Dajabón and Montecristi remained under the domain of the

---

<sup>43</sup> Frank Moya Pons, *Manual de historia dominicana*, (Santiago, Republica Dominicana: UCMM, 1980), 266-170.

<sup>44</sup> Paulino, “Erasing Kreyol,” 36.

<sup>45</sup> William Javier Nelson, “The Crisis of Liberalism on the Dominican Republic, 1865-1882.” *Revista De Historia De América*, 104 (1987) 357.

Spanish troops. Both of these towns were highly contested for their commercial and strategic location; the bay of Montecristi in particular was used to receive military cargoes. By 1865 the Spanish courts decided to abandon the war in Santo Domingo when they realized the changes in Dominican authorities had resulted in overwhelming opposition to the Spanish intervention from the majority of Dominicans. This was not a territory for which the Spanish were willing to fight.<sup>46</sup>

In 1867, two years after the War of Restoration, Haiti and the Dominican Republic signed their first peace agreement, *Convenio de Paz y Amistad, Comercio y Navegación*. With this agreement both countries renewed their relationship and, with respect to border limits, stated that a future treaty would delineate the borderline. From then on territorial disputes would be resolved by diplomatic means: after the historic treaty of 1874 it still took 62 years for the border to be conclusively defined.<sup>47</sup>

Article 4 of the *Convenio de paz* stated:

“Art. A. Las altas partes contratantes se comprometen formalmente a establecer de la manera más conforme a la equidad y a los intereses recíprocos de los dos pueblos, las líneas fronterizas que separan sus posesiones actuales. Esta necesidad será objeto de un Tratado especial, y para ese efecto ambos gobiernos nombrarán sus comisiones lo más pronto posible.”<sup>48</sup>

The clause “sus posesiones actuales” is what complicated the understanding of this article, in that Dominicans considered their “actual possessions” those stated in the Aranjuez Treaty of 1777. At the same time, Haitians considered *their* actual possessions those given by the Public International Right of “*utis possedetis*” after the conflict. After a

---

<sup>46</sup> Moya, *Manual de historia*, 357.

<sup>47</sup> Moya, “*The Land Question*,” 19.

<sup>48</sup> María Elena Muñoz, *Las relaciones dominico-haitianas: Geopolítica y migración*, (Santo Domingo: Alfa y Omega, 1995), 149-150.

series of diplomatic struggles the 1874 Treaty left the Dominican Republic without any possibility to recuperate the territories they had fought over for over 60 years. Dominicans agreed on the boundaries proposed by the Haitians based on the post-bellum status of 1856; however, they soon realized that the Haitian occupation had advanced beyond the marked lines in 1856. The solution of such frontier disagreement was entrusted to a neutral authority, Pope Leon XIII, who responded that because the matter was of a legal and not a political nature, he could not participate. It would not be until the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the official borderline would be set.<sup>49</sup>

In terms of landscape and land division the changes on the Haitian side of the border had important effects for both countries. In the Dominican Republic the difference between central and border regions was becoming more evident. The provinces located closer to the capital turned their *hatos* into communal lands with numerous owners and shareholders. With each generation land titles and boundary lines became more vague. Land titles were further confused as non-family members were allowed to purchase shares of communal lands. In the central borderlands, however, due to the abundance of land and the sparseness of the population, the chaotic landholding pattern caused fewer problems than in the more populous areas of the island.<sup>50</sup> This sharpened the contrast with Haitian land use and land division, as Haiti was more heavily settled and soon became affected by deforestation and soil erosion, processes which were delayed on the eastern side of the frontier.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 150-151.

<sup>50</sup> Palmer, "Land use and landscape change,"74.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

The Dominican Republic, during the period from 1844 to the assassination of President Ulises Heureaux in 1899, saw 15 presidents pass in and out of office. As William Javier Nelson explains in his study of the liberal governments during the period, in reality the country was governed either directly or indirectly by three men: Pedro Santana, Buenaventura Báez, and, lastly, Ulises Heureaux.<sup>52</sup>

President Ulises Heureaux, also known as Lilís, governed from 1882 to 1899. Of Venezuelan, Haitian, and Dominican descent, Heureaux's contact with the neighboring country gave him a more accurate understanding of the borderlands situation in two different ways. First, as an opponent to the government of Báez he sought refuge in the Haitian town of Juana Mendez: he was therefore aware of how the borderland was used as the refuge for rebel groups, and even during his years in office they continued to be the site for anti-government protest movements.<sup>53</sup> Second, Heureaux was the only Dominican president who traveled through the borderlands and Haitian border towns during his administration, as he realized how the Haitian presence was growing in the area.<sup>54</sup>

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Haiti was reaching the first centenary of its independence (1904) and the stability of the government had almost disappeared. The overthrow of president Vilbrun Guillaume Sam occurred under tragic circumstances. The judge Otto Schoenrich, in his report written a few years after the intervention, describes the chaotic circumstances as follows:

"At length, in July, 1915, President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was overthrown and driven to take refuge in the French legation in Port-au-Prince. The next morning

---

<sup>52</sup> Nelson, "The crisis of liberalism," 20.

<sup>53</sup> Horacio Blanco Fombona, *El tirano Ulises Heureaux o veinte años de historia tenebrosa de América*, (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Librería La Trinitaria, 1943), 32.

<sup>54</sup> Paulino, "Erasing Kreyol," 52.

the city was aroused at learning that during the night the garrison of the jail, under orders of the district commander, had massacred over 200 political prisoners. After the funeral of the victims, several of the mourners proceeded to the Dominican legation, where the district commander had taken refuge, and hauled him out and killed him"<sup>55</sup>

A few hours after this social upheaval, US marines disembarked in Port-au-Prince. The occupation by the United States forces thus began, and gradually spread over the whole country. Marine infantry forces proclaimed martial law and disarmed the citizenry. The occupation would last almost 20 years.<sup>56</sup>

In the neighboring country, after the assassination of the dictator Heureaux several governments were unable to maintain order. A few years later, in November 1911, President Cáceres was assassinated and a period of civil commotion started. In the same report judge Schoenrich describes:

"In April, 1916, the minister of war endeavored to depose the president, and another revolution threatened, when the American government took drastic action. With the consent of the Dominican president marines were landed and took possession of Santo Domingo and other port towns. In the interior there was some opposition, but occupation of the whole country was eventually accomplished."<sup>57</sup>

The occupation model imposed on both countries was similar: local institutions and puppet governments would ensure the supremacy of the foreign military forces. This policy of conquest stimulated hostility from all social sectors. The peasantry led the armed resistance against the military intervention; in the Dominican Republic the movement was called the *Gavilleros*, who employed guerrilla war tactics and maneuvered in the eastern part of the country. In Haiti, the *caco* revolt was more widespread: the peasants of the

---

<sup>55</sup> Otto Schoenrich, "The Present American Intervention in Santo Domingo and Haiti." *The Journal of International Relations*, 11 no.1 (1920), 53.

<sup>56</sup> Susy Castor and Lynn Garafola, "The American Occupation and the of Haiti (1915-34) and the Dominican Republic (1916-24)." *The Massachusetts Review* 15 (1974), 254.

<sup>57</sup> Schoenrich, "The Present American Intervention," 46.



northern region, unlike the *gavilleros*, who were rapidly put down, were able to resist the occupation forces for more than three years.<sup>58</sup> During the uprising both groups used the border area as a strategic hideout.

Standing above all national authority, the most progressive sectors of the upper class promoted a wide movement of peaceful resistance, looking for the re-establishment of the sovereignty of their countries. The struggle, led by the *Unión Patriotique* in Haiti, and by the *Unión Nacional Dominicana* in Santo Domingo, was able to reach all sectors of the population in each country, therefore securing the withdrawal of the marines and the return to political independence.<sup>59</sup>

Following the study by the Haitian historian Susy Castor, there are two major marks left by the US intervention in the political and economic structure on both sides of the island. Firstly, the intervention coincided with the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which were marked by the arrival of modernization to the Caribbean. However, while in the Dominican Republic the introduction of modernization ran parallel with certain structural changes that allowed the development of capitalist agriculture, in Haiti it only reached a superficial level without stimulating any changes in the basic structures of society. For example, the agrarian structure stayed without any modifications, unless they were strictly necessary to promote investment. Secondly, the security body the *Guardia Nacional* was created. This military institution was created to reinforce the marines with military aid from the native population. Both the *Guardia Nacional* and its parallel the *Gendarmerie* in Haiti were created with essentially repressive functions, depending directly on the United

---

<sup>58</sup> Castor, "The American Occupation," 268-269.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 269.

States Navy.<sup>60</sup> It was from this military institution that the dictator Rafael Trujillo emerged to control the nation for 31 years.

The economic outcome of the US interventions was clearly different on each side of the island. Haiti remained a pre-capitalist country while the Dominican Republic saw the development of a rural working class and the growth of the middle sector, strengthening its relationship with the world capitalist market on the basis of the sugar industry.<sup>61</sup>

As an explanation for the two different paths, Castor points first to the historical moment of the economic intervention. In Haiti it started after the military arrived and coincided with the 1921 recession; in the Dominican Republic, US investments had been going on since before the military occupation started, and were thus able to achieve higher levels of development before the year of the recession. Secondly, Castor highlights land division. The Dominican Republic was favored by the large *latifundia*, while in Haiti the smallholdings pattern did not offer the infrastructure needed for the sugar industry. Most businessmen invested in Santo Domingo and import Haitian labor. Even though the economic bonanza can be traced through the increase of the sugar exports, “from 122,642 tons in 1916 to 220,629 in 1924,”<sup>62</sup> the benefits of this growth were not reflected in a steady improvement of the living standards of Dominican people.

Modernization arrived in the Dominican Republic in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was reflected in the modern sugar mills, steam power machinery, railroads, telegraph, public electricity, and the construction of a road network. With the introduction of infrastructure advances came new ideas and a new modernizing impulse for the country;

---

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 269.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 272.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 271.

positivism arrived at around the same as the sugar industry.<sup>63</sup> In the administration of President Cáceres the authorities had the idea that promoting white immigration would bring progress to the country.<sup>64</sup> For example, in 1907 the Dominican government took action in the colonization of the borderlands, and created an irrigation plan for the northwestern corridor. The state started buying land near the border to locate the *colonias agrícolas* that were meant to resettle the region.

Meanwhile in Haiti, on the assumption that land ownership would strengthen patriotism, Haitian leaders continued fomenting smallholder agriculture. “The tendency towards *minifundismo* was compounded by the inheritance pattern of the Napoleonic Code, in which heirs were allotted equal portions of property in land.”<sup>65</sup> Such agrarian reform, combined with the fact that Haiti had always been more densely populated than the Dominican Republic, fostered the migration of Haitian peasants to the Dominican borderlands. However, the movement and interaction of both cultures in the region was not new: Haitians had traveled to the central lands in the past for a variety of reasons. What changed was the concerns and mentality of the Dominican authorities and their intention of closing and nationalizing the border.

In the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, daily life on the Dominican side of the frontier started feeling the influence of the new state apparatus. Political figures, thinkers, and state authorities were highly influenced by European positivism. Such “Dominican liberals as

---

<sup>63</sup> Moya, *Manual de Historia*, 499-500.

<sup>64</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The hour of eugenics" : race, gender, and nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>65</sup> Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money,” 509.

Américo Lugo, argued that due to the 'deficiency' of the Dominican racial mixture and low level of mass literacy, the 'people' were not prepared for self-governing democracy."<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money," 505.

## **The Imagined Nation of Rafael Trujillo, The First Seven Years of the Trujillato**

The problem of determining the border limits was finally resolved by the border treaty of January 21 1929. This final treaty was overshadowed by the political and social changes that occurred in the following years, and had to be improved in March 1936 by a Protocol of Revision, which, among other things, agreed on the construction of an international roadway that would function as a border.<sup>67</sup> However, the final revision was made under the rule of Trujillo, and his rise to power was the main cloud over the signing of the Treaty.

In May 1930, General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina assumed the presidency of the Dominican Republic by means of a military coup. Trujillo was the head of the army and supported a coup in February 1930 by the former State Secretary, Rafael Estrella Ureña, leading a march from Santiago de los Caballeros (the second largest city) to Santo Domingo to overthrow the president Horacio Vázquez. Vázquez was an old, sick man and easily agreed to hand Estrella Ureña the presidency. Once Estrella was president there was a new call for elections, and it did not take long for it to become clear that Trujillo, who was now running for the presidency, had always been behind Estrella Ureña and was not going to turn back now. Vázquez organized a new political party to contest Trujillo, but not many days went by before he and his allies discovered that their followers and supporters were

---

<sup>67</sup> Frank Moya Pons “Las tres fronteras: introducción a la frontera domínico-haitiana,” *La cuestión haitiana en Santo Domingo: migración internacional, desarrollo y relaciones inter-estatales entre Haití y República Dominicana*, (Santo Domingo: Flacso, 1992), 19-20.

being persecuted and incarcerated by members of the army. Under such a campaign of political terror, along with the military and police intimidation of civil society, Horacio Vázquez's party collapsed and the election was run with a single candidate. In August of that same year Rafael Trujillo and Rafael Estrella Ureña became president and vice-president, to the consternation of most of the country.<sup>68</sup>

Trujillo's long rule lasted until 1961, during which time his policies emphasized an official racist ideology that he hoped would build a national identity and justify his regime. This ideology united differing historical trends, such as white Hispanic cultural nationalism, Catholicism, and racism toward blacks, which was always targeted toward Haitians.<sup>69</sup> Violence, terror, torture, and murder were the mechanisms utilized by Trujillo, as well as support from the army, to impose his government and remain in power over 31 years.<sup>70</sup>

Looking a little closer into the figure of the dictator provides a better understanding of how he imagined the Dominican nation. It proves interesting to examine the description given by Lauren Derby. She says the dictator was known for his "achieved rather than ascribed demeanor; his love for uniforms, his use of make-up, and his elegance as a dandy."<sup>71</sup> However, with his notoriously whiny voice and porly stature, he was neither exceptionally statuesque nor an eloquent man of words. He relied on cultured regime intellectuals such as the poet and speechwriter Joaquín Balaguer, who provided him with

---

<sup>68</sup> Moya, *Manual de historia*, 507-511.

<sup>69</sup> Jorge L Giovannetti, and Humberto García Muñiz, "Garveyismo y Racismo En el Caribe: El caso de la población cocola en la República Dominicana." *Caribbean Studies* 31 no. 1 (2003) 176-177.

<sup>70</sup> Moya, *Manual de historia*, 513.

<sup>71</sup> Lauren Derby, "The Dictator's Two Bodies: Hidden Powers of State in the Dominican Imagination." *Etnofoor* 12 no. 2 (1999) 95.

the discursive presence needed for a man of stature.<sup>72</sup> If we analyze Trujillo and his individual personal character, it is as if, in his use of make-up, uniforms, and a poet speechwriter, he was creating for himself and for the nation an identity, an artificial veil, that hides reality instead of incorporating it into the big picture.

In the following excerpt from his first speech as president, delivered on August 16, 1930, we will see how Trujillo was constantly selective of the three elements that, in his ideology at least, shape Dominican society – language, lineage, and religion, three characteristics inherited from the Spanish colonial era.

La España colonizadora, la de la nación gloriosa que, al través del tiempo, y cuando ya se ha extinguido felizmente el fragor de nuestras contiendas emancipadoras, contempla con orgullo este despliegue de naciones hispanoamericanas, emplazadas, sobre el haz de todo un continente, en un alarde de vitalidad y de grandeza, orgullosas de su estirpe procera, e identificadas en un empeño común por estrechar constantemente sus vinculaciones con la madre preclara, que nos legó su lengua polícroma, su fina espiritualidad y su eternal e indomable vocación de libertad e independencia.<sup>73</sup>

When talking about the past and the origins of the Dominican nation, Trujillo's eyes can only have been looking at the Spanish precedent: "ninguna otra nación de América, de las que hablan la rica lengua de Cervantes, que haya enaltecido con más celo los timbres de su abolengo hispánico y dado mayores muestras de fidelidad a su pasado venerable."<sup>74</sup> With his constant praising of the Spanish legacy he attempted to create a nation that not only ennobled their Spanish ancestors but at the same time ignored other ethnic groups, denying them the possibility of overtly participating in the creation of a nation. However, the process was taking place in a multicultural society, and even though Trujillo referred to

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid 95.

<sup>73</sup> Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*, I:25.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, IV:185.

himself as “dominicano edificado en las nobles enseñanzas de los Padres de la Patria (...) ciudadano del mundo, que no comparte la ideología inhumana de diferencias de razas,”<sup>75</sup> in reality he held an ideology that differentiated races and consequently worked toward the “elimination” of the African element in Dominican society.

An example is his preoccupation, from the very first years of his regime, with the closure and definition of the border. By the 1936 agreement with Sténio Vincent, the president of Haiti, Trujillo implanted a strong policy of nationalization or “Dominicanization” along the frontier. The basic mission of the nationalization program was to stamp the Dominican national identity on the people and on the land. Trujillo had the intention of integrating them economically, socially, and politically with the rest of the country. “Dominicanization” sought to stop the progress of further intrusion by the Haitians, and Trujillo hoped that in so doing he could achieve political stability along the frontier.<sup>76</sup>

The massacre of 1937 was only one chapter in the campaign to expel the Haitians from the Dominican borderlands. Between 1937 and 1944, many thousands of Haitians crossed the border into Haiti and the border became a barrier to further migration. Once the Haitian presence on the border was eliminated, Trujillo would finally and effectively integrate the border region into the Dominican nation for the first time in the history of his country. This policy favored Trujillo and the elites who envisioned a rigid border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

“The elite sought a both geographically and culturally bounded nation. The frontier population, however, was unable to make sense of, or find a place for itself in this elite formulation of a mono-ethnic Dominican nation radically

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, IV:329.

<sup>76</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization”, 23.



distinct from Haiti. Given these conditions, [Turits argues] that the Haitian massacre should be seen as an attack not only on Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. The Haitian massacre should also be seen as an all-out assault by the national state on a bicultural and transnational frontier world collectively made by ethnic Dominicans and ethnic Haitians.”<sup>77</sup>

Besides these reasons, even before the massacre, the border remained the place of refuge for opponents to the government. The means by which Trujillo took power made his opponents seek refuge in Haiti. The dictator knew this was happening and was bothered by the Dominicans who were receiving support in Haiti, not only from the media but also from certain elements of the Haitian government.<sup>78</sup> Added to this, it should be taken into account that until 1934 Haiti was still occupied by the U.S. Marines; consequently, the approach from the Dominican authorities and the relationship between the two countries was always amicable.

The 1929 Treaty had not really given the Dominican state any authority over the borderlands, and consequently both countries started a series of negotiations to put the treaty into practice. Such discussions took place during the early years of Trujillo’s rule, and were characterized by a careful tone due to the fact that a more powerful army was still bringing support to the neighboring country.

Border negotiations and the beginning of the Trujillato ran parallel to the world economic crisis of 1929, which had a large impact on Dominican society and drastically lowered the quality of life of the Dominican population. From the first day of his regime Trujillo intended to solve the problem with the approval of the legislature by means of limiting the labor market to Dominican nationals and reducing foreign participation, especially by Haitians. Later, in 1933, the labor “dominicanization” law was approved and

---

<sup>77</sup> Turits, “A World Destroyed”, 593-594.

<sup>78</sup> Vega *Trujillo y Haití*, 55.

stated that labor centers were obliged to hire a minimum of 70% national workers. Additionally, an entrance and residency tax of \$6.00 were imposed on foreigners. Racial discrimination was implicit in this law, which stated that Chinese workers, “la raza mongolica”, and “los naturales del continente africano que no sean de la raza caucásica” had to pay \$300 and \$100 for their entrance to the country and residency taxes, respectively.<sup>79</sup> However, the law was not completely implemented. Trujillo ceded to pressure from American sugar mill owners who were not willing to substitute their Haitian labor force for Dominican workers.<sup>80</sup>

Racism was observed not only in the labor laws. One year after the dominicanization of labor law, Trujillo passed a decree to foster settlement on government land along the border to attract white farmers. The law also stipulated that these settlements could take up to 25% foreign workers provided they were white.<sup>81</sup> We can see how the main concerns of Trujillo can be reflected in the border area. He pretended to establish the hegemony of his government in a fixed and well-defined space and encouraged the development and repopulation of the border with immigrants of non-African origins; in this way we approach the different motivations that ended in the massacre of Haitians in 1937.

---

<sup>79</sup> Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 133.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

## **The Haitian Massacre of 1937, Simultaneous narrations**

As explained above, Trujillo's intentional creation of a nation, and his attempts to erase the African element from the social fabric, intensified the borderland conflict between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Here I concentrate on the different interpretations of what Benedict Anderson calls simultaneity and relate them to the Haitian-Dominican border conflict. I look at the Haitian massacre of 1937 to analyze two of the multiple versions of the incident. The narrations of the events have a range of different tones depending on the narrator. Stories vary from a complete denial of the event – Trujillo's version, which slightly changed over time – to the vivid descriptions given by victims who survived and were able to cross the border and give their testimony.

I analyzed the reports and official speeches given by Trujillo, then compared them to the diplomatic dispatches and communications between the Haitian and American Legations discussing the event. The two versions ran parallel to each other; nonetheless, Trujillo's version was public and spread through the official discourse, fostering in Dominicans' minds the process of simultaneously imagining a nation depicted on Trujillo's terms.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson explains how, for medieval man, the present coexisted concurrently with the future and the past. A different conception of simultaneity is fundamental to the complex origins of nationalism. The medieval conception of "simultaneity-along-time" is replaced by a concept Anderson borrows from Walter

Benjamin's *Illuminations*,<sup>82</sup> the concept of "homogeneous, empty time." This refers to transverse and crossways simultaneity that is marked by temporal concurrence and measured in terms of calendar and clock.<sup>83</sup>

Time is empty in the sense that there is no limit to the events that are happening in it, and at the same time homogeneous because it is not affected by any particular event. Without the conscious or unconscious understanding of simultaneity it would be impossible for an individual to conceive a nation; the personal process of thinking – imagining – the rest of the members that form the community, creates in the person's mind the complex system that is the nation.

Anderson refers to two narrative forms, the novel and the newspaper, understood as imagining forms; he explains how they collaborated in the building of the European 18<sup>th</sup>-century nations. But without the shift in the conception of simultaneity the structure of the novel and newspaper would not have developed and provided a way to reproduce the national imagined community.<sup>84</sup>

The structure of the most traditional novel sets in the imagination of the reader a society in which events are taking place at the same time. Even though they are narrated in a sequential order the reader is representing them simultaneously in his imagination. For Anderson "the idea of a social organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid

---

<sup>82</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (London:Fontana, 1973) 265 quoted in Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*, revised edition. (New York: Verso, 2006), 24.

<sup>83</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 24-25.

community moving steadily down (or up) history.”<sup>85</sup> A similar process takes place in the minds of the members of a nation. Information about the movement and development of the nation is inscribed into their understanding, either by reading a newspaper, attending communal gatherings, listening to a public speech, or receiving the benefits of a national development campaign. All these activities create an image of the nation and its trajectory; its members are aware of their belonging to the group and take into account what they are told about other members to construct their representation of the nation.

For both Haitian and Dominican central societies, the border was a distant region, and their idea of the communities living there was also separated from reality. For almost 150 years there was no mutually recognized political divide between the countries. From Trujillo’s perspective the communities in the border region lived in a sort of simultaneity-along-time that interfered with his national project. He would think of them as living in what Benjamin calls a “Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present.”<sup>86</sup> The fact that he would only recognize a past time in order to claim the territory, however, with no intention of considering the societies living on it, demonstrates his extreme preoccupation with the present – a present he intended to shape on his own conditions by promoting in every possible way the Dominican nation he imagined.

The shift in the concept of simultaneity allows the planning and execution of the massacre. As explained above, the emptiness of time provides for an unlimited amount of

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>86</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (London:Fontana, 1973) 265 quoted in Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*, revised edition. (New York: Verso, 2006), 24.

events happening at the same time; Trujillo utilizes this conceptualization to deal with the massacre according to what he wanted the Dominican people to know and believe about it. Nonetheless, the same hollowness of time provides for the creation of as many narrations as there can be narrators.

In October of 1937, President Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina ordered his army “to kill all Haitians” living in the Dominican Republic’s northwestern frontier with Haiti, and in certain parts of the contiguous Cibao region.”<sup>87</sup> Between 2 and 8 of October, hundreds of Dominican troops entered this vast region, and rounded up and slaughtered with machetes as many as 15,000 Haitians. “Those killed in this operation – still frequently referred to as *el corte* (the cutting) by Dominicans and as *kout kouto-a* (the stabbing) by Haitians – were mostly small farmers, many of whom had been born in the Dominican Republic (and thus were Dominican citizens according to the Dominican constitution), and some whose families had lived in the Dominican Republic for generations.”<sup>88</sup> After the first days of the massacre, the official crossing and bridge between Haiti and the Dominican Republic were closed, therefore Haitians were not able to easily escape. Consequently, during the first months of the first year, thousands more Haitians were deported and many others were killed in the southern frontier region.<sup>89</sup>

Trujillo’s preoccupation with the definition of the border situation can be traced back to the second year of his rule. In the year 1931, he started a military tour through the entire border region. An analysis of the speeches given during this tour reveals a clear

---

<sup>87</sup> Turits, “A World Destroyed”, 589.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 590-591.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 591.

preoccupation with ambiguous identities in the communities and their backwardness. An overt anti-Haitian ideology cannot be pointed out in these texts; however, a direct mention of the thefts happening along the border is a recurrent theme. This is important to remember because six years later the dictator spoke about the massacre and referred to such crimes. The following is an excerpt of the speech given in Dajabón, April 25, 1931, during the official visit:

“El Gobierno garantizará mejor la paz y seguridad de sus habitantes con una mayor protección de los intereses privados y públicos. Mejorará por tanto el servicio policial, la vigilancia será eficazmente perseguida, ayudados el agricultor y el ganadero, circunstancias que harán desaparecer los robos de animales y de productos agrícolas, tan frecuentes en estos lugares.”<sup>90</sup>

Six and a half years after Trujillo’s first excursion into the borderlands, he returned to the same town in Dajabón. On October 2, 1937, during a party in Trujillo’s honor, the dictator proclaimed:

“For some months, I have traveled and traversed the frontier in every sense of the word. I have seen, investigated, and inquired about the needs of the population. To the Dominicans who were complaining of the depredations by Haitians living among them, thefts of cattle, provisions, fruits, etc., and were thus prevented from enjoying in peace the products of their labor, I have responded, ‘I will fix this.’ And we have already begun to remedy the situation. Three hundred Haitians are now dead in Bánica.”<sup>91</sup>

The previous text is not part of the official collection of speeches, proclamations, and messages, which comprises 11 issues, each of which has an average of four hundred pages. It was not until February 7, 1938, almost five months after the massacre had occurred, that Trujillo publicly spoke about the event, in his message to the President of the Senate asking

---

<sup>90</sup> Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*, 1:93

<sup>91</sup> Jean M. Jan, *Collecta IV: Diocese du Cap-Haitien documents, 1929–1960* (Rennes: Simon, 1967), 82, quoted in Richard Turits, “A World Destroyed”, 613.

for the approval of the agreement signed in Washington, January 31 to close up the events that occurred between Haitians and Dominicans during the last three months of 1937. In the message, Trujillo talks about how the enemies of the nation had distorted the origins of the event with the intention of turning them into an international scandal. The dictator refers to the events as “hechos ocurridos, muy lamentables, similares a los que acaecen a diario en todas las regiones fronterizas.”<sup>92</sup>

In this same message, Trujillo explains how it was not until November 12 that his government was notified of the events. On that date, he received three messages from the presidents of Cuba, Mexico, and the United States, whom the president of Haiti had asked for help in solving the border problems between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. To the respective presidents – Laredo Bru, Lázaro Cárdenas, and Franklin Roosevelt – Trujillo replied that he had not been informed of any incidents by the Haitian government. He constantly stressed his interest in preserving the peace and guaranteed that as soon as his government was informed of the events he would determine whether intervention from representatives of the three countries would be needed.<sup>93</sup>

In the documents sent by the American Legation in Santo Domingo, there is a dispatch dated November 5, 1937, sent to the Secretary of State. The author of this dispatch, Franklin B. Atwood, Chargé d’Affaires, writes about a previous meeting he had with the Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Joaquín Balaguer, in which Balaguer stated that the number of Haitians killed in the Cibao region was grossly exaggerated; he referred to the deaths as “pequeños incidentes” in which the Dominican armed forces had “exceeded their

---

<sup>92</sup> Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*, III:197.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid* III:200-206



instructions in the heat of the moment.” Balaguer closed his intervention by saying, according to Atwood, that “only a Dominican could appreciate this feeling and that if he had been in the north during these recent incidents he would probably have done the same as the Dominican soldiers.”<sup>94</sup>

From these two examples we can observe how even within the Dominican official discourse there is variation. On one hand Trujillo denies having been informed about the border incidents; on the other hand, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs is not only accepting the existence of the facts (although exaggerated in his opinion), but implicitly recognizing that the killings were carried out by Dominican officials and justifying their action.

In the days immediately after the massacre the Haitian representatives in the Dominican border towns started communicating with the central Haitian authorities. The first document sent about what was happening is a telegram dated October 5, 1937, 2:30 p.m., sent by Colonel André Fabre, Assistant Commander, from Haitian Cape to Port-au-Prince. He writes about 260 Haitians returning to Haiti that afternoon, most of them carrying the identification card required to live in the Dominican Republic – according to Fabre, they said they were obliged to leave after having been mistreated.

One day later, on October 6, and for most of the day on October 7, the telegrams and dispatches exchanged between the Haitian and American diplomats discuss the flight of Haitians from the Dominican border regions. There are slight references to the death of Haitian citizens; however, they are still counted in small numbers. The authors are suspicious of rumors and are waiting to confirm their information. The concern at this

---

<sup>94</sup> Franklin B. Atwood, dispatch no. 54 to the Secretary of State, 5 Nov. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

point is for the number of people returning to Haiti and the poor treatment that they received.

The first report about the massacre came on the night of October 7; however, the last paragraph in this text recognizes that the speaker in the telephone conversation “reported that all the above is a rumor but comes from sources which are usually accurate.”

The following is a fragment of this report by the Chargé d’Affaires, Harold D. Finley:

Dispatch No. 567 Report of telephone call from Melville Monk Resident Inspector at Cap-Haitien, at nine o’clock a.m.

A lot of Haitians being killed at Monte Cristi and Dajabon by soldiers. Eight hundred fifty-eight Haitians came across the frontier at Dajabon, fleeing from Santo Domingo. Four hundred more crossed at Capotille, making over 1,200 who have crossed since Monday.<sup>95</sup>

Dispatch No. 13 of the American Legation from Santo Domingo to the Secretary of State in Washington, written by Henry Norweb, the American Minister, makes reference to Trujillo’s speech from October 2, in Dajabón. Norweb explains:

“the President was at Dajabón on October 2; a dance was held in his honor; he may have, flushed by the occasion, made incautious and inflammatory reference to Haitian border bandits; his own troops or frontier guards, thinking to please the President, may, indeed, have done bodily injury to Haitians resident on the Dajabón side of the frontier and a large number of these persons have consequently fled to the shelter of their territory.”<sup>96</sup>

For the part of the Haitian Legation, their documents do not doubt the truth of the events; on the contrary, they express the concern they are feeling and the impossibility of solving the problem. I copy here a telegram from the Haitian Consul in Dajabón to the

---

<sup>95</sup> Harold D. Finley, dispatch no. 567 to the Secretary of State, 7 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

<sup>96</sup> Henry Norweb, Dispatch No. 13 to the Secretary of State, 18 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

President in Port-au-Prince. The word selection of the consul reflects how powerless the Haitian authorities feel toward the magnitude of the disaster. The consul's first sentence, "The massacre continues," and the last, stating the helplessness of the Consulate, demonstrate their awareness of the event.

Ouanaminthe, le 9 Octobre 1937

President D'Haiti

Palais National, Port-au-Prince

Tuerie continue. Tous les haitiens, hommes, vieillards, femmes et enfants se rendant chez eux et traversant la frontière sont impitoyablement assassinés à quelques pas de Dajabon. Consulat impuissant devant hostilité autorités de Dajabon.

Profond respect.

Arnold Fabre

Consul d'Haiti à Dajabon R.D.<sup>97</sup>

Going through the documents of the three countries, the different parallel versions appear very clear. The fact that Trujillo's version was officially spread throughout Dominican society erased for some time the voices of the Haitian victims; at the same time, with the "Dominicanization" campaign Trujillo intended to remove any cultural trace that was left. In the following section I explain the reaction of the Haitian authorities and the international community.

The Haitian president Sténio Vincent avoided a military response at all costs, probably because he was aware of the inferiority of his army or simply because, as Turits claims, he feared losing control to his opponents. "If troops were sent to the frontier, the palace would be left vulnerable to attack. But under increased domestic pressures due to

---

<sup>97</sup> Arnold Fabré, telegram to Sténio Vincent, 9 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

growing evidence of the extent of the massacre, Vincent did eventually seek an investigation of the atrocities”<sup>98</sup> and assistance in negotiations from other countries.

Trujillo did not agree to the proposal of an investigation and instead offered an indemnity to Haiti, while still refusing any admission of official responsibility. Sténio Vincent readily accepted Trujillo’s offer of \$750,000 – of which only \$525,000 was ever paid – in exchange for an end to international arbitration.

The diplomatic solution to the massacre allowed Trujillo to rewrite the event in his own words. He used it as a “nationalist defense against the putative ‘pacific invasion’ of Haitians. The indemnity agreement signed in Washington, D.C., on January, 31, 1938 unequivocally asserted that the Dominican government “recognizes no responsibility whatsoever [for the killings] on the part of the Dominican State.”<sup>99</sup>

In the statement made to the governments of Mexico, Cuba, and the United States, who witnessed the accord, Trujillo mentioned that the agreement was also establishing the formal process of inhibiting migration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The statement read:

“More than an indemnization, a sacrifice to pan-American friendship . . . [this] also represents an acquisition of legal positions that assure the future of the Dominican family, and preclude the single deed capable of altering the peace of the Republic, the only threat that hovers over the future of our children, that constituted by the penetration, pacific but permanent and stubborn, of the worst Haitian element into our territory.”<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Turits, “A World Destroyed”, 623

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 625.

<sup>100</sup> José Israel Cuello, *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937*, (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985) 456-466 quoted in Turits, “A World Destroyed , A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no.3 (2002) 623.

The signing of the agreement made official Trujillo's second, favored version of the story, with the first being a complete denial of the events. The Dominican government defended the massacre as a response to illegal immigration by hypothetically undesirable Haitians. Trujillo used a moment of international scandal for the regime's legitimization through nationalism. This nationalism justified the massacre on his terms and the imposition of a well-policed border to protect a mono-ethnic national community.

## **Trujillo's Colonization of the Dominican Borderlands Agrarian Colonies and the Nationalization Campaign**

Just as the border negotiations had had a different tone prior to 1937 when the expulsion of the Haitians took place, something similar happened with the colonization campaigns, principally those carried out in the borderlands. Although these had been ongoing projects since the government of Ramón Cáceres in 1907, with his assassination in 1911 the plan was abandoned and the country went through a period of political instability ignoring the development of frontier communities.<sup>101</sup> However, the fact that the country had a low population kept the implementation of settlement campaigns and immigration programs (preferably of Europeans) a priority in the government's agendas. At the same time, the "persistent motivation for the establishment of colonies stemmed from the traditional fear of Haiti's burgeoning population and the need to bolster the thinly-populated frontier against infiltration."<sup>102</sup>

In the years after Cáceres' rule, President Horacio Vázquez promoted the establishment of agrarian colonies at the frontier with two main purposes: first, to stop the rapid Haitianization of the borderland communities, and second, to increase the agricultural production of the country.

Of all the colonies established during this period, the most important was Villa Vázquez, located in the northern province of Montecristi on privately owned land that was acquired by the Department of Agriculture. Several of the characteristics that are common

---

<sup>101</sup> Orlando Inoa, *Estado y campesinos al inicio de la era de Trujillo*, (Santo Domingo: Librería La Trinitatia, 1994), 158.

<sup>102</sup> John P. Augelli, "Agricultural Colonization in the Dominican Republic." *Economic Geography* 38 no.1(1962), 17.

to most agrarian colonies, especially those created later during the era of Trujillo, can be observed in Villa Vázquez. It was the first colony where the State built an irrigation ditch that depended on the National Irrigation Office; after the slash and burn of the area, approximately 20 Spanish families were settled, they received around *mil tareas de tierra*, and food subsidies for six months. Villa Vázquez, named Villa Isabel in the time of Trujillo, was the experimental and demonstration center that the State used as an example of a good colony to promote the production of rice.<sup>103</sup>

In terms of settlement patterns, the colony of Villa Vázquez is a good example to analyze how the distribution of the more recently founded towns, was still following a very similar design as the one ordered by the Laws of the Indies. As Konvitz put it referring to the plan during the Spanish colony, which can be also said about the towns built in the first half of the 1900s, authorities had a “legalistic, programmatic approach to city planning [that] avoided particular distinctions among cities and identified the functional aspects of planning with its administrative control, and, so with uniformity.”<sup>104</sup>In the following map we can observe how the town is set over the traditional grid with a central plaza and the streets are distributed primarily along two axes.

---

<sup>103</sup> Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*, 161.

<sup>104</sup> Konvitz quoted in Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped, Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 114.



Figure 1 Map of Villa Vázquez 2013<sup>105</sup>

The immigration program during the government of Horacio Vázquez, except for Villa Vázquez, was qualified as a failure. The State was unable to make the colonies attractive by offering the necessary means for adaptation. A newspaper of the time, referring to European farmers, said:

“Había que ver cómo se extenuaban aquellos finlandeses bajo el rigor de aquel clima, teniendo que vivir poco menos que desnudos y expuestos a todas horas a las picaduras de los anofeles del terrible paludismo.”<sup>106</sup>

From 1930, when Trujillo took power, the character of the agricultural colonies underwent a significant change when members of the army and prisoners were included as settlers. Known as “Colonias Agrícolas Penales,” these communities depended on forced labor and military control.<sup>107</sup> They were more common during the seven years prior to the Haitian massacre; after it, border colonies went back to supporting immigration of white farmers.

<sup>105</sup> <https://maps.google.com/maps?q=villa+v%C3%A1zquez+mapa&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:es-MX:official&client=firefox-a&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hl=es&sa=N&tab=wl>

<sup>106</sup> *La información*, 30 de enero de 1947, AGN.

<sup>107</sup> Inoa, 164.



The massacre became a turning point in the relationship between the two countries. When Dominican-Haitian international relations became tinted by the violent expulsion of Haitians from Dominican territory the agricultural colonies also changed. They started serving as a contention wall to avoid future encroachment of Haitians into the Dominican borderlands. At the same time, legislation was passed declaring that a 10 km-wide strip all along the border would become of public use, this area was declared on state of permanent colonization.<sup>108</sup>

Before the borderland was replaced with a borderline, people in the region spoke French, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, used currencies interchangeably, had family on both sides of the border, and most probably practiced a religious mix of African religions and Catholicism. Along the border zone people could easily distinguish between Dominican and Haitian territory when the border follows a river, which is the case of the Massacre river in the North and Libón and Artibonito rivers in the South. However, even though in theory the land was divided, in practice, people lived and traveled freely from one side of the border to the other, even more so in those areas where the division was not naturally marked. Communities represented what Richard Lee Turits calls a “bicultural and transnational Haitian-Dominican community.”<sup>109</sup> The mark of cultural heterogeneity was equally perceptible on the land. The typical Haitian house, constructed of wattle and mud, would alternate with the Dominican palm-board structure, occupying prominent positions indiscriminately. “Dispersed settlement so typical of Haitian peasantry was more common

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>109</sup> Turits, “A World Destroyed,” 630.

than the village groupings favored by Dominicans, and the road net, such as it was, was oriented more to the west than to the east.”<sup>110</sup>

Government leaders had been unable to fully control the largely undefined border region; with Trujillo, the state would extend its reach throughout the border in an unprecedented way and make its presence felt. The region that for years had been a haven for maroon slaves, revolutionaries, contraband, and a strong Haitian presence, became the site of Trujillo’s nationalistic project. “The aim was to transform the border and incorporate it into the new nation, the one Trujillo and his intellectuals now defined (...) as Catholic, Spanish, and white.”<sup>111</sup>

Trujillo intended to spread a cultural, ideological, social and urban uniformity across the country, but mostly along the border. “This campaign would officially be promulgated by government authorities in 1942 (...) with the official name of *la dominicanización de la frontera*, or the Dominicanization of the border.”<sup>112</sup> The basic mission of the nationalization program was to stamp the Dominican national identity on the people and on the land. Trujillo had the intention of integrating “Dominicans” economically, socially, and politically with the rest of the country. But the “Dominicanization” program also sought to stop further intrusion by the Haitians, and Trujillo hoped that, in doing so, he would achieve political stability along the frontier.

Another phase in the nationalization process was to reduce the size of the border provinces with the intention of achieving a more efficient administration. As can be seen on the map, only three Dominican provinces adjacent to the border existed in 1935 (Azua,

---

<sup>110</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization,” 23.

<sup>111</sup> Paulino, “Erasing Kreyol,” 41.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 43.

Barahona, and Monte Cristi); by 1950 there were five provinces, which indicates the increased emphasis upon settling the frontier from the Dominican side. The two newly created provinces, Benefactor and San Rafael, were both located on the territory that used to be only Azua. The old province of Barahona suffered a similar fate, except that a part of Barahona, the southernmost section, still touches the Haitian boundary.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, the names of the provinces were changed in accordance with the nationalistic spirit. “The new frontier units and adjacent provinces were christened with names such as ‘Independencia,’ ‘Libertador,’ and ‘Benefactor.’ Hundreds of public buildings and dozens of settlements were given the names of Dominican patriots, famous battles, and other suggestive national symbols.”<sup>114</sup>

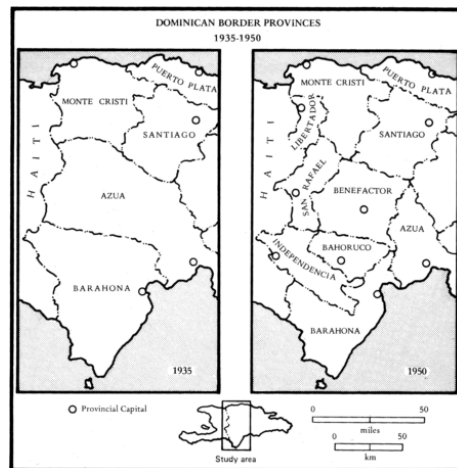


Fig. 2 Changes in size, nomenclature, and capitals of Dominican border provinces between 1935 and 1950<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Donald R. Dyer, “Distribution of Population on Hispaniola.” *Economic Geography* 30 no.4 (1954) 343.

<sup>114</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization,” 33.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

The landscape itself was another instrument of nationalization used by Trujillo. During these years the international boundary was accurately delimited and marked. Juan García Bonnelly, a member of the intellectual community supporting Trujillo, said:

“previa a toda acción dominicanizadora de las fronteras había de ser la definición categorica de la línea de separación de Haití y la República: era necesario saber a ciencia cierta lo que era nuestro por derecho, para comenzar, sobre esa base ya firme, la obra de volver netamente dominicano lo que apenas tenía conciencia de su nacionalidad.”<sup>116</sup>

It is worth analyzing García Bonnelly's words closely, as they condense the approach of the Dominican central government toward the frontier. As was reflected in events, their first concern was to define a line. They needed to know “what was theirs,” but once the line was defined the Dominican State realized that this was not going to solve the problem. The biculturalism of the border communities made it clear it was another task to be taken care of, and that was to turn all that was “barely conscious of its nationality” into “Dominican.”

Consequently, every effort was made to sharpen the visible contrast on either side of the line. Frontier towns were the target of such attention. The government invested millions of dollars in the construction of public buildings such as hospitals, political headquarters, schools, housing projects, military barracks, and other structures. It is helpful to look at the following map that shows the growth of the border cities of Ouanaminthe (Juana Mendez) in Haiti founded in 1758, and Dajabón in the Dominican Republic founded in 1771.<sup>117</sup> Both cities have grown in very distinct ways, the Dominican

---

<sup>116</sup> Juan Ulises García Bonnelly, *Las obras públicas en la Era de Trujillo*, (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1955) TOMO II:57.

<sup>117</sup> Lena Poschet, “Across the River: Urban Borderland Development in the Republic of Haiti + The Dominican Republic: The Case of Dajabón + Ouanaminthe.” *The MIT Student Journal of Planning*, 2007, 65.

town still follows the traditional grid and urban sprawl which is not as evident as it is in Ouanamithe where only the center of the city is set on a squared pattern.



Fig. 3 Growth of Ouanamithe and Dajabón from 1777 an 2004<sup>118</sup>

In terms of architecture concrete was used as the building material, and the architectural style was always typically Hispanic. Houses built of wattle and mud in the Haitian way were ordered to be destroyed and replaced by houses typically Dominican in appearance. Dispersed settlements, characteristic of the Haitian countryside, were also discouraged in favor of agglomerated settlements, which often developed ribbon-like along the highways.<sup>119</sup> Juan Ulises García Bonnelly, author of *Las obras públicas en la era de Trujillo*, with the following description of the border town of Jimaní, reveals there was a sentiment of pride about all the changes taking place – being “Dominican” was almost considered a synonym of “modern and developed”, as opposed to Haitian:

“Jimaní, no era ya la vieja, triste, abandonada y meserosa población de casuchas destartaladas donde se ponía, en eterno ocaso, el sol de la nacionalidad dominicana, sino una ciudad bien trazada, Hermosa, con anchas avenidas y

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>119</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization,” 28.

edificios de una arquitectura neoclásica esplendorosa, que se alzaba de las tierras esteparias donde habían vegetado por siglos sus habitantes, para asentarse como un bastión de la espiritualidad de una nueva era dominicanista.”<sup>120</sup>



Fig. 4 Haitian Rural House<sup>121</sup>



Fig. 5 Dominican Rural House<sup>122</sup>

Dominican reformers saw agricultural development as a cure for the “national vices” associated with the cattle raising culture on public lands, typical of the border region. “Unfenced animals, like stateless caudillos, were seen as social parasites preying on the private property and hard work of others. Liberal reformers virulently focused their attack on fencing laws privileging ranchers.”<sup>123</sup> The Reformers’ civilizing campaign was broader; it involved the defamation of an entire way of life, the vilification of the wild-meat hunting and subsistence slash-and-burn agriculture society. As part of the campaign to nationalize the region, “tools, seeds, work animals, and even house furnishings were often provided gratis [to the settlers]. The colony remained tax exempt until such time as it gained its economic feet, and the colonists [received] cash subsidies for an indefinite period of time, at least until their first harvest.”<sup>124</sup> Due to the great dependency farmers had on the State,

---

<sup>120</sup> García, *Las obras públicas*, TOMO II:63.

<sup>121</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization,” 25.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>123</sup> Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money,” 499.

<sup>124</sup> Augelli, “Nationalization,” 20.

the political interests of the regime determined their agricultural production. From the documents of the Department of Agriculture, we can see how peasants' labor conditions were in many ways precarious; they would constantly write letters to the Secretary of Agriculture asking for oxen, a small piece of land, furniture, and so on.<sup>125</sup>

The failure of the colonization ventures from 1927 stemmed from the poor means of communication and low rainfall levels. Dominican planners learned the lesson and placed major importance on both irrigation and transportation.<sup>126</sup> Numerous irrigation works were constructed to favor the economy, since much of the frontier region is a semi-arid area. The purpose of the campaign was to transform the region's grazing and marginal farming into more intensive agriculture. At the same time, the legal status of many rural villages on the border was formalized. "This change in local border designations meant that the politically ambiguous landscape became increasingly demarcated by 'legal municipalities, district municipalities, provincial capitals and provinces' Dominican officials saw these border provinces as preventive bulwarks against future Haitian immigration."<sup>127</sup>

From 1930 to 1945, 40 agricultural colonies functioned with 9,211 settlers and 45,080 inhabitants over a surface area of 1,135,812 *tareas*, of which 603,922 were cultivated with rice, coffee, peanuts, corn, and bananas. By 1940 these colonies had satisfactorily attained food self-sufficiency.<sup>128</sup>

Through an analysis of the reports and communications that the visiting inspectors issued to central authorities regarding border colonies, we can see how life for the farmers in the borderlands was still unsteady. The most common problems these colonies faced

---

<sup>125</sup> Secretaría de Agricultura Leg 6.223 (1953) AGN.

<sup>126</sup> Augelli, "Nationalization," 19.

<sup>127</sup> Paulino, "Erasing Kreyol," 44.

<sup>128</sup> Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*, 173.

were related to infrastructure, administration and population levels. Requests for irrigation projects, specifically in the south, are a constant topic in the letters that the farmers sent to the State authorities. For example, the report issued by Major Andrés Monclús says:

“La Agricultura en la Comunas fronterizas (...) alcanzará un pleno desarrollo y florecimiento cuando el Gobierno decida la construcción de los canales de regadía que fertilicen sus tierras, pues, demás está decirlo, la región sufre de largas sequías en las cuales se agostan casi completamente los cultivos existentes.”<sup>129</sup>

Corruption at the administrative level was a frequent problem that halted the development of agriculture and towns in general. Dishonesty and fraud were more recurrent in the “penal agrarian colonies,” where the prisoners were supposed to receive their stipend in cash; according to the inspector, only a small number of them received the money.<sup>130</sup>

The two main purposes of the Dominicanization campaign and the agricultural reform were achieved during the era of Trujillo. First, the Haitian element was erased from the Dominican territory, and while Trujillo was in power the only Haitian immigrants admitted into the country were directed to the sugar plantations.<sup>131</sup> Second, the Dominican Republic experienced its largest increase in agricultural production. The main contradiction of Trujillo’s agrarian reform is that none of the wealth and growth shown in the statistics, which received so much propaganda, ever reached the farmer’s hands.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> Ejército Nacional Leg, 31 (1942) AGN.

<sup>130</sup> Ejército Nacional Leg, 31 4 sept (1942) AGN.

<sup>131</sup> Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 398-399.

<sup>132</sup> Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*, 211-212.



## Conclusion

As Derwent Whittlesey explains in his article “The Impress of Effective Central Authority Upon The Landscape,”<sup>133</sup> political activities make an impact upon the landscape similarly as economic pursuits do. It is possible that government acts become visible in the landscape solely as phenomena of economic geography and others express themselves more directly. “Deep and widely ramified impress upon the landscape is stamped by the functioning of effective central authority.” Such was the case in the island of Hispaniola since the colonial period when the French landowners spread the plantation system and the Spanish dedicated to small farms and cattle ranching.

The Haitian Revolution left one of its most obvious traces in its pattern of land division, shifting from a plantation economy to small plots worked by individual farmers. Due to numerous factors such as the disadvantageous conditions (the hostility from the neighboring countries and paying a debt to France) under which the Haitian Republic was founded and the intrinsic political conflicts in the new nation, Haiti faced astounding challenges in setting itself in motion as an independent and prosperous nation. Beyond the sociopolitical challenges, the Haitian Republic also faces the constant decay of the land through deforestation; this ecological catastrophe continues to be one of Haiti’s major problems.

By the 1930s in the neighboring Dominican Republic, Trujillo’s intensive nationalization campaign intended to “Dominicanize” the region, implementing a strong policy that would first and foremost close the border. Trujillo fostered an anti-Haitian sentiment that had consequences not only on the violent expulsion of the Haitians, but also

---

<sup>133</sup> Derwent Whittlesey, “The Impress of Effective Central Authority Upon the Landscape.” *Political Forces in Regional Geography*, 7, no.25 (1935), 85.

in the banishing of any visual trace that could be related to Haiti. In the Trujillista project this also included the physical landscape. Such was the example of the housing buildings that were destroyed along the border and replaced with Dominican style housing.

The consequences of the different policies and governmental campaigns in the borderlands of the island can be easily traced in the landscape and social situation between the two countries. In the Haitian border towns the immediate result of the 1937 massacre and nationalization campaign was a massive influx of new settlers seeking vacant land. Refugees returned to family lands that they had left twenty years before. Another kind of refugee appeared; those born in the Dominican Republic of Haitian descent. These repatriated Haitians became strangers in their own land, Haiti. Shortly after the massacre, most remaining agricultural land in the Haitian provinces was occupied. The sudden increase in population provoked changes in the farming process by shortening the uncultivated period and transforming agriculture in the more fertile areas from a slash-and-burn system to continual cultivation. This intensive use of the land accelerated deforestation and soil erosion, two of the major problems that today still affect the economy and social conditions of Haiti.<sup>134</sup>

The closure of the border in 1936 carried the paradoxical character of borderlines. This is to say, while the closure intended to separate and stop the interaction of a bi-cultural community that shared the area, language, religion, and currency (indeed, the closure marked a distinction among the communities), but this closure also simultaneously created a new network and system of interaction across the two communities. It can be said that such extreme nationalization policies do not resolve border difficulties. Instead,

---

<sup>134</sup> Palmer, "Land use and Landscape Change", 89.

cooperation programs, in this case dealing with development and infrastructure, which benefit both sides of the border are more likely to help create ideal conditions for communities on the borderlines.

As has been explained, three of the objectives of the Nationalization campaign were achieved, however the results obtained from the intensive colonization did not always benefit the borderland societies. The first objective was the strong investment in the infrastructure of border towns, as explained in the report issued by General Marc L. Vital, March 1958, all border towns were provided with potable water and hospitals were built. Looking closer at the case of Dajabón “que era un foco de paludismo, ha visto su cuota de malaria pasar, después del drenaje de la region, de un 40% a un 1% durante este año”<sup>135</sup> it is clear how the quality of life for the new settlers was improved by the Dominicanization campaign.

Regarding the erasure of the Haitian element in the Dominican territory, and the creation of a national identity in opposition to Haitian citizens, I argue that the effects of these measures are not as positive as represented by government officials. In reality, the effect was the marginalization of African culture, and consequently the exploitation of Haitian immigrant workers. Lastly, the increase of the national agricultural production was beneficial for the landowners, whereas the Dominican peasantry in the agricultural colonies were always dependent on the State. The economic growth and surplus that resulted from the industrialization of agriculture never reached or benefitted the Dominican peasants.

---

<sup>135</sup> Fondo Presidencia Sección Palacio Nacional Fechas extremas 1954-1959 Leg 14,303.

Today, along the borderline there are only three official crossings open between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In order from north to south they are at Ouanaminthe – Dajabón, Belladere – Elías Piña, and Malpasse – Jimani. Still, just as it was during the Colonial times, illegal trade of people and goods continues to be a recurrent practice between these two countries just as it is in other borderlands areas. Another effect of the nationalization policy was noticed after the death of Trujillo when the Haitian immigration phenomena re-emerged. By that point, Haitian immigration was marginalized by the Dominican society and conceived of as “the other”.

The history of the relations between the two sides of the island was always characterized by a continuous land struggle that merges with the definition one (first Spanish then Dominican) in opposition to the other (French and then Haitian). Scholars who have studied the phenomenon of nationhood make reference to the existence of a defined territory, a common history, original cultural forms – of which language is one of the most important cultural identity-markers – and the means for material production to assure the survival of the group.<sup>136</sup> In 1936 the Dominican authorities were finally able to achieve the lacking element for the formation of their nationhood, the rigorous demarcation of their national territory. The massacre imposed a new national community and culture on the frontier, one imagined for the first time without Haitians.

In perpetuating the 1937 massacre, Trujillo responded to the interests of a central Dominican elite who felt threatened by the ambiguous border with Haiti. Dominican elites

---

<sup>136</sup> Howard, David A. 2001. “Dominican Republic Spurns Haitian Migrants: Rejection of African Heritage Fuels Anti-Haitian V.” *Report on the Americas*. 24-28. Martinez, Samuel. 2003. “Not a Cockfight Rethinking Haitian-Dominican Relations.” *Latin American Perspectives* 30 (3): 80–101., and Torres-Saillant, Silvio. 1994. “Dominican Literature and Its Criticism: Anatomy of a Troubled Identity” *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, Vol. 1. Ed. A. James Arnold, Julio. 49-64.

saw the region as "the primordial sign and site of barbarism, of a hybrid space of racial and international admixture...".<sup>137</sup> Their fear was not only rooted in economics, but also in a racial ideology that in their eyes made the black Haitians undesirable. However, it seems that both Trujillo and the Dominican elites didn't see a problem with black Haitians as long as they were working on the cane fields, and they were able to benefit from the Haitians' cheap labor.

The 1937 massacre and the successive Dominicanization program were motivated by the elites' desire to make the geographical border correspond to an imagined differentiation among the two national groups. This desire was rooted in the definition of what it means to be Dominican as not Haitian. The Dominican elites believed that they had achieved a unified and stable national identity, an identity that could be thought of as a set of statements that normatively describe and define the nation, and that dictate to the members of the nation what they are and how they should be. However, we know that "almost all societies are culturally and ethnically heterogeneous; after all, nationality is not monolithic."<sup>138</sup> However, in spite of diversity, there is some broad understanding of what belongs to the nation and what does not. National identities tend to be defined in contrast with "the Other".

This dichotomy can be reflected on every social sphere: Dominicans were racially White or Amerindian, Spanish-speaking, and exclusively Catholic, Haitians were racially Black and African, French or Kréyol speaking, and voodoo-practitioners. In fact, one of the Trujillo regime's ideologues, Joaquín Balaguer (whom then became president and ruled the country for 12 years) explains all of these points in his text *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino*

---

<sup>137</sup> Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money," 491.

<sup>138</sup> Pedro L. San Miguel, *The imagined island*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2005), 63.

*dominicano*.<sup>139</sup> The book blames Haitian influence for all of the physical and spiritual defects in the Dominican population, and the author therefore encourages Dominicans to preserve their racial and religious difference.

In the Dominican Republic as in the rest of Latin America an idealized view of racial harmony permeates the official discourse. For example, the Dominican ideologist Juan Bosch alludes to a Dominican racial democracy that does not really correspond to reality. The assumptions of categories like race, ethnicity, and gender are generally expressions of power relations, they conform the social fabric of most Caribbean societies. As was demonstrated, race, perhaps as a tacit protagonist, but protagonist nonetheless, has played an important role in the historical development of these former *sociedades esclavistas*.<sup>140</sup>

When analyzing the current Caribbean societies, including Haiti, race and color are relegated to a second level giving priority to power relations and social inequalities. However, in spite of the rejection to the matter of race, skin color, as a form of expressing racial differences, steps into every dimension of social life and is consciously taken into account by the different social groups as a political and ideological instrument for reproducing or acquiring class privileges.<sup>141</sup> An example is how in the Dominican Republic being black is equivalent to being Haitian and the Haitian immigration corresponds to the lowest class in society.

---

<sup>139</sup> Joaquín Balaguer, *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* (Santo Domingo: Fundación José Antonio Caro, 1983).

<sup>140</sup> Carolle Charles, "La raza: una categoría significativa en el proceso de inserción de los trabajadores haitianos en República Dominicana." *La cuestión haitiana en Santo Domingo: migración internacional, desarrollo y relaciones inter-estatales entre Haití y República Dominicana*, (Santo Domingo: Flacso, 1992), 148.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

Todorov in the introduction to his book *The conquest of America: the Question of the Other* states, "We can discover the other in ourselves, realize we are not a homogeneous substance, radically alien to whatever is not us: as Rimbaud said, *Je est un autre*. But *others* are also "I"s: subjects just as I am, whom only my point of view (...) separates and authentically distinguishes from myself".<sup>142</sup> Once the border conflict ended the bicultural world that existed in the area disappeared, an ideology with both an economic and racial base successfully created two societies conceived as different by the Dominican authorities, relegating the Haitian to the place of the stranger. The *other*, as Todorov explains, can fluctuate from an individual (in relation to *me*) to a collective (a social group *we*) realm, it can be understood within a certain society, men not women, rich not poor, mad not "normal", black not white, or outside of it, either by physical distance or cultural distance (language, customs, history) Haitian not Dominican. Whenever the patience and humbleness of man to participate in this mirroring exercise of recognition to try to see and understand ourselves in the other and vice versa, new, and hopefully healthier forms of interaction between "different" groups will take place.

---

<sup>142</sup> Tzvetan, Todorov. *The conquest of America: the question of the other*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 3.

## References

Américo Lugo. 1952. *Historia de Santo Domingo desde el 1556 hasta 1608; edad media de la isla española*. Ciudad Trujillo: Editorial Librería Dominicana.

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities*, Revised Edition, New York: Verso.

Augelli, John P. 1962. "Agricultural Colonization in the Dominican Republic." *Economic Geography* 38 (1): 15-27.

-----, 1980. "Nationalization of Dominican Borderlands." *Geographical Review* 70 (1): 19-35.

Ayuso, Mónica G. 2011. "'How Lucky for You That Your Tongue Can Taste the 'r' in 'Parsley': Trauma Theory and the Literature of Hispaniola." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 30 (1): 47-63.

Balaguer, Joaquín. 1983. *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano*. Santo Domingo: Fundación José Antonio Caro.

Braziel, Jana Evans. 2008. "Diasporic Disciplining of Caliban? Haiti, the Dominican Republic , and Intra-Caribbean Politics." *Small Axe* 12 (26): 149-159.

Carolle, Charles. 1992. "La raza: una categoría significativa en el proceso de inserción de los trabajadores haitianos en República Dominicana." *La cuestión haitiana en Santo Domingo: migración internacional, desarrollo y relaciones inter-estatales entre Haití y República Dominicana*. Santo Domingo: Flacso. 145-168.

Castor, Susy and Lynn Garafola. 1974. "The American Occupation and the of Haiti (1915-34) and the Dominican Republic (1916-24)." *The Massachusetts Review* 15: 253-175.

Cordero Michel, Emilio. 1974. *La revolucion haitiana y Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: Taller.

Crassweller, Robert D. 1966. *Trujillo: The life and times of a Caribbean dictator*. New York: Macmillan.

Crist, Raymond E. 1952. "Cultural Dichotomy in the Island of Hispaniola." *Economic Geography* 28 (2): 105-121.



Cuello, José Israel. 1985. *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937*. Santo Domingo: Editora Taller.

Howard, David A. 2001. "Dominican Republic Spurns Haitian Migrants: Rejection of African Heritage Fuels Anti-Haitian V." *Report on the Americas*. 24-28.

Deagan, Kathleen. 2003. "Colonial Origins and Colonial Transformations in Spanish America," *Historical Archaeology* 37, (4): 3-13.

Derby, Lauren. 1999. "The Dictator's Two Bodies: Hidden Powers of State in the Dominican Imagination." *Etnofoor* 12 (2): 92-116.

----- . 1994. "Haitians , Magic , and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands , 1900 to 1937." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36 (3): 488-526.

Derwent Whittlesey, "The Impress of Effective Central Authority Upon the Landscape." *Political Forces in Regional Geography*, 7, no.25 (1935), 85.

Dyer, Donald R. 1954. "Distribution of Population on Hispaniola." *Economic Geography* 30 (4): 337-346.

Edward, Paulino. 2005. "Erasing the Kreyol from the Margins of the Dominican Republic: The Pre- and Post-Nationalization Project of the Border , 1930 - 1945." *Wadabagei* 8 (2): 35-72.

Gallego Cuiñas, Ana. 2008. "Denuncia y Univocidad: La Narración Del Trujillato." *Hispanic Review* 76 (4): 413-435.

García Bonnelly, Juan Ulises. 1955. *Las obras públicas en la Era de Trujillo*. Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana. TOMO II:57.

García Márquez, Gabriel. 1978. *Cien años de soledad*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés.

García, José Gabriel. 1983. *Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos.

Giovannetti, Jorge L, and Humberto García Muñiz. 2003. "Garveyismo y Racismo En El Caribe: EL Caso De La Población Cocola En La República Dominicana." *Caribbean Studies* 31 (1): 176-177.

Guitar, Lynn. 1998. "Cultural genesis: Relationships among Indians, Africans, and Spaniards in rural Hispaniola, first half of the sixteenth Century". Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University.

Hicks, Albert C. 1946. *Blood in the streets: The life and rule of Trujillo*. New York: Creative Age,

Horacio Blanco Fombona. 1943. *El tirano Ulises Heureaux o veinte años de historia tenebrosa de América*. Santo Domingo: Ediciones Librería La Trinitaria.

Kostof, Spiro. 1991. *The City Shaped, Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, Boston: Little, Brown.

Inoa, Orlando. 1994. *Estado y campesinos al inicio de la era de Trujillo*. Santo Domingo: Librería La Trinitaria.

Martinez, Samuel. 2003. "Not a Cockfight Rethinking Haitian-Dominican Relations." *Latin American Perspectives*, 30 (3): 80-101.

Matibag, Eugenio. 2003. *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint, Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moya Pons, Frank. 1985. "The Land Question in Haiti and Santo Domingo: The Sociopolitical Context of the Transition from Slavery to Free Labor, 1801-1843." *Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

----- 2007. *History of the Caribbean : plantations, trade, and war in the Atlantic World*. Princeton : Markus Wiener Publishers.

----- 1980. *Manual de historia dominicana*. Santiago, República Dominicana: UCMM.

----- 1992. "Las tres fronteras: introducción a la frontera domínico-haitiana," *La cuestión haitiana en Santo Domingo: migración internacional, desarrollo y relaciones inter-estatales entre Haití y República Dominicana*. Santo Domingo: Flacso. 19-20.

Muñoz, María Elena. 1995. *Las relaciones dominico-haitianas: Geopolítica y migración*. Santo Domingo: Alfa y Omega.

Nelson, William Javier. 1987. "The Crisis of Liberalism on the Dominican Republic, 1865-1882." *Revista De Historia De América*. 104: 227-235.

Palmer, Ernest Charles. 1976. "Land Use and Landscape Change Along the Dominican-Haitian Borderlands." PhD diss., University of Florida.

Pena, Gustavo de. 1998. "The Siblings of Hispaniola: Political Union and Separation of Haiti and Santo Domingo, 1822-1844." Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University.

Poschet, Lena. 2007. "Across the River: Urban Borderland Development in the Republic of Haiti + The Dominican Republic: The Case of Dajabón + Ouanaminthe." *The MIT Student Journal of Planning*. 54-72.

San Miguel, Pedro L. 2005. *The imagined island*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina.

Schoenrich, Otto. 1920. "The Present American Intervention in Santo Domingo and Haiti." *The Journal of International Relations*, 11 (1): 45-62.

Stepan, Nancy Leys. 1996. *"The hour of eugenics" : race, gender, and nation in Latin America*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Torres-Saillant, Silvio. 1994. "Dominican Literature and Its Criticism: Anatomy of a Troubled Identity" *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, Vol. 1. Ed. A. James Arnold, Julio. 49-64.

Tapia, Concepción Hernández. 1970. "Despoblaciones de la isla de Santo Domingo en el siglo XVII." *Anuario De Estudios Americanos* 27: 294-296.

Todorov, Tzvetan. 1999. *The conquest of America: the question of the other*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Tolentino Rojas, Vincente. 1944. *Historia de la división territorial 1494-1943. Edición del Gobierno Dominicano*. Santiago, RD: Editorial El Diario.

Trujillo Molina, Rafael Leónidas. 1946. *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*. Vols. I-VI. Santiago: Editora El Diario.

Turits, Richard Lee. 2003. "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic." *Race And Class*: 589-635.

Vega, Bernardo. 1988. *Trujillo y Haití*. Vol. 1, 1930–1937. Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana.

### **Documents from the National Archive, Dominican Republic**

Arnold Fabré, telegram to Sténio Vincent, 9 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

Arnold Fabré, telegram to Sténio Vincent, 9 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

Ejército Nacional Leg 31 4 sept (1942) AGN.

Ejército Nacional Leg, 31 (1942) AGN.

Fondo Presidencia Sección Palacio Nacional Fechas extremas 1954-1959 Leg 14,303 AGN.

Franklin B. Atwood, dispatch no. 54 to the Secretary of State, 5 Nov. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

Harold D. Finley, dispatch no. 567 to the Secretary of State, 7 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

Henry Norweb, Dispatch No. 13 to the Secretary of State, 18 Oct. 1937, Colección Bernardo Vega, Archivo General de la República (Santo Domingo).

*La información*, 30 de enero de 1947, AGN.

Secretaría de Agricultura Leg 6.223 (1953) AGN.