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Merengue: Dominican Music and Identity

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Merengue: Dominican Music and Identity

Description

Merengue—the quintessential Dominican dance music—has a long and complex history, both on the island and in the large immigrant community in New York City. In this ambitious work, Paul Austerlitz unravels the African and Iberian roots of merengue and traces its growth under dictator Rafael Trujillo and its renewed popularity as an international music.

Using extensive interviews as well as written commentaries, Austerlitz examines the historical and contemporary contexts in which merengue is performed and danced, its symbolic significance, its social functions, and its musical and choreographic structures. He tells the tale of merengue's political functions, and of its class and racial significance. He not only explores the various ethnic origins of this Ibero-African art form, but points out how some Dominicans have tried to deny its African roots.

In today's global society, mass culture often marks ethnic identity. Found throughout Dominican society, both at home and abroad, merengue is the prime marker of Dominican identity. By telling the story of this dance music, the author captures the meaning of mass and folk expression in contemporary ethnicity as well as the relationship between regional, national, and migrant culture and between rural/regional and urban/mass culture. Austerlitz also traces the impact of migration and global culture on the native music, itself already a vibrant intermixture of home-grown merengue forms.

From rural folk idiom to transnational mass music, merengue has had a long and colorful career. Its well-deserved popularity will make this book a must read for anyone interested in contemporary music; its complex history will make the book equally indispensable to anyone interested in cultural studies.

Keywords

Merengue, Dominican Republic, Ibero-African music, dance

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

An often-quoted anecdote maintains that merengue originated in 1844, the year that the Dominican Republic was founded (Vidal in Hernández 1927:6; Hernández in Ysalguez 1975b:50-51; Coopersmith 1945:86-87, 1949:19-20; Roberts 1972:106-107). As the story goes, a Dominican soldier named Tomás Torres had abandoned his station during the Battle of Talanquera in the War of Independence. The Dominicans won the battle, and while celebrating the victory at night, soldiers sang the first merengue, which mocked the cowardly Torres:

Toma' juyó con la bandera

Toma' juyó de la Talanquera:

Si juera yo, yo no juyera,

Toma' juyó con la bandera (in Hernández 1927:6).

Thomas fled with the flag,

Thomas fled from Talanquera;

If it had been I, I wouldn't have fled:

Thomas fled with the flag.

Related by journalist Rafael Vidal to composer and folklorist Julio Alberto Hernández, this account first appeared in print in 1927, during a period when merengue was beginning to gain currency as a national symbol. A melody for the song and a similar text appear in the same year in another publication, Julio Arzeño's Del folklore musical dominicano. Arzeño, however, did not consider it a merengue, classifying it as a "patriotic song" instead (1927:127).¹ The Battle of Talanquera theory of merengue's origin is clearly dubious history, but it is a powerful myth, because it links music and national identity in a solid bond, a bond that has endured through most of merengue's history.

The true origin of this music will never be known with certainty. But whatever their differences, theories about merengue's origin express deep-rooted feelings about Dominican identity. Although they differ in many important ways, the Dominican Republic and Haiti share many cultural characteristics.

Like merengue in the Dominican Republic, mereng (in Haitian Creole, méringue in French) is a national symbol in Haiti. Fouchard suggests that mereng evolved from the fusion of slave musics such as the chica and calenda with ballroom forms related to the French contredanse (1988:5-10). He also writes that mereng's name derives from the mouringue music of the Bara, a

Bantu people of Madagascar (1988:77-82, 1973:110). The fact that few Malagasies came to the Americas renders this etymology dubious, but it is significant because it foregrounds what Fouchard, and most Haitians, consider the essentially African-derived nature of their music and national identity.² Fouchard posits that Dominican merengue developed directly from Haitian mereng during the 1822-44 period in which Haitians ruled Spanish Dominicans (1988:66).

Dominicans are often disinclined to admit African and Haitian influences on their culture. As ethnomusicologist Martha Davis points out, many Dominican scholars

have, at the least, ignored African influence in Santo Domingo. At the worst, they have bent over backwards to convince themselves and their readers of the one hundred percent Hispanic content of their culture. This is not an uncommon Latin American reaction to the inferiority complex produced by centuries of Spanish colonial domination (1975:9).

Merengue innovator Luis Alberti writes that merengue "has nothing to do with black or African rhythms" (1975:71). The proclivity to hide connections with Africa is related to anti-Haitian sentiment, and relationships between the national musics of Haiti and the Dominican Republic have often been ignored or downplayed in Dominican merengue scholarship. Several standard Dominican sources, written by competent scholars, that mention merengue in

Puerto Rico and other countries neglect to even acknowledge the existence of Haitian mereng (Nolasco 1956:321-41; del Castillo and García Arévalo 1988:17; Lizardo 1978a, 1978b; Lizardo in Ysalguez 1979a:51,). Peña-Morel is one of the few Dominicans to acknowledge that merengue is something that Dominicans share with Haitians. For him, however, this fact renders merengue an inappropriate Dominican symbol; he suggests that another genre, the mangulina, is more representative of national culture (1929 III:1,3).³

In the 1970s, some Dominican intellectuals and artists began to challenge this Eurocentrism by celebrating the African contributions to Dominican culture and looking at connections to Haiti. The musicologist Jorge noted that

anti-Haitian sentiment and the tendency to hide and/or minimize the African roots of our [Dominican] culture on the part of the bourgeois intelligentsia have obstructed understanding and study not only of merengue, but of numerous forms of Dominican culture through the years (1982:33).

Prominent in this movement was Dominican folklorist Fradique Lizardo, who discussed the African influence on Dominican culture (1979) and asserted that "merengue's origin is in Africa" (in Ysalguez 1975a:50). Lizardo was criticized for making such statements. For example, the respected dance music composer Luis Senior said that he was "horrified" by Lizardo's assertion, and

that it is "unpatriotic" to call merengue African (in Ysalguez 1976d:50). Lizardo's theory of merengue's origin resembles Fouchard's. Asserting that the Bara of Madagascar perform a dance called "merengue" and noting that they utilize a drum similar to the Dominican tambora, which is prominent in Dominican merengue,⁴ Lizardo suggests that Bara and other African musics were syncretized with a Cuban form called the danza, and that this gave rise to Caribbean merengue (1978a; also see 1978b:11-13).⁵ As mentioned earlier, few Malagasies came to the Americas.

Moreover, the facts that drums similar to the tambora are diffused widely in Africa (and Asia), and that several styles of merengue (both in and out of the Dominican Republic) do not use the tambora weigh against Lizardo's idea that merengue derives specifically from the Bara.

In spite of their differences, almost all of the origin theories point to connections between merengue European ballroom dance musics such as the danza (Fouchard 1988:15-21; Lizardo 1978a; Nolasco 1939:60, 1948:164-65, 1956:322; Hernández 1969:65; Rueda 1990b). Nolasco feels that merengue's association with these forms indicates that its origins are in Europe (1948:164-65). Although Rueda acknowledges the possibility of some African influence on merengue, he also believes that its European influences demonstrate merengue's Euro-American nature and discredits the idea that merengue is Afro-Caribbean (1990b). Hernández, however, points out that European-derived musics came under African influence in the Americas, arguing that while merengue developed from European forms, it is a syncretic, Afro-

Hispanic genre (1969:53). Singer Joseito Mateo, the "king of merengue," concurs, pointing out that racial amalgamation naturally produces syncretic music:

Dominican whites and blacks [originally] had their own musics, just as in the United States, the blacks have their own music. But gradually, what is called a fusion of the two races came about, the blacks and the whites. And so, a música mestiza was formed; that is, a mixed music. The white contributes his part, and the black contributes his drums (interview).

For most Dominicans, then, discussion of merengue's origin is equated with discussion of Dominican national and racial identity. Eurocentric thinkers emphasize merengue's European elements, Afrocentric scholars emphasize its African elements, and those who celebrate racial amalgamation point to its syncretic nature. While they do not agree on the nature of Dominicanness, all of these constituencies agree that Dominican identity is expressed in merengue.

A Mixed-Race Community

The Dominican Republic's population is estimated at 80% mixed African and European, 15% black, and 5% white; Dominican sociologist Pérez Cabral aptly calls it a "comunidad mulata," or mixed-race community (1967:75).⁶ As Martha Davis writes, the

African-derived element in this mix is considerable: the Dominican Republic "without doubt, should be considered an Afro-American nation -- that is, a New World nation in which the African cultural influence figures prominently, if not predominantly" (1976:2; also see Lizardo 1979; Aretz and Ramón y Rivera 1973; Austerlitz 1986, 1992). But this does not mean that the European element in Dominican culture is negligible; the upper classes, as well as the campesinos (country people, peasants) in certain regions, are of predominantly Spanish origin. Spaniards and Africans were not strangers when they met in the Americas; Spain had come into a great deal of contact with Africa during the 700 year Moorish occupation of the Iberian peninsula. Ortiz writes that the forces occupying Spain came from as far away as Timbuktu (1952-55, vol. 3:64), and Curtin notes that many Spanish entrants to the Caribbean were "free settlers of partial African descent" (1969:31). Juan Bosch suggests that economic conditions in colonial Santo Domingo may have produced the "de facto, if not de jure, liberation of the slaves, to extent that these already in 1659 behaved as free men, although they were not free legally" (1988:121; quoted and translated in Hoetink 1973:85). Black and mixed-race freedmen outnumbered both whites and slaves in Spanish Santo Domingo by the end of the eighteenth century.

Positioned at a juncture between Old World civilizations, Dominicans developed a unique culture steeped in both African and Spanish traditions. This Afro-Spanish borderland spawned myriad musics. These include a wealth of African-derived styles such as

palos, congo, and sarandunga drumming, which are performed by Afro-Dominican religious brotherhoods; European-influenced forms such as chuines, influenced by Canary Islands music; and many syncretic styles such as merengue and mangulina, characterized by a fusion of African and European elements (see Davis 1976, 1981; Lizardo 1975).

Mountainous terrain and poor roads kept five primary areas of the Dominican Republic relatively isolated from each other; regionalism has been central to both music and politics in the country (see the map).⁷ El Sur (the South), the largely arid southwestern portion of the country, contains large cattle ranches and Santo Domingo, the capital of the Republic, while sugar cultivation as well as ranching dominate el Este (the East). The lush northeastern Samaná peninsula was settled by black entrants from Haiti, the English-speaking Caribbean, and the United States. The fertile, rolling mountains of the country's most densely-populated central region, el Cibao, have been used mainly for small-scale fruit, vegetable, tobacco, and coffee cultivation, and shares many cultural characteristics with the more arid Línea Noroeste (north-west border). The country's oligarchy was long concentrated in the Cibao's largest city, Santiago de los Caballeros (literally, "Santiago of the Gentlemen"). While Dominicans of both African and European descent live in all areas of the Republic, the Cibao contains⁸ the highest degree of European ancestry in both urban and rural areas. As Pérez Cabral puts it,

the South and East of the country became true centers of mulatos...[while] several areas of the Cibao maintained a preponderance of white population more or less devoid of African physical characteristics (1967:132-33).⁹

The high concentration of European blood, combined with the presence many oligarchs and its large population, precipitated what Hoetink terms a "hierarchy of regions, in which the Cibao had always been dominant" (1982:50, emphasis his). Variants of merengue developed in several regions of the country, but only the Cibao version gained national prominence.

Syncretism and Articulation

A cleavage between the Dominican Republic's dominant, Hispanocentric, ideology and its cultural reality caused mixed feelings similar to a "socialized ambivalence" that Herskovits noted in Haiti. Herskovits wrote that this predicament is caused by a Haitian's "possession by the gods of his [African] ancestors...despite his strict Catholic upbringing," and that his "desire to understand and worship the gods of his ancestors" is followed by "utter remorse after having done this" (1937:295-96).

Many Dominicans reveal similar mixed feelings about local music and national identity. Urban middle and upper classes are often attracted to rural arts as expressions of a national character, but eschew them in practice because most Dominican musics are

associated with African-derived religious practices. One Dominican friend told me on several occasions that he would like to view some of my videotapes of rural Dominican festivals. But he made it clear that he only wanted to look at tapes that "do not involve the saints or the dead"; the worship of saints and religious homage to ancestors in the Dominican Republic is associated with African-derived beliefs that my friend considered taboo. Because most Dominican rural festivals are, in fact, held in honor of saints or deceased community members, it was difficult for me to find tapes that he could view. Most Dominicans thus prefer to think of the Cibao variant of merengue as representative of their traditional culture. Davis, who has conducted extensive research on Afro-Dominican drumming, writes that

When I say that I study folk music, Dominicans on the whole say, "Oh, you mean the [Cibao-style] merengue" Long drum and other strongly African influenced types of music are not perceived as "folklore" (1976:10).

Or, they are not perceived as presentable folklore. Ironically, merengue is often performed as a recreational component of African-influenced rituals that Eurocentric Dominicans eschew.

Bourguignon noted a relationship between mixed feelings and syncretism, arguing that while the latter "helps to present a complete picture of the universe, ...ambivalence is essentially disruptive not only to a harmonious world-view, but even to

successful self-identification" (1951:173; also see Bourguignon 1969). But judgments resting in rigidly relativistic compartmentalization don't do justice to life's complexity; as Rosaldo writes, many cultural phenomena "escape analysis because they fail to conform with standard expectations" (1988:79). Explicating his influential notion of "double-consciousness" in 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois noted that mixed feelings cut both ways, sometimes widening, rather than limiting, people's horizons. He acknowledged that the African-American "ever feels...two warring ideals in one dark body," but also held that while this may "seem like the absence of power,...it is not weakness, -- it is the contradiction of double aims" (1989 [1903]:3). Far from being a flaw, the predicament that Herskovits describes are a natural outgrowth of the colonial encounter, a result of the inculcation of hegemonic values;¹⁰ as Franz Fanon writes, "ambivalence" is "inherent to the colonial situation" (1983:67; also see Smith 1983:93-95; Wilcken 1992; Ferrán 1985). Complex feelings engender multifaceted creativity; through the years, Dominican musicians have shown a remarkable ability to adapt to changing realities by incorporating non-Dominican elements into merengue. This multiple signification has given the music a special aesthetic relevance to changing times.

One-sided theoretical frameworks for considering merengue are inadequate. Adorno believed that popular culture promotes the interests of the ruling class (1976), while commentators such as Fiske argue that it belongs to "subordinated and disempowered" elements of society (1989:4). Calling attention to the

deficiencies of both views, McGuigan calls for a "critical populism" to replace the sometimes naively celebratory tone of "cultural populist" scholarship on one hand, and Adorno's position on the other (1992:5). Stuart Hall affirms that

Popular culture is neither, in a "pure" sense, the popular traditions of resistance...nor is it the forms that are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked (1981:228, quoted in Middleton 1990:7).

He thus proposes that we look at popular culture in terms of articulation, because this term "carries the sense of language-ing, of expressing," but more importantly, because

in England...we also speak of an articulated lorry (truck), a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another...So the so-called "unity" of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary "belongingness" (Grossberg and Hall 1981:53, quoted in McGuigan 1992:34).

Syncretic, multivalent, and fluid, merengue has endured as a symbol of Dominican identity by successfully articulating the contradictory forces at play in Dominican life.

Prologue to the Dominican Nation: 1493-1844

The Dominican Republic is on an island situated between Cuba and Puerto Rico which was called Quisqueya by its native inhabitants (see the map).¹¹ Christening it La Española (Hispaniola in English), Columbus claimed it for the Spanish crown and founded the first permanent European settlement in the Americas, Santo Domingo de Guzmán, on its southern coast in 1493.

Later, Santo Domingo became the capital of the Dominican Republic.¹² Only a century after Columbus's arrival, virtually all the native Tainos and Caribs had perished, and enslaved Africans comprised the majority of the island's inhabitants. Following a brief period of interest on the part of the Spanish crown, Hispaniola became a neglected part of the empire, as more lucrative areas of the Americas, such as gold-rich Mexico and Peru, were colonized. Frenchmen, many of them buccaneers, took advantage of Spain's disinterest in the island, and began to settle its western part in the seventeenth century. This area was ceded to France under the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. The Spanish colony was called Santo Domingo, and the French one, Saint-Domingue. While the French possession was soon relatively densely populated, mostly by enslaved Africans, the Spanish area remained sparsely settled and as we have seen, was characterized by a high degree of racial amalgamation.

Successful slave revolts shook Saint-Domingue in the late eighteenth century. Hoping to destabilize France's most

important colony, Spain and England supported the rebellions. Vying for the complicity of the Saint-Domingue masses, revolutionary France abolished slavery, and the black leader Toussaint L'Ouverture defeated the Spanish and English in the name of France in 1795. As a result, Spanish Santo Domingo was ceded to France under the Treaty of Basil. Occupied with its own revolution, France did not take possession of Spanish Santo Domingo until 1801, when L'Ouverture entered the territory, abolishing slavery as his first official act. Napoléon Bonaparte, however, had decided to reinstitute slavery on Hispaniola and use it as headquarters for a new French empire in the Americas. His forces wrested control of Hispaniola in 1802, capturing L'Ouverture and sending him to France. France secured control of the Spanish side of the island, while former slaves on the other part, now led by Jean Jacques Dessalines, refused to submit to their former masters and expelled Napoleon's forces. The Republic of Haiti, the world's first black republic and the second independent state in the Americas, was founded in 1804.¹³

Slavery was reinstated in Spanish-speaking Santo Domingo, now was under French control. Hoping to banish slavery and European domination from the island once and for all, Haitian President Dessalines invaded Spanish-speaking Santo Domingo in 1805, but was unable to take control. Although many Dominicans of color had sided with him, the Haitian leader felt betrayed and committed abuses while retreating; according to Moya Pons, he killed over 400 people in the towns of Moca and Santiago (1986:130). Stressed in Dominican historiography, this massacre

played a tractable role in the formation of a Dominican national identity that has often been articulated in opposition to Haiti.

The French enacted policies that the Spanish-speaking Dominican elite found disfavorable. With help from Spain and England, the Dominicans expelled the French in 1809, and their territory was returned to the Spanish Crown. Many Dominicans had mixed feelings about living under colonial rule when much of Latin America was seeking independence, and this period came to be known as the era of "España boba" ("Foolish Spain"). A group of Dominicans led by José Nuñez de Cáceres overthrew the Spanish colonial government in 1821, establishing "El Estado Independiente del Haití Español" ("The Independent State of Spanish Haiti") in alliance with Simón Bolívar's Colombia Federation. Haitian President Boyer was haunted by the possibilities of the return of the French and the re-institution of slavery. Enjoying the support of many Afro-Dominicans, Boyer's forces met little resistance when they entered Santo Domingo in 1822, and the island was again unified under the Haitian flag. The period that followed brought emancipation for the slaves, although they were tied to the land they worked. According to Davis, a "cultural renaissance" followed, as African-derived customs could be practiced without fear of persecution by the colonial authorities (1976:17).

Although Boyer's regime was relatively stable, Haitian policies, which tried to replace Spanish with French traditions, were not popular with the middle and upper classes. Economic problems fomented discontent on both the French and Spanish sides

of the island, and plots to depose the Haitian President were launched in both places. On the Dominican side, liberal intellectuals founded a secret society known as La Trinitaria (The Trinity). Headed by Juan Pablo Duarte, La Trinitaria strove to establish a new sovereign state independent from Haiti. The overthrow of Boyer in Haiti in 1843 created conditions favorable to the application of the plan, and after a short war of independence, the Dominican Republic was founded on February 27, 1844.¹⁴

Race, Nation, and Music

Many Dominicans did not consider Haitian President Boyer an outside aggressor when he took control of Spanish Santo Domingo in 1822. As Frank Moya Pons affirms, the Haitian leader offered the Dominican masses more than the Euro-Dominican ruling class did:¹⁵

[T]he majority of the population was mulatto, and many were favorably disposed to the unification with Haiti. To them, the Haitian government promised land, the abolition of taxes, and the liberation of the few remaining slaves (1995:123).

But being subsumed into a black republic was unacceptable to the white Dominican elite. Because Spain was less than forthcoming with support for this constituency, many privileged Dominicans

believed that the best way to preserve their social position was to break away from Europe (see Royce 1982:89-90). Anderson shows that many Latin American independence movements arose in response to threats of black or indigenous uprisings; Simon Bolívar himself once said that a slave revolt was "a thousand times worse than a Spanish invasion" (in Anderson 1991:49). These were the sentiments of the Dominican patriots, who gained independence from Haiti rather than from colonial Spain.

Hobsbawm demonstrates that the term nation originally applied to groups of people with a shared history, to what are today called ethnic groups. The idea that nations or ethnicities are linked to sovereign states and bounded territories became prevalent in western Europe and the Americas only in the middle to late nineteenth century (Hobsbawm 1990:14-17).¹⁶ The demographics of the Dominican state founded in 1844 were clearly at odds with the Eurocentric worldview of its leaders. As Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc write, the development of national identity is a "hegemonic process" in which a shared historical past is invoked or invented in a way that meets the interests of a country's dominant classes (1994:36). While the resulting sense of national identity may partake of pre-existing feelings of ethnicity,¹⁷ it is essentially a social construct; Balibar calls it "fictive ethnicity" (1991:96). This term is particularly applicable to the Hispanic sense of self that developed in the Dominican Republic, whose culture owes so much to Africa.

As propagated by Johann Gottfried Herder, Central European

Romantic nationalism taught that nations express their essences and highest manifestations in language and artistic expression (see Wilson 1973). The New World patriots espoused Enlightenment ideas rather than Herderian philosophy, but Romantic nationalism influenced the arts in the Americas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Béhague 1979:96 ff.). Upper class and bourgeois composers enlisted local rural musics as national symbols, but only those forms that were consonant with the dominant world-view were embraced. Urbane, Eurocentric Dominican cultural nationalists were naturally attracted to the syncretic merengue rather than to Afro-Dominican drumming. By canonizing one genre in particular, what Raymond Williams calls a "selective tradition" was "passed off as the tradition" (1991:414, his emphasis).

As the Dominican Republic entered the orbit of transnational capitalism in the late twentieth century, many of its citizens sought work abroad. Like other late twentieth-century migrants, their patterns of adaptation differed from the patterns of earlier migrants. While developing allegiances with the countries in which they reside, these "transmigrants" also maintain loyalty to their home countries, forging multiple identities that serve as subtle forms of resistance to political and economic domination (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994:7). Ex-patriot Dominicans created social, economic, and political networks to extend their home culture into transnational spaces, effecting what Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc call a "deterritorialized nation-state" (1994). Merengue was central to

the transnational Dominican identity that developed not only in the diaspora, but also in the Dominican Republic itself, as it was inundated with outside influences in the late twentieth century. Let us now look at merengue's early history, which had a different kind of transnational dimension.

¹ A third similar song text appears in a nineteenth-century writing by a Spanish military officer, but according to him, the song is a mangulina rather than a merengue (López Morillo 1983:81).

² Herskovits notes that only a "small proportion of the slaves" that came from Madagascar (1958:47).

³ Damirón suggests that merengue evolved from the mangulina, but provides no evidence to support the idea (1947:22).

⁴ Sachs (1938:35-37) provides a photo of a Malagasy drum similar to the Dominican tambora.

⁵ Fouchard himself notes that, despite the similarity of Lizardo and Fouchard's theories, the Dominican scholar does not cite his Haitian source (1988:81). Moreover, Lizardo makes no mention at all of Haitian mereng. As we have seen, conspicuous inattention to Haitian music is emblematic of much Dominican scholarship. While Lizardo's theory is revolutionary in acknowledging the African influence on merengue, his approach adheres to this pattern of omission. This suggests that, in some cases, repudiation of Haiti may run deeper than rejection of Africa.

⁶ Lizardo estimates the population at 72.9 per cent mixed, 16.1 per cent white, 10.9 per cent black, and 1 per cent Asian (1979:25), while the Dominican government reckons it as 60.4 per

cent mixed, 28.1 per cent white, and 11.5 per cent black (Wiarda 1969:74).

⁷ In 1881, Pedro F. Bonó complained about the hardship of long distance travel in the Republic, which was caused by roads that were

by a proper definition, not roads: those in the neighborhood are paths; those in the savannas are cattle-trails; those denominated royal are nameless passages where absolutely no one has ever lifted a finger...Every old Dominican who has finds himself obligated to make a journey,...spends the evening before as agitated as if it were the one preceding a battle (quoted and translated in Hoetink 1982:47).

⁸ Certain parts of the South also have also have populations of largely European descent.

⁹ Because race is a socially-constructed category, such assessments can be misleading to North Americans; in the United States a person with less than one-quarter African blood is often considered "black," while in the Dominican Republic he or she may be considered "white" (Wiarda 1969:74). Most Dominicans from the Cibao would not be considered "white" in the United States.

¹⁰ Contrasting it with "state coercive power," Antonio Gramsci

defines hegemony as "the 'spontaneous' consent of the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life imposed by the dominant fundamental group" and adds that "this consent is...caused by the prestige that the dominant group enjoys because of its position" (1971:12). Williams explains that hegemony amounts to a "common sense" world-view shared by all social classes, which, while often incorporating oppositional positions, ultimately serves the interests of the status quo (1991:419).

¹¹ Dominicans still use this term as a vernacular appellation for their country.

¹² The term Santo Domingo also refers to the entire colonial entity of Hispaniola, and is loosely used to refer to the Dominican Republic.

¹³ The term Haiti, which is said to derive from an indigenous word meaning "mountainous land." By using a native term for their country, Haitians express an anti-colonial posture. By contrast, the Dominican use of a European name (La República Dominicana, the Dominican Republic) as their country's official designation and an indigenous name (Quisqueya) as a vernacular one reflects mixed feelings rooted in colonial experience.

¹⁴ Moya Pons (1995) is my primary source on Dominican history. Moya Pons (1986), Pérez Cabral (1968), and Bosch (1988) have also

informed my perspectives.

¹⁵ Although the perspective offered here diverges from Moya Pons' rather Hispanocentric view of Dominican history, my work has greatly benefited from his rigorous scholarship.

¹⁶ Through most of the nineteenth century, the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Spain glossed the word nación as "the aggregate of the inhabitants of a province, country, or kingdom," making no reference to sovereignty until its 1884 edition changed the definition to "a State or political body which recognizes a supreme centre of common government," and "the territory constituted by that state" (in Hobsbawm 1990:14).

¹⁷ Hobsbawm calls these "proto-nationalism" (1990:46 ff.).