

Life by Steam

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S FIRST REPUBLIC, 1844–1861

“The people are miserable:—true, but not as much as in the Haitian time,” a journalist in Santo Domingo argued in late summer 1846, two years after Separation. “Paper money has no value:—it has more than that of the Haitians,” the author persisted.¹ In the Dominican capital, columnists condemned Haitian politics in order to externalize political scrutiny and to deny the dire, authoritarian political drama that was unfolding in Santo Domingo at the same time. They allowed themselves considerable hyperbole. “We have a liberal Constitution and an honorable and patriotic leader who executes it punctually,” one writer boasted, hopefully. He claimed that the newly separated east would have reduced military forces and civil rights for all citizens.² Instead, repression and insecurity mounted. “The public is groaning in misery,” another admitted.³ Soldiers mocked the new Dominican motto (“God, Country, Liberty”), changing it to “God, Country, Slavery, and Lean Meat.”⁴ Residents of the capital marked the anniversary of the constitution signing with “embarrassing coldness and indifference,” and one man compared the new republic to someone slowly dying of fever.⁵

Over a series of months between 1843 and 1845, as President Jean-Pierre Boyer’s power collapsed, Haiti fractured into two administrations. In chaotic and depressed circumstances, the men who held on to the reins of power in the east, the newly independent Dominican Republic, were largely the same southern elite who had worked with the Unification regime. The first Dominican president, Pedro Santana, rose to power at the head of an army of loyal followers from his home province, and his prestige made him a “true feudal seigneur,” contemporaries observed.⁶ Buenaventura Báez, the man

who emerged to be Santana's primary political rival, was a large landowner. Well traveled and wealthy, Báez was a high-level politician who easily weathered the changes in flag. Separation came easily, but consolidating a new state proved difficult. In the Dominican capital, a tiny electorate rallied around the administration, but censorship, exile, and executions cooled the atmosphere. Alternating terms in power, Santana and Báez controlled the administration with heavy hands. Both invoked a war powers clause of the constitution, Article 210, for autocratic license. They used the clause domestically, restricting freedom of the press, relentlessly pursuing critics, and trading off power in a continuous pattern of usurpation, corruption, and revenge.⁷ Reformers had little recourse but to complain about "the plague of parties."⁸

Most Dominicans, meanwhile, lived far from the capital, independent and dispersed. No export bonanza or internal migration brought them in closer contact, nor could authorities in Santo Domingo generate resources with which to expand their administration.⁹ Internal travel was treacherous, and small boats, *yolas* or *balandras*, were the only practicable way to reach other coastal towns.¹⁰ After decades of flag changes and rural independence, power had devolved "from one to many": to regional military networks, family units, religious brotherhoods, tobacco, wood, and cattle trade, and, only lastly, to the nominative southern administration.¹¹ As Separation unfolded, the idea of a new republic did not extend beyond a handful of towns.¹² Residents might have considered themselves at various points "Haitian-Spanish," "Dominican-Spanish," or even "not Spanish nor French nor Haitian"; more likely still, they embraced local identities that were more salient.¹³ Residents of the north coast were deeply tied with Cap-Haïtien, surrounding islands, and the Atlantic. In the Cibao, politicians wealthy from tobacco trade pulled away from the capital. They wanted a federalization of power, or to relocate the government totally. In the center of the island, the unpopularity of Haiti's emperor stymied solidarities for a time, but residents were hardly faithful. In the new state, domestic flashpoints became more critical with each passing year.

This chapter details how citizens made their lives between foreign powers and political revolution. Even in the capital, few people thought autonomy was possible.¹⁴ British, French, U.S., and Spanish authorities intervened constantly in Dominican affairs. They jockeyed for competing concessions, supported various protectorate, citizenship, or colonization schemes, manipulated treaty negotiations, meddled in domestic political struggles, demanded indemnities, sent warships as implied menace, and

generally intervened aggressively for their own interests, all while withholding recognition.

As capital city figures made increasing bargains with these powers, residents engaged in active debates about identity and citizenship. Feeling anxiety over the future, Dominicans in multiple sites responded to these developments with steady vigilance, frequent protests, and warnings of slavery. From rural, center-island spaces, where decades of trade, travel, and political connection tied them to Haiti, military men occasionally drew a handful of local residents into intrigues to reunite the island. As years passed, the very fragility of the Dominican administration, wracked with political competition, economic crises, and growing imperial aggression, made these pacts more urgent. The grip of the capital was loosening.

Reform and Separation, 1843–1846

Unification of the whole island, which began in early 1822, lasted under the rule of President Boyer for two decades. After abolition in Unification's first days, many lived life much as before.¹⁵ In towns, the administration had an uneven impact. The government employed several hundred officials in the Dominican capital and dozens in other towns. Much of the quotidian administration continued in Spanish.¹⁶ Prominent Dominicans like Manuel Joaquín Delmonte earnestly and unctuously praised the regime. "Let us all toast to the day that the knot that binds us gets tighter," he urged, from a Masonic lodge called "Perfect Harmony" in Azua.¹⁷ Black regiments in and around the capital, which predated Unification, enjoyed larger ranks and status.¹⁸ Black Dominicans forged "the tightest of bonds" with arriving Haitian soldiers and administrators, one traveler remarked.¹⁹ In the Cibao valley, Dominican tobacco merchants and others benefited from stability and government support.²⁰ In rural areas, the reach of the state was minimal.²¹ As years passed, however, and as outside observers heaped noisy judgment on Boyer's regime, fissures grew.²² Boyer's autocratic style, the political and economic burden of a so-called indemnity debt to France, regional divisions, and a plurality of other grievances rankled an increasing number of political opponents.²³ Dominican periodicals later blamed a parasitic administration and a bloated administrative and military class.²⁴ Boyer's aides had sheltered him from rumblings of discontent for years, the journalists argued.²⁵ By the early 1840s, a significant group in the Dominican capital had begun to support separation, Delmonte and other former Unification supporters included. In the west, anti-Boyer voices grew louder simultaneously.

A natural disaster accelerated the fracture, heralding a providential reckoning. A massive earthquake struck the heart of Haiti on 7 May 1842. It seemed like the apocalypse. In towns across the island, “not one stone was left on top of the other,” an observer wrote in horror. The calamity destroyed homes, churches, and businesses and left thousands more on the brink of collapse. Visible devastation surrounded the living. On the northern coast, from Port-de-Paix to Monte Cristi, a wall of seawater flooded over residents. Rivers overflowed, and the deluge covered whole fields. Violent aftershocks “frightened and made the people more desperate.” The island’s capital, Port-au-Prince, burned day and night on end.²⁶ “I will tell you the horror, the death, the tears, the endless havoc into which the miserable nation of Haiti has sunk,” an eastern poet wrote. “What confusion! What horror! What fright!” He wrote of religious fear and of the “reckless pride” of his compatriots, swallowed up in a horrible din.²⁷ A hurricane followed that summer. Port-au-Prince burned again in the beginning of the new year.²⁸

Boyer’s regime, already on the precipice of collapse, quickly crumbled. Political “excitement . . . spread like a contagion to every nook,” observers reflected.²⁹ Earnest island liberals, Dominican separatists and annexationists, ambitious military figures of varying allegiances, prominent southern Haitian families, and growing rural opposition in the western south all vied for power. A handful of Dominican nationalists had recently returned to Santo Domingo from San Juan, inspired by liberal discontent and pro-independence murmurings in the late 1830s.³⁰ They joined a secret society in the capital, the Trinitarios, whose members were a small group of urban elite with insular family and geographic ties.³¹ Their critiques were moderate but increasingly nationalist in elocution. Other plans proliferated, including renegotiating the terms of Unification. Dominican commentators remembered the possibilities of the moment acutely. “It seems to me that Boyer knew best the true path of happiness for all Haitians,” one Dominican wrote, decades later. “He was only wrong about one thing: not having founded the union of the two pueblos on a more equal and advantageous base, for example a confederation,” he concluded.³²

From different sites, anti-Boyerists tried to salvage a federation. In Les Cayes, Haitian and Dominican reformers formed the Society of the Rights of Man and Citizen, demanding wide-ranging government changes.³³ At a constitutional convention in Port-au-Prince, Puerto Plata deputy Federico Peralta y Rodríguez spoke frankly of “atrocious oppression . . . and total ruin” of many prominent families—his frankness already revolutionary—but also expressed enthusiasm for proposed reforms, “so liberal and democratic”

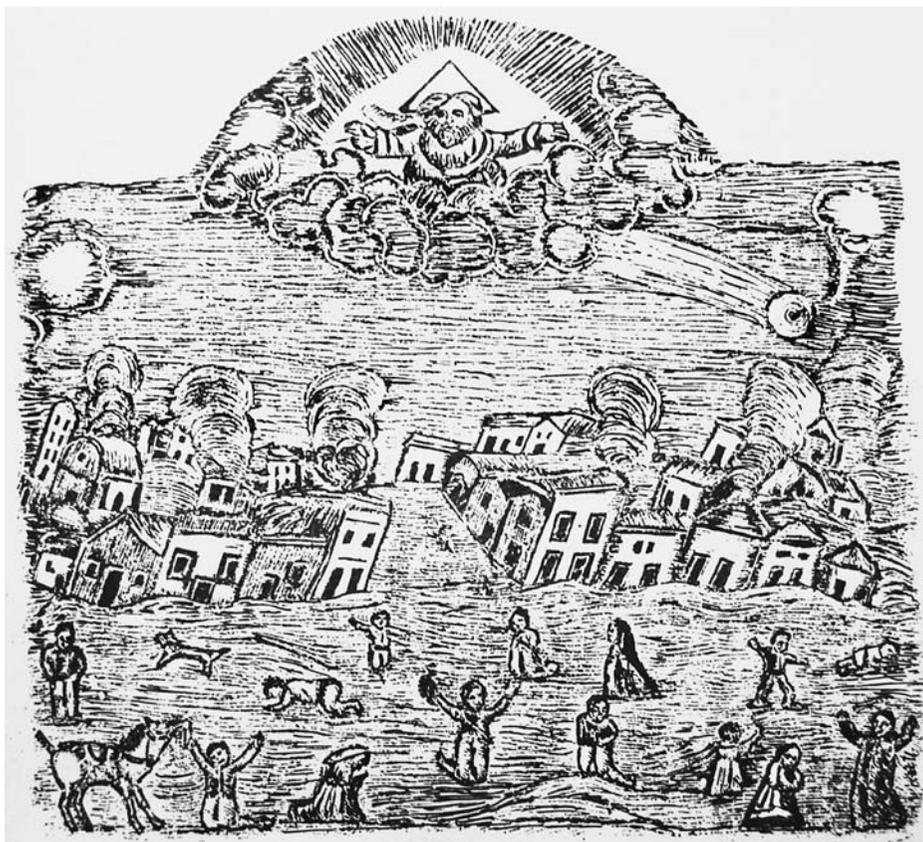


Fig. 1.1 Domingo Echavarría (1805–1849, attributed), “Terremoto en la isla de Haití,” 1842. Colección bibliográfica J. R. Marquez, Santo Domingo.

as they were. He and others hoped for serious constitutional changes.³⁴ Reformers tried to save the union, drafting a Haitian-Dominican Constitution that was unmistakably liberal, according much more power to the legislative branch, abolishing presidency-for-life, and reducing the army. They hoped to maintain and strengthen island unity, proposing a trilingual national school (English, Spanish, and French).³⁵ In Santo Domingo, meanwhile, Haitian opposition leaders Alcuis Ponthieux and General Étienne Desgrotte plotted together with Dominican Trinitaria members to take the fort of the capital in the spring of 1843, but no mobilization materialized. In solidarity, whole regiments deserted Boyer’s unpopular campaign against the southwestern conspiracy.³⁶ Boyer fled for Jamaica in February 1843, ending more than two decades of rule.

As months passed, however, political turmoil increased. General Charles Rivière-Hérard increasingly presided over the reform convention and maneuvered to impose his authority, proclaiming himself president. He received, and then imprisoned, Trinitario emissary Ramón Mella, as he moved to squash other reforms. Southern Haitian peasants protested his betrayal and mobilized independently; the movement became known as the Piquet Rebellion.³⁷ A popular song rebuked the presidential usurper:

President Rivière was cross-eyed!
He thought he was the king!
He thought he was the king!
He thought he was the king!³⁸

Dominican commentators expressed dismay. An editorial critiqued Rivière's January 1844 Constitution and scolded him for his excesses, calling him a "dictator who only use[d] the liberal title of president."³⁹ "[Without our cooperation] the revolution would not have been more than a crazy plan," another disillusioned Dominican columnist reflected. "And what was our prize . . . ? What were the considerations, the improvements, the guarantees, for our unalienable rights? Dark dungeons in Port-au-Prince!"⁴⁰

French interference loomed as many Dominican politicians grew divided between separation or a French protectorate. From Port-au-Prince, a prominent southern Dominican, Buenaventura Báez, tried to sabotage other movements. He warned Rivière of Dominican opposition and furiously tried to conspire for a French protectorate instead, continuing to do so after he became the mayor of the Dominican town of Azua.⁴¹ "Frenchified" Dominicans (*los afrancesados*) in Azua boasted their own flag: red and white vertical stripes, with a small tricolor in the top-left corner.⁴² The strongest clarion call for total separation from Haiti was actually Azuans' demand for French annexation; authors of a separation statement from the Dominican capital simply called for provincial autonomy.⁴³ Meanwhile, prominent rancher Pedro Santana led a military mobilization for separation from further east, marshaling a loyal band of peons and peasants from his home province, Seybo. He wrote confidentially that he feared many Dominicans opposed separation, and may have even briefly lent his own allegiance to the French cause.⁴⁴

French officials collaborated and encouraged Dominican protectorate plans, but they insisted that residents of the east continue to pay Haiti's indemnity. In a menacing and opportunistic stance, they lobbied for cession of the Samaná peninsula in exchange.⁴⁵ Diplomats felt confident that the plan could be secured in a matter of weeks.⁴⁶ Both Unification and protec-

torate advocates faltered; the indemnity was a major sticking point, even for reform proponents. Cap separatists made a last-minute call to make a new North Haiti–Dominican union—they freed all Dominican prisoners in the town, designed a new red and blue flag with a star at the center, and sent overtures proposing a federative alliance to central and northern Dominican towns—but eastern observers worried that a clash with France was imminent. Unity seemed too costly.⁴⁷

Quietly, secession proceeded in the Dominican capital and spread piecemeal to other towns. With most western troops already departed, a group of Dominicans proclaimed Separation in Santo Domingo, fairly uneventfully, on 27 February 1844. A number of Haitian residents in the town openly supported the movement, and a handful of Dominican residents left for Saint Thomas to avoid taking sides.⁴⁸ Official secession occurred the next day, with a cordial withdrawal accord for property guarantees, respect, dignity, and “frankness and loyalty” on all sides.⁴⁹ In March, the leading men of several towns in the Cibao valley and elsewhere declared themselves in favor of an eastern republic. As news reached Haiti, President Rivière called for a mobilization. Trying to reach the Dominican capital, he occupied Azua, where Santana defeated him. Dominicans quickly defeated his auxiliary in Santiago, too, and a series of small skirmishes in border towns came to little that spring. Some central towns changed hands several times, but the encounters often involved only small groups of soldiers.⁵⁰ Southern Haitian peasants, still in a democratic mobilization of their own, observed Rivière’s defeat by Dominicans with satisfaction. “The Spaniards chased him, he ran like a dog after fresh carrion!,” one song rebuked him.⁵¹ Losing everywhere, Rivière was unseated by May 1844. He, too, left for Jamaica.⁵²

As Pablo Mella observes, traditional accounts maintain a conspiracy of silence about Dominican racism and class divisions, framing the uncertainty of 1844 as mere conflict between “liberal” and “conservative” factions.⁵³ Among the tiny formal political class there did exist a plurality of positions, of course, and regional elites in the Cibao also hoped for power. Much more salient, however, were the divides between the tiny elite who were assuming power and most Dominicans. These were the men in the capital whom most dubbed “white Spaniards,” whom many residents considered almost a foreign group.⁵⁴ Defiantly, the Separation junta held whites-only meetings, and government emissaries bragged to foreign authorities that it had been whites who had led Separation.⁵⁵ At one meeting, liberal Juan Pablo Duarte proposed an amendment arguing, “The unity of race . . . is one of the fundamental principles of our political adhesion,” but to his alarm, other

attendees tore up the proposal.⁵⁶ At the head of the military forces, Santana aligned himself with these prominent whites, who appealed abroad for recognition, annexation, and white immigration simultaneously.⁵⁷ Santana's collusion with these elites disgusted and worried prominent military officers of color in the capital, even those who had previously supported him.⁵⁸ Town residents were abuzz that the group was considering reinstating slavery, either in a new Gran Colombia-like federation, like the pro-slavery separation movement of 1821, or through a French protectorate.⁵⁹ A colonel of the African Battalion, Santiago Basora, blocked the entry of separatist forces to the capital.⁶⁰ General José Joaquín Puello, a prominent officer from the Unification period, joined Duarte and others in spreading the alarm among soldiers and concerned citizens.

Tension between the governing group and the town's black regiments and other citizens peaked during the summer. To counter General Puello and to silence nervous town residents, Santana arrived with two thousand of his own followers from outside the city. In a tense compromise, Santana allowed Puello to keep command of the plaza, and several of the most vocal antiblack Junta members resigned.⁶¹ The governing group published a decree in July reaffirming the abolition of slavery. Later the same month uproar returned to the capital, however, when a wealthy planter arrived from Puerto Rico, intent on recapturing nine men who had escaped to freedom. The group of men, who had already joined the town's black regiment, recognized the slavemaster on the street, and a large group of armed Dominicans aided them in cornering him in a private house. The men's protectors very nearly attacked Santana, who arrived to the planter's rescue. Promising to jail him, Santana merely snuck him off in a boat under the cover of night. Santana went on the offensive, trying to neutralize the black regiments entirely. He dispatched many of them off to the border, "with extensive promises about their continuing liberty."⁶² To assuage the alarm of town residents, the Junta reiterated once more that Santo Domingo was free soil and decreed that any Dominican who mounted a slave voyage would be classified a pirate, tried, and executed.⁶³ Assuming the title of "Supreme Chief of the Republic," however, Santana expelled and exiled a number of the reformist legislators. Observers continued to report that the government, other than Santana, was all white.⁶⁴

Adding their support to the opposition, families and soldiers in the outskirts of the capital and the center-island distrusted new Dominican rule and continued to support Unification. Through July 1845, a number of men in Santa María refused to join the new Dominican forces, convinced that

the project was to reestablish slavery.⁶⁵ Unification loyalists raised the Haitian flag in San Juan, Las Matas, and Bánica in 1846; authorities from the capital gave chase and made arrests as best they could. In the spring of the following year, rumors of unification intrigue in these same central towns rose again. Only “brute force” pacified the towns, an observer noted.⁶⁶ Some military officials changed sides in the ensuing months, throwing their allegiance back to Unification.⁶⁷ Arrests continued on the border and in the capital, and rumors abounded. Within the year, Santana executed several prominent Trinitarios and military men of color in the capital, including General José Joaquín Puello and his brother, Gabino, just before Christmas. The power struggle had reached a dramatic moment. All manner of town elites were satisfied with the executions, including proponents of a French protectorate. Unrepentant biographers later claimed Puello was simply “arrogant” and “hostile to the white race.”⁶⁸

By the end of the year, a small administration finally solidified around Santana, who ruled autocratically. Legislators borrowed 113 articles of the new Dominican constitution directly from the defunct Port-au-Prince reform constitution of 1843.⁶⁹ They kept much of the civil code, but they attacked civil marriage and a recent expansion of women’s property rights.⁷⁰ Santana filled his cabinet largely with loyal allies. Unification authorities had appropriated church lands around the capital into state possession; Santana maintained control over these properties and simply distributed them among his supporters.⁷¹ He pursued his opponents and perceived opponents quickly and mercilessly. Some wrote anguished poetry from exile.⁷² Observers compared his government to a hierarchical “family” and his forces, who were mostly from his home province, to his “henchmen.”⁷³ One columnist rhapsodized about Santana’s “tender and sweet name,” while another wrote a thinly veiled poem critical of the “abuse of a father.”⁷⁴ Archbishop Thomas de Portes threatened excommunication to Santana’s opponents.⁷⁵ Santana wielded his military power constantly, justifying his heavy-handed rule on the pretext of permanent war with Haiti. Observers were not convinced of Santana’s feeble justification for his virtual dictatorship. “The War with the Haitians is preoccupying weak spirits and serving as a pretext to the malintentioned and egotistical, who benefit exclusively from the revolution,” one Spanish official wrote.⁷⁶

The rest of Separation was anticlimactic. A short-lived successor to Rivière, General Jean-Louis Michel Pierrot, tried to mount a campaign to take the Dominican capital. Dominican columnists appealed directly to a hypothetical Haitian readership to chide Pierrot for his hypocrisy and lament the

continued fighting. Pierrot was just “a puppet chosen by Boyeristas,” and serious political men were fleeing the violence, one argued.⁷⁷ Capital city writers became bellicose, even bloodthirsty. One poet rhapsodized about the “last Haitian biting the dust” in battle.⁷⁸ They told sentimental fables of Dominican unity and exaggerated Haitian excesses. Priests argued Separation was divinely ordained; papers republished their sermons.⁷⁹ The paper’s editors announced that every issue of Santo Domingo’s first regular newspaper, *El Dominicano*, would “refute the apocryphal writings” from official presses in Port-au-Prince that claimed official Haitian victories.⁸⁰ Dominican papers ridiculed hawkish propaganda for its dishonesty to the Haitian public.⁸¹ They need not have bothered; or, rather, the whole island was in agreement. Haitian enlisted men refused to mobilize, and Pierrot’s own troops overthrew him. They did so, not casually, on the 27 February 1846.⁸² With the periodic border spats all but uneventful, Dominican journalists turned their focus to economic and political concerns.⁸³

The new administration’s economic predicament was dire and urgent. Foreign currency was the only hard specie, British and Saint Thomas merchants demanded exorbitant loan terms, the government printed reams of paper money, and even prominent men from the capital refused to lend the new administration any funds. Beleaguered elites bragged of extroversion and dreamed of foreign capital, condemning the supposed isolation of the wealthier state from which they had just emerged. Haiti’s property protections, Dominican journalists and politicians argued, were as “absurd as they were ridiculous.”⁸⁴ In reality, many Haitian elites shared the same capital development dreams, publishing front-page critiques of barriers to foreign investment and land ownership and promoting cash crop production.⁸⁵ Dominican policy vis-à-vis immigration and investment, anyway, remained more similar to Haitian law—or Mexican, which they also occasionally excoriated—than different.⁸⁶ Lawmakers passed a 30 percent tax on the sale of territory to foreigners, who also had to rely on individual dispensation of naturalization from the president.⁸⁷ Critically, they maintained a Unification-era policy of restricting foreign traders to wholesale activity.⁸⁸ They also left tariffs at Unification levels.⁸⁹

Boasting of their extroversion was essentially a rhetorical exercise, one which Dominican elites could practice without particular consideration for consequences: few investors came. Meanwhile, the entire state budget hovered between \$200,000 and \$300,000, declining slightly over time.⁹⁰ Domestic agriculture was insufficient even to maintain the population; all manner of things were imported into towns of the republic, even staples like flour.⁹¹

Grass grew in capital city streets, and houses slowly crumbled.⁹² The trade balance was abysmal. “In Saint Thomas *se vende pero no se compra*,” journalists lamented.⁹³

Geography, Racism, and Town Politics

Over the next two decades, a small group held power. Both of the republic’s first long-ruling presidents were wealthy men of color. Pedro Santana was born in the rural center of the island and grew up in the cattle country of the east. The son of a military hero, he confidently justified his power as a heroic crusade, immune to outside assessment.⁹⁴ Divine vindication and a loyal army afforded him pronounced immunity to any sort of deference. Years later, he pointedly received the Cuban governor barefoot.⁹⁵ Imperial outsiders directed racism, disdain, and pity toward these presidents. White French observers could not contain themselves from commenting on the texture of President Báez’s hair, nor from mocking the impoverished girls of the capital.⁹⁶ The political coterie around the executive, meanwhile, except for high military officials, was largely white. Baptized in twenty-two years of governance with the revolutionary Haitian state, these figures never publicly breathed a word against either leader along racist lines, even as small snippets of song from the capital betray how phenotype preoccupied them.⁹⁷ As power was reshuffling at the beginning of the republic, a few liberals did speak about race openly, even if seeking to “transcend” it.⁹⁸ Overwhelmingly, however, elites renounced any division and repudiated discussion entirely. Rather, they defended the republic in oblique, civilizationist terms, and many poured massive intellectual energy into didactic anti-Haitianism. Both Santana and Báez assented and collaborated extensively with these allies. There was only one press in the capital, owned by the state.⁹⁹

Members of the small but politically dominant elite who lived in the capital were the protagonists of settler and protectorate schemes. Prominent families ruled: the Delmonte, Alfau, Bobadilla, Galván, and Guridi, among them. Many owned land around the capital and profited from the sales of mahogany in other parts of the south, as far east as Higüey. Visitors referred to “wealthy non-workers” and “patrician families”; they reported, too, on the families’ “faithful” servants.¹⁰⁰ They established small private seminaries to educate the “higher classes of society.”¹⁰¹ The sugar industry near the Dominican capital had left its mark, ideologically and materially, decades after its absolute decline, but plans to revive it with Canary Islander colonization projects predated Separation.¹⁰² The daughter of one large plantation owner, wealthy in property if not capital, ran one of the few

guesthouses in the capital.¹⁰³ An intermittent diaspora of Dominican elites to Cuba during the nineteenth century—fleeing the Haitian Revolution, fleeing Unification—meant that a handful of wealthier residents in Santo Domingo had family in Havana, Santiago de Cuba, San Juan, and other sites. Others had sojourned in Havana for legal education or political exile, and they wrote poems about planning never to return. All casually avoided mentioning slavery.¹⁰⁴

As scholars demonstrate in nearby republics, republican universalism both “enabled and constrained” debates over political belonging. Even as elites in the Dominican capital had to subdue overt racism in governance, it circulated in normative language, political rumors, and private sphere.¹⁰⁵ Travelers observed, “It is clear that the whites and the sons of Spain have the most influence, even if they have a touch of color.”¹⁰⁶ Antiblack rhymes betrayed the limits of so-called civil discourse, and prejudices restricted patterns of settlement, as they did in neighboring islands.¹⁰⁷ Writers in the capital were unabashedly bold in their phenotypic hierarchies:

For a woman to be a total beauty, she has to have:
Three white things;—Her skin, teeth, and hands.
Three black;—Her eyes, eyelashes, and eyebrows.
Three red;—her lips, cheeks, and nails . . . ¹⁰⁸

“Spanishness” offered them a useful, and vague, vocabulary to articulate distance from Haiti. They authored battle hymns, urging, “Rise Up in Arms, O Spaniards.”¹⁰⁹ *El Dominicano*’s journalists sometimes called the eastern troops Spanish, sometimes Dominican, within the same piece.¹¹⁰ Actual connections to Spain were few, of course, as Spain refused to recognize the republic for more than a decade. Elite affinities extended to regular adulation of the south’s semirecent French connections. The richest Dominicans toasted “à votre santé,” sent their children abroad for education, and continued, actively and constantly, to entertain French protectorate prospects.¹¹¹ French tutors advertised in the capital.¹¹² Responding uneasily to a foreign observer at a dance, a columnist wrote, “Come on, speak *franchement* (openly) with me (because as you know, Sirs, in addition to the Gallicisms we do all the time, we love mixing in a few French words, damn custom)!”¹¹³ The most regular and important connections of the capital, meanwhile, were with nearby islands, sites of mahogany and cattle trade. Not a single European ship came to Santo Domingo’s port in the first six months of 1848.¹¹⁴

Elite narrators remained purposefully elusive, maintaining a treacherous silence on racism in public policy. From the first months of the republic,

columnists highlighted what they assessed as a labor shortage, an implicitly antiblack strategy shared by elites in neighboring islands.¹¹⁵ “Depopulation is the principal cause of our misery,” a columnist wrote in 1845, calling for an immigration commission in each province.¹¹⁶ Lawmakers passed a colonization law in 1847 offering land, advances, tools, and an exemption from military service for arriving migrants. Legislators wanted them to be white, even as they had cautiously avoided mentioning race. Rather, officials simply blocked plans for migrants of color individually.¹¹⁷ Similarly, individuals privately lobbied for French support, the consul alleged, by slandering the British flag as “the flag of the blacks.”¹¹⁸ Agents from the United States reported similar race-based, closed-door entreaties.¹¹⁹ So did the Spanish.¹²⁰ As they excoriated Haiti, then, they maintained a deafening silence on race thinking domestically. Privately, Báez warned the Cuban and Puerto Rican governors that Dominicans feared foreign occupation and slavery, and that most Dominicans would not hesitate to call on Haiti for help.¹²¹ Publicly, however, he blamed outside agitators, “slavery propagandists,” for these fears. The archetype of the “slavery propagandist,” or of “denaturalized” or “Haitianized” Dominicans, stood in for any elite acknowledgment of popular discourses about foreign threats and dismissed Dominican antiracist discourses.¹²²

Elites challenged the legacy of the recent Haitian past and, along with it, emancipation. Legislators affirmed commitment to a free-soil republic; in fact, at popular vigilance, they affirmed it many times. In practice, however, they made and imagined bargains that would have imperiled free labor if they had been realized, from colonization schemes to protectorate appeals to slave powers. They did so repeatedly, even as they observed, evidently dispassionately, the popular opposition that such plans provoked.¹²³ Writers set about anti-Haitian mythmaking simultaneously, anxious to create distance from a nation, the target of so much hemispheric aspersion, which had only very recently been their own. Given the almost total lack of written patrimony—Thomas Madiou’s *Histoire d’Haïti* was the only history book to circulate in the Dominican capital—the story of Dominican difference was an “extremely urgent necessity,” these columnists decided.¹²⁴ Capital city journalists veered to the openly didactic, taking pains to explain anti-Haitian slurs for their audience with an asterisk.¹²⁵ They worried the public did not heed them. “No one writes here because no one reads, and no one reads because no one writes,” one paper’s motto fretted.¹²⁶ Even elites who were enthralled with nationhood felt deeply pessimistic of aggressive international interests and their own political opponents. “Civilization! Is

the favorite word of 1855,” one columnist observed, “[but] it has shielded rapacious politics on bayonet point.”¹²⁷

Anti-Haitianism, beyond appealing to North Atlantic powers, offered elites a proxy to exorcise their anxieties about their own political predicament, an outlet for impatient and proscriptive visions of development, for scorn toward popular religious and marriage practices, and for their own racism. It facilitated “raceless” republican fictions and maintained a putative domestic unity with rural and poor Dominicans, especially of color, by invoking a target that was simply, elusively, external.¹²⁸ Elite unease toward rural Dominicans—over whom they had precious little influence—was usually oblique, but it was constant. Columnists criticized small farming plots as an “excuse for laziness,” critiqued poor Dominicans’ work habits, and praised the “absolute obedience” of soldiers.¹²⁹ Adopting a script of a Haitian “other,” they made accusations of “relaxed habits,” a supposed lack of religion, “libertine” cohabitation, and so on, hoping to discipline common Dominicans simultaneously.¹³⁰ Legislators passed vagrancy laws, although they were probably as unenforceable as those of the Unification period.¹³¹ Authors argued that domestic vagrancy was “the seed of so many vices” and a deterrent to both local development and international investment.¹³² They urged the creation of civic honors for productive domestic laborers, a practice the Haitian government already embraced.¹³³ When discussions veered to leisure and religion, tensions mounted perceptibly. Anxious commentators tried to “deport” merengue back to Haiti, calling it “horrible” and “loathsome.”¹³⁴ One columnist described the dance: “When a merengue starts, ¡Holy God! One man grabs the other one’s partner, the other one runs around because he doesn’t know what to do, this guy grabs the arm of a young woman . . . everything is confusion. . . . Could that be agreeable to anyone?”¹³⁵ Columnists acknowledged familiarity with unease. In one imagined Spanish-Kreyòl dialogue, a Dominican character remonstrates a Haitian man for allegedly allowing himself to be abused by his leader. At the close of the conversation, the Dominican man bitterly rejects the latter’s offer of a *guangá* (a “disgusting talisman . . . of horsehair, salt and ashes,” the character claims derisively), but the bilingual conversation—in all its political, religious, and linguistic context—is perfectly understood by both parties.¹³⁶

Poorer Dominicans lived alongside the wealthy in the capital, which was as isolated from the north as “two different countries” but tied to cattle plains and woodcutting in the nearby south.¹³⁷ The town was materially poor, with few stores and paltry regional trade.¹³⁸ Because foreign merchants could only be wholesale traders, however, a local market did flourish.¹³⁹ Traders

brought inland products—fruit, corn, root vegetables, and small amounts of tobacco, raw sugar, and coffee—downstream by two-person canoes for consumption in the capital and shipped logwood out of the country. On the banks of the Ozama, a small market bustled for hours.¹⁴⁰ In Santo Domingo and other towns where individuals confronted prejudice and structural inequalities, it is probably true that some individuals sought to assimilate the privileges of whiteness and anti-Haitianism, but it is also certainly true that residents of color proffered explicit discourses of esteem, including total rejection of these norms, in direct response. Dominicans of color sometimes used “white” as a simple shorthand for “foreigner,” similar to usage in Haiti.¹⁴¹ During Unification, anonymous poets celebrated the upending of racist order in the capital.¹⁴² Another unknown poet offered reassurance to black Dominican listeners who endured inequality, promising that someday, “the omelet would flip to the other side.”¹⁴³

A number of distinct Afro-Dominican organizations shaped the capital landscape. The black regiments remained a separate force years after independence, receiving a “large number” of men escaping from slavery in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other islands into their ranks as soldiers and officers.¹⁴⁴ Churches, brotherhoods like the *Cofradía* of San Juan Bautista, and mutual aid societies blossomed.¹⁴⁵ African American migrants, who arrived in the 1820s at the invitation of President Boyer, maintained a sizable mutual aid society and English-language Methodist church in the capital in the 1850s.¹⁴⁶ The small capital outlay required to participate in the market meant that African American women from Baltimore and other sites integrated themselves easily into the public space of the town as vendors, selling fruits and other wares. They joined others on the streets of the town who were curious about news from abroad and ready to debate with travelers about slavery. They asked visitors for news of their former homes, but they also informed witnesses of the horrors they had suffered there.¹⁴⁷ Travelers reported that black Dominicans were loath to serve as servants, and that when elites sought replacements from Saint Thomas and other islands, these individuals promptly chose independent living as well. One white U.S. traveler called them “impertinent.”¹⁴⁸

Unlike the group in political power, most capital residents felt a deep wariness toward European powers. Spanish warships had demanded that islanders salute their flag in the 1830s, and many residents felt an uneasy “fear of the uniformed” (*miedo a los uniformados*).¹⁴⁹ When a Spanish ship docked in 1846—on its way to Cap-Haïtien to demand reparations—townspeople left “joys of *mardi gras* to watch in somber silence,” distrustful of the few Spanish

authorities who disembarked, an observer remarked.¹⁵⁰ Spain's slaveholding projects were always close to Dominican shores. The French consul maintained that foreign interference would inspire "serious resistance," fears of slavery, and calls for Haitian reunification in the capital.¹⁵¹ Years later, the British consul reported much the same.¹⁵² At least since the 1820s, men and women from Puerto Rico are on record as having reached the Dominican capital; how many elusively crossed the Mona passage in smaller crafts to other sites, perhaps with their whole families, is difficult to estimate.¹⁵³ Secret antislavery societies, organized by Ramón Emeterio Betances and other Puerto Rican activists, may have ushered an increasing number to Dominican shores. An unknowable number of Cubans arrived, too, on the northern coast and in the capital. The British consul remarked in 1861 that many had "enjoyed liberty for many years."¹⁵⁴ One Chinese tailor slipped out of Cuba on a passport to Jamaica, heading instead to Santo Domingo.¹⁵⁵ The governor of Puerto Rico warned that migrants of "very advanced political opinions and of very dangerous tendencies" sought out Dominican soil, probably precisely to win this freedom.¹⁵⁶

Outside the capital, the landscape bore witness to a long history of sugar slavery and of independent black settlement. San Carlos, an *extramuro* community less than two kilometers northwest of the old city, lodged many traveling day laborers and others passing through to the southern wood markets, Baní, and other towns.¹⁵⁷ The settlement had a small wooden church and about a hundred huts made with palm leaves, distinct both in their manner of construction and in their purposeful arrangement amid vegetation. As much for its distinctive construction as for the residents' skin hue, the community had "the most marked aspect of an African people of Zambeze [sic] or Lake Nianza [sic]," a Spanish soldier supposed.¹⁵⁸ Its "original and happy" arrangement contrasted with the "European taste and aspect" of the nearby capital.¹⁵⁹ To the west, five small rivers converged to San Cristóbal, long a site of large estate sugar production. In 1822, residents seized a plantation that had enslaved 145 people, transforming it into small-scale production of raw sugar and rum, which they continued to trade in Santo Domingo, along with various foodstuffs.¹⁶⁰ Los Mina, chartered as a free black town in the late seventeenth century to receive people fleeing slavery from Saint-Domingue, was just east of the capital. Monte Plata, to the north, housed one of the black regiments whose members had opposed Separation. For those returning to the capital from Monte Plata, foreboding landscape lay ahead: the Pass of the Dead and then the Cold Sugar Mill (Yngenio Frio). Maroon settlements endured farther west. Afro-Dominican residents of La

Bonó reflected that his grandmother, “of one of the richest classes of planters [of Saint-Domingue] . . . drank to France with every pore” after she arrived to Santiago in exile.¹⁶⁶ Elites lived in the town center but also in rural areas, alongside poor families. Lack of capital meant that landowners acquiesced to informal sharecropping or squatting rather than waged work.¹⁶⁷ In the towns, liberal writers imagined isolated, noble, bronzed peasants, the poorest of whom were “ugly, but strong and healthy.”¹⁶⁸ Mythical figures like the black *comegente* (“people eater”) haunted public consciousness in the Cibao valley, embodying the wealthy region’s troubled and inchoate relationship to the island’s revolutionary past.¹⁶⁹ Residents had strong commercial ties, mostly via the north coast but also overland, connecting them to Cap-Haïtien, a richer city than most Dominican port towns. Wealthy men like Teodoro Heneken traveled regularly to the commercial and political centers of the island, Santiago de los Caballeros, Puerto Plata, Cap, and the two capitals.¹⁷⁰

Cibao politicians, easily richer than many in the southern capital, felt Santana’s and Báez’s subjugation acutely, but they could not easily rally popular support. Báez dismissed the province, writing, “El Ozama thinks, Cibao works.”¹⁷¹ A flourishing literary culture grew in Santiago and other towns, along with progressive societies and Masonic lodges.¹⁷² The members were men educated in Havana, Paris, London, and occasionally Philadelphia; they took a dim view of what they perceived as the provincialism and antidemocratic impulses of Báez and Santana and southern oligarchs generally.¹⁷³ Anti-Santana songs, stories, sayings, and *décimas* (short poems) abounded. The presidents’ repeated printing of paper money caused deflation that devastated tobacco merchants.¹⁷⁴ Markets, roads, and rivers led north, to the *línea noroeste* (northwest line) of settlement and trade of tobacco, fine woods, and other products. *Recueros* (muleteers) and *prácticos* (guides) managed to travel these routes well enough, but urban Cibao residents’ integration even with surrounding tobacco cultivators was not extensive.¹⁷⁵ Tobacco production led to centripetal settlement patterns in the surrounding countryside. Farms could be scattered around the areas of best soil; tobacco was light, transportable, and slow to rot. One historian estimates that an individual cultivator could produce anywhere from four hundred to two thousand pounds of tobacco a year, with fairly rudimentary technology.¹⁷⁶ The material culture was meager, and most rural cultivators probably relied on horses to counteract the physical isolation, even in Santiago’s immediate surroundings. Overland travel south, meanwhile, was so arduous that most

news from the capital reached, circuitously, from the northern coast. There were no places to sleep except for “the big bed” (the ground) or a hammock, and many horses, already expensive, could not weather the trip.¹⁷⁷

Residents of Puerto Plata were a keenly cosmopolitan public. Migrant and commercial networks linked them regularly to Europe, the north coast of Haiti, the Turks and Caicos, Saint Thomas, southern Florida, and other sites. A free port since 1756, Puerto Plata earned the nickname “la Novia del Atlántico” (the Bride of the Atlantic) for the town’s intense macroregional connections. Many residents were bi- or trilingual.¹⁷⁸ Germany dominated the tobacco trade, but the roster of ships that sailed in and out of the Puerto Plata—which funneled lumber and Cibao tobacco to Denmark, Bremen, and other primarily European sites—was considerable. At about two or three ships per day, it amounted to nearly ten times the traffic of the southern capital.¹⁷⁹ For regional trade, British and Danish vessels traded various goods for Dominican foodstuffs. The Turks and Caicos, which traded salt, depended completely on this exchange.¹⁸⁰ People came, too. Migrants from Saint Thomas, Tortola, Nassau, Providenciales, Grand Turk, Jamaica, Saint Kitts, Nevis, Martinique, Guadeloupe, the United States, Germany, France, and elsewhere trickled into Puerto Plata, Monte Cristi, and other north coast towns. A profusion of monikers like “el Inglés” (the Englishman) or “la isleña” (the islander) highlights the ready manner with which these migrants were received, and visitors described black migrants who earned a steady living in town as boatmen, laundry women, carpenters, and other professions.¹⁸¹ Hundreds of African American émigrés came to Puerto Plata, establishing multilingual schools, churches, and mutual aid societies. Groups came at Boyer’s invitation, through waters long familiar to Franco-Haitian corsairs.¹⁸² Others escaped to freedom in following years. Individuals arrived from South Carolina and Georgia, often through the Keys, leading bookkeepers to record all of them as Floridian.¹⁸³ Trade and travel united the north coast. Cap-Haïtien was just one day’s sail away. Monte Cristi residents sent wood along for resale in Puerto Plata, but they also engaged in an intense cattle and goat trade westward, to northern sections of Haiti.¹⁸⁴ People sometimes relocated along the coast after major life events. Theresa Smith, for example, moved back to Cap-Haïtien from Puerto Plata after her husband’s passing.¹⁸⁵

Regional migrants fleeing slavery also built communities alongside Dominicans in the Samaná peninsula. Faithful groups established an African Methodist church as early as the 1780s. When President Boyer issued an

invitation for African American émigrés in 1824, hundreds made a permanent home in Samaná, in settlements like Protestant Heights, Free Fort, and Palenque.¹⁸⁶ Where the migrants to many other sites had eventually moved to nearby towns, on the peninsula, many chose farming, shipbuilding, and other activities.¹⁸⁷ In relative isolation, they made a community, working on sixteen-acre plots. By midcentury, the peninsula was sparsely populated—fewer than two thousand people—but it boasted a healthy trade of foodstuffs to the Turks and Caicos.¹⁸⁸ Like Puerto Plata, the community was actively multilingual. Town residents and visitors conversed in English, Spanish, and Kreyòl.¹⁸⁹ Probably the most regular regional news arrived from the nearby British islands, although the healthy salt-cowhide trade and a small stream of migrants connected them to Puerto Plata as well. Residents kept in contact with family and pastors in Philadelphia and other North American cities. Community residents remained Protestant, sometimes marrying with Turks and Caicos Islanders. They wrote to U.S. congregations praising the freedom of religion. “We enjoy our homesteads, and our freedom of worship, in neighborly peace,” one parishioner reported.¹⁹⁰

Filibuster intrigue, slave ship traffic, and imperial threats made north coasters very attentive to regional politics and vigilant about anticolonialism and antislavery. Puerto Plata authorities rushed into action when a suspected slaver docked in their harbor, for example. Against the protest of Spanish merchants, town officials immediately embargoed the vessel and sent the captain to Santo Domingo to stand trial, where he and his crew were convicted.¹⁹¹ Despite their relative isolation, Samaná residents were keenly aware of foreign designs on the peninsula percolating in the capital and nearby waters.¹⁹² An 1822 French expedition betrayed interest in the strategic peninsula that was decades old.¹⁹³ In the 1840s, French diplomats argued that a series of specious debts ought to justify their occupation of the peninsula, and they sent warships on numerous missions there.¹⁹⁴ By the 1850s, U.S. envoys angled for plans of their own. They very nearly negotiated for perpetual rent and a free port. The British and French sent warships; negotiations summarily ceased.¹⁹⁵ More than a few recent community members—like “Norberto [Ebora] el isleño, María la isleña”—became mixed up in anticolonial organizing in Puerto Plata and elsewhere.¹⁹⁶ Many maintained their first citizenship. In 1854, a group of Samaná residents traveled all the way from the peninsula to the capital to oppose a proposed U.S. treaty. Santana meant “to trick the population of color to subjugate them to slavery,” they warned.¹⁹⁷

New Terms for the Dictionary: Rural Identities and Politics

Many, if not most, Dominicans resided far from the coasts and towns, where they lived in rich autonomy and material paucity. Perhaps 8,000 lived in the capital, per one estimate, and about 12,000 lived in the rest of the towns of the country.¹⁹⁸ About 200,000 other Dominicans, more or less, lived dispersed in expansive rural areas, with perhaps just 7.4 inhabitants per square mile in 1860, compared with Puerto Rico's 169.¹⁹⁹ Almost everywhere but the Cibao, land pressure was very low. "The population of the African race are so spread out at points that one can travel large distances without the one hut in which to take refuge from the sun," a Spanish traveler complained in 1860. Few roads, dense vegetation, and rain-choked waterways made his travel even more difficult.²⁰⁰ Little long-distance overland transport meant that most rural communities thrived in relative isolation. Since the colonial period, Dominicans of color sought respite from exploitation through rural pursuits, including ranching.²⁰¹ Scholars like David Barry Gaspar have emphasized the separate social and psychological space carved out even in the most intense modes of plantation slavery by the enslaved. This independence and selective impenetrability would have been even more pronounced in the autonomous rural contexts of postslavery Santo Domingo.²⁰² Narratives of national identity and difference forged in the capital amounted to a foreign construct, or simply an additional lexicon. In describing themselves, rural Dominicans throughout the territory might have invoked a discourse of relationship rather than describe a unitary identity.²⁰³ More likely still, within their community they were endowed with plural histories and plural identities.²⁰⁴ Mostly, they governed themselves.

Rural Dominicans, even the most poor, lived semi-independently. Even near the capital, just one month's work woodcutting afforded three months' leave.²⁰⁵ Others took cattle-trading paths leading west into Haitian territory, as they had for more than a century. In highlands, rural dwellers subsisted on various tactics of slash-and-burn farming, animal grazing, capture of semiferrous pigs and other animals. Semisedentary *monteros*, who lived in this way, might also work for a family who raised cattle without dramatic stratification.²⁰⁶ Those who lived in service to a landowner did so in exchange for land use and other rights, rarely for salary.²⁰⁷ Some looked to wealthier families for credit, employment, or godparentage. In the south particularly, large landowners involved in lumber and cattle held considerable influence over poorer area residents.²⁰⁸ Even in those areas, however, the extent of available land greatly eased dependency. Residents had free-ranging pigs and cattle

of their own, and they often cleared different lands every few years. Sometimes women managed farm plots as men traveled.²⁰⁹ Common lands were usually not clearly delineated, but negotiation and the idea of community belonging and usufruct were avenues of access.²¹⁰ The system of common land use rights, *terrenos comuneros*—which had flustered President Boyer in his attempts to commercialize agriculture in the 1820s—remained well into the twentieth century.²¹¹ Only products near natural ports or small-scale transport of rivers moved longer distances. Pack animals could carry tobacco and cacao, light but valuable, and livestock moved themselves. Sugar in Azua and lumber in northern and southern pockets were the other products that traveled by mule or small boat, without refinement. Agriculture did not transform substantively from the early nineteenth century, nor would it for decades.²¹²

In their obligations, eastern rural residents probably behaved similarly to rural residents of other islands, leaving jobs when they felt they could live independently for a while.²¹³ Rural dwellers' party allegiances may have been more stable than party politics in towns, as land patronage was readily available.²¹⁴ As other scholars have argued, although caudillo literature has shied away from personalistic explanations, there was nothing at all illogical about either president's personal appeal, as far as the influence of either actually extended. Reciprocity, mythogenic appeal, and the language of "moral preservation" sustained them.²¹⁵ In decentralized and capricious circumstances, the idea that a powerful individual, not a distant state, might disseminate justice was an appealing recourse.²¹⁶ Fear also governed, as rivalry led to displays of public violence. "Santana was very popular among rural leaders and the masses of the countryside. . . . Many thousands viewed him with respect and even more saw him with fear, true terror," observed Alejandro Guridi, a onetime supporter of Santana.²¹⁷ In center-island areas, rumors circulated that Báez's supporters, too, had superhuman capacities, including magical bullets.²¹⁸ In every situation, however, the relative abundance of land abated inequality and increased rural Dominicans' leverage. A general aversion to state interference—only irrelevant and possibly costly or disruptive—probably typified the attitude of many. While some might have been caught up in the to-and-fro of caudillo anglings, others likely abstained from the enterprise. "He did not follow any government at all," several neighbors later observed of a day laborer who had been accused of rebellion.²¹⁹

Rural residents constructed for themselves a different moral universe, with different political imperatives from the politicians of the capital. They embraced an epochal and moral sense of time: the Haitian Revolution, for

example, ended “the time of the whites”; others remembered “when the whites hung” or made a future prophecy, “when the whites hang.”²²⁰ Similarly, villains and heroes could transcend temporality. The legend of Don Melchor, greedy slave owner from San Cristóbal who met his end falling from the sky as he tried to reach heaven, endured from the 1500s as a cautionary tale.²²¹ Fighting, emancipation, natural disasters, migration, illnesses, drought, pests, famine, and the arrival of strangers punctuated political beliefs and epistemologies, even as labor modes and technologies remained fairly constant. Interpersonal connections ranged from autarky, to ties between extended families, to bonds of formal patronage. Some communities may have valued periodic redistribution from their more prominent members.²²² Authority sprang from multiple reserves, from the geographically close to the celestially distant. Settlements may have remembered their founders with special veneration; it is likely, furthermore, that residents based their claims to local belonging on a genealogy of kinship.²²³

Distinctiveness and independence were fundamental to the language of everyday life. Dominican residents of southern coast towns were fascinated by what they saw as the extreme, even supernatural, solitude of the nearby mountain areas. Town residents claimed to have captured *biembienes*—several maroon individuals so isolated that they supposedly had no language—in the 1860s.²²⁴ One traveler to the center of the island marveled at distinctive rural vocabulary: “New terms for the dictionary! Here, to say there were a bunch of things or many people: *había pila*. For a gathering of troops, *embarbascáos*. For saddlebags, *cerones*, for jacket, *celeque*, to say that anyone could do something, *esgarita*, to do something on purpose, *expresmente*, for rolls, *güalimones*, for the flies in these areas, *prieta*, to catch someone by surprise, they caught him *nete*.”²²⁵ French and Kreyòl loanwords and regionally specific rural vocabulary demonstrated wholly distinct cultural inflections, from region to sparsely populated region. One scholar has argued for as many as eight different regions whose geography and agriculture all distinguished them from the next in the center of the island alone.²²⁶ Well beyond enduring maroon settlements in the central mountains, rural residents believed that *biembienes* populated the hills, sometimes characterized as ominous creatures, sometimes human. *Biembienes*’ name evoked an invitation of the people who had escaped slavery in decades past: “Come! Come!”

The administration’s reach was small. Although the constitution called for five regional courts, just two existed, in Santo Domingo and Santiago de los Caballeros, and their records were minimal. No one translated the civil code out of French after Separation, and given the dispersal of the population and

the costs of traveling, many cases dragged on extensively.²²⁷ Most rural residents likely resolved their disputes beyond formal proceedings. The wealthy administered justice extrajudicially as well, “without soiling our hands with these expensive nuisances—courts and prisons.”²²⁸ Government legislation was similarly informal. In the capital, charisma and military prowess had supplanted written dicta since the days of Juan Sánchez Ramírez (“all seems to have been by [his] verbal order,” a contemporary observer marveled in 1811).²²⁹ Buenaventura Báez and Pedro Santana, similarly, governed largely by decree. As the earliest arriving Spanish-Cuban officials lamented in 1861, “no fixed legislation” ruled, leaving citizens in the hands of these authorities.²³⁰ The executive dictated law according to his inclinations, even as he paid lip service to popular will.²³¹

Military authority reached somewhat further. Most served irregularly, often by conscription, which many resented.²³² “Al pobre no lo llaman para cosa buena” (the poor person is never called on for good things), one writer later ventriloquized.²³³ There were few funds to pay soldiers, so local administrators rewarded men with rank and commissions.²³⁴ Borrowing structure from the Haitian National Guard, regional divisions were self-ruled and decentralized, and soldiers still used some French commands.²³⁵ “Each division general is a little president of his own province, and pronounces any odious decree, ‘in virtue of Article 210,’ even though that power is only conceded to the president,” an observer claimed.²³⁶ The Dominican army boasted at least 330 officers by 1861, probably many more, and officers had special rights, both for logging and to distribute wholesale goods brought in by foreign merchants.²³⁷ Those at the highest ranks at times ruled abusively in towns. “He doesn’t respect married women, girls, maidens, nor honorable men nor any class of person,” read one complaint about a habitually drunk general, “and he is a disturber of the peace wherever he arrives.”²³⁸ Rank-and-file soldiers probably enjoyed much less prominence. They probably made claims to military sacrifice as a mode of political belonging, rather than a language of rights.²³⁹ As with other armies, however, political elites valued their obedience.²⁴⁰ “Our former life was the life of a soldier, or the life of a citizen who armed himself,” one journalist in the capital remarked, “but here on out . . . that should change.”²⁴¹ Journalists frequently lamented the burden of military expenses on the administration’s meager budget.²⁴²

Spiritual knowledge informed Dominican life intensely. Popular religious practice differed from the doctrinal “fervent Catholicism” of urban elites, but it was by no means less integral to daily life.²⁴³ Religious brotherhoods, in fact, were an important rural social network, and members administered them

largely outside of clergy supervision.²⁴⁴ In homes, popular practice probably had more of what some sociologists have termed a “matriarchal core,” which not only venerated female figures such as the Virgin Mary but also afforded spiritual importance to female practitioners in general, as devotees, ritual experts, or simply women of faith.²⁴⁵ The practice of *promesas* and personal altars, wakes and processions for deceased community members, and religious festivals and pilgrimages connected individuals directly to divinities and to each other. Collective rites and the veneration of a regional patron saint were important organizing principles.²⁴⁶ Annual pilgrimages to the Virgin of Altigracia in Higüey united the faithful across the territory.²⁴⁷ All of these modifications of priest-centric practice—from the authority of regional brotherhoods to practices of divination—disseminated alternative authority among community members. Like Obeah in other islands, Dominicans embraced epistemologies of justice that were parallel to and independent of bourgeois discourses of legality.²⁴⁸ Religious fraternal societies (*cofradías*) existed as rural orders just as they did in towns, like the black Brotherhood of Saint Antoine in the Cibao valley. “These blacks have always lived in a state of independence . . . which has never permitted [officials] to collect any goods from them,” an official complained in 1806.²⁴⁹ Scholars would judge the 1844 invocation “Viva la República Dominicana y la Virgen Maria!” to be a “naïve and charming cry,” but the marriage of the two was not surprising.²⁵⁰

In their faith, Dominicans and Haitians shared overlapping lexicons, in a connection so fundamental that Dominicans and Haitians venerated the Virgin of Altigracia together for centuries.²⁵¹ Call-and-response music and liturgy, an emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and emotional conversion experiences characterized practice across the island. All-day dances on saints’ days and other festivals embodied joyous or mournful expressions of faith.²⁵² Drumming added an important ritual element in some areas, including *palos de muerte* (to commemorate the deceased) and *fiestas* or *bailes de palo* (to celebrate saints’ days).²⁵³ Disapproving outsiders remarked that Dominican celebrations became raucous and that “singing and shouting” after baptisms was common.²⁵⁴ One might seek to clean up or improve one’s luck, bind a spouse or lover, gain protection from a *resguardo*, and seek the aid (or vengeance) of the deceased.²⁵⁵ Many faithful performed special veneration for saints, like San Miguel, whose importance crossed pantheons, and Erzulie, Ogou, and marasa twins also appeared.²⁵⁶ Especially in center-island areas, one might have appealed to papabocó or papalúa ritual experts, and some eastern faithful accorded special authority, or “generative potency,” to western

practitioners.²⁵⁷ That authority might transcend time and space, even individual bodies, in what one scholar describes as “traveling spirithood.”²⁵⁸ Dominican families’ mourning rituals—nine-day funeral vigils and rites like *baquini* for deceased infants—evoked those in Jamaica, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere.²⁵⁹ The repetition of these rites, one year and seven years after the death, underscore the central importance of ancestors. Figures like *la jupia* and *la ciguapa* (*taína* spirits who roamed the fields), *nimitas* (glowing firefly-like creatures who watched over the living), and potentially malevolent creatures like *barsélicos*, *galipotes*, *zánganos*, and *bacás* all embodied the vibrant connection between the Dominican countryside’s human inhabitants and other life.²⁶⁰ At harvest time, Dominicans performed labor in some areas with the collective help of neighbors and extended family. Their collective work songs, *convite*, echoed *konbits* of the west.²⁶¹

In different commercial and familial circuits, Dominicans traveled to Haiti often. Whole families traveled regularly from Puerto Plata and Santiago to Cap-Haïtien, for example. José del Carmen Rodríguez’s wife was Haitian, and she had family throughout Haiti, whom she had not seen in eighteen years. José, his wife, their four children, and “un peón” made the trip to visit her relatives, perhaps to stay.²⁶² Some had left spouses and parents in Haiti and hoped to return. One fourteen-year-old boy, Rudolfo Ovidio, wanted to meet his mother’s family. Nicasio Jiménez reported that his wife’s mother and sister had been living in Haiti “ever since the Separation,” when he intended to visit them nearly twenty years later.²⁶³ Some moved multiple times in their life, like José María Sanchez, who moved from Higüey to Cap, overland, via Dajabón, as a child. He later settled elsewhere in the center of the island, farther to the south.²⁶⁴ Southern residents traveled to the northern coast by ship, as Anna María LaPlace did, leaving Santo Domingo for Cap-Haïtien, for reasons of family.²⁶⁵ Haiti’s government paper published acts of naturalization. Dominican women could contract their own naturalization in the west.²⁶⁶ North-coast commercial trade in both directions was brisk. Meanwhile, small-scale Haitian merchants, *pacotilleurs*, regularly traveled all the way to Higüey, selling their goods to country people along their route.²⁶⁷ In the porous southern center-island region, migration was as old as the maroon communities that had welcomed fleeing slaves in the colonial era and the cattle trade that still burgeoned. Settlement patterns amounted to living geographic memory of the semirecent past.

Residents of the border or, more accurately, the center-island region in the south, were aware of but strategically removed from political projects of the island capitals. Relatively less direct travel connected the island capitals,



Fig. 1.3 A grave in Jacmel. Biencité Santana's given and family names suggest he was one of many who had family from both sides of the island.

which could take as long as two weeks in unfavorable conditions. News of Santo Domingo often arrived in Port-au-Prince via relay in Saint Thomas or Turks and Caicos Islands, and vice versa. By contrast, bustling cattle and wood trade connected the “deep south” (*sur profundo*) with the west, and coffee came eastward. By midcentury, there may have been some international enclaves of individuals and families engaged in wood selling on both sides of the island for decades.²⁶⁸ “Free trade across the border” continued to be a primary negotiation concern in 1850s treaties.²⁶⁹ In some center-island areas, settlement was shifting. In the nearly ninety years since the Treaty of Aranjuez had fixed borders on the island, decades-long demographic shifts blurred the boundaries of ethnicity and community. Hinche or Hinchá, in the north-central area of the island, slowly transformed, becoming more Haitian, a pacific shift that became obvious at Separation. Several decades later, a man recalled that Separation had provoked something of a land grab, with wood sellers quickly coming forth with specious titles to continue to do business as they had before.²⁷⁰

In the center of the island, both governments had a collection of military outposts, but little more. In areas of so much commingling, “nation” was as much a tactic as it was a community. Residents’ identity and filiation

overlapped, intermingled, and transformed. Travelers and residents regularly negotiated differences, perhaps through humor, where they were not irrelevant.²⁷¹ Towns like Neiba were founded on a centuries-long history of marronage from the west. Expressions for the fundamental language of everyday life—words for hunger, fear, markets, scandals, and so on—easily blended center-island Kreyòl and center-island Spanish.²⁷² Town residents of San Juan de la Maguana, and others to the north, lived off cattle trade to Haiti. For cattle traders, Port-au-Prince was much closer than Santo Domingo.²⁷³ Not particularly loyal to the east (much less “anti-Haitian”), peasants, cattle rustlers, and military men of central and central-southern regions of the island presented a direct challenge to political authority. Whole towns had reputations for fluid and charged allegiances. Neiba was of “well-known poor disposition,” a French consul observed in 1847.²⁷⁴ Neiba’s “denaturalized citizens . . . threaten the country with anarchy,” one Dominican paper warned, a decade later.²⁷⁵ Haitian authorities also conceived of the region as a space for criminals, and they accused the Dominican government of supporting cattle rustling.²⁷⁶ Dominican authorities returned the accusations, and they repeatedly complained that lower-level Haitian military officials sought to spread “letters of seduction” to Dominican military officials and other residents.²⁷⁷

Political schemes in the center-island area never ceased. Santana’s opponents repeatedly fled to the area to regroup.²⁷⁸ Local military men espoused goals that ranged from personal military ambitions, to vague declarations of subregional autonomy, to outright opposition to the Dominican state and proposals of reunification with Haiti. Capital city papers described their actions as “criminal” or “denationalized.” Some became infamous; their nicknames—“el Quiri,” “Cabulla,” and so on—well known to authorities and the public alike. Their goals were similar to those of the ambitious separatists and prominent local leaders in Haiti and other state periphery sites throughout the Caribbean. Officers invoked national rivalries for their own purposes and argued that their services, rather than any ethnolinguistic claim, afforded them belonging in the national structure they chose to support.²⁷⁹ Historian Ismael Hernández Flores argues that the youth of the region moved on from any rancor that had touched the region in 1844, quickly returning to centuries-old patterns of community, trade, and political collaboration.²⁸⁰

Provocation, Instability, and Revolution

Economic crises, diplomatic aggression, popular discontent, and political violence constantly plagued the new republic. France, Spain, and the United

States all withheld recognition, seeking leverage for concessions, especially the cession of the Samaná peninsula.²⁸¹ Britain, the first to recognize the republic in 1850, actively sought to stymie other treaties. To forestall U.S. influence, collect debt, or simply because it did not please their sensibilities that two “negro states” be divided, both British and French agents occasionally lobbied for reunification of the island.²⁸² These authorities were nakedly interventionist in Dominican local politics, too. Their favor fell to the caudillo they perceived to be more receptive to concessions. The French tended to favor Báez for his repeated (although far from exclusive) annexation entreaties. U.S. agents decided Santana would give them the concessions they sought, and one Spanish diplomat initiated a citizenship scheme that offered tantalizing (and disruptive) political immunity. Commercial agents from the United States, a growing presence, fantasized about large-scale land speculating and colonization. As they became more ambitious, these agents complained that the Dominican Republic was too “semicolonial” even to contract concessions without European nations intervening.²⁸³ Sometimes the agents’ machinations proved so outrageous that Dominican authorities, in exasperation, arrested them.²⁸⁴ Dominican officials and other prominent figures, anxious, responded with annexation and protectorate overtures. Chaos grew.

By the close of the 1840s, the capital city administration was in crisis. The treasury was empty, despite ten printings of paper money.²⁸⁵ The French consul alleged that a protectorate plan had near-unanimous support; indeed, the Dominican Congress may have secretly passed a resolution.²⁸⁶ Haiti’s new president, Faustin Soulouque, looked on, with French worries of his own. His political opponents were demonstrating for democratic reforms, along the lines of the revolution that had occurred in France the previous year. Despite repression and executions, their opposition continued, and rumors of the French-Dominican protectorate provoked him further.²⁸⁷ He insisted on the indivisibility of the island. The British consul egged him on, proposing a plan that would reunite the island while leaving Dominican governors and military forces intact.²⁸⁸ Although his overtures were mostly bellicose, Soulouque also tried to appeal directly to Dominicans, highlighting the racism of Santana’s administration.²⁸⁹ He invoked the memory of General Joaquín Puello, killed by Santana for his opposition to early Separation plans.²⁹⁰ He reminded Dominicans, too, of the disastrous incident of the men fleeing Puerto Rico and the pro-slavery complicity of Santo Domingo officials.²⁹¹ He called Dominicans “our brothers of the east,” which journalists particularly loathed and resented.²⁹²

A few months into the French treaty negotiations, Soulouque launched an ill-fated campaign in Dominican territory. He held Azua for a little more than two weeks; his subordinates engaged in smaller conflicts in several center-island towns.²⁹³ Santana met him near the southern town of Baní, soundly defeating him. The aggression was so unpopular in Port-au-Prince that Soulouque's opponents were purposely silent, expectant that the mobilization would bring his downfall.²⁹⁴ Tightening his grip instead, Soulouque named himself emperor. Dominicans led a small naval offensive against Haiti in 1849, burned Anse-à-Pitres, and attacked one other town, but both sides quickly demobilized.²⁹⁵ The French consul was not chastened in the least. He dreamed of a "white trade" to Samaná, in new French settlers, and wrote to Dominican legislators promising it.²⁹⁶ French authorities continued to lobby for both administrations to pay Haiti's indemnity, and they did not recognize the Dominican Republic for several more years.²⁹⁷ British and French diplomats intervened as "mediators" in the peace that followed. Dominican ministers found few complaints too small to report.²⁹⁸

Santana's victory, easily won, gave him a temporary burst of popularity, but he quickly squandered it. He persecuted political rivals and eviscerated constitutional reforms. An "infernal party spirit" reigned.²⁹⁹ Some journalists asserted Santana was a "magic name for the country"; others, that he was "fratricidal and ferocious."³⁰⁰ "What a country we live in!" a columnist complained, when Santana exiled another newspaper editor.³⁰¹ Authors of a new paper, *La Acusación*—perhaps the most roundly critical of all antidemocratic tendencies in the city—leveled themselves squarely at Santana, accusing him of appropriating 16 million pesos fuertes and warning that the "thieves" might soon spirit away the remaining 300 million. The editor earned himself a beating.³⁰² Papers turned to satire and allegory. *El Dominicano* mocked a fictional "Don Chameleon," who threw his allegiances wherever jobs were to be found.³⁰³ A play, entitled "The Conspiracies, Seen from One Side," depicts characters motivated by jealousy, arrogance, ignorance, and self-interest.³⁰⁴ In a satirical dream sequence, *El Oasis* depicted a society where a "Pueri-Cracia" ruled, with a constitution ordering the deportation of all men and women over age thirty, polygamy, continuous revolution, the beating of foreign consuls, and constant conflict between legislative and executive branches. Meanwhile, military men had license to "do absolutely whatever they wanted."³⁰⁵

U.S. filibusters soon came to the island in earnest, joined by a diplomatic corps who supported their ambition. Although Dominican officials supported white American migration, incoming proposals were not agricultural

projects but rather armed filibuster operations, intending to attack Cuba. One Georgia operation associated with a failed Narciso López expedition offered “8,000 migrants” for Dominican settlement. President Báez was so suspicious that he warned the outfit that Spanish troops were prepared to defend the northern coast if necessary. The French consul also offered ships.³⁰⁶ Tensions ran high. The French consul predicted that north coast residents would “revolt and unite with Haiti” if French troops, meant to forestall U.S. filibusters, arrived precipitously.³⁰⁷ Báez passed regulations restricting migrants’ ports of arrival, preventing the disembarkation of guns, and demanding proof of employment within two months.³⁰⁸ New proposals continued cropping up; the Dominican government opposed them, one by one, and sent secret agents to investigate.³⁰⁹ Several years later, swashbuckling Texas veteran William Cazneau arrived aboard the *USS Columbia*, intending to draft a recognition treaty. He followed his ardently pro-filibuster wife, Jane Storm Cazneau, to the republic. Both harbored eager and aggressive settlement plans. Jane Cazneau wrote effusively that Dominican land for sugar and coffee could be had for just three dollars an acre, compared with forty or fifty dollars in Cuba.³¹⁰ Privately, she suggested armed colonization.³¹¹ In exchange for recognition, William Cazneau demanded cheap rent of Samaná. British, French, and Spanish agents worked furiously to oppose him, docking warships in Samaná and the capital.

Dominican popular opposition to U.S. plans was acute and growing. Cazneau’s proposal was so wildly unpopular in Samaná that demonstrators traveled to the capital to make their opposition plain. A Spanish observer remarked, contentedly, “Samaná has not been sold because there is a fear of revolution of the people of color.”³¹² In the capital, the treaty collapsed, too. Controversy about Article 3, under whose provisions Dominicans would be subject to U.S. laws, ostensibly put Dominicans at risk for enslavement upon visiting Baltimore and other southern ports. Under intense public pressure, the Dominican Congress soundly rejected it, Cazneau refused to alter it, and the negotiation was brusquely dropped.³¹³ Cazneau blamed opposition in Santo Domingo on “adept . . . and malicious” Haitian propaganda, trying to minimize or dismiss the obvious discontent in the town.³¹⁴ The “liberty . . . to treat the colored Dominican Consul as it treats any other negro, was too large a bone for the Dominican Congress to swallow. . . . General Cazneau is distressed, Mrs. Cazneau is mortified,” the *New York Times* reported.³¹⁵ The Spanish consul expressed satisfaction that joint diplomatic action had helped to block the treaty negotiations. “I hope that the Dominican government will be demoralized,” he wrote.³¹⁶ They were not. Diplomats continued

talks for a naval station in Samaná as the United States sent warships to Port-au-Prince on the pretext of private debt collection.³¹⁷

In this tempest, Soulouque mounted a second, final, disastrous campaign in late winter 1855, opposed by his own troops and the majority of the Haitian public. He imprisoned southern peasant activists, and as opposition popped up in other towns, he restlessly looked eastward.³¹⁸ Dominican newspapers knew he was trying to occupy restive high-ranking opponents.³¹⁹ The French consul in Haiti, Maxime Raybaud, goaded Soulouque in favor of unification. Raybaud then menaced Dominican officials with the suggestion that forced reunification or U.S. occupation was imminent.³²⁰ Santana promised a fight to the death.³²¹ Capital city journalists furiously refuted Soulouque's propaganda about solidarity and unification, but they were much more calm.³²² Soulouque was "pumped up by a little devil, by sycophants, or maybe by liars who wanted to see his downfall," Dominican paper *El Oasis* asserted drily.³²³ Other than a six-day occupation of one center-island town, Soulouque and supporting generals made few gains. Haitian soldiers hated the expedition, and they chided the emperor in song, "ça pa z'affair a nous" (it's not our cause).³²⁴ Even before a second and final encounter, Dominican journalists reported confidently that "perfect tranquility reigns on the borderlands" and warned Soulouque he would soon lose power.³²⁵

Soulouque's last foray into Dominican territory did not disrupt Dominican domestic struggles very long, nor did it forestall growing U.S. aggression. A major uprising challenged him in Les Cayes, and U.S. adventurers claimed a small, uninhabited island off the coast for their own guano exploitation.³²⁶ News of filibuster aggression in Nicaragua filled Dominican and Haitian headlines.³²⁷ Dominican capital city officials, undeterred, never relented to U.S. negotiations, as U.S. officials demanded more coaling concessions. Meanwhile, Santo Domingo residents protested nightly in the capital at the house of U.S. agents. Cries of "Down with the Yankees!" could be heard on the streets. The U.S. flag had to be raised out of reach of those throwing rotten eggs. The Dominican capital was in disorder.³²⁸

Revolution brewed. By the summer of 1856, papers lamented that Santana was exiling people "by the thousands" and executing others without trial.³²⁹ He made a spectacle of having the condemned dig their own graves.³³⁰ One poet ventriloquized Santana: "Blood, always seeking blood! . . . Men hate me: I hate them!"³³¹ Other authorities, including the archbishop, threw their support to his rival.³³² Spanish consul Antonio María Segovia allowed Báez supporters to register as Spanish citizens in order to claim political asylum. In a popular rhyme, an anonymous person celebrated:

I'm not scared of Santana
Or the Alfau brothers
Just of Segovia
'Cause I'm matriculated.³³³

Critics lamented their impotence to quell the disorder as Santana lost his grip. The country was “lost to disorder and anarchy, plagued by hypocrites and demagogues,” one writer argued, gravely, and he observed that common people were suffering the most of all from the unrelenting disorder.³³⁴ The economic crisis continued unabated, as inflation brought nearly 80 percent devaluation each year on average, from 1847 to 1855.³³⁵ A priest lamented, “Whoever . . . looks at the history of our country . . . will cry over its disasters.”³³⁶ Santana hurriedly retired to his ranch, ending a term he had originally claimed would last another ten years. After a brief interlude, Báez again ascended to the presidency. He, too, filled the Senate with his supporters, ordered his rivals’ arrest and exile, and called for multiple printings of millions of pesos. England, France, and Spain refused the new exchange rates. Adopting the voice of a foreign lender, an anonymous Dominican author penned a poem called “Another Pirate”:

My till is my treasure
My God is interest
My happiness is when I calculate
Five percent each month.³³⁷

Dutch creditors were so unpopular that one was nearly murdered on the street in the capital, just steps from the British consul’s door.³³⁸ Báez’s printing of paper money had left the exchange rate at 4750 pesos to one dollar.³³⁹ Particularly for tobacco merchants of the Cibao valley and northern coast, inflation made prices intolerable.³⁴⁰

In the summer of 1857, merchants and liberals of Santiago de los Caballeros and surrounding towns of the Cibao valley threw their lot into revolution. “REVOLUTION! CONSPIRACY!” screamed *El Eco*’s headlines in the capital.³⁴¹ Delegates drafted a constitution in Moca, calling for an end to the death penalty, extensive civil liberties, more government control of the army, term limits, and other reforms. They named a provisional president, to serve in a new capital, Santiago.³⁴² The leaders could not easily mobilize local cultivators, who favored Báez’s paper money policies. Cibao’s agriculture-intense valley had less of a tradition of military mobilizations, anyway, even if local peasants had been supportive.³⁴³ Only one man could mobilize a familiar

and loyal following, and, so, the Cibaeño leaders called on Santana to command a siege of the capital. France and Britain docked warships in the harbor, and Spain clamored to do the same. The British consul in the capital and the vice consul in Puerto Plata openly supported the rebels.³⁴⁴ The *Moniteur Haïtien* published a letter from the besieged capital that read, “We do not know when this war will end, nor what the result will be; . . . The picture of everything is so sad, my pen cannot paint it. Dominicans are divided among themselves. The dead! The injured!” Famine and pillage were coming, the writer warned.³⁴⁵ After months of desperate standoff, Báez capitulated and fled the country. A “bloody struggle divides us,” he inveighed.³⁴⁶ The Cibaeños lost, too, however. Santana easily wrangled power back from them, replacing the reform constitution with a familiar, draconian one.³⁴⁷

Unrest and the Eve of Annexation

Patience for the constant foreign intrigue wore thin. “Fulano [that guy] (and there are lots of those guys) today is involved in French politics, tomorrow he’s English, and the next day you have a Russian,” a writer complained.³⁴⁸ Furious editorials railed against the Spanish matriculation scheme. One author commented acerbically, “Where are *fraternity, equality, and liberal laws* . . . where one must craft a document of *limpieza de sangre*?”³⁴⁹ Nearly eight hundred in the capital had taken Spanish citizenship, opponents claimed. Supporters dismissed opponents as “Boyerists.”³⁵⁰ “It has been a long thirteen years . . . [and] if people are demoralized, it is not by the matriculation, but because of the country’s failures,” another writer countered.³⁵¹ Writers tired of escapist Europhilic sentiment amid the disorder and chaos. In an editorial entitled “Spirit of the Times,” an author condemned the frivolities of his small readership for their “damned craze . . . to do everything *by steam* and in accordance with the fashions of overseas.” He warned them, “Well, if by some misfortune the course of things doesn’t change, and becomes more laughable, then we’ll just also have to live *by steam*, so that we can leave this treacherous world as fast as possible and go enjoy all the good stuff of the next in the sky.”³⁵² A poet mocked Santo Domingo elite citizens who pretended to European birth, similarly:

Upon seeing my friend Lola
With a fancy black skirt and a fan
I asked her, ¿are you Spanish?
And the *manola* answered me
Yes, *me born in Potorico*³⁵³

Many residents of the Dominican capital continued to demonstrate their opposition to U.S. interests. They detested the U.S. commercial agent, Jonathan Elliot. For some months, he had been suffering daily harassment; the final straw, he reported, was a young man menacing his wife at her parents' home. Before the end of the year, he wrote hurriedly to request a passport to leave with his family and servants, "by first opportunity that offers."³⁵⁴ Capital residents continued to protest, however. In the summer of 1858, a U.S. commander condemned "nightly mobs" issuing "abuse and threats" about their "inimical feelings against the Agent and the flag of the United States."³⁵⁵ He demanded a twenty-one-gun salute for the "public abuse" before leaving. The next year, a U.S. outfit tried to seize an island off the coast for guano exploitation, the second to have done so in as many years. The matter caused a massive uproar in the press.³⁵⁶ Across the island, Jane Cazneau described constant unrest in Puerto Plata. She blamed annexation rumors on town residents of color.³⁵⁷

Despite popular opposition to colonization and protectorate plans, Santana's inner circle pushed forward. Columnists continued to support the idea of colonists for cash-crop products, and Dominican officials reached a migration agreement in Paris in April 1857.³⁵⁸ When migrants arrived in Samaná that fall, the Dominican government sent some shipments of food, as promised.³⁵⁹ The attempts were disastrous. Illness killed many of the new arrivals, and French authorities advised the remaining colonists that it would be wise to forfeit the project.³⁶⁰ An even more ambitious coterie nevertheless dreamed of larger transformations. Santana's vice president, General Antonio Abad Alfau, and his brother, General Felipe Alfau, lobbied for both a protectorate and an indenture revolution simultaneously. The Alfaus and their supporters wanted contract laborers from India and China.³⁶¹ They wrote enthusiastically about the hundreds of Canary Islanders and Spaniards who arrived from Venezuela, fleeing social unrest.³⁶² The Spanish consul added his approval, noting that they had begun setting up plantations near the capital.³⁶³ In a secret meeting with Cuban authorities in 1860, Antonio Abad Alfau argued that Dominicans loved Spain—especially the "most notable"—and suggested that Santana was considering declaring annexation unilaterally. Santana's machinations for Spanish annexation were an open secret.³⁶⁴

Conditions continued to deteriorate. Santana soon printed 10 million more pesos; the public refused to accept them. British, French, and Spanish warships all threatened military action.³⁶⁵ Santana responded by printing millions more.³⁶⁶ His officials rushed to sign long-term mining, wood, and guano

concessions with French companies in exchange for up-front payments.³⁶⁷ A flood of political exiles arrived in Haiti, Curaçao, Saint Thomas, and Venezuela as censorship and repression continued. Some men cited their Spanish matriculation to avoid military service, long after the whole affair had ended; others deserted to British ships.³⁶⁸ Santana used his army to pursue Báez supporters in Azua.³⁶⁹ In an 1860 debate, participants made veiled judgments about Santana through a debate about Julius Caesar. “Some say the great crime of Caesar was to have killed the Republic,” one participant observed, testily. “A fairly specious paradox. Can a cadaver be assassinated?”³⁷⁰ “The life of a tyrant is never long,” a poet warned. In front of Santana, a liberal priest gave a defiant sermon, threatening, “The people always begin with a murmur, and end by toppling their tyrants.”³⁷¹ December 1860 began with an attempt on Santana’s life.³⁷²

Libertad, Igualdad . . .

At the close of the 1850s, echoes of the 1843 mobilizations rumbled across the whole island and in rebel networks as far as Venezuela, Saint Thomas, and Curaçao. Port-au-Prince burned in 1857, inflation soared, and open rebellion began in the north.³⁷³ Rebellion spread from Gonaïves as foreigners evacuated. A collaborative Dominican and Haitian surge supported the anti-Soulouque revolution. “Dominicans recently made a revolution, or what they more pompously called a *combined movement* among the island residents,” to instate General Fabre Nicholas Geffrard, a hostile Spanish official recorded.³⁷⁴ A career officer, Geffrard had participated in Soulouque’s 1856 campaign. Among his Dominican supporters in the center-island area and in exile, all was obviously forgiven. Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, himself a veteran of 1844 Separation struggles, allied with Geffrard to overthrow Soulouque. Rumors abounded about Emperor Soulouque’s assassination, and in January 1859, he departed for Jamaica as Boyer and Rivière had done.³⁷⁵

Geffrard’s republicanism electrified the public. Citizenship language was everywhere. The *Moniteur* promised that the revolution would “regenerate the country and make it retake its place among the peoples who are friends of civilization,” reestablishing liberal institutions immediately.³⁷⁶ Lawmakers took to wearing special hats to emphasize that civilian rule would replace military power at last.³⁷⁷ Town politicians praised Geffrard’s democratic commitments. “We promise to bury ourselves beneath the ruins of the country before living in slavery.— We furthermore promise to obey nothing but the empire of law and never to the despotic will of any individual,” one group of citizens effused.³⁷⁸ The new president offered immediate conciliatory gestures to the east. He con-

demned his predecessor's aggressions in ringing terms. Quickly, his ministers drafted a five-year treaty. All the while, political refugees fled Santana's repression. Often their first stop was Port-de-Paix or Cap, both easy to reach on the northern coast. Occasionally, they continued on to the Haitian capital to seek audience with high political officials.³⁷⁹ By 1860, Sánchez was in exile in Saint Thomas but organizing opposition to Santana. He and other activists had Geffrard's frank support.³⁸⁰ Geffrard praised the rebels publicly and urged that they sought "fraternity and conciliation." He also warned that many were discussing annexation rumors, raising the alarm as far as Curaçao.³⁸¹

Anti-Santana figures, military authorities, their families, and allies mobilized, meanwhile, in the center of the island. They celebrated the new democratic regime in the west and opposed mounting rumors about annexation in the east.³⁸² News that center-island residents and these political figures wanted "indivisibility of territory" quickly reached the Dominican capital, and the border percolated with "unusual intensity."³⁸³ Authorities mandated that all communication between the two nations cease. Already that spring, Dominican officials tried to restrict the travel of any foreigner who had been in the west, a measure that irritated the foreign consuls.³⁸⁴ General Valentín Alcántara, a Dominican officer who had switched to serve the Haitian army ten years earlier, found a new "denaturalized" ally: Domingo Ramírez y Parmantier.³⁸⁵ In a manifesto with a handwritten Spanish heading of the Haitian motto, "Libertad-Igualdad," Ramírez addressed his compatriots:

Our efforts have as their goal

1. To remove ourselves from the ferocity of Santana, whose bloody character pardons neither women nor children.
2. To extricate ourselves from the shocking misery in which his ignorant administration has submerged us.
3. To return to their destiny an infinite number of noble Dominicans kept in cruel ostracism by his tyranny.
4. To break the chains of the great mass of our co-citizens, shackled by that despot.
5. To impede Santana, whose relationships with foreigners, enemies of our race, threaten to alienate our territory from us and compromise our liberty and political existence.
6. To unite ourselves under one sole flag, so that the country can be indivisible and strong through the fusion of all of us.

These goals, as you see, are not just laudable; rather, they are the foundation of our common prosperity—the fate of our family—the guarantee of a future for our children!

Co-citizens, you have nothing to fear!³⁸⁶

Santana himself rounded up loyal men to crush the movement.

Santo Domingo's officials refused to acknowledge the rebels' political goals. They dismissed the rebels as "ambitious men," "robbers," or "traitors," and they demanded that the Haitian government provide restitution for the whole affair. To foreign consuls, the Dominican foreign minister insisted that a total ban in communication with Haiti would prevent further disorder.³⁸⁷ He claimed a "general mobilization in all of the Republic" had crushed Ramírez's "totally infamous and criminal treason," and that "the Dominican soldier . . . was always ready to fight the Common enemy," a willful misunderstanding of Ramírez's own identity.³⁸⁸ Another minister admitted, uneasily, that the movement was Dominican.³⁸⁹ Puerto Plata's residents warned each other that slavery was to be reestablished.³⁹⁰ Capital city officials responded to the growing unrest only by declaring that spreading slavery rumors was a capital crime.³⁹¹ The common enemy was not very clear at all.