

THE EMPERORS OF SPORT: DOMINICAN BASEBALL DURING THE US OCCUPATION
OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 1916-1924

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ABSTRACT

While baseball is typically associated with the United States for most Western readers, the sport was already being played in Cuba, Japan, and the Dominican Republic before the United States fully realized its own Major League system. During the First World War, the United States invaded and occupied Santo Domingo in an attempt to maintain hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Dominican intellectuals in the capital city utilized baseball in their nation-building endeavor, seeking to prove that not only were they capable of performing their own westernization, but that Santo Domingo was the modern heir of ancient Athens in the New World.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013, in the third edition of the World Baseball Classic, the Dominican Republic national baseball team bested the likes of perennial baseball powers South Korea, the United States, Japan, Puerto Rico, and Cuba to win their first title in the global tournament. Of the twelve players named to the all-tournament team, five of them hailed from the Dominican Republic, including tournament Most Valuable Player, Robinson Canó. Although the inauguration of the World Baseball Classic itself is a rather recent development, competitive international baseball in the Americas dates back more than a century. The game of baseball, since its murky origins, has transcended boundaries of nation, race, and culture. The island of Hispaniola has reemerged in the historical narrative as a veritable hotbed of professional baseball talent. Major League Baseball, at the present day, incorporates a larger share of international players than ever before. The Dominican Republic, despite its geographical size and small Caribbean population, supplies more of these ballplayers, or *peloteros*, than any other country by a significant margin. The history of baseball in the Dominican Republic is not easily confined to the imposed limitations of colonial order and imperialist cultural exportation. Rather, the Dominican game, in its unique iteration, is the result of a negotiated space where cultural resistance adapted the US game for Dominican use and meaning.

In the Dominican Republic, baseball served as an agent of both resistance to foreign occupation and an agent of international humanitarianism. Baseball was already a Dominican cultural institution when the United States invaded Santo Domingo and established a military government in the spring of 1916. During this time, Dominican political visionaries in the capital of Santo Domingo grappled with the prospect of entering the modernizing West and contemporary ideals of progress, liberalism, and development. At the time, the island was

predominately rural and disinclined toward Westernization. Urban Santo Domingo served as the national seat of progressive intellectual thought. While these Dominicans sought to remove the constant spectre of foreign intervention by other Western powers, they attempted to do so by proving that they could acclimate themselves to the tenors of the modern West of their own accord, instead of at the behest of European bankers or at the barrel-end of US gunboats. These Dominican men of letters, or *letrados*, maintained a nascent literary tradition in Santo Domingo. Many of these writings, found in *Listin Diario*, the most widely-read daily newspaper in the Dominican Republic, demonstrate that baseball was a part of this lettered progressive intellectual discourse embraced by liberal elites, not in a capitulation to US cultural influence, but in an attempt to establish the Dominican Republic as a progressive and independent nation in order to prove to imperial powers that they did not require the constant foreign encroachment that had marred their history since its inception. Historians have written about the divide in the Dominican Republic between liberal urban intellectuals and the rural peasantry, and that seems apparent in the baseball discussion as well. This study, necessarily, focuses on the urban intellectuals of Santo Domingo and their role in negotiating baseball's place in an emerging nationhood.

The following historiography seeks to flesh out the variation of methods of understanding the history of baseball in the Caribbean, especially the Dominican Republic. In doing so, the presently small field of literature necessitates drawing upon some sources that do not focus entirely on Hispaniola, but on other nearby locales or grander concepts of imperialism, colonialism, diffusion, globalization, and sport. Most importantly, this unsettled discussion and the general lack of historical scholarship on Dominican baseball speaks to the present necessity of further work on this topic. This endeavor ultimately seeks to understand how the Dominican

Republic overcame repeated foreign intervention and small geographic stature to be today the single greatest source of international Major League talent.

Historical Antecedents

US and Cuban Baseball

The origins of the game of baseball have long been contested by historians. Competing sets of myths vie to explain the game's genesis, classically couched in the Abner Doubleday vs. Alexander Cartwright debate.¹ Whether Doubleday or Cartwright actually was the first to develop the game, it likely took form in mid-nineteenth-century New York, in either outstate Cooperstown or the vacant lots of Manhattan.² Considering the multitude of influential hands involved in the subsequent expansion of the game, perhaps it is a faulty endeavor to pinpoint a single point of origin. Importantly, it took just a few short years for baseball to extend beyond national boundaries. At the end of the nineteenth-century, the fledgling US sport began to accompany US forays into international affairs. Notably, baseball found itself at home in Japan and in the Caribbean. Cuba, which at the time was in its last years of Spanish colonial rule, served as the regional entry point for the game in the 1860s. The traditional story on the island recalls that US naval crews, while stranded in Matanzas Bay for repairs, taught local Cubans for the purpose of the first Cuban baseball game.³ While the veracity of this story remains open to question, the significance of baseball in Cuba has been apparent since. Roberto González

¹ Historians debate as to who originally contrived the game, whether it was Civil War general Abner Doubleday in 1839, or a young bank clerk named Alexander Cartwright in 1845. Either way, the evidence is limited and the stories are rather apocryphal in nature today.

² Warren Goldstein. *A History of Early Baseball: Playing for Keeps, 1857-1876*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1989, 11.

³ Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria. *The Pride of Havana: A History of Cuban Baseball*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 75.

Echevarría argues that, in a perfect convergence of events, the infancy of the Cuban game shared a common time and place with independence from Spain and the emergence of a truly Cuban national identity.⁴ Likewise, historian Louis A. Perez confirms the “critical moment” in which baseball served as a present element in the fomenting of a post-colonial Cuba. Further, Perez describes baseball as an allied proxy for US intervention and anti-Spanish revolutionary discourse. In fact, baseball was banned as a subversive game by Spanish colonial authorities, who were aware of the game’s US roots. In the imperial competition for fans for the United States’ and Spain’s respective national sports—baseball and bullfighting—baseball won, and Cuba became an independent nation under the protection of the US. Despite the association of the game’s importation with imperialist machinations, Perez concludes that baseball “promoted both local attachments and national allegiance...shared images that could bear and disseminate common values.”⁵ Echevarria, in another work, ascribes baseball parallel status to other forms of consumable culture—Cuban literature and dance—and highlights their roles in the island’s burgeoning nationalist and anticolonial sentiment.⁶ Historian Thomas F. Carter, however, asserts that the rise of baseball is not due to the influence of US imperialism, but was instead propelled by the efforts of creole elites to pair the game with revolutionary ideology. Rather than an instrument of colonialism, he argues, baseball was a weapon in the struggle for post-colonial

⁴ Echevarria, 76.

⁵ Louis A. Perez, Jr. “Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898” in *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 81, 1994, 494, 496, 508-509, 513.

⁶ Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria. “Literature, dance, and baseball in the last Cuban fin de siècle” in *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 1996, Vol. 95, No. 2.

independence.⁷ The links between baseball and the colonial discourse, and the origins of the Cuban game are significant to the larger discussion of baseball in the Dominican Republic, since the sport's entry into the rest of the Caribbean was facilitated by its nascent Cuban genesis.

Baseball in the Dominican Republic

The taking of the Dominican Republic to the new sport of baseball has been a subject of some intrigue among historians and anthropologists, and the angles of study are increasingly varied. Nonetheless, the largest portion of scholarly discourse on the subject revolves around the nature of sport in colonial and imperial contexts. Importantly, this body of scholarship has begun a very young discussion of the role of sport in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This approach opts neither for imperial imposition or unfettered agency of the marginalized; instead, the negotiation of this peculiar place is of increasing interest.

It is sometimes difficult to separate the history of the Dominican Republic from repeated instances of US intervention. Marine occupations, United States' protectionism, and the support of dictators like Trujillo mark the post-colonial reality of Hispaniola. Anthropologist Alan Klein warns, however, that the common "cultural imperialist argument in which the cultural exports of the...industrialized West to the rest of the world are uncritically accepted" is inadequate.⁸ He argues that, in spite of the hegemony of Western culture, there exists a tension between imperial imposition and cultural resistance.⁹ Exploring this tension ethnographically, Klein concludes that

⁷ Thomas F. Carter. "The Manifesto of a Baseball-playing Country: Cuba, Baseball, and Poetry in the Late Nineteenth Century" in *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2005: Vol. 22, No. 2

⁸ Alan M. Klein, "American Hegemony, Dominican Resistance, and Baseball" in *Dialectical Anthropology*, 1988. Vol. 13, 301.

⁹ *Ibid.*

despite the “precarious autonomy of Dominican baseball,” the game of baseball “in Latin America has a greater capacity for radical political or cultural expression [than elsewhere].”¹⁰ In another work, Klein additionally argues that baseball in the Dominican Republic has served as a “softening” agent of a more hostile response to US imperialism.¹¹ Another scholar of sport in the Caribbean, Michael H. Allen, argues for the ability of a minimized people to use “imported ideas,” such as baseball, for their own advantage.¹² Boria Majumdar, too, illustrates the role of island populations in forming their own particular colonial sports attachments, arguing that the indigenous subversion of sport has been a means of enduring the colonial experience.¹³

Together, these ideas provide a newer approach to studying the historical role of sport in the Dominican Republic in which baseball is not a blunt apparatus of unimpeded imperialism, but instead a place where foreign ideas are negotiated and even appropriated for the means of cultural resistance. Not all scholars of Dominican baseball adhere to this approach, however. Rob Ruck, for instance, in his 2011 *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game*, links the decline of African-American participation in Major League Baseball to the US turn toward Latin America for cheaper, racially analogous replacements characterized in some ways as “impostors.” Ruck raises interesting questions about race, but also contributes to the racialization of Latin American baseball players and clings to the old model of imperialistic

¹⁰ Klein, *Sugarball*, 152, 156.

¹¹ Alan M. Klein, “Baseball as Underdevelopment: The Political-Economy of Sport in the Dominican Republic” in *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 1989, Vol. 6, No. 2

¹² Michael H. Allen. “Sports and Political Economy in the Caribbean” in *Latin American Perspectives*, 1991: Vol 18, No. 3.

¹³ Boria Majumdar. “Why baseball, why cricket? Differing nationalisms, differing challenges” in *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2007, Vol 24, No. 2.

imposition while downplaying the agency of the marginalized.¹⁴ Ruck's somewhat declensionist narrative regarding the viability of future sport in the Caribbean seems all the more suspect only four years later, considering the Dominican baseball boom currently transpiring.

The US Occupation of 1916-1924

Following a series of repulsed foreign invasions and annexations, failed dictatorships, and severe financial crises, the United States in 1916 invaded the Dominican Republic and instituted a controversial military government in an eight-year era that significantly altered the trajectory of Dominican history. Baseball, already established as the favored national sport of the Dominican Republic, was a key agent in the makeup of national resistance to the unwelcome US presence.

The 1916 US occupation of the Dominican Republic has received limited scholarly attention. The earliest historical treatment of the occupation was conducted by Sumner Welles in 1966. Significantly, Welles served as the head of the Division of Latin American Affairs in the State Department during the occupation and was instrumental in the eventual US withdrawal from the Dominican Republic. Welles, drawing on a personal wealth of various government correspondence, recounts eighty years of Dominican encounters with foreign powers in *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*. His personal background and sympathies led Welles to conclude that the US occupation instilled a long-awaited sense of order in the Dominican Republic. Further, Welles asserts that racial tension and discrimination in the

¹⁴ Rob Ruck. *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Dominican Republic were largely non-existent.¹⁵ Welles argues that two significant problems plagued the Dominican Republic in the era of the 1916-1924 occupation: the unregulated investment of foreign capital on the island and the lack of political parties in favor of “personal government.” He further asserts that the US military government since its withdrawal has instilled an “enlightened and progressive” spirit to “accelerate the march of the nation toward stability.”¹⁶ Despite this linear sense of progress, Welles describes the limits of the occupation. He asserts that US authorities understood little about the culture they were attempting to intervene in and transform and that the forced military occupation inculcated “an artificial peace which did not result from the natural causes which engender peace.”¹⁷ Welles concludes by lamenting that the United States would better serve its interests by “removing the motives and the contributing factors of revolution and anarchy” than submit to a policy which propagates the “culmination of the causes for revolution and anarchy and then attempts to cure them through the exercise of force.”¹⁸ Ultimately, *Naboth’s Vineyard* largely ignores Dominican resistance to the US presence on the island. For Welles, the occupation’s marginal success is due not to Dominican resistance to the invasion, but, rather, to the actions and decisions of the US military government. While this is certainly understandable given his personal involvement in the occupation, it certainly leaves a gap in the historical record that invites further exploration.

¹⁵ Sumner Welles. *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. 1. Saville Books, 1966, 908-909.

¹⁶ Sumner Welles. *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. 1. Saville Books, 1966, 913.

¹⁷ Sumner Welles. *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. 1. Saville Books, 1966, 928.

¹⁸ Sumner Welles. *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. 1. Saville Books, 1966, 929.

The first significant departure from Welles's voluminous work was written by Frank Moya Pons in *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Moya Pons, a prominent Dominican historian, details the Dominican nationalist resistance to the occupation and how Dominicans possessed a long history of gaining independence from insufferable foreign powers and largely "preferred a free country with rebellions to an occupied country living under an imposed peace."¹⁹ Moya Pons argues that nationalist resistance, coupled with a regional economic crisis and a Dominican delegation to President Warren G. Harding, was instrumental in finally ending the occupation. Moya Pons does note a few positive effects of the US occupation—improved transportation and sanitation infrastructure, for instance. However, he also details the problematic nature of the occupation. Namely, he argues that the national disarmament of the general populace, together with a repressive national police trained by the United States, gave way to the impending Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961). Further, he argues that the military occupation increased the foreign control of the sugar industry, which essentially operated as "autonomous enclaves virtually independent from the government."²⁰ Additionally, he notes, most other domestic industry was destroyed by military government legislation that flooded the nation with US goods. He concludes, finally, with the observation that the Dominican "exercise of sovereignty would be understood...as always conditioned by US foreign policy."²¹

¹⁹ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 328.

²⁰ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 337.

²¹ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 339.

The most detailed analysis of Dominican resistance to US intervention is Bruce J. Calder's 1978 article: "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924." In it, Calder argues that Dominicans successfully waged a guerilla war against the US military government, helping to force the eventual withdrawal of US soldiers from the island. Calder describes how the *caudillo* system, little understood by the invaders, shaped Dominican politics and fomented serious resistance to the occupation. Calder explains that the US military government misunderstood *caudillo* power structures and underestimated local Dominican strongmen as simple "bandits."²² His work profiles the careers of a few significant caudillos and their direct role in challenging the US military in an irregular war on Dominican soil. Moreover, Calder is the first to address the often abusive conduct of US Marines toward Dominican civilians and attempts at judicial redress, however fruitless, in military tribunals.²³ Calder reiterates the notion that US Marines in the Dominican Republic poorly understood the foreign culture in which they were immersed and directed an array of racist behavior, actions, and language toward the Dominican people.²⁴ Despite the efficacy of the *caudillos* in driving away the US occupiers, Calder argues, the imposition of the new national police force and improved intra-national transportation effectively ended the era of *caudillo* power and ushered in the thirty-one year dictatorship of Rafael

²² Bruce J. Calder. "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 659.

²³ Bruce J. Calder. "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 662.

²⁴ Bruce J. Calder. "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 664.

Trujillo.²⁵ Most significantly, Calder's work gives vivid descriptions of the realities of Dominican armed resistance to the US occupation, a phenomenon little understood by earlier chroniclers of Dominican history.

Most recently, Alan McPherson addresses further the Dominican resistance to US intervention. McPherson argues that Dominican resistance was "motivated not primarily by nationalism but by more concrete, local concerns that were material, power-related, self-protective, or self-promoting" and effectively prompted a "transnational resistance movement" across Latin America. Local issues, rather than nationalism, he argues, stoked the fires of these movements.²⁶

The present study seeks to bring together these seemingly unrelated historiographical threads of baseball and foreign occupation. Given that baseball had been present on the island dating back to the 1880s and that by 1916 it was already a formidable Dominican cultural institution, it should come as no surprise that the sport of baseball played a central role in the history of the occupation. Drawing upon the remnants of Dominican baseball writing, a number of observations can be made. Foremost, just prior to the US entrance into Dominican affairs, baseball was already feverishly linked with popular Dominican celebrations commemorating the break from foreign rule. However, as McPherson argues that Dominican resistance was grounded less in nationalism than concerns of local autonomy, the same is also visible in the study of Dominican baseball during the occupation. Certain historical episodes suggest the limits of

²⁵ Bruce J. Calder. "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 675.

²⁶ Alan L. McPherson. *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, 9.

ascribing human behavior to simple nationalism. As will be discussed later, some notable instances advise that sporting culture transcends nationalist boundaries or motivations.

Sources and Organization

Potential useful sources on the matters of baseball, nationalism, and US occupation in the Dominican Republic remain elusive. English-language records in United States archives from the period seem entirely uninterested in Dominican baseball, and generally ignorant of Dominican life during the occupation outside of military tribunals and reports of hunting down rogue *gavilleros*. This study necessitates the use of non-US sources to extricate the meaning of baseball in this international dynamic. For various reasons, the Dominican sources regarding this are rather limited. The instability of past Dominican governments, the nature of the Trujillo dictatorship, and the censorship policies of the US military government, for instance, have limited the creation and survival of potential sources. Additionally, the state of archival preservation in the Dominican Republic is only beginning to progress toward professional standards, and archival records are notoriously neglected throughout the Caribbean. The principal source utilized is four years of the Spanish-language newspaper *Listin Diario* from 1916 until 1920, of which I perused in its entirety. The longest continuously running newspaper in the Dominican Republic, *Listin Diario*, was also the chief newspaper of Santo Domingo during the early twentieth century. Dominican *letrados* convened on the pages of *Listin Diario* with poetry, history, prose, editorials, arts reviews, and sportswriting. Many of the *letrados* admittedly assumed pseudonyms when they shifted into writing about baseball or horse racing. The reason for this is unclear, although sportswriting *letrados* evidently understood each other's identities and they often assumed names connoting their contest of choice. *Listin Diario* seems to be the sole extant source from which to glean what Dominican *letrados* wrote about baseball and

its place in the context of the US occupation. The only other Dominican sources employed in this project are a series of photographs depicting baseball scenes from the occupation, recently digitized by the national archives of the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately, these photographic records were not on any finding aids at the Dominican archives during my visit to Santo Domingo. Perhaps there remain further relevant and hidden primary sources in the Archivo General de la Nación.

My original research aims were to study Dominican baseball at its earliest developments. As with attempts to pin down the exact origins of baseball in the United States, this proved rather futile. Instead, the secondary literature and the utilization of *Listin Diario* drew me to the United States occupation of the Dominican Republic from 1916 until 1924. The occupation was resisted by guerrilla conflicts across the island. I sought any kind of connection between this guerrilla resistance and baseball as symbolic resistance to the US presence. This project, focused on the urban intellectuals of Santo Domingo, found no such connection outside of their mutual disdain for the occupation. What follows, then, is a study exploring the nature of these Dominican *letrados* and their relationship with baseball and nation-building.

The first chapter, “Dominican Baseball and the Roosevelt Corollary,” establishes the historical context of baseball and foreign intervention in the Dominican Republic. The second chapter, “Dominican Baseball and 16 de Agosto Festivals: The USS Memphis and the Exposición Provincial,” explores the relationship between Dominican baseball and popular public festivals celebrating the overthrow of Spanish rule, suddenly reinvigorated by a new foreign invader. The third chapter, “Letrado Discourse in the Dominican Press: Baseball, History, and Literature,” discusses the nature of the Dominican *letrados* who sought to establish Santo Domingo as part of the modern Western world. Together, these chapters illustrate how

Dominican intellectuals incorporated baseball into their own rendition of Dominican history. Baseball was central in the celebration of escaping the past, in which the Dominican Republic was a Spanish colony. Likewise, with the arrival of the United States, baseball once again influenced the Dominican response to the present. And finally, baseball figured into the way Dominican *letrados* envisioned their future as emperors of sport.

DOMINICAN BASEBALL AND THE ROOSEVELT COROLLARY

The Dominican Republic has a long history of contending with the specter of foreign domination. Prior to the twentieth century, the island feuded, with varying degrees of success, against France, Spain, Haiti, and a host of European bankers. With the rise of the United States as a new global power, Dominicans came face to face with the United States' escalating imperialist ambitions. Fending off a number of political and militaristic endeavors, Dominicans also faced an abundance of cultural imports, including baseball. But the island's inhabitants quickly appropriated the game for themselves and molded it to their own tastes. They even wielded baseball as a symbolic weapon against US intervention, in many ways reflecting the larger political and military movements themselves. The largest event during this modern period, the Marine occupation of the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924, serves as a worthy case study for the explication of this historical phenomenon.

Baseball in the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic

Although baseball was first transmitted to the Caribbean from the United States to Cuba, it was not long before the game made its way to the Dominican Republic. As with the game's genesis in the United States, it is similarly unclear in the Dominican Republic.²⁷ However, one particular narrative remains most prevalent—in religious metaphor, Cuban expatriates served as what one scholar calls “the apostles of baseball.” The original members of this form of

²⁷ Orlando Inoa, Hector J. Cruz. *El béisbol en República Dominicana: crónica de una pasión*. Verizon, 2006; Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi. *Sociedades, cofradías, escuelas, gremios y otras corporaciones dominicanas*. Santo Domingo: Editora Educativa Dominicana, 1975; Tirso A. Valdez. *Notas acerca del béisbol dominicano del pasado y del presente*. Ciudad Trujillo: Editora del Caribe, 1958; Fernando A. Vicioso, Mario Álvarez D. *Beisbol Dominicano: 1891-1967*. Santo Domingo, 1967.

missionizing were young Cuban men educated in North America, responsible for bringing baseball and other perceived forms of modernity to Cuba in the 1860s. By 1872, the Habana Baseball Club was established and professional baseball in the Caribbean was born.²⁸ Interestingly, the early origins of Cuban baseball are largely contemporary with the organization of the National League in the United States; professional baseball had traversed international boundaries from its inception. These organizational efforts on the island nation ninety miles from Florida were led by an array of Cubans educated in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, directed by Emilio Sabourin. By the 1890s, Cuba had over two hundred baseball teams, and each town of any population had at least one, if not several. US professional teams were routinely barnstorming in local competitions.²⁹ Cuban writers and nationalist visionaries, including Sabourin, were not shy in linking the modernity of baseball and that of revolutionary nationhood. Colonial Spanish authorities' suspicions were piqued by Sabourin's interest in Cuban independence, Jose Marti's movement, and the financial relationship between Cuban baseball and revolutionary politics. Spanish authorities banned baseball as an "anti-Spanish activity" as early as 1873 with little effectiveness. Team names were often symbolic guises with revolutionary subtext. For example, one bore the name Yara, referring to the *Grito de Yara*, the precursor to the Ten Year's War of 1868. Another team, named Anacaona, after a Taina princess famous for perishing in resistance against Spanish subjugation, met rebuke from colonial

²⁸ Louis A. Perez, "Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898" in *The Journal of American History*, September 1994, 500.

²⁹ Perez, "Between Baseball and Bullfighting." 502.

authorities.³⁰ Already, imported, non-Spanish foreign culture was being used to resist imperial order. Eventually, Sabourin was arrested and deported to a Moroccan prison where he later died.

Sabourin's demise and the aftermath of the Ten Year's War sparked baseball's next international leap. Disenchanted revolutionary Cubans agitated against Spain. In retaliation, Spanish authorities confiscated Cuban land, property, and monetary assets, crippling the island's creole middle class and the Cuban economy.³¹ Scores of island denizens left the colony, scattering themselves and their beloved baseball to other parts of the Caribbean.

The Alomá brothers, Ignacio and Ubaldo, prolific iron workers fleeing the Ten Years' War in Cuba, along with five thousand other Cubans, emigrated to the Dominican Republic. The Alomá brothers introduced baseball to the Dominican Republic and arranged the first organized club game, played in June of 1891 between El Cauto and Cerveceria in Santo Domingo.³² These teams, named after a Cuban river and a Santo Domingo beer factory, respectively, consisted of both Cuban exiles and a new generation of willing Dominican *peloteros*. While the first Dominican players hailed largely from elite families, this first generation was soon infused with new disciples from the working class—notably those with artisan backgrounds.³³ This Dominican generation additionally included English-speaking migrants from the West Indies, traditional cricket players who quickly were absorbed into the growing baseball phenomenon.³⁴

³⁰ Perez, "Between Baseball and Bullfighting." 511.

³¹ Louis A. Perez. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999, 98.

³² Rob Ruck. *The Tropic of Baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991, 2-5.

³³ Ruck, 3.

³⁴ Gerald R. Gems. *The Athletic Crusade: Sport and American Cultural Imperialism*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, 116.

These latter individuals, known as *cocolos*, congregated, largely excluded from the general population, in dwellings around the sugar mill towns, notably San Pedro de Macoris, and comprised the bulk of the sugar industry's labor force.³⁵

Baseball's arrival resonated with the Dominican people, and by 1907, the first professional team, Licey, appeared in Santo Domingo. A rival nine, Nuevo Club, appeared shortly after Licey. Additionally, a host of vibrant amateur squads—including Gimnasio Escolar, Capital, Amor al Progreso, Los Muchachos, Delco Light—formed in the capital. Following baseball's explosion in Santo Domingo, the provincial cities of San Pedro de Macoris and Santiago saw the formation of their own teams. By 1920, the Dominican Republic was already hosting intra-Caribbean competitions with Puerto Rico and Cuba, a testament to the rapid advent of baseball on the island.³⁶ The regular presence of US Marines and naval personnel further swelled the burgeoning local baseball-playing population. These US military players served as reminders not only of current troubles with the United States, but also of the longstanding historical tradition in which Dominicans wrestled with domineering imperialistic missions, dating back to colonial secession from Spain.

Political Background

When the Alomá brothers arrived in the Dominican Republic, they discovered themselves in the midst of yet another complex process of colonial detachment and nation-building, albeit significantly different from the one underway in Cuba. While the Dominican Republic achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and from Haiti in 1844, the young nation possessed a tenuous

³⁵ Ruck, 118-119.

³⁶ Alan M. Klein. *Sugarball: The American Game, the Dominican Dream*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, 16-17.

viability—a financially-destitute and incompetent government gave way to internal revolution in 1857. A new, liberal constitution was written, guaranteeing Enlightenment ideals of free speech, civilian government, term limits, and public elections. Despite the regime change, poor economic conditions and massive inflation persisted, rendering the new Dominican government rather hapless, especially when threatened with military invasion by France, England, and Spain at the behest of European merchants with Caribbean interests.³⁷ Facing a crisis of its very existence, the Dominican Republic hoped to avoid annexation by the United States and another Haitian military occupation by resubmitting to Spanish royal authority in 1861. Not coincidentally, this colonial agreement was made during the outbreak of the United States' Civil War, as to minimize possible US involvement in the island's recolonization by a European power. This annexation was finalized under the conditions that Spain would validate all Dominican laws passed since 1844 and refrain from reestablishing slavery.³⁸ This new relationship was immediately strained in a variety of ways: peninsular Spaniards dismissed darker-skinned Dominicans with racial disdain, the Spanish government refused to recognize the already-circulating supply of paper currency, and the Dominican military was dominated by Spanish officers who forcibly requisitioned supplies and livestock from rural residents.³⁹ Insurrection against Spanish rule began once more in 1863 with the support of Haiti, as Haitian president Fabré Geffrard vehemently opposed the reappearance of a colonial government on the island with ties to slavery. Spanish forces encountered a deluge of obstacles—disease, unreliable supply

³⁷ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 192-197.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

lines, and persistent guerilla provocation—in an unfamiliar and treacherously mountainous landscape. In the summer of 1865, the Spanish crown annulled the prior order of annexation and withdrew from the island, once again leaving the Dominican Republic in a state of flux.⁴⁰

While the withdrawal of Spain from the island left something of a power vacuum, the island was not without competing political aspirants. The insurrectionary warfare that had resisted Spanish authority comprised a patchwork landscape of numerous competing guerilla blocs. The lack of roads kept these factions fairly isolated and independent. This form of *caudillo* politics was already tradition in the Dominican Republic. These charismatic strongmen ruled illiterate rural locals for whom the liberal revolution was largely irrelevant. The ensuing decade featured a remarkable amount of political turmoil, as various *caudillos* vied for power, occasioning at least twenty-one changes in government and various constitutions.⁴¹ Eventually, in 1868, Buenaventura Báez installed himself as president during a military takeover of Santo Domingo, complete with fake elections to legitimize the change. Báez, who liked to be called the Great Citizen of the Dominican Republic, decreed execution of all government opposition and, upon inheriting an insolvent government, began secret negotiations with the United States for the sale of the Samaná peninsula in exchange for one million dollars in gold and a promise of US naval protection against further Dominican uprising. The deal was further negotiated to include the full annexation of the Dominican Republic to the United States, hashed out by spies belonging to Ulysses S. Grant. While President Grant signed the treaty, the United States Senate refused to ratify it because of anxieties related to the ethics of annexation and suspected

⁴⁰ Ibid., 214-218.

⁴¹ Ibid., 220-222.

corruption. Another revolt in the Dominican Republic resulted, this time ousting Báez from office in favor of yet another provisional government.⁴²

When the Alomá brothers arrived in the Dominican Republic in 1880, the presidency was held by Fr. Fernando Arturo de Meriño. Meriño, fearful of another *caudillo* revolt, issued his own decree of death for any government opposition, abolished the constitution, and installed himself as dictator in 1881. Meriño's dictatorship was short-lived, however, as his own leading general, Ulises Heureaux supplanted him in 1882. Liberal economic reforms encouraged exiled Cubans and Puerto Ricans to settle in the Dominican Republic, marking a departure from the Báez-enforced persecution of intra-Caribbean migrants. Cuban migrants brought with them scraps of a wracked sugar economy, reinventing themselves in the Dominican Republic. Cuba's diminished market share, the economic malaise wrought by the Ten Year's War, and this wave of migration helped transform the Dominican Republic from sugar outsider into a world leader in sugar production. New investments from dislocated Cubans, modernized sugar production utilizing steam power and locomotives, and government stimulation of foreign investment spurred an influx of capital totaling several times the operating budget of the Dominican government. Sugar, then, overtook the traditional Dominican economy of rurally-raised cattle and tobacco, shifting the island's economic epicenter from the countryside to urban Santo Domingo.⁴³

⁴² Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 226-232.

⁴³ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 260-263.

Ulises Hereaux, self-proclaimed Pacifier of the Homeland, had inherited another Dominican government impoverished by constant war and the global recession of the 1880s. Strapped for cash, Hereaux negotiated massive loans from European lenders in London and Amsterdam. Further, Hereaux reinitiated the process of leasing Samaná to the United States military in exchange for protectorate status and economic favoritism. By 1893, the Dominican Republic had accrued seventeen million pesos in national debt, a number dwarfing the national budget several times over. This financial crisis prompted Hereaux to allow the San Domingo Improvement Company, a US investment group, to assume total control of customs receipts, establish several US monopolies, and re-center the Dominican economy in New York City. Dominican revenue further suffered, and eventually, Ulises Hereaux was funding the national government out of his own pocket. By 1898, the Dominican government was bankrupt again, and the unpopular Hereaux was assassinated in the summer of 1899 while attempting to raise money from rural merchants to run the government. No one was willing to prosecute the known assassins.⁴⁴

The death of Hereaux sent an economic shockwave through Europe. Lenders from England, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy all understood well that the Dominican Republic was broke and unable to pay its debts. These European countries threatened military invasion in order to seize control of customs revenue for themselves. In a state of panic, the Dominican government under new president Juan Isidro Jimenes, much to the disdain of the United States, revoked the San Domingo Improvement Company's authority to collect customs after it refused to divert revenue to stave off impending European invasions. By 1903, warships

⁴⁴ Ibid., 265-278.

from Germany, Italy, and Belgium were stationed outside of Santo Domingo. Only a year earlier, English and German forces had successfully attacked Venezuela with the same goal of recovering loaned sums. Under the pretext of protecting Caribbean nations like the Dominican Republic from situations such as these, Theodore Roosevelt invoked the Monroe Doctrine in 1904:

Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.⁴⁵

This “Roosevelt Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine marked the beginning of the Dominican Republic’s foreign relations reorientation from Western Europe to North America.⁴⁶

The Dominican government, in a helpless state by 1905, acquiesced to demands that the United States government control all of the Dominican Republic’s financial obligations. A new constitution that sought to undermine *caudillo* power in Dominican politics, coupled with widespread and fragmented distrust of the country’s relationship with the United States led to the assassination of president Ramon Cáceres. Once again, the highest office in the Dominican Republic was vacant, and this time the United States was watching events carefully. During the struggle among various *caudillos* for control of the government, US President William Taft deployed a unit of 750 Marines to negotiate an end to the civil war, threatening a military

⁴⁵ John Bartlow Martin. *U.S. Policy in the Caribbean*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1978, 18.

⁴⁶ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 288-290.

takeover if the Dominicans did not submit to US demands. Ensuing negotiations resulted in Archbishop Adolfo Alejandro Nouel's installation as president, a move decried by several revolutionary *caudillo* factions. Nouel, uninterested in being the next assassinated Dominican president, resigned almost immediately.⁴⁷

The United States next endorsed the return of Juan Isidro Jimenes to the presidency, with the understanding that he would maintain the protectorate relationship the United States had imposed. However, Jimenes opposed US desires to replace the Dominican military with a national guard run by the United States. Facing impeachment by his own senate in 1916 after arresting his biggest political opponents, Jimenes refused another offer from the US government to use its military to secure his office and the economic interests of the United States. Instead, in early May of 1916, Jimenes resigned. Nine days later, US Marines forcibly occupied the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo. In November of the same year, the Wilson administration formally declared that the Dominican Republic was "in a state of military occupation by the forces under [US] command and remains submitted to the Military government and to the exercise of the Military Law applicable to such occupation." US military law now superseded Dominican self-rule.⁴⁸

The Dominican experience with US intervention was not unique in the region. A similar military invasion took place in Haiti in 1915. In prior years, Haiti had issues staving off foreign agitators, acting on behalf of investors dissatisfied with the fractured state of Haitian political affairs. Like the Dominican Republic, Haiti, much in debt to European lenders, was financially

⁴⁷ Ibid., 305-309.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 312-320.

insolvent. An array of Western powers vied for control of Haitian customs in order to recoup their owed debt. Germany was at the forefront of this aggression, stationing warships off the coast of Haiti on the eve of the First World War. Perturbed by the German presence in the Caribbean and the threat of the European war seeping into the Western Hemisphere, US Marines occupied Port-au-Prince in the summer of 1915 and remained until 1934.⁴⁹ Both interventions were part of Wilson's foreign policy objective to apply the Monroe Doctrine to the First World War and keep European powers out of the Caribbean. Rather paternalistically, President Wilson expressed his desire that in the midst of Caribbean turmoil, the United States might " [teach] the Latin Americans to elect good men."⁵⁰ When military intervention in the Dominican Republic became likely, US soldiers were already stationed on the Haitian side of Hispaniola.

In practice, the US occupation of the Dominican Republic dredged up nationalist memories of past foreign impositions of imperial will. Resistance to this latest invasion was immediate—armed Dominicans in the capital of Santo Domingo clashed with US soldiers, and the ensuing bloodshed claimed the lives of US Marines and Dominican revolutionaries alike. In the Santo Domingo neighborhood of Villa Duarte, Marines hunted and killed Ramón Batista, leader of a local insurgency.⁵¹ Swiftly, the new military government dismissed the bulk of incumbent Dominican officials from their positions, prohibited civilian ownership of firearms, and placed a restrictive set of censors on the Dominican press. Ranking members of the US State

⁴⁹ Walter H. Posner. "American Marines in Haiti, 1915-1922" in *The Americas*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (January 1964). 231-266.

⁵⁰ Stephen A. Fuller and Graham A. Cosmas. *Marines in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924*. Washington D.C.: History and Museum Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1974. 6.

⁵¹ Stephen A. Fuller and Graham A. Cosmas. *Marines in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924*. Washington D.C.: History and Museum Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1974, 24-25.

Department assumed a swath of administrative vacancies and initiated a rapid disarmament marked by the indiscriminate arrest, incarceration, and torture of Dominican civilians.⁵²

Additionally, with the US entrance into the First World War, the United States sought a reconfiguration of the Dominican Republic's position in the global economy. The Dominican economy had been largely predicated upon German patronage—the Dominican Republic served as purveyor of tobacco, coffee, and sugar to Germany—a business relationship deemed unsavory by the United States. Consequently, the military government forbade all Dominican economic transactions with Germany and prosecuted any suspected transgressors. This new prohibition, together with the introduction en masse of duty-free North American trade goods, reoriented the Dominican Republic away from Europe and toward the United States in a complete economic transformation. Moreover, the war created a larger global demand for Caribbean sugar, and in effect quintupled its price on the world market. This short-term Dominican economic boom is known as the Dance of the Millions and this period dramatically reshaped the island's landscape by providing the military government revenue to begin electrifying, paving, and educating the Dominican hinterlands in its quest to extend the occupation beyond the metropolitan boundaries of Santo Domingo. Several Dominican towns—including Santiago, San Pedro de Macoris, and Puerto Plata—became new urban commercial centers. The newly-created National Council of Education oversaw the construction of hundreds of schools between 1917 and 1920, resulting in a five-hundred percent increase in student enrollment. To augment this new economic alignment, the military government created the Dominican National Police in 1917, intended to be a

⁵² Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 321-323.

Dominican extension of the US military with the objective of maintaining military and economic order. At this point, the US saw the occupation of the Dominican Republic as lasting indefinitely.⁵³

With the city of Santo Domingo relatively pacified, the Marines began to shift their attention to the untamed countryside. Large swaths of the rural populace enjoyed a strong degree of isolation and independence, cut off by poor roads and inefficient communication. The Marines were largely ignorant of the political milieu into which they were entering. The *caudillo* system that had long-dominated Dominican politics was still firmly entrenched outside of Santo Domingo. These *caudillos*, “men who could combine military skills, economic resources, personal strength, charisma, friendship, family ties, and the ability to manipulate followers,” ruled much of the eastern country and were experienced in near-constant fighting with the French, Spanish, Haitians, and each other.⁵⁴ In the nineteenth century, prominent *caudillos* like Pedro Santana had even ascended to the office of the Dominican presidency. A dual system of government was often in place, where the national government was unable to function without the cooperation of these *caudillos*. In fact, national officials often actively worked to gain the support of the *caudillos*. When these relationships failed to bear fruit for the national government, the better-armed and better-equipped *caudillo* would often have essentially complete autonomy over his region. Since the Dominican army was poorly-trained, ill-equipped, and few in numbers, this network of local *caudillos* was necessarily the de facto army of the

⁵³ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 325-327.

⁵⁴ Bruce J. Calder. “Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924” in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 653-655.

Dominican Republic. The Marines, in their attempts to pacify the entirety of the island, completely failed to understand this political system, underestimating them in military documents as mere “bandits...and malcontents of the rural districts.” The Marines, unable to speak Spanish, unfamiliar with Dominican culture, and racist toward the darker-skinned Dominicans, were ill-equipped to carry out their neo-imperialist goals of bringing civilization to the island nation.⁵⁵

For the most part, these *caudillos* enjoyed the support of the largely poor rural residents. Additionally, the wealthier merchants, sugar planters, and landholders were much subservient to the *caudillo* system. Unable to supersede *caudillo* power, these wealthy interests usually paid the local strongmen to leave them alone or even guard their interests. In at least one instance, the national government even put one *caudillo* on salary and housed him in the capital in exchange for ceasing hostilities. Clearly, these individuals were capable of opportunistic manipulation against antagonistic political and military power. When the US military government spilled into the Dominican countryside to enforce its centralized authority, the *caudillos* were not taken aback—they had extensive experience in confronting the national government and bending it to their will. The ensuing guerrilla war, which displaced much of the rural peasantry, only

⁵⁵ Bruce J. Calder. “Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924” in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 663; Stephen A. Fuller and Graham A. Cosmas. *Marines in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924*. Washington D.C.: History and Museum Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1974, 11.

strengthened *caudillo* support. Landless and unemployed peasant guerillas, or *gavilleros*, directed their bitterness toward the encroaching US forces.⁵⁶

A few examples of these factionary guerilla leaders stand out especially. Vicente Evangelista is perhaps the most well known. In 1917, Evangelista, backed by a personal band of at least three hundred armed *gavilleros*, publicly declared his open opposition to the US military government. Ever shrewd, Evangelista would even attempt to use the Marines to his advantage, situationally pitting them against rival *caudillos* as he saw fit. Holed up in the mountains, Evangelista and his men staved off multiple Marine regiments, forcing the military government to hire Evangelista's rival *caudillos* to hunt him or infiltrate his band, leading to his eventual capture. In the summer of 1918, while awaiting trial, Vicente Evangelista was, according to military documents, killed while attempting to escape. It has since been largely understood that the military government often reported extrajudicial executions as failed escape attempts.⁵⁷

Another prominent *caudillo*, Ramón Nateras, enjoyed a more enduring run of success, despite the regular execution of his followers by the military government. Nateras, enjoying the support of numerous localities, in 1921 kidnapped a British sugar estate manager and released him unharmed only upon the agreement that he and the regional sugar planters deliver a message to the military government: the *caudillos* were sovereign and their unwavering goal was to end

⁵⁶ Bruce J. Calder. "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 656-658.

⁵⁷ Stephen A. Fuller and Graham A. Cosmas. *Marines in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924*. Washington D.C.: History and Museum Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1974, 35-36; Bruce J. Calder. "Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 659-660, 668.

US occupation of the Dominican Republic. Nateras called himself General, and regularly left it stamped on correspondence and places he wrested from foreign control. In addition to Nateras, a few other *caudillos* are worth a brief mention. Dios Olivorio Mateo, for one, led an insurrectionary movement in which he declared himself the new messiah. Mateo ran from Marine patrols until he was eventually hunted down and killed in 1922. Another, Eustacio “Bullito” Reyes, named his troop La Revolución, emphasizing the political nature of *caudillo* actions, even kidnapping mail carriers and sending them back to the military government with letters detailing their opposition to its rule of the country.⁵⁸

While stationed in the Dominican Republic, US Marines committed a variety of abuses that galvanized Dominican resistance to their occupation of the island. Accounts persist of massacres, rape, extortion, and murder. Further, traveling Marine troops often appropriated homes, livestock, and food from local peasants. After they left, the Marines would burn what was left so that it might not be used by insurgent forces. These locals were also subjected to torture, beatings, and imprisonment under the desire that they provide intelligence on *caudillo* activity. While most of these abuses were ignored, some found their way to the military courts in Santo Domingo. But, these courts nearly always ruled in favor of the Marine defendants, and evidence suggests that the cases that were heard were rigged theater to acquit the US of wrongdoing abroad. The United States Senate investigated these abuses in 1922, taking no action, however.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Bruce J. Calder. “Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924” in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), 660-661, 668.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 670-674.

Resistance to the occupation of the Dominican Republic was not limited to *caudillos'* insurrectionary movements. Nationalist intellectuals included Américo Lugo, Fabio Fiallo, Enrique Henríquez, and Emiliano Tejera, who published work in Santo Domingo condemning the foreign presence of the United States. Francisco Henriquez y Carvajal, who at one point was President of the Dominican Republic, traveled throughout Latin America on a cautionary campaign to warn nearby nations of the Dominican situation, inspiring several nations to openly protest the Wilson administration's imperialistic actions in the fear that their country might be next. Warren G. Harding, in the 1920 US Presidential election, ran against Wilson on a campaign demanding an end to Caribbean interventionism, and won. In 1924, Harding's administration finally ended the military occupation of the Dominican Republic.⁶⁰

Dominican resistance to US intervention was not only militaristic and political, but also cultural. The reconfiguration of Dominican markets away from Europe and toward the United States meant an influx of US products. Dominicans were soon inundated with ads for US beer, toys, clothing, and automobiles. But the imposition of US culture was met with mixed success. Despite the attempted importation of US popular music, for instance, the merengue remained most favored by Dominicans and achieved status as a symbol of cultural resistance. Baseball, however, another US importation, was wildly popular, even surpassing more traditional pastimes such as cockfighting in popularity.⁶¹ Baseball was being played by Dominicans more than ever, by a populace increasingly embittered against foreign intervention. Dominican squads regularly

⁶⁰ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 329-338.

⁶¹ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 338.

squared-off against teams composed of Marines, taking no small joy in thumping the United States at their own game. Dominican resistance to foreign occupation, then, was partially expressed through their appropriation of US sport.

Foreign Sport as a Marker of Progress

Following the collapse of nineteenth-century colonial rule and failed Dominican dictatorships, the future of the island was in question. The role of prime actor in this political evolution was assumed, in currents common to the emerging liberal West, by the urban intellectuals of Santo Domingo. These *letrados*, or men of letters, believed that the intellectual elite was best suited to run the nation.⁶² In the city, the spectre of yet another foreign intervention and Western ideals of progress and modernization spurred these *letrados* to “join the development race.” After all, Dominican intellectuals, concerned about the perceived “backwardness” of their fledgling nation, feared that the Dominican Republic was an “illegitimate actor on the world stage.”⁶³ For them, the urban capital of Santo Domingo served as the site of citizenship, a barometer of the modernity of the state, and ultimately “localized the national project.”⁶⁴ The *letrados* of Santo Domingo, therefore, sought to showcase their ability to align with Western ideals of progress of their own volition.⁶⁵ Elsewhere in Latin America, the rise of sports was an integral component of the idea of progress in places like Mexico and Cuba.

⁶² Teresita Martínez-Vergne. *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 23.

⁶³ Teresita Martínez-Vergne. *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 46, 72.

⁶⁴ Teresita Martínez-Vergne. *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 74.

⁶⁵ Teresita Martínez-Vergne. *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 57.

However, these national projects were selective in deciding which athletic imports they found culturally attractive. In Mexico, for instance, citizens embraced boxing and horse racing, but rejected the US import of American football wholesale.⁶⁶ These intellectual currents regarding sport were not unique to Latin America in this era. In Ireland, growing Irish nationalism endorsed hurling and Gaelic football as the preferred athletic endeavor of the Irish nationalist. These participants sought to prove that they were not “naturally unruly” and that British imperialists were not the sole proprietors of “civilizing” organized sport.⁶⁷ In the Dominican Republic, however, the *letrados* gladly took up baseball as their preferred sport. One scholar writes:

The timing of the discourse of nationalism was significant also because the Dominican Republic, like other national entities in the Americas, was hoping to enter the ranks of the industrial world on an equal footing precisely when a people’s worth was increasingly measured by their propinquity to Western standards of production, spirituality, and physique.⁶⁸

Dominican *letrados* chose baseball, already in its Dominican infancy, as their mode of sport in their quest for progress. Thus, traditions of literature, poetry, and philosophy were soon intertwined with the sporting life. This consequence was not unique to the Dominican Republic or baseball. On the West Indian island of Trinidad, local intelligentsia, most notably historian

⁶⁶ William H. Beezley. *Judas at the Jockey Club: and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 13-14.

⁶⁷ P.F. McDevitt, “Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports, 1884–1916” in *Gender & History*, 9: 263–268.

⁶⁸ Teresita Martínez-Vergne. *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 190.

C.L.R. James, made similar connections between progress, fomenting nationalism, and the sport of cricket, imported via British colonialism. Adamantly passionate about cricket, James argued that Trinidadian yearning for both sport and popular democracy were essentially wedded, and that sport served as an art, an amalgamation in the vein of theater, ballet, opera, dance, and drama.⁶⁹ James noted that for the ancient Greeks, sport served as a testament to the quality of a nation's citizens—a function he believed to be dormant until the global renaissance of organized sports in the Western stride for modernity and progress. Likewise, he wrote, for the ancient Greeks the world of sport was at the center of intellectual life. Philosophers and scientists demonstrated their work at the Olympic Games, and even Herodotus himself gave the new field of history an oratory test run at the games.⁷⁰ James himself embodied this combination of sport and intellectual life. He frequently composed poetry, history, and political philosophy, while simultaneously nurturing his obsession with cricket. The poetic tradition also found its way into Dominican baseball discourse, as will be discussed later. Eventually, James' experience with cricket led to his publication of *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*.⁷¹ Developing nations of the Caribbean like Trinidad, assuming their preferred Western sport, he asserts, keenly “reshap[ed] the medium...[to] give new satisfactions to new people.”⁷² In the Dominican Republic, the *letrados*' love of baseball would meet its first test in yet another forthcoming foreign intervention. The *letrados* of Santo Domingo, operating under pseudonyms, wrote about baseball, composed poetry, debated one another, made political allusions, attended popular

⁶⁹ C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 196.

⁷⁰ C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 156, 166.

⁷¹ C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 115.

⁷² C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 222.

festivals, celebrated their victories over foreign invaders, and championed the new Dominican game. Santo Domingo, the locus of Dominican nationalism and modernity, served as the setting for a series of vignettes illustrating baseball's role in the Dominican Republic's national identity.

DOMINICAN BASEBALL AND 16 DE AGOSTO FESTIVALS: THE USS *MEMPHIS* AND THE EXPOSICIÓN PROVINCIAL

Beginning in 1861, Spain undertook an ill-fated annexation of the Dominican Republic following a short-lived term of Dominican independence. Dominicans, spurred by their distaste for a return to life under Spanish rule, waged a guerrilla war against the Spanish army. The successful revolt, culminating in rebel recapture of Santo Domingo on August 16, 1863, cemented a yearly tradition of 16 de Agosto festivals across the Dominican Republic. During the United States' occupation of the Dominican Republic, these 16 de Agosto festivals took on additional significance as symbolic opposition to unwanted foreign military presence. Interestingly, baseball played a role in these, the most widespread and popular festivals of the Dominican year. Two different baseball-related episodes demonstrate the complex relationship between sport, national identity, and resistance to the US presence.

The first of the baseball episodes, taking place during the 16 de Agosto festivities of 1916, the first summer of the occupation, focuses on an early rivalry between star Dominican baseball players of Santo Domingo and the US crew of the USS *Memphis*, which was stationed in the capital's harbor during the occupation. In the aftermath of their brief rivalry, the Dominican press spoke openly about baseball in the context of Dominican patriotism. This demonstrates the disjointed Dominican view of baseball and what it meant to Dominican identity and sovereignty.

The second episode, the 16 de Agosto celebration of 1919, must be read differently than the first. The military government of the United States issued an order in November of 1916 that any publication of the press required prior approval. The order prohibited any speech that criticized the United States, encouraged resistance against the imposed military government,

insinuated that living conditions in the Dominican Republic were less than ideal under US oversight, and anything else “contrary to public morals as understood by all civilized nations.” By 1921, the efficacy of US efforts to censor the Dominican press had completely been undone by increasing resentment of the enduring occupation, but in 1919, there existed some level of censorship in practice. The Dominican press’s coverage of the 1919 16 de Agosto celebration does not overtly denounce the occupation, but these writers nonetheless demonstrate how baseball wordlessly served as an agent of resistance.⁷³

In *Judas and the Jockey Club*, William H. Beezley analyzes sport and popular festivals in Porfirian Mexico and how the Judas festivals and carnivals “constituted the popular humor and folk culture...and represented a vital heritage shared by the common people.”⁷⁴ Beezley describes how foreign culture, colonially transmitted from European customs, reached Mexico and was subsequently adopted and appropriated for native use by all sectors of Mexican society. Further, Beezley describes how these popular Judas-burning festivals persisted despite their prohibition by the Porfirian regime. The celebration of the 16 of August and the Dominican resistance during The War of Restoration against Spain bears some resemblances to Beezley’s discourse. Similarly, 16 de Agosto celebrations during the US occupation prominently featured a foreign importation, baseball, but not necessarily as a form of cultural assimilation into US tastes. Rather, in the service of Dominican interests, baseball performed as twin agent of both resistance to foreign occupation and of fostering contemporary humanitarian disaster relief

⁷³ Carl Kelsey. “The American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.” *American Academy of Political and Social Science: University of Pennsylvania*, 1922, 185-187.

⁷⁴ William H. Beezley. *Judas at the Jockey Club: and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 90.

efforts. Through the extant writings of Dominican *letrados*, we can manage a glimpse into the interplay between the intellectual elites of Santo Domingo, US occupation, popular festivals, and baseball.

Spanish Annexation and the War of Restoration

The popular festivals celebrating the 16 de Agosto were rooted in resentment towards the Spanish occupation of the Dominican Republic, still vivid in the historical memory of Dominican nationalists. While the national government of the Dominican Republic acquiesced to Spanish annexation in 1861, Dominican nationalists agitated against Spanish authority with a litany of grievances. Many Dominicans, already offended by their exclusion from the national military, Spanish racial condescension, Spanish disregard for pre-existing Dominican currency, hefty duties on non-Spanish trade, and the unpopular *bagajes* system of forced military requisition of civilian property, were further insulted by the imposition of a new archbishop for the Dominican church, Bienviedo de Monzón.

Monzón immediately began to rankle the Dominican populace with his disdain for local religious practices. Since the colonial residents lived in rural isolation with few priests and even fewer roads, most Dominican marriages were not ecclesiastically legitimate in the eyes of the Catholic Church. Monzón campaigned to formalize Dominican marriages, denouncing as immoral the state of Dominican family life. Most Dominicans found this unnecessary and burdensome and detested the need for foreign clergy to validate Dominican social norms. Further, Monzón lambasted Dominican priests, many of whom were married freemasons with

children. Monzón demanded that Dominican priests surrender their income to his archbishopric, wrote pastoral letters denouncing freemasonry, and ordered the closure of the masonic lodges.⁷⁵

In February of 1863, two years into the Spanish annexation, Dominican rebels under the command of Santiago Rodríguez planned a massive revolt for February 27, the anniversary of the Dominican Republic's proclamation of independence from Haiti in 1844. His operation, enlisting the full populace of the Cibao region, was uncovered by Spanish authorities on February 21. The Spanish army chased Santiago Rodríguez and his men to the Haitian border, where he received protection and munitions from Haitian president Fabré Geffrard. After recuperating in the mountains of Haiti, on August 16 Rodríguez led his remaining troops back across the border into the Dominican Republic and raised the Dominican flag in Santo Domingo. One classic work describes the events of the sixteenth:

On August 16th, the revolution broke out once more at Capotillo, where a small body of Dominicans under the leadership of Cabrera and Monción surprised a Spanish detachment and utterly routed it. And this time the revolution was not to be quenched by the energy of Santana, nor by the brutality of the Spanish officers; it was destined to continue until the last Spanish soldier had been driven from Dominican soil.⁷⁶

Rodríguez's rallying cry for independence precipitated a cascade of *caudillo* rebellions across the island, and guerilla wars and popular revolts challenged Spanish royal authority. After two years of sustained war and the establishment of a new provisional government, the queen of

⁷⁵ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 207-210.

⁷⁶ Sumner Welles. *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. 1. Saville Books, 1966, 250.

Spain annulled the annexation in March of 1865.⁷⁷ The new Dominican president, on the eve of the island's third liberation from foreign domination, spoke at length:

If Spain is disposed to continue the war, we must wage it with all of its terrible consequences; but if she wishes peace in good faith, if openly and sincerely she extends towards us the hand of friendship, we will accept it frankly, we will bury our resentments and inaugurate a new and happy era of peace and concord...If I combat, it is for my country, for her welfare, happiness, liberty, and independence. My ambition is limited to that, and once those cherished objects are attained, I aspire to nothing further than to withdraw to private life, and to enjoy in the quiet of the domestic hearth the satisfaction of having fulfilled my duties.⁷⁸

This balanced sense of national pride would be recalled by later generations of Dominicans. But for now, the reclaiming of the Dominican Republic for the Dominican people was complete. August 16, the day Rodríguez raised the Dominican flag in the capital, would eventually become a national holiday and the traditional inauguration day for Dominican presidents. And while the holiday was celebrated prior to the occupation, festivities burgeoned during the US invasion of the island.

⁷⁷ Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, 210-218.

⁷⁸ Sumner Welles. *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. 1. Saville Books, 1966, 290.

Fiestas del 16 de Agosto, 1916: The *Memphis* Forgiven, but not Forgotten

The summer of 1916 was the first opportunity for Dominicans to celebrate the anniversary of Santiago Rodríguez's grand defiance of Spanish authority under US Marine occupation. Several weeks prior to August 16, the Santo Domingo press adorned every inch of daily advertising space not committed to US beer, cars, and clothing with proclamations of the impending celebration of the Dominican homeland. Amidst editorials questioning the motives of the US presence on the island, others proudly recollected the Dominican effort to drive Spain off the island, particularly Rodríguez's *grito de Capotillo* before leading the march into the capital to raise the Dominican flag.⁷⁹ As the 16 of August approached, the letters of PATRIA (homeland), ornamented by a saber, only increased in size.



Fig. 1.1. Header from *Listin Diario*. It reads, “Soon there will be HOMELAND ... Before the 16 of August.” *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), July 18, 1916.

⁷⁹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 15, 1916.



Fig. 1.2. Additional header from *Listin Diario*. *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 10, 1916.

The Dominican government, in a state of flux over how to react to the US military presence on the island, nonetheless continued with an elaborate ceremonial program on the week of the 16 of August. A morning program at the governor's palace of solemn convocations was followed by a much more explosive evening. The Dominican military band took stage on the Plaza de Colón to perform a sweeping concert, punctuated by piercing salvos of artillery fire. At the music's conclusion, an array of fireworks—variously described by a reporter as light rockets, Chinese chandeliers, electric chimeras of rain, gyrating pyramids, crazy puppets, and baskets of jewels—illuminated Santo Domingo above el Parque Independencia.⁸⁰

The most popular event of the 1916 independence festivities, however, according to the spate of newspaper coverage, was the nascent but amicable rivalry between star Dominican players and the US crew of the USS *Memphis* on the baseball field. On the grounds of Gimnasio Escolar, the two teams engaged in a contested affair. The shoreline stadium, built in 1911 in the

⁸⁰ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 15, 1916.

Santo Domingo neighborhood of Nueva Ciudad between Pina and Cambronal streets and oddly quadrangular in design, was eventually destroyed by a hurricane named San Zenón in 1930.⁸¹

The crew of the *Memphis* took an early 3-1 lead in the second inning, only to allow four runs to the Dominicans in the bottom of the fifth on a massive home run to center by Dominican favorite Piñeyro. Despite the scoring outburst, the crew of the *Memphis* knocked the Dominican starting pitcher out of the game with three more runs, regaining a 6-5 advantage. With the margin holding into the eighth inning, one observer noted that US victory seemed imminent. Instead, after a sequence that included multiple game-saving diving catches by Dominicans Velázquez and Golivart, the Dominican team rallied to score two runs in the bottom of the eighth inning on the daring base running of Piñeyro. The Marines, unable to hit lefty junk-baller Ballester since the sixth inning, continued to be flustered by his repertoire in the final frame, securing a Dominican victory witnessed by thunderous swells of applause and cheering.⁸²

⁸¹ Córdova, Cuqui. "La historia del "Menphis" y el "Gimnasio Escolar"." LA CRÓNICA DE LOS MARTES. August 19, 2014. Accessed April 22, 2017. <http://www.listindiario.com/el-deporte/2014/08/19/334156/la-historia-del-menphis-y-el-gimnasio-escolar>.

⁸² *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 22, 1916.

1-	trezas fueron aplaudidas.	
2.	El score fue así:	C
		P
		C. H. E.
1-	Yankees 0 3 0 0 3 0 0 0 6 11 3-1	
1c	Criollos 1 0 0 4 0 0 2 x 7 7 1-1	
1s		-
	C. H. E.	

Fig. 1.3. Box score from the 1916 festival. It lists the two teams as “Yankees” and “Criollos,” showing a Criollo victory. *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 22, 1916.

The exciting bout left both teams hungry for a rematch—accounts describe both teams practicing daily among themselves in anticipation of their next scheduled encounter. The Dominican players, eager to show their capability, noted that the crew of the *Memphis* was the toughest nine they had yet faced. A game was scheduled for an upcoming Sunday afternoon, much anticipated by fans and players alike.⁸³

⁸³ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 26, 1916.



Fig. 1.4. The game that took place likely closely resembled this scene from a few years later. At the site of Gimnasio Escolar, the partially-salvaged wreck of the *Memphis* lingered until 1938. “Juego de beisbol” in Fondo Luis Mañón, Archivo General Nacional de Republica Dominicana, Santo Domingo.

However, the budding series between the Dominican team and the crew of the *Memphis* was cut drastically short before it could continue—on the weekend of the scheduled meeting, the *Memphis*, docked in the harbor of Santo Domingo, was struck by several hundred-foot waves in the wake of a regional hurricane. With water entering the *Memphis* at every possible aperture, the battleship capsized, and was driven into the rocky coastline, gashing its hull and exploding the vessel’s steam power plant. In the chaos, most of the *Memphis*’ crew was killed, went missing, or suffered serious injuries. The ship proved a total loss, never to float again.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ “Loss of the USS *Memphis*, 29 August 1916.” Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, Washington DC. [<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/OnlineLibrary/photos/events/ev-1910s/ev-1916/memphis.htm>]

The wreck of the *Memphis* elicited an outpouring of Dominican responses. The Dominican president ordered that the Dominican flag be flown at half-mast on every official building in Santo Domingo. Scores of the city's residents surrounded the floundering remains of the *Memphis*, traveling by car, bicycle, and foot to see the spectacle. Dominican doctors offered their medical services to the American Red Cross and survivors of the *Memphis* wreck. One writer described the valiant efforts of Dominicans Prosper Marchena and Emeterio Sánchez in recovering surviving Marines from the battleship's wreckage. Dominican civilians accompanied the procession of caskets to the arriving hospital ship. To assist in the aftermath of the wreck, the Dominican Secretary of War offered the use of Dominican boats to clean up the flotsam of the *Memphis*, and the municipal government of Santo Domingo coordinated the housing of survivors in Dominican homes. A reporter for *Listin Diario*, Mario de la Concepción, describes how, as the *Memphis* was a "sad toy upon the waves," a crowd of Dominican women lined up to kneel and pray for the salvation of the US crew, to the awe of the surviving Captain Beach. Another young woman, he observed, promised to the Virgin of Altagracia to wear for six months the *listadillo*—a striped blue and white garment signifying poverty—if it meant the dying and injured crew would be saved. Eerily, many reported seeing a beam of light that shone on the grounds of Gimnasio Escolar. Rumors circulated around Santo Domingo that the ghostly beam of light came from the floating derelict of the *Memphis*.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 31, 1916; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 1, 1916; "Language as a Fundamental Sign of Puerto Ricanness" Encyclopedia of Puerto Rico. Retrieved October 8, 2016: <http://www.encyclopediapr.org>

Photo # NH 46219 USS Memphis wrecked at Santo Domingo, August 1916



Fig. 1.5. Photograph of the grounded *Memphis* wreck, surrounded by a throng of Dominican observers. “Loss of the USS *Memphis*, 29 August 1916 – Views taken the day after the Incident.” Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, Washington DC. [<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/OnlineLibrary/photos/events/ev-1910s/ev-1916/memph-2.htm>]

The Dominican response to the *Memphis* disaster contrasted with the anti-intervention opinions expressed in the Dominican press. While the *Listin Diario* continued to publish editorials criticizing the US occupation, its writers offered condolences to the wreck’s survivors. It was even noted that, during the salvage of the *Memphis*, the ship’s bell was removed and donated to a local church as a token of appreciation for the Dominican efforts in the wake of catastrophe. Another monument, a solitary Ionic Greek column, was also erected in memoriam of the *Memphis* on the Caribbean coast. While the rivalry between the *Memphis* and Santo Domingo’s baseball players was incredibly short-lived, this incident suggests that baseball played a unique role in the relationship between the occupiers and the occupied.

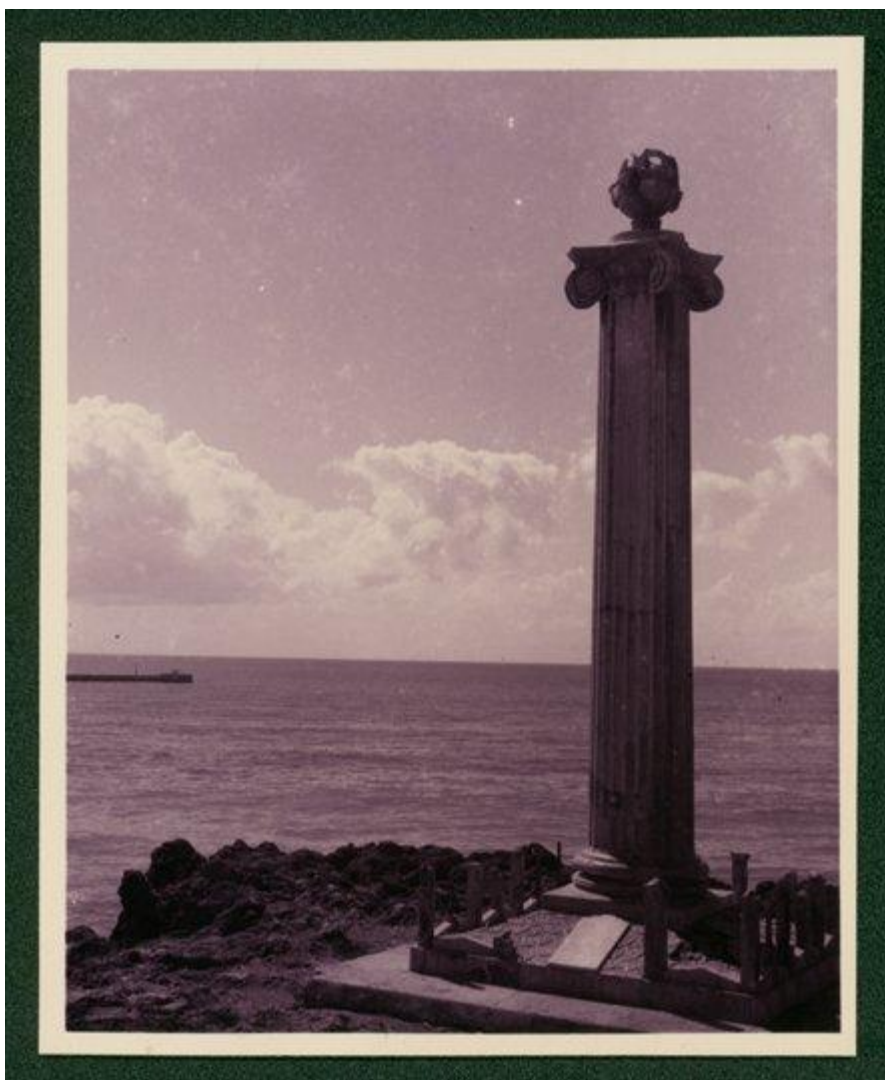


Fig. 1.6. Photograph of Dominican monument memorializing the lost crew of the USS *Memphis*, in Santo Domingo. “Monumento al Memphis” in Colección Instituciones Estatales. Archivo General Nacional de Republica Dominicana, Santo Domingo.

La Bandera, a newspaper in the provincial city of Santiago, the day after the wreck of the *Memphis*, castigated Dominicans who played baseball with the US Marines, asserting his fellow countrymen were not Dominicans. The anonymous Jugador, who penned much of *Listin Diario*'s baseball coverage responded to *La Bandera* in a scathing editorial. He asked, “Are the hordes of spectators at the games also not Dominicans?” Additionally, he noted that he saw several of *La Bandera*'s editors at the games himself, clapping and yelling. He asked again, are they also not

Dominicans? Jugador began to mock *La Bandera* for being such good patriots, recommending that they take a *poco de tila*⁸⁶ and read a past *Listin Diario* article entitled “El Bluff del Patriotismo,” in which its author argues the difference between confronting the reality of an ominous US occupation and opportunistic charlatans attacking other Dominicans in “macabre sport.” Jugador concludes his editorial response to *La Bandera* with a few lines of poetry:

Tiro piedras por la calle	I throw stones in the street
Y al que la de que perdone.	And at that which you would pardon
Tengo la cabeza loca	I go crazy
De tantas cavilaciones. ⁸⁷	From so many musings

The tradition of meshing sport and poetry, as seen in contemporary Trinidadian cricket, found a home in Dominican baseball as well. Elsewhere, another *letrado* composed poetry praising the valiant efforts of a team named the Osos Polares in their loss to Escojido, illustrating that this tradition of baseball and poetry permeated the occupation.⁸⁸ But, this particular exchange between *Listin Diario* and *La Bandera* is a rarity in the available sources regarding baseball, in the way that it explicitly links baseball to the political atmosphere of the island’s occupation. The exchange between these two portions of the press did not end with the previous diatribe—*La Bandera* doubled down in reply a few days later, and while their original retort does not survive, *Listin Diario*’s second response does. Jugador insists that the honor and patriotism *La Bandera* speaks of are worth less than gold, and that their editors are nothing like the patriots of the Dominican revolutionary past, as they claim. The senior editor of *La Bandera*, whom we find was named Fabio, denied his presence at any baseball games and instead suggested that

⁸⁶ *Poco de tila* refers to a tea from the Linden flower, possessing sedative effects.

⁸⁷ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 1, 1916; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), July 11, 1916.

⁸⁸ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), February 13, 1919.

Jugador, in addition to his baseball patronage, frequents many other locales of ill-repute. Finally, Jugador addressed Fabio's assertion that Dominican baseball fans are "ignorant people who need to be educated." Jugador described the composition of the crowd of Dominicans at the baseball games against the *Memphis*—professors, doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, renowned politicians, successful businessmen, esteemed journalists, and many others capable of appreciating Dominican patriotism the same as any of the editors at *La Bandera*.⁸⁹

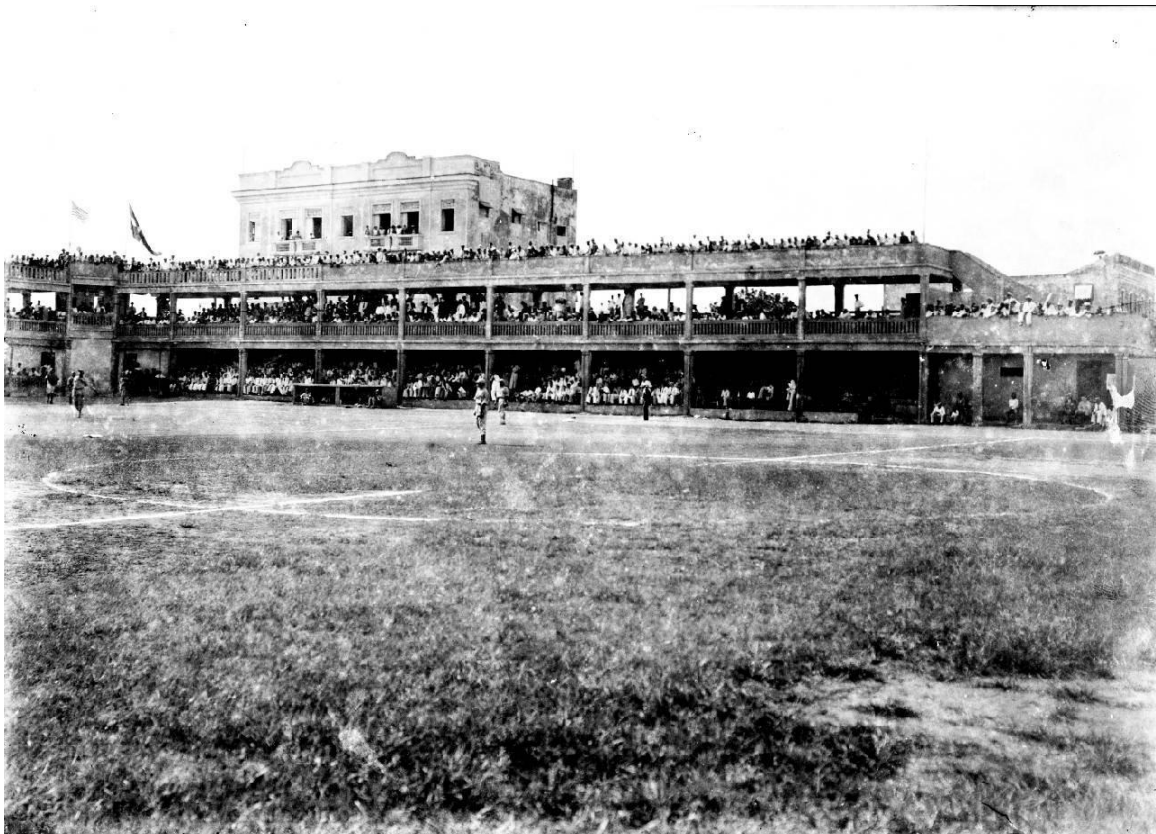


Fig. 1.7. View of a typical crowd at Gimnasio Escolar, taken around 1920. "Juego de Beisbol en el Gimnasio Escolar" in Fondo Luis Mañón, Archivo General Nacional de Republica Dominicana, Santo Domingo.

⁸⁹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 5, 1916.

The clash between the occupiers and the occupied on the anniversary of the end of Spanish control was fought not by blade or gunpowder, but via sport. The 1916 festivities, in their unfolding, were dramatically changed by the ensuing hurricane and the wreck of the *Memphis*. The exciting contests between Dominican and Marine ballplayers immediately gave way to humanitarian disaster relief on the part of the Dominicans. Despite the reality of foreign occupation, Dominicans willingly aided the afflicted soldiers in a myriad of ways. This is not to suggest any sort of acceptance or justification of the occupation on the part of contemporary Dominicans, but de la Concepción's descriptions of Dominican women praying on the shore may illuminate an underlying sentiment. "In misfortune, [they] forgive the offense, but they will never forget," he writes, indicating that Dominican cultural values of compassion could coexist with fervent nationalism. And Dominican empathy for foreign citizens in times of disaster was not limited to the wreck of the *Memphis*. Two years later, in 1918, Dominican ballplayers played exhibition games to fund relief efforts for the victims of the San Fermín earthquake in Puerto Rico.⁹⁰

The unexpected disaster in which the *Memphis* was destroyed initiated a new interplay between Dominican baseball and international humanitarian operations. As evidenced by the Dominican response to the wreck of the *Memphis*, the cooperation naturally coalesced. Dominican journalists documented a series of contests between the United States Marine Corps and famed Dominican squad Licey. Many Sundays, the two teams would engage in afternoon matinees, with gate proceeds benefitting the Allied Red Cross. *Listin Diario* remarked on the ongoing series, predicting that the "most vigorous fight in all the world," a "lavish triumph" for

⁹⁰ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 2, 1918.

Licey, would be enjoyed by all Dominicans, especially the youth, both male and female.

Deportista, another pseudonymous contributor to *Listin Diario*, wrote that the grounds of Gimnasio Escolar were adorned with the pleasurable sounds of military bands as the “gleaming spheroid flew around the diamond.”⁹¹

The games were a rousing success. In one such contest, Panchieú Herrera, a Dominican favorite two years retired, appeared to the delight of a packed Gimnasio Escolar to captain the Licey nine. In his return, Herrera rapped two crucial hits with “astonishing ease,” leading Licey to victory over the occupiers. Herrera’s return to the Dominican baseball scene via the collaboration between the United States Marine Corps, the Red Cross, and Licey seems to have invigorated the Dominican baseball scene in wartime. In the weeks following his homecoming in Santo Domingo, local teams clamored for Herrera to join their squad as a sporting mercenary. One such writer, Bender, penned an open letter in *Listin Diario* addressed to Herrera. In it, Bender warns Herrera of the “alarmingly pretentious” San Carlos squad, more known for “chat [than] triumph.” Instead, Bender, in the midst of praising Herrera’s veteran play, suggests that Herrera continue his captaincy of his “old Licey sympathizers.” After all, Bender writes, Herrera showed his batting guile against the “hot pepper and koka-cola” thrown by a USMC pitcher by the name of Keenan.⁹²

⁹¹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 7, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 6, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 5, 1917.

⁹² *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 13, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 29, 1917

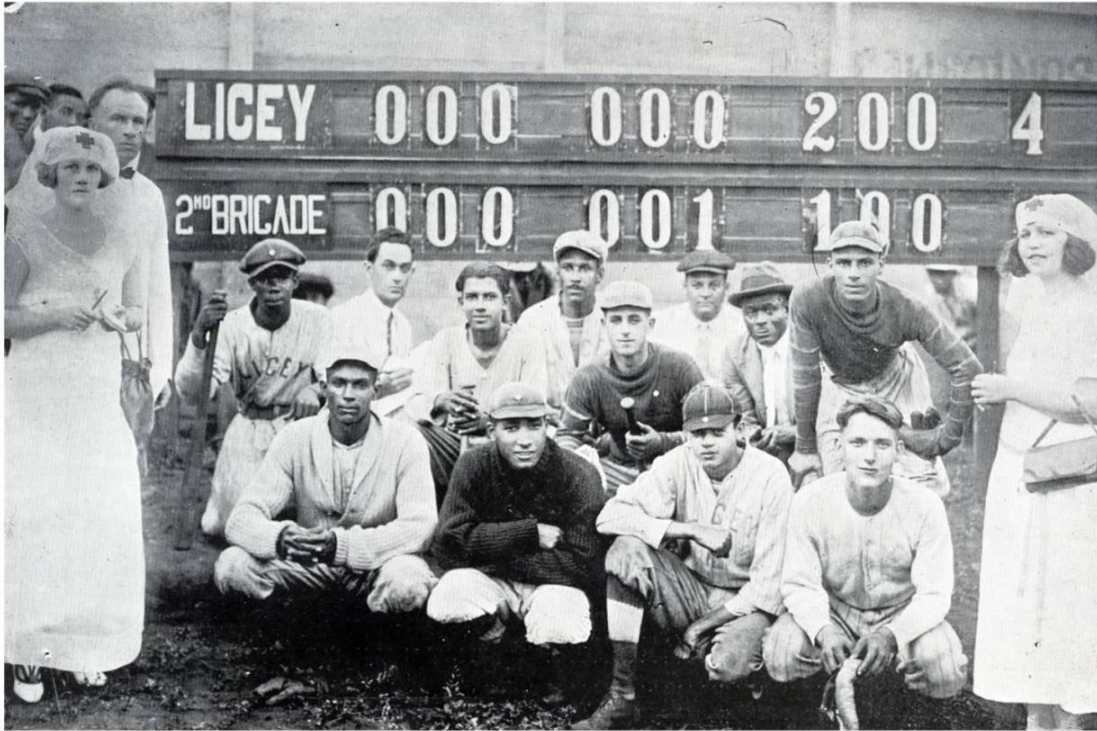


Fig. 1.8. Red Cross nurses and players from the team Licey pose in front of the scoreboard following a victory over US Marines. “Peloteros del Licey y enfermeras” in Colección Alejandro Paulino, Archivo General Nacional de Republica Dominicana, Santo Domingo.

Ultimately, the dissonance in the Dominican press reveals the fractured debate over Dominican patriotism in the face of the US occupation of the island, and baseball’s place in Dominican culture was argued on the pages of the national capital’s premier newspaper. Acceptance or rejection of baseball was divorceable from Dominican resistance to the Marine occupation. In Santo Domingo, the national seat of intellectual liberalism, this acceptance and promotion of baseball was most clearly seen. Dominican nationalism was composed of a variety of voices competing for a vision of the Dominican future free of US imperial imposition. It is especially interesting that this took place in a debate over baseball following the *Memphis* disaster. For the most prominent voice in the Dominican press, *Listin Diario*, this meant espousing that Dominicans who played baseball were still Dominicans. They were Dominicans

who played baseball without forsaking their national identity, but also Dominicans who could display empathy and compassion in the aftermath of a natural disaster which claimed the lives of their sporting counterparts.

Notably, the disagreement in the Dominican press also followed some characteristics of the divide between the metropolitan Santo Domingo and the cities of the provinces. One historian has commented on the nature of the nascent class of urban liberal intellectuals in these same years. These individuals, who likely included many of these anonymous Dominican baseball writers, he writes, “generally lamented what they saw as the backwardness and barbarism of their rural countrymen.” Being that these writers were generally without wealth or political power, he continues, their sole source of influence lay in “contact with European high culture.” Given the ardent resentment toward Spain and European bankers, the only place to draw upon was the United States. With the threat of continued foreign intervention, however, these same intellectuals began to craft and elaborate on a “true Dominican cultur[e],” and “perform their own civilization” to keep foreign imperial powers at bay.⁹³

While this historian makes no mention of baseball, it seems applicable to the events of 1916. Nationalist urban intellectuals in Santo Domingo happily seized baseball as an element in revising Dominican culture for a new global era. Baseball, then, was not a capitulation to US influence, but opportunistically utilized by writers in Santo Domingo. It is evident that not all Dominicans, judging from the editorial replies from provincial Santiago, were as enthused about

⁹³ Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof. *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, 19-23.

this national project. Regardless of their abstract arguments of nationalism, the crowds still arrived to watch the budding game.

Fiestas de 16 de Agosto, 1919: Santo Domingo, the Emperor of Sports

Three years after the wreck of the *Memphis*, Santo Domingo hosted another iteration of the 16 de Agosto festival. The 1919 celebration of the 16 de Agosto was especially vibrant and included every class and geographic locale of Dominican society. Santo Domingo organized a public celebration, including the inaugural Exposición Provincial on the grounds of the Hipódromo de La Primavera. Farmers from as far as La Vega, Altamira, and Jarabacoa participated in a fair where they displayed the year's best grains, fruits, tubers, and soil samples. Additionally, a number of painters and photographers gathered at La Primavera to exhibit their works of art. Artists named Castillo and Villalbá showcased their seasonal landscape paintings and photography of city bridges, respectively, and were the subject of much "animated commentary" from Exposición-goers. Another gallery displayed a variety of industrial arts, including José Turull mosaics, adorned with undefined "ellusive inscriptions." In the same gallery, an architectural engineer presented models of his works in Madrid and Puerto Rico next to a public display of his many awards. One reporter, after seeing the new lithographic press belonging to El Progreso Press and their debut of a new magazine to a thunderous ovation, deemed the Dominican printing industry on par with any in the world. Additionally, a number of industrial *gremios*, or guilds, made an appearance to demonstrate their trades. Shoemakers from the gremio de zapateros unveiled an array of new waterproof boots and drew crowds to see strange three-centimeter miniatures of other various shoes. Exposición-goers also sampled new Dominican rums, cigars, and candy in a large room adjacent to the art galleries. At the end of the

day, one reporter noted, individuals from all walks of life gathered under the banners of their respective gremios to sing the Dominican national anthem under the watch of US soldiers.⁹⁴

Elsewhere, the capital hosted parades, horseracing, musical concerts, guild gatherings, and dances. The heads of the military government gathered at Santa Iglesia Cathedral to give grandiose speeches, which one reporter deemed a “sad assignment.” But it was baseball, the Dominican Republic’s burgeoning national sport, which occupied center stage at the 1919 festival. Large and raucous crowds gathered on the grounds of Gimnasio Escolar to watch the popular team Escojido take on a team of US Marines. For the occasion, Escojido deftly recruited former Puerto Rican superstar shortstop and accountant for the military government, Pedro Miguel Caratini, widely known as the “father of Dominican baseball.” That day, Caratini led the Escojido attack by slashing three hits, scoring three runs, and stealing two bases. After Escojido mounted an 8-0 lead following the eighth inning, the humiliated Marines requested that the game end and refused to play the second game of the agreed-upon doubleheader, much to the chagrin of *Listin Diario*’s baseball commentators. Sarcastically noting the inability of the US umpire to help the Marines avoid an embarrassing defeat, a writer using the pen name Cronista declared the impossibility of a US win over a true creole team.⁹⁵ While the star of the Dominican team, Caratini, was Puerto Rican, this did not seem to matter to the Dominicans. In fact, in an earlier editorial, another anonymous scribe, Second Base, wrote an open letter to Cuban and Puerto Rican baseball players, requesting that they come to the island to reinforce the Dominican team,

⁹⁴ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 18, 1919.

⁹⁵ Rob Ruck. *The Tropic of Baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, 11; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 19, 1919.

so that baseball may be raised up in Santo Domingo, the First City of the New World, and Emperor of Sports.⁹⁶

It is clear that the most common denominator of both the 1916 and 1919 festivals is the playing of baseball against US troops. Proud Dominicans, in the midst of celebrating their victory against Spanish imperialism, celebrated doubly in soundly routing the Marines in the US game. Yet these Dominicans likely did not see baseball as the US game. By now, it was already the Dominican game, proved in battle against yet another foreign oppressor. A Dominican in 1916 or 1919 could be an ardent proponent of baseball while subtly resisting foreign occupation. In fact, much of the language used by Dominicans to describe baseball, as to be discussed in the next chapter, advocates a sport not recalcitrantly adopted, but endorsed and championed by the capitaleños of the oldest Spanish city in the hemisphere.

⁹⁶ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), March 22, 1917.

LETRADO DISCOURSE IN THE DOMINICAN PRESS: BASEBALL, HISTORY, AND LITERATURE

The early modern era of Dominican baseball was covered in the newspaper pages of *Listin Diario* by a host of pseudonymous writers, who apparently practiced writing careers in unspecified capacities. Their writing reveals the way they thought about themselves, baseball, the Dominican national project, and the place of the Caribbean in the world. Notably, when they drew upon Western culture for the formation of a nascent Dominican identity, they were primarily interested not in the United States or the Enlightenment for a source, but in Ancient Greece. C.L.R James, likely the most famous Caribbean-born historian of sports and intellectualism, spoke in similar terms in his classic work, *Beyond a Boundary*. However, Dominican men of letters, or *letrados*, espoused similar views decades before the work of James. In the Caribbean world, Dominican *letrados* constructed for themselves a direct link to the classical past. Further, Dominican *letrados*, during the intensification of the occupation, used increasingly militarized metaphors in their descriptions of the baseball they watched. Finally, a rare instance in *Listin Diario* provides a contentious dialogue between two of its writers, revealing some interesting inter-*letrado* dynamics.

C.L.R. James, Trinidadian Cricket, and the Greco-Caribbean

C.L.R. James, in his 1963 discourse on cricket, described a historical link between Trinidadian cricket and the games of the ancient Greeks. Consuming the classics and cricket with equal voracity in his youth, James imagined Trinidadian cricket through Hellenistic lenses. At an early age, James “believed that...if I had gone into the society of Ancient Greece I would have been more at home than I ever had since been.” James asserted that, during his time in Trinidad, “the luminous glow of the Greek city-state seems to penetrate more searchingly into every corner

of our civilization.”⁹⁷ “A testament to the quality of its citizens,” he wrote, sport “asserted the national unity of Greek civilization and the consciousness of themselves as separate from the barbarians who surrounded them.”⁹⁸ He concludes:

The popular democracy of Greece, sitting for days in the sun watching *The Oresteia*; the popular democracy of our day, sitting similarly, watching Miller and Lindwall bowl to Hutton and Compton—each in its own way grasps at a more complete human existence. We may some day be able to answer Tolstoy’s exasperated and exasperating question: What is art?—but only when we learn to integrate our vision of Walcott on the back foot through the covers with the outstretched arm of the Olympic Apollo.⁹⁹

For James, the star cricket players of his day bore an intellectual lineage hearkening to the birth of Greek democracy. The Trinidadian historian’s analogous relationship between cricket and classical Greece is intriguing, but not unique. James wrote these words in the 1950s while reflecting on 1930s Trinidadian cricket. These ideas had earlier antecedents in the discourse of Dominican *letrados* decades earlier, who, in their surviving writings in *Listin Diario*, frequently imagined themselves as denizens of the Athens of the New World.

The Athens of the New World

Early Dominican *letrados* had no difficulty equating the Caribbean and Mediterranean seas. Primitivo Herrera, writing for *Listin Diario* in 1917, published a work titled “The Sadness of the Latin Sea,” in which he writes that, as the Mediterranean served as the setting for the

⁹⁷ C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 154.

⁹⁸ C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 156.

⁹⁹ C.L.R. James. *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 211.

heroes and artists of Athens and Rome, the Caribbean does so for Santo Domingo. Herrera writes:

The Latin Sea, from whose azure waters Aphrodite came wrapped in a cloak of floating foam, evoked by fantasy as the most sublime representation of love, is furrowed in these black hours of mourning by monstrous vampires that frighten sailors and suck their blood.¹⁰⁰

Herrera does not name these vampires of the Caribbean, although it may be a subversive reference to the current occupation. Herrera recounts how these bloodthirsty intruders afflict the Caribbean and its residents:

[the sea] has a shadow entering its soul: sadness and dread are made crumbs of mourning, because in the orchards and in the harbors its children lament the ruin of their industry and their trade, as previously flourishing...orange blossoms vainly promised great crops.¹⁰¹

Still, Herrera is vague with his references, although an imagery of despair is made apparent. The orange blossoms of the Dominican revolution have led to the present apprehension and economic tribulations wrought by nefarious entities. Herrera concludes, wistfully:

Poor sea, beloved sea, you are my confidant in these hours of anguish: by force of asphyxiating gases they have wished to stain your beauty with disgusting shadows; your supreme beauty that has served as the genesis of so many legends of love, dreams, voluptuousness, and light.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), June 27, 1917.

¹⁰¹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), June 27, 1917.

¹⁰² *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), June 27, 1917

As seen by the prose of Herrera, Dominican *letrados* imposed a Mediterranean framework onto their conception of the Caribbean Sea. However, the metaphor of the classical world surpassed the simple comparison of two great seas. While the ancient Mediterranean world had Athens at its center, the Dominicans bestowed this designation upon Santo Domingo.

As Dominican *letrados* evoked the Mediterranean in their conception of the Caribbean Sea, they additionally envisioned Santo Domingo as their own Athens. In 1917, several Dominican *letrados* congregated under the name of the Dominican Society of History. Notably, this group included pre-occupation Dominican presidents Adolfo Alejandro Nouel and Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal. In its public address, the Society described Santo Domingo as the “sacred crucible” in which the history of the New World was forged. Asserting that history served as the “main wealth of nations,” it further deemed Santo Domingo to be the “Athens of the New World.”¹⁰³

Shortly after the foundation of the Dominican Society of History, Dominican *letrados* dreamed of tangible ways to reinforce their Athenian conception of Santo Domingo. Less than a month after the formation of the Dominican Society of History, *letrados* in Santo Domingo conceived what they called “our own Dominican Athenaeum” to promote literacy and arts in the capital. It could only follow, they argued, that the Dominican Athenaeum would contribute to the “literary splendor” of the Dominican Republic.¹⁰⁴

Dominican *letrados* made a number of classical associations between their world and the ancient Mediterranean theater. *Listin Diario* ran a series featuring several Dominican *letrados*

¹⁰³ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 19, 1917

¹⁰⁴ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 6, 1917.

and their discussion of what they believed was the emergence of their very own Dominican Parnassus, alluding to the mountain where the muses of Greek mythology resided. The exchange lasted several weeks, with its participants affirming that they themselves constituted the Dominican Parnassus. They asserted that their own literary movement was certainly much better than any found in Cuba or Nicaragua, even if their work was yet unheralded in Europe or the United States. For them, Dominican poetry was destined for global acclaim.¹⁰⁵

Much of the surviving writing of these *letrados* of the Dominican Parnassus or the Dominican Athenaeum is replete with references to the Greek world. One Dominican *letrado*, German Soriano, boldly asserted, “I am a Greek of eras gone” in a poetic ode to the Greek god Hymenaeus.¹⁰⁶ Another *letrado*, Luis A. Abreu, admonished a rival critic, naming him an irresponsible, lamentable, and drunk Zoilus. Seeking to discredit his critic, Abreu included the negative connotation of calling him a Zoilus, a Greek philosopher infamous for “slandering” the great Homer.¹⁰⁷ Emilio A. Morel, writing an open letter to Silvestre Rincón, assures him that they both share the blood of Apollo.¹⁰⁸ German Soriano, in another work of poetry, describes himself as an Argonaut of the Caribbean, confronting adversity like a Dominican Leonidas.¹⁰⁹ The writings of these *letrados* are consistently littered with further references to Greek deities, mythological creatures, and Mediterranean localities.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), March 23, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), March 26, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), April 4, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), April 10, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), April 11, 1917.

¹⁰⁶ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), June 2, 1917.

¹⁰⁷ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), June 20, 1917.

¹⁰⁸ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 22, 1917.

¹⁰⁹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), July 4, 1917.

¹¹⁰ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 28, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 6, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), July 4, 1917.

For Dominican *letrados*, many of them metaphorically envisioned themselves as descendants of the classical Greek world. In the Athens of the New World, Dominican baseball players most famously played at Gimnasio Escolar. In consistent fashion, Dominican *letrados* described the stadium in Greek terms. In commemorating the inauguration of Gimnasio Escolar, Luis Magin evoked classical scenes of the Greek games where philosophers gave seminars between displays of athletic prowess. In this way, Magin wrote, the performances at the stadium exercised both the body and the spirit. Magin remembered the earliest contests between the Dominican Stars and the visiting Cuban Stars, with thousands of Dominican children participating in a mass baptism between games. Magin argued that, through the life of Gimnasio Escolar, Dominicans could eschew the unhealthy elements of modernity and look toward what he thought a more natural, more perfect Greek society. Magin extols “the graceful customs of the Greeks, their civil and athletic exercises, the perfect line of their beautiful women, and the virile outline of their well-formed men.”¹¹¹

The Dominican appropriation of the classical world for their Caribbean sphere is apparent from their extant writings. However, further study of their writing lends a few more insights into the Dominican literary scene and their interest in sport. In addition to the spate of references to the Greek world, Dominican *letrados*, when writing about baseball, increasingly became more violent in their descriptions as the US occupation progressed.

October Violence and Heavy Artillery

Dominican baseball during the occupation was often couched in militaristic language. Given the context of frequent and repeated foreign occupations and the development of the Great

¹¹¹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), April 29, 1920.

War in Europe which dominated Dominican headlines, this is not entirely surprising.

Additionally, the fact that Dominican baseball teams often competed against teams composed of US military personnel explains some of this language.

Repeatedly, the Dominican press referred to these Dominican players as fighting patriots, combatting and conquering the enemy.¹¹² Elsewhere, they described how Dominican “forces,” led by “the heroes of the attack,” gave the adversary a good “thrashing.”¹¹³ In provincial Santiago, rural ballplayers are addressed as “conquistadors.”¹¹⁴ Another instance hailed these ballplayers as “local warlords,” reminiscent of descriptions of rural caudillos.¹¹⁵ This language often mirrored concurrent confrontations of the occupation—in one notable instance, the Puerto Rican club Ponce requested to come to the Dominican Republic to face the best Dominican competitors. The Dominicans eagerly accepted this challenge on the condition that they could subsequently travel to Puerto Rico to do the same.¹¹⁶ But a series of violent commotions delayed the inter-island affair, however, which was to take place in October of 1916.

On October 24, a group of US Marines crossed the Ozama River into the capital neighborhood of Villa Duarte, where they planned to arrest a suspected rebel, Ramón Batista. Batista had been employed by the occupiers to collect weapons from other Dominicans as part of the military government’s disarmament program. Instead, it was suspected that Batista was stockpiling these weapons for rebel use. Batista yelled out during the attempted arrest, and

¹¹² *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), March 15, 1917; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 17, 1916.

¹¹³ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 5, 1916; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 29, 1916.

¹¹⁴ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 6, 1917.

¹¹⁵ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), September 7, 1917.

¹¹⁶ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), October 14, 1916.

several armed Dominican men appeared, initiating a wild shootout. The Marines, managing to shoot and kill Batista in the chaos, escaped back across the river. In the violence, two US officers and several Dominicans, including a number of bystanders, were killed. Not long after, more than one hundred Marines stormed Villa Duarte, breaking into civilian homes, making arbitrary arrests, and burning down houses at will.¹¹⁷ The same week, US soldiers opened fire on a number of Dominicans at the café Polo Norte, killing three. José María Cabral y Báez, the Dominican Minister for Foreign Affairs, warned the US military government that previously amicable Dominicans now felt “universal hostility” toward the US presence.¹¹⁸ While the wreck of the *Memphis* showcased the height of Dominican goodwill toward their occupiers, October’s violence did much to reverse these feelings.

Baseball provided one avenue of escape for afflicted Dominicans—the Puerto Ricans were still to arrive, and did so on October 29. *Listin Diario* seemed relieved, celebrating the return of baseball after a week of rain and “two tragic days,” in which “hundreds of peaceful civilians had their lives endangered, hardly able to think about baseball or anything but national defense.” The return of the sun and the cessation of violence marked the return of the new Dominican game and a doubleheader between Ponce and Escogido on the grounds of Gimnasio Escolar. Luis Aristides Fiallo Cabral, an esteemed Dominican doctor, scientist, and intellectual threw out the first pitch, offering a gold-plated cane to the first batter to hit a home run. In the first game, star Dominican pitcher Indio Bravo faced an intimidating Puerto Rican lineup, which

¹¹⁷ Alan L. McPherson. *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, 51-52.

¹¹⁸ Sumner Welles. *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. II. Saville Books, 1966, 788.

included the famed “Ty Cobb of the Antilles,” Caratini. Indio Bravo impressed the Dominican crowd and Ponce, striking out ten Ponce batters, including the “heavy artillery” in the middle of Ponce’s batting order. The “heavy artillery” of Ponce came to life in the second game, however, resulting in a rain-shortened 14-3 blowout. The face of the Puerto Rican “heavy artillery,” Caratini himself, over the course of the day hit .545 with three home runs in only eleven times at bat. Soon after, Caratini and Ponce attempted to offer Indio Bravo a contract to play for Ponce, claiming that with him they would be able to defeat the formidable Cuban teams. *Listin Diario* proudly reported this, noting that Indio Bravo was now a legend of international fame. Following the games against the Dominicans, Ponce arranged games against US Marines the same week. *Listin Diario* proclaimed that for the games, Ponce would be “our home-club” and noted that the Puerto Ricans promised to use their “heavy artillery against the invader and make them flee the island in demoralizing retreat.” The next day, the Puerto Ricans kept their promise, “handing the crew of the USS *Prairie* nine zeroes” in a “splendid and colossal triumph,” much to the delight of the Dominican audience.¹¹⁹

Generally, the language used by Dominican writers in their coverage of baseball contained increasingly violent tone and imagery, especially with the escalation of local violence. Baseball began to figuratively represent a Dominican weapon in the aforementioned attempt to “perform their own civilization” in the mode of the Greeks, rather than the United States. The inclusion of Puerto Ricans and Cubans in this effort makes sense, as one historian has remarked

¹¹⁹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), October 30, 1916; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), October 31, 1916; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 1, 1916; *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 2, 1916.

that this attempt mirrored previous intellectual movements in Puerto Rico and Cuba.¹²⁰ The willingness of Dominican writers to request and celebrate the fellow Argonauts of their own Mediterranean to go to bat for them, so to speak, is more understandable in this context.

Between Love and Duty

In 1914, the Dominican presidency, troubled by a series of resignations, short-lived terms, and assassinations, drew the attention of the United States' State Department. Woodrow Wilson, weary over the inefficacy of his attempts to “teach Latin Americans to elect good men,” intervened with a paternalistic ultimatum—cease the rebellion and agree upon a provisional president or yield to the Wilson Plan. The Wilson Plan called for the United States to select a new president and utilize the Marines to enforce the regime change, complete with elections operated by the United States. Dominican president Jimenes repeatedly declined these US offers of armed intervention in the latest Dominican political upheaval. Despite his stubborn refusal, the *Prairie* and the *Castine* were landed in Santo Domingo and US Marines entered the city. On May 7, 1916, lamenting his “legitimately constituted government which perishes today under the dark wave of the most futile disloyalty,” Jimenes resigned his office rather than enlist US military might to recapture Santo Domingo, proclaiming that he would rather retire than resort to asserting his office with the force of a foreign power.¹²¹

Foreshadowing the eventual arrival of the Marines by only a week, *Listin Diario* prominently displayed a cartoon image of the impending specter of US intervention. In the top

¹²⁰ Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof. *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, 22.

¹²¹ Sumner Welles. *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924*, Vol. II. Saville Books, 1966, 769.

and center of the newspaper's front page on April 29, 1916, ran a cartoon in which a character resembling Uncle Sam stands facing forward, adorned in sharply-bifurcated dress. His right side, decorated by stars and stripes, stands in contrast to the military uniform of his left side, grasping a service rifle in his left hand. In his right hand, he holds a baseball bat by its handle, resting its barrel on the ground.

This Uncle Sam character is set against a peculiar background—it appears to be a desert landscape, replete with cacti and a disapprovingly frowning sun. The sun, encircled by the word Mexico, gazes upon Uncle Sam wielding his two inherent instruments. Beneath the cartoon, the image is captioned “between love and duty,” insinuating the dichotomy of allegiances which composed the US soldier.

Listin Diario

(Fundado en 1848)

SANTO DOMINGO R. D. SABADO 29 DE ABRIL DE 1916

-Caricatura Americana-

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 A
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 su nuevo estable.
 Un mesal No. —
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Terse Antonio Valdez
Marina Gómez
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Entre el Amor y el Deber

Fig. 2.1. Cartoon featuring the soldier-ballplayer. *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), April 29, 1916

The origins of this image appear not to be Dominican, but perhaps Mexican. However, *Listin Diario* fittingly appropriated the image for a Dominican context. At its printing, US Marines already occupied Haiti, and Jimenes’s rocky tenure was serving as an open invitation to the interventionist inclinations of the Wilson administration.

The image overtly contributes to the militarized conception of the baseball player in the Dominican Republic. Here, Uncle Sam is not the deliverer of baseball—the game was already present on the island and accepted as a Dominican institution. Rather, the image conveys the dualistic nature of the soldier-ballplayer. While Uncle Sam would rather keep his gaze fixed on

his love, baseball, his rear hand stays reluctantly committed to his duty as military serviceman. Dominican ballplayers during a time of national crisis likely understood this dilemma, as they were compelled to champion the burgeoning Dominican game while still seeing to the island's defense from yet another imposed foreign presence. While the image is an odious harbinger of the next week's US encroachment, it also portends a sentiment presumably understood by its Dominican audience that did not see baseball as necessarily associated with US culture. Recalling the episode of the *Memphis*, it did not perturb ardent provincial Dominican nationalists in places like Santiago that urban Dominicans were playing baseball. Instead, once the Dominican ballplayers became involved in the aftermath of the *Memphis* crisis, their baseball association with US soldiers drew the umbrage of *La Bandera*.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the *Listin Diario* in these years rarely printed editorial cartoons, much less ones that were centered on the front page in the midst of a political crisis. This unique instance instead speaks to the weight of the aforementioned subtexts of the ballplayer-soldier image. The invader and the defender, predisposed to lean toward their love of baseball, remained reluctantly committed to shoulder a rifle for their country's cause.

While Dominican baseball during the occupation was often tinged with nationalist sentiments, especially considering its numerous encounters with the crews of US naval vessels, similar sentiments were often invoked without the necessity of a foreign antagonist. Regularly, even in contests between Dominican teams, from the semi-professional stars to the employee-teams of the sugar *ingenios*, or mills, their players "worthily kept the ball-playing flag of honor

of our race.” Rafael Sánchez Lustrino, in one instance, embodied the invincible Dominican ballplayer, able to “throw three strikes in a blink of the eye.”¹²²

Dominican *letrados* had high expectations for the adherents of their national pastime. After all, it would be a crucial component in their pursuit of the national project. Dominican *letrados* also seemed to recognize that baseball was likewise critical in the formation of the nationalistic image of the United States. El Patria was one of the most esteemed teams of the Dominican capital during the occupation period, their name evoking the Dominican fatherland. In 1917, one chronicler of the game yearned for the glory seasons of El Patria’s past, marked by enigmatic curveballs from the pitching staff and clutch hitting on offense. However, this season “left much to be desired,” with El Patria’s players appearing “disoriented, lacking discipline,” and showing “little seriousness.” Surely, the chronicler writes, the directors of El Patria must reorganize the team to realize its past of “resounding triumphs,” lest it continue its perilous “walk toward its dissolution.”¹²³ The image of Uncle Sam playing baseball, therefore, must have resonated with the host of Dominican *letrados* who envisioned the game as parcel of the Dominican nation as well.

Thrown into the Sea

The pseudonymous baseball writers of Santo Domingo each seem to have been associated with a certain team, suggesting that each team had its own enclave of coded baseball correspondents. Throughout the baseball year, these correspondents participated in a certain game of their own—jabbing at each other in open editorials.

¹²² *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), April 12, 1917.

¹²³ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), May 15, 1917.

On one occasion, repeated frequently throughout the run of *Listin Diario*, Base Bolero, correspondent for Atlético, recounts his team's victory over rival Gimnasio Escolar. After reciting carefully the accolades of Atlético's "distinguished" roster and "promising future" spearheaded by an array of young, "dignified" defenders, Base Bolero mockingly asks, "where is Majagua?" referring to Gimnasio Escolar's own correspondent who has failed to supply *Listin Diario* with his own recap of the game.¹²⁴

Majagua responded two days later, remarking that the preceding ordeal was not a shameful loss as Base Bolero had insinuated—the game had been tied into the ninth inning, only to be decided on a rather controversial play. Majagua, additionally, reminded Base Bolero of what certainly constituted a "shameful loss" just three months earlier, when Atlético coughed up twenty-one runs in a loss to Gimnasio Escolar. In a closing jab, Majagua emphasized to Base Bolero that the three contests prior to that "thrashing" were all Gimnasio Escolar victories and that he was not particularly worried about losing again.¹²⁵

Two additional correspondents for Atlético and Gimnasio Escolar ratcheted up the editorial rivalry as the season progressed. Goitia, writing for his own Atlético, recalled how Orgen, writing for Gimnasio Escolar, had previously proclaimed that Atlético had been deftly thrown into the sea thanks to a "stupendous beating" at the bats of Gimnasio Escolar. Yet, in this rematch, Goitia gloated how Atlético sent the "poor boys" of Gimnasio Escolar crazily spinning all over the field in futile pursuit of batted balls and frustratingly unable to stop the Atlético running game. Goitia exclaimed that it was indeed possible to come back to life after being

¹²⁴ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), May 22, 1917

¹²⁵ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), May 24, 1917.

thrown into the sea and began to attack Orgen personally. “Now will you shut up, Orgen?” he asked, suggesting that Orgen abandon his place in baseball and instead devote himself to his writing, and not to come back like a ricocheting baseball. Finally, Goitia concluded, wishing pain upon Orgen.¹²⁶



Fig. 2.2. Header from Goitia’s column responding to Orgen. *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), August 22, 1916.

Orgen apparently found time to reply to Goitia’s direct attack. Prior to their next meeting, Orgen predicted the matchup to be a sensational event for all to see—Gimnasio Escolar would make Goitia surrender his very soul to the creator, not in the deep waters of the Caribbean Sea, but in a deep sea of his own sorrow and tears.¹²⁷ Goitia and Orgen later decided to settle this rivalry with the “laurel of triumph” on the field.¹²⁸ However, the ultimate result of this feud is never quite made clear in the available sources. Despite this, their relationship provides substantial insight into the nature of Dominican baseball during the occupation.

¹²⁶ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), October 31, 1917.

¹²⁷ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 17, 1917.

¹²⁸ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 15, 1917.

Clearly, baseball was a Dominican entity separable from the North American invasion. The so-called “eternal rivals,” such as Gimnasio Escolar and Atlético, were both Dominican. Contests against US squads, while celebrated, were not battles for the “emperor of sports in the First City.” Dominican ballplayers, as with revolutionary heroes past, were incessantly interlocked in a struggle for supremacy amongst themselves, not just against a foreign threat. Further, the editorial interplay between *Listin Diario*’s baseball correspondents suggests a rather subversive element. No other writers for the newspaper, regardless of subject, went by a coded name, and perhaps in a time of censorship by the US military government, this was a calculated choice. Perhaps, even, multiple names were assumed by a single writer or two for the sake of editorial material.

From the available sample of their discourse, they appear to have been previously established authors—for example, Goitia suggests that Orgen return to his letters rather than attempting to ply his trade writing about baseball. It is not explicitly evident, but it is possible to speculate these correspondents had ties to the larger nationalist cadre of liberal intellectuals. One instance does surface in *Listin Diario* to hint at this, and it is the only moment in which a correspondent reveals his actual name. 6-1, in one of his baseball columns, notes that the police are searching the city to arrest a man named Felipe Lugo, who is accused of being an anti-US *gavillero*. 6-1 reveals that his name is also Felipe Lugo, and from now on, will instead be going by the name of Felipe Lugo y Peña.¹²⁹ As evidenced before, in discussion of the rural-urban divide, Santo Domingo’s liberal intellectuals were quick to distance themselves from rural uprisings, even if they shared a common enemy. Given the *letrados* distaste for the “backward”

¹²⁹ *Listin Diario* (Santo Domingo), November 4, 1918.

ways of the Dominican hinterland, they had no impetus to associate themselves with any *caudillos*, *gavilleros*, or other provincial aspirants to national sovereignty. In their minds, instead, Dominican *letrados* assumed the intellectual responsibility of leading the way through baseball for the Athens of the New World.

CONCLUSION

While baseball is typically associated with the United States for most Western readers, the game was already being played in Cuba, Japan, and the Dominican Republic before the United States fully realized its own Major League system. Baseball immediately meshed with revolutionary politics—Cuban baseball, among other forms of political dissidence, agitated Spanish royalists, was subsequently banned, and ultimately caused many disciples of the basepaths to flee to other parts of the Caribbean, such as Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.

Likely introduced by the Alomá brothers, baseball accompanied a long procession of foreign invaders onto the island of Hispaniola. Since its inception, the Dominican Republic had wrestled with repeated intervention at the hands of France, Spain, and Haiti. At the time baseball began to thrive on the island, in the prologue to the First World War, European lenders sought to reclaim the debt racked up by decades of colonial revolt and failed dictatorships. The US administrations of Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, citing the Monroe Doctrine, were intent on intervention to keep European powers out of the Caribbean during the First World War. The threat was not imaginary at this point—European navies had already invaded Venezuela and were threatening Haiti for similar reasons. Nonetheless, Dominicans found themselves at the center of two different spheres of Western interventionist interest. A fledgling island nation, finally free from French, Spanish, and Haitian rule was not eager to accommodate an additional entry on the list of foreign occupiers in the form of the United States.

Political instability and economic turmoil on the island, however, convinced the United States to intervene and establish a military government in Santo Domingo, while failing to make inroads in their attempt to pacify the island's outlying rural provinces. The reorientation of the Dominican Republic toward the US brought an influx of American capital, commercial products,

and culture, including the presence of baseball-playing US soldiers, which increased the game's popularity. While modern perceptions may suppose that baseball was imposed on the Dominican Republic via US cultural exportation, the game was already present and imbedded in the Dominican imagination for the future of the island.

This study focuses on the liberal and progressive intellectuals in Santo Domingo, who in the vein of like-minded individuals in Western countries like the United States, Mexico, and France, believed they were best-suited to direct the nascent Dominican national project. In the name of legitimizing the Dominican Republic as a modern Western nation, they appropriated the popular game in pursuit of nationalist ideals. Similar to the Trinidadian cricket-loving literati, Dominican *letrados* believed that an independent, progressive, and stable baseball-playing nation would win the respect of Western powers and stave off further foreign occupation. Dominican *letrados* wrote of the integral function of baseball in descriptions of independence festivals.

The US intervention had barely begun before Dominican star *peloteros* were already engaging Marines—and thoroughly defeating them at the US game—during the most popular celebration of the year. Not only were the 16 de Agosto festivals the most popular and advertised, they also commemorated the most recent instance in which the Dominican Republic had shoved off the coil of Spanish domination. In this context, the 16 de Agosto baseball games became a way to engage the newest oppressor in athletic ritual as opposed to the armed resistance of the provincial *gavilleros*. The 1916 festivities took an unexpected turn when the thrill of drubbing US soldiers on the diamond was interrupted by the wreck of the USS *Memphis*. Between the wreck of the *Memphis* and earthquake in Puerto Rico, they extended a great deal of compassion toward the afflicted, regardless of their status as ally or enemy. As shown in the exchange between *Listin Diario* and *La Bandera*, there was substantial disagreement between

provincial and capital-dwelling Dominicans about the relationship between the island nation, its invaders, and baseball. By the time of the 1919 16 de Agosto festivities, Dominican *letrados* were triumphantly proclaiming Santo Domingo to be the First City of the New World, and Emperor of Sports.

Dominican *letrados* writing in *Listin Diario* under a variety of pen names showcased a burgeoning nationalist literary tradition, and its foibles and nuances. As the occupation wore on and became increasingly violent during the US raids on Villa Duarte, so did the language of the baseball writers. The more amicable descriptions of Dominican-US competitions during 1916 began to disappear, and instead, Dominican *letrados* increasingly weaponized the vocabulary of baseball, seeing it as a tool of nationalist resistance to another foreign invasion. Further, they were willing to enlist baseball mercenaries from neighboring Puerto Rico, who had nationalist aspirations of their own, in a common goal of subverting US authority in the Caribbean.

A tradition of fusing poetry and the Greek classics with sporting narrative, as in Trinidadian cricket, became prevalent. Dominican *letrados* engaged each other on the sports pages of *Listin Diario*, composing poetry and tributes to esteemed players and teams, trading insults, and contextualizing baseball as inseparable from the national project. In rare instances, they also allowed the subtext of baseball imagery to speak to *Listin Diario*'s audience. While it is difficult to claim with any certainty the exact intent of their surviving baseball cartoon, the image of the ballplayer-soldier likely resonated with the *letrados* of Santo Domingo's national project. Further, the interaction with Orgen and Goitia is the only instance in which these baseball writers directly refer to each other as existing in literary realms outside of sportswriting. And while it is now likely impossible to ascertain the true identities of these baseball-obsessed *letrados*, they

were expressly disinterested in being associated with the *gavillero* resistance outside of their urban circles, despite their many common desires for Dominican sovereignty.

From 1916 to 1920, it is evident how Dominican *letrados* embraced their preferred mode of sport, baseball, in their pursuit to legitimize the Dominican Republic as a democratic, liberal, independent, and Westernized island nation, emancipated from centuries of foreign control. Despite their optimism, the withdrawal of the US military allowed for the installation of a ruthless Trujillo dictatorship that spanned three decades, culminating in yet another US intervention in 1965. However, while the Dominican national project certainly labored through nationalist growing pains, the aftershocks of centuries of colonialism, and continued foreign influence throughout the twentieth century, the vision Dominican *letrados* had for Santo Domingo as Emperor of Sport in the First City persisted. At the present day, Major League Baseball employs more ballplayers from the Dominican Republic than any nation outside the United States, and the Dominican Republic is quadrennially the field favorite in the World Baseball Classic. The roots of Dominican baseball's current successes are to be found in the aspirations of its apostolic *letrados* of the early twentieth century.

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