

CANEPARI, ANDREA (ED.). *THE ITALIAN LEGACY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE, ECONOMICS, SOCIETY*. (2021). PHILADELPHIA: SAINT JOSEPH'S PRESS. 541 PÁGINAS. ISBN 978-0-916101-7.
https://issuu.com/ciaosantodomingo/docs/28.05.2021_italianlegacyindr_compressed

Pauline Kulstad

Dirección Nacional de Museos
República Dominicana
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4760-5926>
pkulstad5@gmail.com

Recibido: 4/10/2024 • Aprobado: 10/10/2024

Cómo citar: Kulstad, P. (2024). Canepari, Andrea (Ed.). *The Italian legacy in the Dominican Republic: history, architecture, economics, society*. (2021). Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's Press. 541 páginas. ISBN 978-0-916101-7. *Ciencia y Sociedad*, 49(4), 155-157. <https://doi.org/10.22206/cys.2024.v49i4.3313>



One of the pitfalls of recent historical research of the earliest colonization in the Caribbean has been the assumption that all innovative avenues of inquiry have been exhausted, and no further new data will be found. Fortunately, books like *The Italian Legacy in the Dominican Republic: History, Architecture, Economics, Society*, point to other sources of investigation. More specifically, it suggests the idea of investigating sources in other countries, like Italy in this case, to get new data and/or perspectives. The book contains several essays that mesh well with the themes of this special issue, namely the identification of persons who influenced the earlier colonization and evangelization of the Indies.

Officially a coffee table book written to celebrate the re-opening of the Italian Embassy in the Dominican Republic in 2017, it contains 47 essays, several preliminary remarks from Italian and Dominican

political authorities, and an exceptional collection of photographs pertinent to the subject matters. The essay section is divided into 4 broad categories: History, Architecture, Literature and the Arts, Economics and Science. Although it temporally covers from 1492 to the present, most of the essay's cluster around the early colonial period or from the mid-19th century to the late 20th century.

It is the 9 essays related to the early colonial period that refreshingly coincide with the goals of this issue. Instead of solely focusing on the Columbus family and their holdings (essays 4 and 21), the editor has chosen to also include essays about other important Italians and their activities, in fact coinciding with the period during which Bishop Juan de Rodriguez de Fonseca served as president of the Indies. These essays are:

1. The Italian Presence in Santo Domingo (1492-1900) - Frank Moya Pons (Former Professor of Latin American History at Columbia University; Research Director of the Institute of Dominican Studies of the City College of the City University of New York)
4. Christopher Columbus: A Man Between Two Worlds - Gabriella Airaldi (Professor of Medieval History at the University of Genoa)
5. Alessandro Geraldini vs. Rodrigo de Figueroa: The Dominican Church, the Encomenderos, and the Issue of Indigenous Peoples - Edoardo D'Angelo (Professor of Medieval Latin Philology at the University of Naples Suor Orsola Benincasa)
6. From the Mediterranean to the Atlantic: The Itinerarium ad regiones sub equinoctiali plaga constituyas (Itinerary) of Alessandro Geraldini d'Amelia - Edoardo D'Angelo and Rosa Manfredonia
7. Homily given to commemorate the Quincentennial of the arrival of the First Resident Bishop of Santo Domingo, Monsignor Alessandro Geraldini - Basilica Cathedral of Santa Maria la Menor (First Cathedral of the Americas) Sept. 17, 2019 - Monsignor Francisco Ozoria
21. Porto Firenze al Nuovo Mondo: The Viceregal Palace of Diego Columbus in Santo Domingo (1511-1512) - Julia Vicioso (Historian and Dominican diplomat at the United Nations Agencies in Rome)
22. The Walls of Santo Domingo and Documentation of the Construction Projects by the Antonelli Family - Sandro Parrinello (DICAr Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture of the University of Pavia)
23. The Funerary Monument to Alessandro Geraldini at the Cathedral of Santo Domingo - Virginia Flores Sasso (PhD, Architect)
24. The Italian Influences on the Catedral Primada de América - Esteban Prieto Vicioso (Rector/coordinator of the Centro de Altos Estudios Humanísticos y del Idioma Español; Director of the Oficina de la Obra y Museos de la Catedral de Santo Domingo, Researcher at UNPHU)

Indeed, it is novel to have a book about this subject matter contain five essays highlighting Bishop Alessandro Geraldini (essays 5, 6, 7, 23 and 24) and only two about the Columbus family. As these essays fittingly introduce, Geraldini was an influential player in the European society of his time, who ended up in Santo Domingo due to almost incredible circumstances. As explained in Essay 6, Geraldini was the confessor of Catherine of Aragon who first

married Arthur, Prince of Wales in England, and upon his death, his brother, Henry VIII. When Geraldini opposed the marriage due to a controversy dealing with consumption of the marriage to Arthur, he was returned to Spain and Rome to work for the Pope. He was officially sent to Santo Domingo to continue to study the allegations of abuse against the indigenous peoples, but on a personal level, he hoped to amass a fortune in the New World. His arrival coincided with the mass exodus to the mainland (México) and the Enriquillo Revolt. His main contribution was the initiation of the building of the masonry cathedral of Santo Domingo, where he was eventually buried. Essays 23 and 24 present how his life, and the building of his mausoleum, influenced the look of the Cathedral Santa Maria de la Menor in Santo Domingo today.

Essays 1 and 22 are not related directly to Geraldini, but are perhaps the ones that best fit the aims of this publication. In Essay 1, Moya Pons not only presents a list of various Italian explorers who chronicled the early colonization period (Cuneo, Benzoni, Geraldini) but also includes the Italian business ties between the New and Old Worlds, particularly in regards to African slavery and the sugar industry. The data presented in this essay could easily launch a dozen theses. Meanwhile, Essay 22 is based on a joint assessment and documentation of Santo Domingo's colonial defense system undertaken by the University of Pavia (Italy) and

UNPHU-Universidad Nacional Pedro Henriquez Ureña (Dominican Republic). The high quality of the results presented demonstrate that these types of projects should be advocated.

In spite of the quality and novelty of this group of essays, this book suffers from its stated purpose as a celebratory volume. Essay 44, which offers a brief history of the Casa de Italia in Santo Domingo, as well as the efforts to re-open the Italian embassy, evidences that, despite Canepari's official title as editor, he probably did not have total control over what to include in the book. Indeed, many of the essay topics coincide with past exhibits at the Casa de Italia. This influence, as well as the need to include statements by political authorities, makes this book unwieldy to read, both in its physical and digital formats.

Despite these weaknesses, this volume can serve as an important first step in the incorporation of sources from places that are now geographically part of Italy, such as Genoa and Florence, into the early colonial narrative. Although most of the pertinent essays only focus on history and architecture, Essay 1 tantalizingly offers the possibility of finding information about slavery, business and the sugar industry in Italian sources. Finally, it is important to commend the editor's decision to publish this book online and make the information available to all, in its English, Spanish and Italian versions.