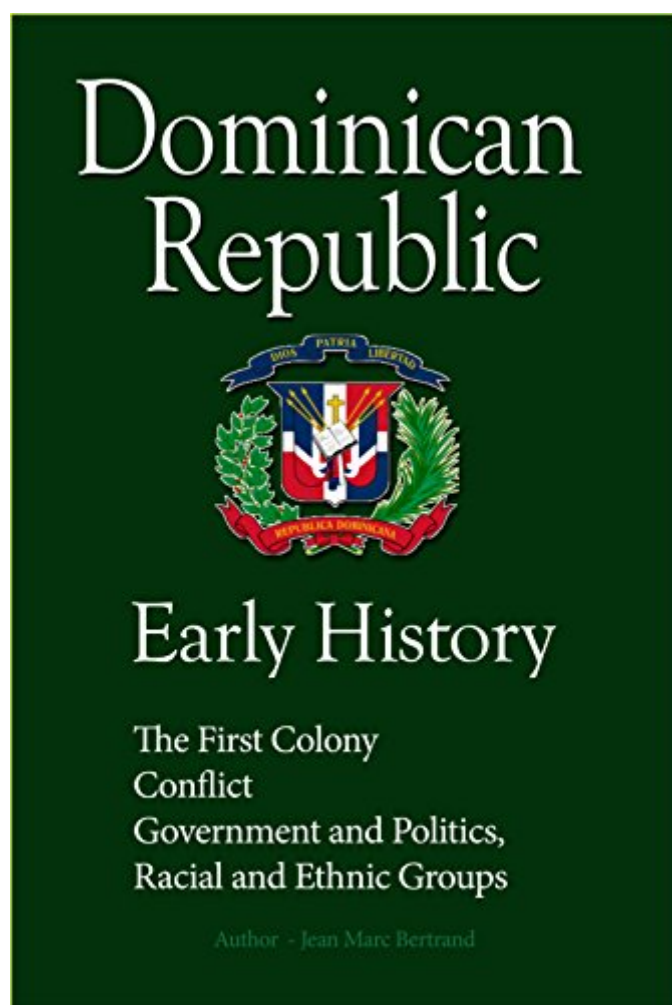


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Dominican Republic Early History, People And Environment: The First Colony, Conflict, Government And Politics, Racial And Ethnic Groups



Synopsis

Dominican Republic history. The island of Hispaniola (La Isla Española) was the first New World colony settled by Spain. As such, it served as the logistical base for the conquest of most of the Western Hemisphere. Christopher Columbus first sighted the island in 1492 toward the end of his first voyage to "the Indies." Columbus and his crew found the island inhabited by a large population of friendly Taino Indians (Arawaks), who made the explorers welcome. The land was fertile, but of greater importance to the Spaniards was the discovery that gold could be obtained either by barter with the natives, who adorned themselves with golden jewelry, or by extraction from alluvial deposits on the island. After several attempts to plant colonies along the north coast of Hispaniola, Spain's first permanent settlement in the New World was established on the southern coast at the present site of Santo Domingo. Under Spanish sovereignty, the entire island bore the name Santo Domingo. Indications of the presence of gold--the life's blood of the nascent mercantilist system--and a population of tractable natives who could be used as laborers combined to attract many Spanish newcomers during the early years

Book Information

File Size: 875 KB

Print Length: 161 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: July 15, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01IKID03W

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #802,905 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #34

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