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Culture, ideology, and dwelling in two Dominican villages

Study of the contrasting response to modernization in 2 Dominican villages. Author demonstrates that this contrast is caused by the intentional use of 2 culturally specific ideologies aimed at achieving and maintaining existential security. He also shows that the constitution of the 2 ideologies was conditioned by the ideosyncratic constitution of cultural-ethnic identity, nationalism, and peasant consciousness.

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CULTURE, IDEOLOGY, AND DWELLING IN TWO DOMINICAN VILLAGES

September 29, 1966. At seven o'clock in the morning, after meandering for hours through the churning Caribbean Sea, Hurricane Inés' two-hundred kilometer-per-hour winds slammed into Blue Mountain and Green Savannah, two adjacent Dominican peasant villages. Twenty minutes later, devastated by the sight of what had been their houses and farms, Montañeros (the residents of Blue Mountain) and Sabaneros (those of Green Savannah) began the painful task of identifying the dozens of dead and missing in this arid, mostly flat, frontier region known as the Deep South (see Figure 1).

Just a few days after the disaster, Montañeros and Sabaneros were already busy reconstructing their communities. As in other peasant regions, crops and animals formed the core of material security and were woven into the fabric of social life and symbolic expression. No wonder then that, in their pursuit of security, the inhabitants of both villages turned their immediate energy to replanting the *conucos* (small farm plots – the word is Taino) and taking care of the cows and hogs. The line between death and survival, continuity and change, was neatly drawn.

The Sunday morning of September 29, 1979 was hot and calm. In place of the ceaseless howl of a hurricane, what altered the normal pace of daily life in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah was the strange, metallic noise of a husky red tractor plowing the dry, reddish soil of the three-hectare farm belonging to Vicente, a Montañero peasant. This impressive piece of technology had arrived as part of a state-sponsored project to cultivate hybrid sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) for animal feed. From the perspective of the recently elected government, the promotion of the new cash crop

Figure 1. General Map of Hispaniola, With Main Locations

had three interconnected goals: to support the privately owned poultry industry based in the nation's capital; to increase the real salary (as defined by formal economists) of low-income families, southern peasants included; and to promote social justice and progress in the Deep South, then as now one of the country's less developed regions.

As with Hurricane Inés, sorghum cultivation transfigured daily life in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah. It also set off profound and unprecedented socio-economic changes such as sharp increases in income; rapid transformation of the household division of labor; erosion of long-lived patterns of production, distribution, consumption, and reproduction; the diversification of sources of capital accumulation; the reshaping of the local power structure, an increase in the complexity of the social relations (along lines of class, gender, and generation) within the two villages; a thicker bureaucratization of the relationships between peasants and the larger society (from merchants to state apparatus); and adjustments in local values and expectations.

Neither the unambiguous demarcation between life and death nor the similarity of Montañero and Sabanero responses to despair in 1966 was repeated in the process of acute social change that sorghum cultivation triggered exactly thirteen years later. In contrast to the transparent situation created by Hurricane Inés, the shift defined by agricultural modernization was distinctively opaque. It is precisely the ambiguity accompanying the transformation of their social spaces that Montañeros and Sabaneros present metaphorically when they say that since the introduction of sorghum cultivation, life in their villages has become "an underground hurricane." What follows is a synopsis of that multifaceted experience.

One might expect that the inhabitants of two villages that are just four miles apart and have a similar "infrastructure" (as defined by land holding size, physical environment, family structure, population density, technology, and climate) would follow a similar pattern of conduct in the face of modernization. But Montañeros and Sabaneros acted in significantly different ways while facing comparable structural constraints and being equally exposed to the official discourse used to promote and legitimate the modernization of their *conucos*.

Although Montañeros and Sabaneros' ambiguous engagement with sorghum cultivation over the years resists any rigid, dichotomous analysis, a brief look at what occurred during the 1979-82 period helps us understand the contrasting response to modernization in the two villages. Briefly, most Sabaneros – in contrast to Montañeros – neither sold their livestock nor eliminated their long-lived *conucos* in order to grow the new cash crop. While nearly 80 percent of the Montañeros gave up their

traditional system of production, less than 5 percent of the Sabaneros did so. The many Sabaneros who eventually adopted sorghum cultivation took nearly twice as long as Montañeros to make the same decision. More importantly, the majority of Sabaneros who became sorghum growers did not abandon the *conucos* that provided them with food for their own consumption (use-value) and for trade (exchange-value), as well as sense of personal identity. On the contrary, they did everything they could to protect them.

That we are dealing here with complex cultural and ideological phenomena becomes apparent when one hears Sabaneros, in everyday discourse, referring to themselves as “people who grow food,” and to Montañeros as “people who only know how to plant sorghum and look after their animals.” When Montañeros are confronted by such a harsh criticism of their rather hasty abandonment of the *conuco*, they often justify their action by characterizing themselves as *pasionistas* – people with an impulsive character. In spite of their biases, these remarks reveal a great deal of how inhabitants of the two villages perceive themselves and are perceived by their Other as well. As we shall see, these discursive strategies play a key role in the social construction of reality in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah.

How can we explain the dissimilar praxes of Montañeros and Sabaneros in the face of comparable structural constraints? How is their differing engagement with agricultural modernization related to their culture, ideology, race, and ethnicity? And how suggestive is this case for an understanding of the constitution of society and historical subjects in the Dominican Republic as a whole?

In this essay I intend, first, to demonstrate that what we are seeing in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah is the intentional use of two culturally specific ideologies aimed at achieving and maintaining existential security and, second, to show that the constitution of the two ideologies was conditioned by the idiosyncratic constitution of cultural-ethnic identity, nationalism, and peasant consciousness in the country’s southern and northern geographic regions. My argument hinges chiefly on an interpretation of two interconnected sets of phenomena.

First, at the time the decision was made to accept or reject sorghum cultivation, most Montañeros were *sureños* (southerners) – natives of the Deep South. In contrast, most Sabaneros were, then as now, *cibaeños* – people originally from the western section and adjacent areas of the Cibao, a rich, prosperous valley located in the northern Dominican Republic, with Santiago at its center (see Figure 1). For at least the past two centuries, the categories *sureño* and *cibaeño* have been markers of cultural-ethnic

identity (heavily influenced by racial prejudice) as well as signifiers of entitlement to the fruits of socio-economic progress.

Second, even though historically the *conuco* has been used in both the Deep South and the Cibao to grow food for internal consumption and for the market, its cultural-ethnic (hence ideological) meaning for *cibaeños* and *sureños* is different primarily (though not exclusively) for two reasons: the idiosyncratic way in which farming was interwoven with the genesis and development of nationalism and ethos at the regional level, and the different relationship the Deep South and the Cibao have had with the state apparatus in general and the central government in particular.

My story unfolds in four steps: a clarification of some key working categories and theoretical issues; second, the characterization of the Deep South and the Cibao as distinctive social spaces; the description and interpretation of Montañeros' and Sabaneros' initial ideological response to sorghum cultivation in connection with their ethos as *sureños* and *cibaeños* of a specific generation and class; and finally, the interpretation of how the two ideologies are embedded in the contrasting constitution of society and the different meaning of farming in the Deep South and the Cibao through time.

STRUCTURES, SELF, IDEOLOGY, AND ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

We begin with some working definitions. In this narrative, ideology is understood as the set of practical and symbolic means deliberately used by members of specific cultures to justify defensive or aggressive actions in their attempts to achieve and maintain a sense of existential security in overtly contested social spaces framed by an asymmetric distribution of power (not exclusively political). Culture is seen as the changing, symbolically mediated, institutionalized set of practices, norms, values, and beliefs – inherited from predecessors and learned through contemporaries – which is habitually shared in daily life by a group of people at a given point in time and space. Ideology and culture influence each other; they also are concomitant with both structuration (i.e., institutionalized distribution of power for enabling or constraining action and access to resources) and utopias (i.e., social movements aimed at constructing ideal communities).

At the risk of simplifying complex theoretical and epistemological issues, these characterizations of ideology and culture imply that whereas cultures are habitually lived with a "suspension of doubt" (Schutz 1982: 229), ideologies are manipulated with a suspension of belief in the claims made by the power holders. In other words, it is the overt, systematic

combination of reflection and contestation (rather than cognition and action as such) that makes ideology different from culture. Within this conceptual framework, ideology is explicitly used for overcoming alienation, achieving social cohesiveness, and demarcating the line between Self and the Other, between Us and Them. Nowadays, ethnicity functions as ideology.

The assertion that ethnicity currently functions as ideology is based on four premises: first, the fluidity and multiformity intrinsic to the genesis, reproduction, and use of ethnic boundaries and contents; second, ethnicity's explicit connection with issues of power, perception, and purpose (Royce 1982); third, the tendency for ethnicity to be "reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation" (Sollors 1989:xi) in clear reference to personal identity or nationalism; fourth, ideology's prominent role in the dialectical interplay between resistance and integration on the one hand, and claims and beliefs on the other (Ricoeur 1968, 1991; Zizek 1991).

Even though both ethnic notions (e.g., the feeling of sharing a history, a language, a culture, and so forth) and racial characteristics (e.g., skin color, hair type, facial features) may be deliberately used to justify ideological praxes, in my opinion race (when defined in biological rather social terms) lacks the plasticity and multi-accentuality that make ethnicity such an effective instrument of oppression or resistance in the hands of knowledgeable social agents. Bluntly put, under normal circumstances one does not choose one's race; yet one can construct one's ethnicity (including the manipulation of skin color, hair type, facial features, language, and so forth) in order to cultivate a sense of belonging in a community. Of course in the ambiguous realm of praxis, the boundaries between race and ethnicity are more fluid than as presented here. Such fluidity is chiefly due to the polysemic, contextual nature of all discursive – ideological signifiers – the body in particular (Bakhtin 1968).

Hitherto, the discussion of race and ethnicity has been nearly a taboo in Dominican academic circles. And this despite of the *de facto* existence of nuanced, fluid racial-ethnic boundaries, as well as a sui generis racial prejudice in a country with an extremely high level of miscegenation. To the surprise of many, these rather hidden phenomena became evident in the 1994 presidential elections when the "blackness" (or "Haitianness") of one of the candidates was disdainfully used by the others as an indication of his presumed anti-Dominican intentions.

It is fair to say that the neglect of ethnicity in the country is the outgrowth of three interconnected phenomena: the presence next door of Haiti, the Other *par excellence* in Dominicans' consciousness since the early nineteenth century; the consolidation during the Trujillo dictatorship

(1930-61) of a hegemonic, nationalistic ideology to which the claim for racial-ethnic homogeneity among *all Dominicans* was central; and the overemphasis put on structures at the expense of human agency for explaining social movements. As a result of this last position, the analysis of Dominicans' objective class membership has received far more attention than the understanding of other sources of group solidarity and personal identity (e.g., territory, work place, gender, generation, race, ethnicity).

An easy solution to the challenge posed by racial-ethnic diversity has been to define the republic as a "mulatto community" (Pérez Cabral 1967) while labelling Haiti as a black, backward nation (Balaguer 1983). In so doing, the demonization of the Other was not the only goal achieved by Dominican public intellectuals in the present century; that act of naming also hindered the appreciation of the country's cultural complexity.¹

Despite such a stubborn neglect of race and ethnicity by the Dominican intelligentsia, Dominicans are very aware in daily life of regional differences in language, racial characteristics, religious and agricultural practices, architectural styles, food habits, and so forth. Some of those differences, in language for instance, are unequivocal; others, like religious beliefs, are less tangible.² For example, according to the stereotypes prevalent in Dominican society, people from the south are black and backward, and practitioners of *brujería* or witchcraft. People from the north, by contrast, tend to present themselves as whites, industrious citizens, "good peasants," and devoted Catholics. Objectively such dichotomies are difficult to defend. Nevertheless, in specific circumstances, these perceived differences may signify ethnically-linked ideologies in the country.

A focus on the concept of "dwelling" in this exploration of the role of culture and ideology in the praxes of Montañeros and Sabaneros will help underscore the philosophical dimension of peasants' existence. This is not mutually exclusive with my interest in understanding peasants' utilitarian, mundane pursuits and interests as people who make a living by performing "domestically organized agricultural production within state societies" (Silverman 1983:27). In other words, comprehending Montañeros and Sabaneros' ethos or "structure of feelings" (Williams 1985) is as important for my story as understanding their economic rationality.

Thus, in addition to the previous structuralist definition of peasants, I would like to emphasize that peasants are also human beings who survive by staying as authentic, persistent dwellers of a social space or a dwelling. Here I align myself with Heidegger's (1977:327-28) ontological assertion that "human being consists in dwelling, and indeed, dwelling in the sense of stay ... the basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve."

Viewing Montañeros and Sabaneros as authentic dwellers, however, does not entail subscribing to an essentialist, ahistorical interpretation of their quest for security in the face of social change. Instead this ontological stance postulates that the physical space used by peasants for instrumentalist purposes also provides them with the foundations (material and spiritual alike) to ask themselves existential questions such as: Who am I? What is my mission in life? This argument is persuasively presented by Foucault (1988:16-19) when he asserts that the “technologies of the self” are closely interwoven with the technologies of production, of signs and systems, and of power.

Paying equal attention to reason and affect will help us understand that Montañeros’ and Sabaneros’ intentional engagement with sorghum was mediated both by their projection of the new cash crop’s advantages and disadvantages (their aspirations as land cultivators) and by their ethos as dwellers – that is, the meaning that preserving or abandoning the *conuco* had for them as *sureños* and *cibaeños* with a particular set of values.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN THE DEEP SOUTH AND THE CIBAO

The Deep South is a solitary land. At the time of my fieldwork, its population density of twenty persons per square kilometer sharply contrasted with the national average of 117. A nuclear family unit of two parents and six children was typical of the area in 1978. Nearly half of the 6,200 inhabitants resided in Blue Mountain and roughly six hundred in Green Savannah. The rest lived in smaller villages scattered through the dry terrain. Water is scarce in most of the Deep South. Unless there is a hurricane or a tropical storm, Montañeros and Sabaneros depended on just 800 millimeters of rainfall each year to grow food. As of this writing, there is neither irrigation nor running water in either village.

In 1990, land holding was comparable in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah, ranging from less than one hectare to seventy hectares, excluding the larger farms owned by a couple of landlords. At the time of my fieldwork most peasants from both places owned more than one farm each. With a couple of exceptions, peasants had no land titles. The land market is a recent phenomenon in the area. Uncultivated common lands, formally owned by the state, were abundant in 1990. Montañeros’ cattle herds roamed freely on the extensive common lands, locally known as *tierras orejanas* (unmarked, free lands). Sabaneros kept their animals in enclosed fields or *potreros*. Dozens of peasants still utilized shifting cultivation to grow crops other than sorghum.

Blue Mountain has been, since 1958, the seat of a *municipio* (roughly

equivalent to a county). After being obliterated by Hurricane Inés in 1966, the village was rebuilt three miles inland, away from the nearby salt lagoon whose turbulent waters did so much damage during the natural disaster.

Green Savannah, a division of the county, became an agricultural colony in the mid-1950s when the government built new houses and gave away free land to the new colonists, most of whom were *cibaeños*. Even though Hurricane Inés also obliterated this village, the government decided to rebuild it in its original location.

At the time of my fieldwork, most Montañeros were *sureños*. Rather than adherence to a regional cultural (i.e. *sureña* culture), Montañeros stress their loyalty to their local culture. This culture is deeply rooted in the instrumental and communicative spheres of ranching, hunting, and gathering. For instance, killing a wild hog is still a common rite of passage to manhood. Likewise, for Montañeros, being a prosperous rancher is the ultimate symbol of prestige.

In 1990 most Sabaneros were still natives of the Cibao, La Línea, and La Sierra – conterminous northern regions whose residents generally call themselves *cibaeños*. Despite intraregional differences, *cibaeños* share core elements of the heterogeneous *cibaeña* culture (e.g., linguistic style, “pure” Catholicism). Farming epitomizes *cibaeña* culture. So does perceived whiteness. “To think white,” Antonini (1968:151) indicates – in my view correctly – has been a distinctive identity marker for northern dwellers since the early stages of Dominican history.

Sabaneros began migrating as colonists from the north to the Deep South in the mid-1950s, as part of a racially-based official policy aimed at “Dominicanizing” the border with Haiti and expanding the agricultural frontier as well. That migration continued until the early 1970s.

A sense of exclusion is pervasive in the Deep South, particularly in Blue Mountain. In 1990, while traveling in a public bus, a shy twelve-year-old girl sitting next to me started vomiting blood, her dark eyes wide open, her pale face sweating profusely. Just a few days earlier, according to other passengers, while standing in a line to buy food at a government-owned store, the girl was sharply hit on her back by a soldier who thought she was making too much noise. Though a subtle protest took place on the day of the incident, nobody dared to confront the soldier. He was a *guardia de la frontera*, a border guard.

It is precisely their perceived isolation that Montañeros express when they call the few visitors to the region *forasteros* (foreigners). The way locals see themselves in relation to the rest of the country is also manifested in their behavior when traveling to the capital. Indeed, when the bus from Blue Mountain passes a certain point on the rolling road, people

often exclaim “*ya salimos a lo claro*” literally, “we just came out into the clear.” (The strength of the metaphor is highlighted by the complementary notion of “*de lo oscuro*” – out of the darkness, obscurity, remoteness). This feeling of exclusion and isolation notwithstanding, at no point since the conquest has the Deep South been detached from either the larger society or the world economy.

The Deep South’s relative lack of socio-economic progress has been attributed in part to the late arrival of capitalism in the region (Baud 1986). According to this interpretation, while capitalism flourished in the northern and southeastern regions as early as the 1870s, it truly arrived in the Deep South only after the first U.S. military occupation of the republic in 1916. This theory of “late capitalism” has been uncritically used to suggest the existence of a backward culture among *sureños*. And one indication of such backwardness, so the argument goes, is the rather naive conduct (or false consciousness) of peasants like Montañeros, who are unable to see the danger inherent in state initiatives such as sorghum cultivation.

Useful as the above theory may be for examining the structural dimension of regionalization in the country, it is not sufficient for understanding the lived experience of Montañeros and Sabaneros. Indeed, despite the relative underdevelopment of the Deep South as a whole, there is ample ethnographic and historical evidence that capitalism has heavily impacted Montañeros’ lives since at least 1870, when a privately owned salt mine was established in Isla Beata, just a few miles off shore from Blue Mountain. Dozens of Montañeros worked for wages at the mine until the mid-1930s, when it was closed down by President Rafael L. Trujillo.

In addition to working on the extraction of salt, over the years hundreds of Montañeros have worked for wages in felling trees for exportation, building the infrastructure for the bauxite mine established in the mid-1940s in an adjacent town, and clearing and picking cotton at the plantation that has operated in the area since 1957, among other jobs. It is worth noticing that when the bauxite mine was being built, a few Montañero peasants sold agricultural products to Alcoa Exploration, the owner of the industry. By the same token, earlier in this century, when roads did not exist in the Deep South, a variety of agricultural products grown by local peasants were shipped by boat from a small sea port near Green Savannah to several Dominican coastal cities, including the capital.

Rather than lack of capitalist development, then, what epitomizes the economy of the region is the operation of extractive enclaves using cheap labor and abundant natural resources. This has resulted in an uneven exchange between the Deep South and the larger society. Likewise, as will become apparent in the following section, what typifies peasants from

the Deep South is not a false consciousness but rather a concrete “horizon of expectations” (Korselleck, quoted by Ricoeur 1991:218) constructed through the multifaceted experiences (capitalism included) lived and internalized by Montañeros.

In sharp contrast with the generalized perception of the Deep South as a backward region, admiration for the Cibao’s material wealth and beauty is pervasive in the republic at large. The Cibao has been the epicenter of major economic, political, and religious events throughout Dominican history. To name but a few, it was in the valley and adjacent areas that the spread of Catholicism in Hispaniola started as early as 1493, followed by the construction of roads in the early sixteenth century, the birth and development of a highly profitable tobacco industry nearly two centuries ago, the victorious War of Restoration of 1863-65 (ending annexation to Spain), and the construction of irrigation canals in the region’s western section in the early years of the twentieth century.

Cibaños are proud of being related to this symbol of bounty and nationalism. The fact that the vast majority of the fifty-one Dominican presidents and national rulers have been *cibaños* (nearly all whites) reinforces regional pride. No wonder that to the often-heard saying that “It’s in the capital that cheques are made,” *cibaños* respond that “It’s in the Cibao that God dwells” (“*En el Cibao es que está Dios*”).

This paradise-like image of the Cibao notwithstanding, a hidden land of poverty has existed for decades in the specific areas and communities where most Sabaneros started their involuntary journey to the Deep South. Those poorer areas represent, so to speak, the other side of the coin in the Cibao. It is this veiled reality that Sabaneros uncover when they refer to their northern place of origin as “a backward and hot zone” (“*una zona atrazada y caliente*”).

Georges (1990) argues, in my view convincingly, that two structural causes of the areas’ backwardness in the mid-1950s were the creation of two national parks and the monopolization of timber land (mostly pine forest) by Trujillo and a couple of powerful northern families. According to Georges, while facing the combination of those two processes, peasants from La Sierra and adjacent areas were “caught in a vise” (1990:62). These “push factors,” together with Trujillo’s determination to “Dominicanize” the frontier with Haiti, explain Sabaneros’ migration to the Deep South.

Two different Cibaos emerge from the previous synopsis: one prosperous, the other indigent. For present purposes we need not trace the roots of the uneven development in the Cibao, La Línea, and La Sierra. What demands our attention instead is that, in spite of their poverty in a land of

plenty, northern Sabaneros not only systematically express their pride in being *cibaeños* but do so using two main symbols: their perceived qualifications as “good peasants,” and their felt whiteness. Because of the social context in which such symbols are displayed, they become markers of racial-ethnic boundaries between *cibaeños* and *sureños*.

The meeting of Montañeros and Sabaneros transformed the Deep South into a new, more complex social space. The cultural exchange inherent in such an extraordinary event contributed to the configuration of at least three ambiguous frontiers in the region: the political one separating the Haitian and Dominican republics, the cultural-ethnic frontier between *cibaeños* and *sureños*, and third the ideological frontier signified by Montañeros’ and Sabaneros’ unique expectations as citizens of the nation-state (the interplay of civil society and the state, in Gramscian terms). A common denominator of all three frontiers is the subjective feeling of inclusion or exclusion, of belonging or not belonging to social spaces inhabited (and often contested) by the Other and structured by the presence of institutions (the state included).

CAPITAL, RECOGNITION, ETHOS, AND IDEOLOGY

A complex system of production existed in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah prior to the arrival of sorghum cultivation. Suffice it to say here that some peasants sold to outside merchants a variety of products that included yucca (cassava tubers), squash, sweet potatoes, hogs, and cows. Labor by women and children was a vital input for this multicropping system. Hunting and gathering were used to meet the household’s consumption needs, particularly in Blue Mountain. Dozens of women from Green Savannah worked for wages in harvesting and packing peanuts, then the main cash crop in the village. Peanuts were the only crop grown by peasants exclusively to supply a national industry (for manufacturing cooking oil). A few women from Blue Mountain sold some local agricultural products in a couple of adjacent towns. Likewise, women, men, and children from both villages worked as wage laborers on the cotton plantation, especially during the harvest season.

Because Green Savannah is an agricultural colony, the National Institute for Land Reform provided Sabaneros with some assistance for farming (i.e., tractors, seeds). This linkage with the official agency notwithstanding, the colonists had, then as now, almost total freedom to grow the crops of their choice. This rather unusual situation was caused chiefly by the erosion of state control over the colonists’ *conucos* and the secularization of power that followed the fall of Trujillo’s regime in 1961. In Blue Mountain

prior to 1978, only occasionally did the public agencies venture into Montañeros' *conucos*.

The arrival of sorghum in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah was mediated by the interplay between national priorities and local expectations. Undoubtedly, the newly-elected government gave decisive support to the project (i.e., massive technical and financial assistance) in part because sorghum was a major source of capital accumulation for the owners of the national poultry industry. Likewise, local sorghum growers expected to make a substantial profit by means of growing a crop they knew was in high demand. However, for most local dwellers the new cash crop represented more than just a potential monetary gain; it also was a symbol of recognition by the Other. In other words, in that situation political economy and social ontology were concurrent.

In part because of the national consensus that followed the 1978 presidential elections, the usually tense relationship between peasants and the state became more relaxed in 1979. Similarly, the slogan "The Shift" (*El Cambio*), used by the winning party to symbolize redistributive justice, gave birth to a short-lived utopia in which struggle and recognition were intertwined. Hence when Antonio Guzmán, the new (and *cibaeño*) president, claimed that he was both "the president farmer" and "the president of all Dominicans," Montañeros and Sabaneros listened attentively with both hope and distrust.

The expectations triggered by the new project were particularly high in Blue Mountain, chiefly because of the deep sense of exclusion shared by Montañeros. Simply put, from the mid-1950s to the arrival of sorghum cultivation the only major official initiative explicitly aimed at helping the two villages consisted of the new houses and public facilities (e.g., schools, town square, government offices) built by the government after Hurricane Inés. This epitomized the situation in the Deep South as a whole. In the Cibao, by contrast, the government spent millions on the construction of infrastructure, especially hydroelectric dams, paved roads, and irrigation systems. It is hardly surprising then that in the eyes of most Montañeros sorghum cultivation denoted a major shift in the government's interest in the Deep South and its inhabitants.

The way the new project was perceived in Blue Mountain is well illustrated by Pedro, a Montañero peasant. "We never thought that the government was really willing to help us this way," said Pedro to indicate what he and his neighbors felt when they saw the huge tractor working on the plots of poor peasants. "I never thought that those important people from up there cared about little, poor people like us," he added, with a tone of perplexity in his voice. The only other occasion in which

Montañeros had seen such a massive display of technology was in the mid-1950s, when the cotton plantation was established. Back then, however, the big tractors were not helping peasants to modernize their farms; instead, they were destroying the *conucos* in order to grow cotton and benefit a powerful capitalist from Central America who had close ties with the government.

Although Green Savannah was far from being a prosperous village when sorghum arrived, Sabaneros' expectations of the project were not as high as those of Montañeros. The contrast may be traced to several inter-related phenomena.

First, while Blue Mountain was rebuilt on a new site following Hurricane Inés, Green Savannah was reconstructed on the same terrain it had been on prior to the disaster. In both material and ideational terms this circumstance gave continuity to Sabaneros' individual and collective projects, while introducing an element of fragmentation into Montañeros' lives. Second, whereas the majority of Montañeros were supporters of the new government, most Sabaneros opposed it. In that context, politics conditioned the dwellers' perception of their entitlement to government support. Third, whereas Sabaneros' systematic growing of crops (chiefly peanuts) for commercial purposes prior to and after their migration to the south had exposed them to commercial capitalism *as peasants*, most Montañeros had dealt with the market economy primarily *as herdsmen* by selling their animals (cows and hogs in particular) to outside merchants. It is precisely such a differential experience with capitalism and their attitudes toward the new cash crop that Montañeros express when they say that, prior to sorghum cultivation, they cultivated the land mostly for tradition or "*siembra por tradición*," and raised their animals "*por interés*" (ranching "for interest"), whereas after modernization both farming and ranching are done "for interest." I never heard Sabaneros saying that they ever worked the land or raised animals "for tradition."³ Finally, whereas Sabaneros' lived experience and ethos as *cibaeños* predisposed them to protecting the *conuco* as much as possible, Montañeros' outlook as *sureños* predisposed them to taking extraordinary risks with their crops. This last point will become clearer in my discussion of the ethos in the two villages.

The rejection of sorghum entailed renouncing a relative large sum of money. Indeed, from being an unknown crop in 1978 sorghum became the most important cash crop in the area by 1984. Altogether during the period 1979-87, sorghum cultivation was responsible for the circulation in the local economy of a sum equivalent to nearly two and a half million U.S. dollars. Such a large amount of money had major social and cultural con-

sequences. For example, at least thirty Montañeros bought houses in Santo Domingo, others sent their children to college, and nearly all purchased new home appliances and furniture. It is when projected against this background of prosperity that the rejection of sorghum by a large number of peasants is so puzzling.

To continue our reconstruction of Montañeros' and Sabaneros' engagement with sorghum, let us look into other quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to the acceptance or rejection of the new crop as well as the preservation or abandonment of the long-lived system of production.

Out of twenty-six Montañeros surveyed, fourteen (53.8 percent) said that they planted sorghum for the first time in 1979, and five (19.2 percent) that they became sorghum growers in the second year. Significantly, no respondent said that he began planting the new crop during the 1984-86 period, and only one indicated that his first experience with sorghum was in 1987.

Whereas sorghum cultivation started in Blue Mountain in 1979, in Green Savannah that process was initiated in 1980. According to the agronomist most directly involved in the implementation of the project, this difference in time was due to his decision to concentrate the available resources (i.e., tractors, mechanical planters, seeds) on one location instead of trying to work simultaneously in both places. In those terms, there is nothing mysterious about the nearly absolute lack of sorghum in Sabaneros' parcels in 1979.

One comes to a different conclusion, however, when noticing that only two (8 percent) Sabanero respondents said that they planted sorghum in 1980, and only three (12 percent) became sorghum growers in 1981. What this means is that in the period 1979-1981, 81 percent of the respondents from Blue Mountain, but only 23 percent of the respondents from Green Savannah, became sorghum growers. It is also worth noticing that it was in 1982, three years after the launch of modernization, that the majority of Sabanero respondents (54 percent) made the decision to plant the new cash crop. Further, whereas during the same period most Montañeros totally stopped growing food when they accepted the new cash crop, the overwhelming majority of sorghum growers in Green Savannah preserved their *conucos* and continued growing food for internal consumption. It is clear that during the period under consideration engagement with the new crop in the two villages was significantly different.

A more complex picture of the interrelation of culture, ethnicity, and ideology in the Deep South develops when one examines the conduct of the few *cibaeños* residing in Blue Mountain of 1990. From the beginning, most of those Montañeros from the Cibao combined the cultivation of

food with the acceptance of sorghum cultivation. However, instead of preserving the *conucos* in which they had grown food for years, most of them established new ones deep into the common lands, and devoted the old ones (with fewer stones) to sorghum cultivation.⁴

Although the data discussed above help us answer the “what” and “how” questions they are insufficient for understanding the role of culture and ethnicity in the ideological rejection or acceptance of sorghum in the two villages. To do so, we need to go deeper into the ethos, experiences, and social projects of Sabaneros and Montañeros.

Let us first examine the contrasting ethos of these communities.⁵ The ethos in Blue Mountain is expressed through four main existential forms: Endurance (i.e., bodily and mental strength), Suffering (i.e., spiritual strength), Belongingness (i.e., inclusion into/exclusion from the larger society), and Pleasure (i.e., spiritual and physical joy). In the case of Green Savannah, the ethos of its dwellers from the north (i.e., the Cibao, La Línea, La Sierra) is expressed through the existential forms of Self-Respect (i.e., taking care of one’s self and the family), Compassion-Faith (i.e., generosity with others, respect for and fear of God), Involvement (i.e., social responsibility), and Fairness (i.e., sense of justice). I will start with the interpretation of the ethos in Green Savannah, using the stories of Juan and Julio for heuristic purposes.⁶

In early June of 1990, Juan, a Sabanero from La Sierra with whom I used to play dominoes nearly every day, told me he was going to miss our entertainment because he had to do “a little work in the forest.” At first I thought he was talking about charcoal-making, which is an illegal activity some Sabaneros do when they face a shortage of money or fuel. Juan disappeared for nearly a month, coming out of the thick, dry forest just once in a while to visit his wife. To my surprise, when I dropped by his plot at the end of July I saw that Juan not only had made several kilns to make charcoal but had also planted four crops in his new *conuco* or *tumba*.⁷

Juan kept working on the land until the rains finally came in early August. Since his plot was well suited for sorghum cultivation, I asked Juan whether he was going to plant the cereal after uprooting the stumps. He looked at me, his face covered with sweat, his eyes friendly as usual: “No,” he said, “I won’t grow sorghum on this land; sorghum brings hunger to people. I want to plant what I and my family can eat. When I see that we lack yucca, I feel restless.”

Neither Juan’s commitment to growing food for himself and his family nor his anxiety when he does not see certain crops growing in his *conuco* are isolated phenomena in Green Savannah. Instead, they are two indications of the values shared by most Sabaneros. This is clearly discernible

from the following definition of a "good peasant," given to me by a Sabanero.

A man who had the reputation of being a particularly industrious, ingenious peasant in Green Savannah, Julio was one of the first Sabaneros who migrated from the Cibao to the south. He also was one of the most vehement defenders of the belief that Montañeros only know how to grow sorghum in their modernized *conucos* and look after their cattle herds in the common lands. Curiously, Julio himself is a sorghum grower. Why, then, is he so critical of Montañeros' acceptance of sorghum? Let us listen to his argument as a *cibaeño* peasant.

"They are not good peasants," said Julio in reference to Montañeros. "We peasants have to grow our own food," he continued, speaking in a rather philosophical tone. "Because if I live in the countryside and I don't grow yucca, then what am I doing staying here? Growing food is a peasant's main *hold in life*, after his family. He may have a pig and a cow, but he ought to have his *conuco* to be able to harvest his yucca, his food."

It is based on this cultural notion of what a genuine peasant ought to do *in order to stay in his dwelling* that Julio and other Sabaneros blamed the Montañeros' decision to not preserve their *conucos* as a buffer for tough times. "They are not peasants, they do not grow food, they only grow sorghum and raise cows," Julio insisted in a vehement tone.

Juan and Julio's views on the existential meaning of the *conuco* illustrate the working of the notion of Self-Respect. They also show the prominent role of farming as a marker of Sabaneros' cultural-ethnic identity. *Cibaeño* peasants of the generation we are dealing with will likely feel ashamed if they are unable to have some food in the *conuco* for home-consumption. Further, failure to be a "good" peasant is perceived as having no respect for yourself. Ultimately, such a failure means that one is unable to take care of oneself.

It does not follow, however, that autarky in itself is a goal for Sabaneros. Instead what this existential form depicts is that *cibaeña* culture is deeply grounded in the value of protecting the family's "hold in life" (the *conuco*) while taking advantage of the market whenever possible. The underlying ethical principle is that one ought to be responsible and resilient in life, especially when the well-being of one's family and community is at stake.

Despite the apparent rigidity in Juan's and Julio's outlook, I hasten to say that flexibility is a characteristic of most Sabaneros. One can safely argue that daily life in Green Savannah oscillates between a rather conservative set of values and the proclivity to negotiate and progress. This is clearly discernible from the metaphor "*un hombre de loma y de llano*"

("a man from both the slopes and the plain") one often hears in the villages. When northern Sabaneros use this metaphor, they mean a "rounded" person who is able to perform equally well at different and somewhat contrasting levels of his/her social roles, say farming and fishing. Likewise, the metaphor means that a person should be flexible and creative while facing the ambiguities of life. A key discursive and ideological marker for Sabaneros, this metaphor epitomizes their culturally rich, ingenious common-sense knowledge. It is also a key component of Sabaneros' ethnic identity.

Sabaneros' ideological response to sorghum cultivation was embedded in the notion of Self-Respect. What I mean by this is twofold. First, we see Sabaneros actively engaged in the protection of their *conucos* as a vital component of one's dwelling. Second, while at first we see most of them prudently avoiding the new cash crop (hence contesting, suspending the belief in the claim made by the government), we later witness them making the decision to grow a crop that represented higher incomes (hence accommodating). The interplay between reason and affect is obvious.

Let us now turn to the situation in Blue Mountain. An ethos of personal courage is pervasive among Montañeros. This existential form I term Endurance. Endurance is symbolized by two key historical characters: first, the *montero*, the courageous, audacious, lawless hog and goat hunter who survives in the wilderness with his rifle and dogs; second, the *cimarrón* or maroon who for centuries resisted European oppression by escaping to remote areas. Although currently only a handful of hunters exist in the Deep South, and maroons as such vanished from Dominican territory long ago, their personae permeate the social fabric of Blue Mountain. For instance, in everyday life Montañeros use the term *marronear* (literally, to maroon) to convey a message of passive or active resistance to oppression.

Awareness of the strength of one's and others' body and feelings is central to the notion of Endurance. Montañeros value a person who is able to cope adequately with thirst, hard physical work, loneliness in the forest, fear, and natural death. For instance, a man who is unable to be out in the dry forest for days, all by himself, is not well regarded here. Still worse, getting lost in the wilderness is taken as an indication of a weak mind.

Endurance leads Montañeros to undertake tasks that demand an extraordinary physical and spiritual strength. It also predisposes them to take serious risks in a rather sudden way (e.g., the abandonment of the long-lived system of production) thinking that eventually they will win by beating all odds, misleading others, or just through adamant forbearance. Such

a proclivity, my argument goes, makes them simultaneously strong and weak in ideological terms.

A second existential form in Blue Mountain, Belongingness, refers to Montañeros' perception of two interconnected phenomena: who is an insider or outsider in the village as well as in their hearts; and how Montañeros relate to the larger society, the government in particular. When combined with Endurance, the existential form Belongingness leads Montañeros to adopt what I term an "ideology of extremes." The following two examples may illustrate this.

Born in 1905, Rafael was still in good shape at the time of my fieldwork. Easy smile, friendly eyes, and always in love with life, he had – as of 1990 – made more than twenty *conucos*. "I made my first *tumba* with a machete and an axe," Rafael said as if he was actually seeing himself going through that rite of passage. "I made it myself. I got no help from my father," he insisted. This awareness of his own ability and courage was with Rafael the day he started working as a wage laborer at the salt mine functioning at Isla Beata. What follows is a synopsis of his recollection of that personal experience.

When I arrived at Beata, I had many wounds on my left hand. I got them after working on my *tumba*. I had my hand bandaged, so that no one could see what had happened to me. The boss did not like that because he knew that working with salt with a hand in such bad shape would make anyone quit working after the first day on the job. I told him that my right hand was OK. He gave me the job. I worked hard, despite the pain in my hand. At the end of the day the boss asked me for my hand. I told him that everything was fine. His response was: "man, you are extraordinary!" He gave me a permanent job when he saw that I was an exceptional man who was capable of enduring pain and adjusting myself to the work discipline as well.

For our purposes, Rafael's ethos is significant for two reasons. First, his personal pride led him to work beyond normal limits, even running the risk of hurting himself. Further, his perception of himself as an extraordinary worker, when joined with the boss' view of him as a strong person, created a personal bond that could be manipulated by the dominant power holder. Rafael told me that after working at the mine for three months, even though he was making good money, he wanted to return to Blue Mountain and work on his plot. Despite the "calling of the land," Rafael remained working as a miner because he did not want to disappoint his boss. In a way, his strength ended up being Rafael's weakness. In that context, Endurance made himself vulnerable in relation to the Other.

Second, Rafael was a role model for the younger generations in part

because of his proven audacity as a miner and well-known fearlessness as a sailor in a region where most people admit to being afraid of the sea. In addition, Rafael is, then as now, a medicine man. One can safely say that his lived experience and knowledge made him a cultural broker between the village and the outside world. As many Montañeros say, "Rafael is a sage, courageous man who knows life's ups and downs." So when Montañeros heard about sorghum cultivation, many of them asked him whether growing the cereal was a good idea. The fact that he, a peasant well known for his good *conucos* and personal courage, decided to grow the new cash crop as soon as it arrived, was seen by others as a good thing to emulate. Of course I do not mean to imply that Rafael's admirers made their decision based solely upon what he did or said. Yet I suggest that Rafael's enthusiastic attitude toward sorghum cultivation actually became an endorsement of the new path of modernization in a village whose inhabitants, as we saw earlier, call themselves "passionate."

In late December 1981, Eduardo, a pioneer sorghum grower from Blue Mountain, made a gesture that signified the first overt resistance to the erosion of traditional values accompanying sorghum cultivation. His gesture also epitomizes the existential form Belongingness. On that occasion the sixty-seven-year-old peasant took his rifle in his right hand and went out to do what, in his view, a serious man ought to do when his honor is challenged. With a mixture of pride and horror, uttering just a few words to whoever asked him what was going on, he kidnapped the mechanical harvester owned by the government, indicating in unambiguous terms that if his sorghum was not harvested immediately he would take further action. Eduardo did not sleep that night. He simply sat down near the combine, accompanied by his rifle and a friend. He waited there until the next day to make sure that the operator would harvest his sorghum first thing in the morning. That was the last time he planted the cereal. Significantly, a few days later he quit growing sorghum, Eduardo planted in pasture the farm plots he had previously devoted to the cereal. No *conuco* was established for growing food. The herdsman's interest prevailed over the peasant's.

Eduardo's radical decision to quit planting sorghum was based on two convictions: first, that a serious man does not let anybody else control either his life or his property; second, that planting sorghum is bad business because "Even if the price is raised, sorghum does not pay off." With regard to the first point, Eduardo argues that if somebody else has the power to tell you when and how you have to do certain things in your private life or in the parcel that you have made "*con tus propios brazos*" (literally) "with your own arms" then you are neither free nor honorable.

In his view, the public agencies involved in sorghum cultivation are taking away too much of peasants' freedom to choose.

As ideological phenomena, the existential forms Endurance and Belongingness played a key role in Montañeros' response to sorghum cultivation. To begin with, these people took risks in a fashion that is not typical of peasants in the Dominican Republic. By this I mean that the majority of Montañero peasants abandoned the *conuco* and accepted sorghum in a rather short period of time, contrary, for example, to what most Sabaneros did. Secondly, as Eduardo's behavior illustrates, some of them replaced sorghum cultivation altogether just a couple of years after they made the decision to grow the cereal. This is a clear indication of the "ideology of extremes."

Rather than being restricted to the realm of production, this ideology of extremes seems to impregnate the totality of Montañeros' self. For instance, under normal circumstances a person who feels his or her honor has been hurt will likely cut off all contact with the other person. In some cases, this applies even to family members. At the same time that this conduct provides them with self-identity and personal psychological balance, when taken in the public sphere it makes Montañeros vulnerable in a frontier context where ambiguity is so important for everyday survival. For instance, the soldier who hit the girl (discussed above) might be the same person who decides whether or not you cross the Haitian border when you need to make some money by selling used clothes. This ideology, I would argue, is deeply grounded in Montañeros' rather stubborn confidence in their ability to escape any dangerous situation by using their physical and mental strengths.

The above characterization does not rule out Montañeros' flexibility in dealing with social conflicts. I hasten to say that they are particularly effective at using local social capital, including long-lived forms of cooperation such as the *convite* or labor pooling. This skill is clearly discernible in the metaphor "*hombre de silla y de aparejo*" that one often hears in Blue Mountain. (Literally, *hombre* means man, *silla* means a leather saddle, and *aparejo* a rustic tackle used as a saddle.) In its social context, the metaphor is indicative of how Montañeros value a man who is able to perform well at different levels, say hunting and ploughing. Although this figure of speech resembles the "*un hombre de loma y de llano*" metaphor used in Green Savannah and thus seems to suggest a similar degree of ethical flexibility in both villages, a careful analysis of discourse reveals otherwise. Let me explain what I mean by this.

What makes flexibility an idiosyncratic phenomenon in the two villages is that in daily life a Montañero man would likely adopt a rigid, stoic atti-

tude in the face of a pressing situation. I think I understood better this dimension of Montañeros' inner self on December 24, 1989, the day a young local man was killed with a sharp knife by a member of a different family group. Just before the coffin was about to be taken to the cemetery, I heard an old woman saying proudly: "Not a single tear on her face; she is a strong woman." The remark was made in reference to the mother of the deceased. She was been praised for her strength and courage. When I asked my best Montañero friend (who had blood ties with the person killed) to explain to me the meaning of the quasi-stoic attitude displayed by the woman, his answer was a rather philosophical one: "*Aquel que tiene las lágrimas lejos que comience a llorar temprano*," literally "the person whose tears are at a great distance must begin to cry early." What he meant was that crying in that context would have been indicative of personal weakness before the Other. It is based on their perception of incidents like this that Sabaneros often say that "people from Blue Mountain do not have feelings." This is but another example of how ethnic boundaries are constructed in the two village.

It is fair to say that, as a norm, a Montañero man would likely adopt a rigid attitude before taking a more flexible path. This is certainly the case when it comes to changing the local systems of production, as discussed above. Analogically speaking, the *montero's* and maroon's outlooks prevail over the peasant's worldview among Montañeros of this generation. Running the risk of being overly dichotomous in my interpretation, I would argue that a typical Sabanero of this generation would be more ambiguous in his behavior, acting like a peasant who is determined to "plant and wait," staying in his dwelling rather than "hit and run" as the *montero* does. Let us not forget, however, that we are dealing here with ideal types.

If one accepts the premise that ethos, ideologies, and utopias belong to the realm of praxis in culturally-specific situations, then one can argue that Montañeros' and Sabaneros' contrasting attitudes toward the *conuco* and sorghum is indicative of the equally distinctive social projects they had in mind when progress arrived in the Deep South. Interpreted this way, their engagement with the cereal was conditioned by how dwellers themselves perceived their mission in life, their place in society, the worth of farming, and so forth. In other words, Sabaneros' and Montañeros' economic decisions as land cultivators were deeply grounded in their unique ethical convictions (their sense of Self) as *sureños* and *cibaeños*.

A word of caution is necessary here to avoid the reification of Self. Indeed, rather than timeless essences, Sabaneros' and Montañeros' ethos and social projects have biographies that walk on history's shoulders.

Such biographies were carved out by the intentional praxis of concrete individuals belonging to specific communities (e.g., family, class, village, region, nation) with a past, a present, and a future. Thus, in order to comprehend how Sabaneros' and Montañeros' respectively lived experiences as *cibaeños* and *sureños* prior to 1979 conditioned their unique ideological response to sorghum cultivation, we need to make explicit the connection of their ethos to two other historical phenomena: first, the role of farming in the constitution of society and peasant consciousness in the Cibao and the Deep South; and second, the interrelation of structuration, ideology, utopia, and culture in the two regions. Ultimately, this reconstruction of events will serve the purpose of answering two key questions: how did Montañeros and Sabaneros perceive the new cash crop through their cultural-ethnic lenses?; and how important was the *conuco* in their social projects at the time?

FARMING, LIFE-NEXUS, AND CONSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

As elsewhere in the Caribbean, the constitution of a peasantry in the Dominican Republic occurred in a complex context of overt and surreptitious resistance to powerful structures and individuals, endogenous and exogenous alike. In Hispaniola the first steps toward this persistent struggle were taken by the numerous maroons who escaped European control and became agriculturalists, hunters, gatherers, and warriors in remote mountainous areas. Such rebellious people eventually became integrated, "captured" peasantries chiefly because of the interconnected processes of state formation and capitalist expansion. Thus, to use Sidney Mintz's (1984) apt terminology, peasants like Montañeros and Sabaneros are "re-constituted" peasants.

The constitution of peasantries, the genesis of nationalism and the configuration of cultural-ethnic identities were concomitant phenomena throughout Dominican history. Speaking metaphorically, the alterity Self-Other in the country was also a marriage of human blood and crop seeds. This is to say that Sabaneros' and Montañeros' predecessors became peasants and citizens through the experiences of tilling the land and encountering the Other in a context of war. Likewise, preserving the *conuco* and cattle herds became signifiers of cultural-ethnic identity for those pioneer dwellers because of the experiences of "acting and suffering together" and constructing a sense of "constancy despite all changes" (Dilthey 1991:449-51) inherent to the violent process of territorialization in the republic as a whole and the Cibao and the Deep South in particular. The unique meaning of the *conuco* for present-day Montañeros and

Figure 2. The *Devastaciones*, 1605-1606. Source: Adapted from Juan Bosch (1988:67)

Sabaneros is embedded in a legacy of resistance and integration, and claims and beliefs as well. Outlining its genealogy in time and space is our next task.

A turning point in the genealogy of ethnic identity and nationalism in the Cibao and the Deep South occurred in the 1605-06 period, when the Spanish troops destroyed all farms, burned all buildings, and forcefully relocated the residents of several commercial centers in Hispaniola. The *Devastaciones*, as that dramatic event is known, transformed most of the Cibao and the totality of the Deep South into a no man's land. The way in which farming and ranching were used to repopulate this vast territory conditioned two closely interwoven phenomena: the genesis of two distinctive peasantries in the Banda del Norte (northern side) and Banda del Sur (southern side); and the idiosyncratic formation of nationalism, regionalism, and cultural-ethnic identity in the two regions.

In contrast to the Cibao, where the *cincuentenas* or groups of fifty men on horseback, armed with lances (Bosch 1988:27) resisted the increasing presence of French buccaneers after The *Devastaciones*, most dwellers of the Deep South at the time seem to have negotiated with and even profited from the presence of the Other (Deive 1985:83-97). An indication of this is that Spanish troops carried out the defense of the southern region, particularly Isla Beata – a buccaneer stronghold (Sánchez Valverde 1947: 19-20).

In the constitution of Sabaneros' and Montañeros' cultural-ethnic identity, regionalism, and nationalism, the encounter with Haiti was a major signifier, especially during the 1822-44 Haitian occupation. The context of that signification, however, was not created by economic factors alone. Race and religion played a key role in that process.

During the Haitian occupation, the area currently belonging to Blue Mountain and Green Savannah was a battlefield (symbolic and otherwise), where the figure of the free, lawless *montero* became the symbol to be emulated if one was determined to survive. The other symbol was the stoic rancher, riding on horseback across the solitary terrain. Although certainly important as a physical space where food was grown, the southern *conuco* was not a vital component of the *montero*'s ethos. Hence its limited role in the construction of cultural-ethnic identity in the area of study.

This was not the case of the Cibao. Despite the presence of the *cibaeño montero*, here the regional ethos was primarily constructed by the praxis of thousands of small land cultivators (tobacco growers in particular) who resisted being "captured" by the state apparatus set in place by the Haitian rulers in 1822.

Between 1844 (the year marking the end of the Haitian occupation and the birth of independent Dominican Republic) and the mid-1950s (when Sabaneros began migrating to the Deep South), the country experienced at least twenty-three successful revolutions (Antonini 1968:87), a war aimed at ending the annexation to Spain, the birth and development of capitalism, a limited war of liberation against the U.S. troops (1916), the consolidation of the state apparatus, and the unfolding of Trujillo's dictatorship (backed by the first U.S. military intervention), among other major processes. For present purposes I will highlight the occurrence of three interrelated processes that directly contributed to the genesis and development of two ethnically-linked ideologies in the Cibao and the Deep South.

The first was the configuration of a strong regionalism which accelerated *cibaños*' and *sureños*' conflicting loyalty to national symbols as well as their awareness of racial and cultural differences between the north and the south (Hoetink 1982).

The second crucial process during the more than hundred years between independence and the mid-1950s was the increasing diversification of the republic's cultural-ethnic map, chiefly because of the steady arrival of immigrants from Europe (i.e., the Canary Islands, Hungary), Japan, China, the Middle East (the so-called *Turcos* or Turkish), the West Indies (the so-called *Cocolos*), and Haiti (Augelli 1962; Hoetink 1970; Del Castillo 1979). Very few of such immigrants were sent to the Deep South, except for some Hungarians who moved out of the region shortly after their arrival in the late-1940s.

The third, and last, major development during the period under discussion was the extraordinary role played by anti-Haitian sentiments in the processes of territorialization, consolidation of the state apparatus, and capitalist expansion led by Trujillo. Indeed, the extraordinary measures taken by the national state to first draw the frontier line on the map and second "Dominicanize" it by killing thousands of Haitians and establishing agricultural colonies along the border must be seen as a major turning point in Montañeros' and Sabaneros' perception of themselves and the Other.

Trujillo's rejection of Haiti's cultural symbols (i.e., language, skin color, architecture, religion, agricultural practices), in addition to reinforcing Dominicans' conflicting attitude toward their African past, contributed to the genesis and reproduction of a racially-based national ideology. Because of the aforementioned regional differences in the country, coupled with the pattern of uneven development still present, such an ideology was transformed into ethnically-linked regional ideologies. The way people saw

themselves in relation to the ideal signifiers legitimized by "the center" played a crucial role in the configuration of such ideologies.⁸

The agricultural colonization on the frontier was rooted in the aforementioned ideological grounds. The ideal signifier of Trujillo's colonizing policy was an industrious, Catholic (and Calvinist-like), non-African (hence non-black) peasant such as the typical "white" Sabanero. The official claim that blackness was synonymous with inferiority became tangible to *sureños* and *cibaeños* in 1957, when the government chose "white" peasants from the Cibao, La Línea, and La Sierra as the settlers of the new agricultural colony in Green Savannah. In contrast, when Trujillo visited the area in 1956, he told Montañeros that neither their *conucos* nor their rustic houses were "civilized" enough. "I want you to get rid of those houses and civilize your agriculture," Montañeros were told by the dictator.

Thus, while the building of the colony just a few miles from Blue Mountain sanctioned Sabaneros' cultural symbols, it was perceived by Montañeros as a condemnation of their own. Rather than the "good" peasants Trujillo expected them to be, most Montañeros perceived themselves as "good" hunters, gatherers, and ranchers. Mediated by the interrelation of structuration, utopia, and ideology, the cultural differences between Montañeros and Sabaneros conditioned their action and access to resources as well. It was in such a context that the ethnicity of both groups was socially constructed.

In summary, when Sabaneros began migrating to the Deep South, they were more than a group of poor peasants desperately looking for land to build a *conuco* and survive; they were also members of a community which, while becoming structured because of state intervention (a *comunitas*, à la Victor Turner), were already integrated by the ideology of being *cibaeño*, non-black, Catholic, and "good" peasants. The life-nexus Sabaneros developed through their experience with poverty and oppression in their place of origin, coupled with their sense of mission and access to power, helped them to cope with the despair accompanying their diaspora.

Literally, in that situation Sabaneros had two sorts of mission: the first, prescribed by the state, consisted in their threefold role as builders of a new agricultural frontier, promoters of rather innovative agricultural practices, and exponents of values and symbols (i.e., religion, loyalty to the state, skin color, architecture, agriculture) considered better than the ones prevalent in the Deep South at the time. The second mission, chosen by Sabaneros themselves, aimed at constructing a dwelling by means of using in ideological terms their long-lived culture, their newly-acquired ethnicity,

and, of course, by manipulating the enabling side of public structures and institutions as well. In addition to influencing one another, both missions found in the protection of the *conuco* a point of convergence that minimized fragmentation of both Sabaneros' self and Green Savannah's social structure.

Montañeros, by contrast, did not have a prescribed official mission other than to emulate the Other's industriousness and give up their culture, hence becoming *cibaëño*-like. They, nevertheless, had a mission chosen by themselves as members of a community of *sureños*. One side of that intentional mission consisted in protecting what Montañeros valued the most at the time: their cattle herds and the abundant common lands in which farming, hunting, and gathering were regularly practiced. The second side was epitomized by their determination to resist being "captured" as peasants by the official structures and institutions. In other words, most Montañeros wanted to preserve the feeling of freedom they associated with their life style as ranchers, *monteros*, wood cutters, and gatherers. Montañeros' previous experience as wage laborers in the bauxite mine did not undermine their appreciation for personal freedom. One might argue in fact that such experience actually reinforced their resistance to being captured.

The *conuco* in the late 1950s, despite its significance for growing food, was not a converging point of Montañeros' prescribed and chosen missions. In pursuing the latter while coping with the former, Montañeros were integrated by an ideology of remoteness from (and resistance to) "the center," the national capital and its symbols of progress.

Montañeros' position vis-à-vis the larger society suffered a major shift with the impetuous arrival of Hurricane Inés in 1966. The event marked a new chapter in the relationship between civil society and the state in Blue Mountain. Indeed, even though many Montañeros resented that the government had relocated them against their will, they were proud of the new houses and public facilities of their new village built by the government. New social projects and expectations were constructed in that context. Further, the circumstance that Blue Mountain was the seat of the county provided Montañeros with some public jobs. The small local bureaucracy took advantage of the new structuration, hence gaining access to a limited amount of power. Curiously, during the period 1958-78, such power was primarily utilized to improve the cattle herds rather than the *conuco*.

Montañeros' and Sabaneros' ideologies, being deeply grounded in their idiosyncratic experiences as peasants, *cibaëños*, *sureños*, "whites," "blacks," and so forth, predisposed them to have unique expectations of the state in general and the central government in particular. In other

words, their two contrasting ideologies made tangible the rather abstract notion of entitlement to the fruits of national progress.

When sorghum cultivation arrived in 1979, Montañeros and Sabaneros faced a paradoxical problematic. First, because of the power structure in which recognition by the state takes place, its impact could be either favorable or unfavorable to the local interests, depending on the system of authority at the local level and the uneven terms of exchange between the villages and the larger society. Second, without recognition from the center, dwellers of the two villages were restricted in their attempts to realize their social projects. Hence, the Other in that situation could represent either a better life or sharper impoverishment. Consequently the official claim that the new cash crop was good forced Montañeros and Sabaneros to "suspend belief," look deep into their lived experience, ponder their projects, and make choices.

It was while walking through the threshold of their new existential situation that Montañeros and Sabaneros looked simultaneously at their *conucos* and cattle herds, and asked themselves: Who am I? What is my mission in life? While facing such an ambiguous situation, the past, present, and future became closely interwoven in Blue Mountain and Green Savannah. Rather than being an abstract phenomenon, the heritage of their predecessors in the Cibao and the Deep South remained very much alive. Now was time for a conversation to take place among *monteros* and peasants, *cibaeños* and *sureños*, "good peasants," and "good ranchers," included and excluded citizens, perceived or real blacks and whites, and Catholics and practitioners of *brujería*, as well. In other words, it was again time for testing Montañeros and Sabaneros' ethnically-linked ideologies.

Yet ideologies are neither static, simple, nor purely rational. Instead, they are changeable, fluid, and multidimensional. And they are defined by the interplay between reason and affect. Moreover, acting out ideologies is inseparable from pondering the intended and unintended consequences of one's action. In other words, testing ideologies is synonymous with taking risks using one's lived experience and expectations.

Put to test, the Sabaneros had a "stock of knowledge" (Schutz 1982: 21) whose constitution in time and space, as discussed above, involved their relationships with the market economy and the state apparatus as peasants. It does not follow, however, that Sabaneros foresaw all the consequences of sorghum cultivation and therefore decided to reject it. Yet they knew some of such consequences, including the great danger involved in abandoning their long-lived *conucos*. After all, they were the ones who had experienced loss of land in their northern place of origin

(i.e., the Cibao and conterminous areas). And they also had their ethos of Self-Respect, which prescribed that keeping the *conuco* is synonymous with taking care of one's self and one's family alike. Consequently, although tempted by the opportunity to make a large profit through the new cash crop, most Sabaneros rejected modernization at first. At the time such an ideology was typical of most peasants from the republic's northern regions.

Like Sabaneros, Montañeros were also forced to test their ethnically-linked ideology. But the stock of knowledge in Blue Mountain was different from the one in Green Savannah. Indeed, while most Sabaneros were peasants and had *conucos*, neither their ethos as *sureños* nor their previous experience with the larger society as ranchers/peasants had predisposed them to contest the new, hegemonic discourse used by the public agencies to promote sorghum cultivation. And there was also the Montañeros' quest for recognition, which led them to believe at first that the new cash crop was a favor from the government. In a way agricultural modernization provided Montañeros with an opportunity to become full citizens of the nation-state. They wanted to progress, almost at any cost. Further, their ethos of Endurance predisposed them to take extraordinary risks. A clear indication of this is that some of them even sold a few of their precious cows to grow sorghum. It was using such rational and affective constructs that most Montañeros decided to embrace change at the expense of tradition. Such an engagement with modernization was not typical of most Dominican peasants at the time.

Needless to say, the original response to sorghum cultivation in both villages changed over time. Indeed, since 1979 the Sabaneros and Montañeros' ideologies have been tested in myriad ways. Sometimes they have failed the test and experienced defeat as a result, and sometimes they have passed the test and enjoyed its fruits. But that is another story. The point to be stressed here is not whether Sabaneros and Montañeros will survive in the long run. What calls for our attention instead is that so far they have survived as persistent, authentic dwellers of a changing social space by using their creativity and courage in ways that challenge the claim that peasants lack "true" consciousness.

CONCLUSION

In this narrative I have interpreted the lived experience of two groups of people who met in the Dominican Deep South and faced death and modernization together. I have attempted to demonstrate that their ethnically-linked ideologies as natives of two distant geographic regions conditioned

the idiosyncratic way they engaged both phenomena. Tracing their historical roots, I have argued that myriad experiences framed by the interrelation of structuration, utopia power, ideology, and culture influenced Montañeros' and Sabaneros' social projects. I have further argued that the way the two groups preserved or abandoned their *conucos* was part of their quest for ontological security rather than just an attempt to maximize in formal economic terms.

NOTES

My fieldwork, conducted during the 1988-90 period, was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. I was directly involved as an agronomist in the early stages (1978-80) of the modernization project discussed here. Most names used in this narrative are fictitious. This article was originally prepared for the conference "Ethnicity, Ideology, and Colonial Legacy in the Caribbean," organized by John Hawkins in December 1992 at Brigham Young University. I acknowledge the invaluable editorial help provided by Richard and Sally Price.

1. Broadly speaking, Dominicans use the term *indio* instead of *mulato*. In addition to *indio*, the other two main racial categories are *negro* (black) and *blanco* (white). The term *trigueño* is currently replacing *indio*, perhaps reflecting "political correctness" in a country whose Taino population (i.e., Indians) was wiped out as a consequence of the European conquest. The construction of these racial categories is chiefly based on skin color, hair style, and facial features (nose and lips in particular). Black Dominicans are primarily of four sorts: the *cocolos* or descendents of the immigrant English-speaking Caribbean workers (West Indians); the descendents of free African-Americans brought by Boyer, the Haitian ruler, in the early years of the 1822-44 Haitian occupation of eastern Hispaniola; Haitians and their Dominican-born descendents; and Dominicans of dark complexion whose roots are more directly related to the long-lived hybridation of Tainos, African slaves, Europeans, and other populations.

2. Although most *cibaeños* and *sureños* speak only Spanish, there are important linguistic differences between the two groups. For instance, *cibaeños* tend to change the "r" and "l" to "i" (e.g., *mar*, Spanish for sea, becomes *mai*); *sureños*, by contrast, tend to either change the "r" to "l" (e.g. *mal* instead of *mar*) or elongate the "r" (e.g. *marr*, instead of *mar*). Many words, proverbs, sayings, and so forth, are unique to each region.

3. For heuristic purposes, I am deliberately overlooking Sabaneros' and Montañeros' experience as wage laborers.

4. The presence in the Blue Mountain of these *cibaeños* is unrelated to the establishment of the agricultural colony in Green Savannah.

5. I hasten to say that this is but a sketch of Montañeros' and Sabaneros' intricate phenomenological world. I limit myself here to interpreting the existential forms from each village most relevant to our story.

6. These existential categories are interpreted as ideal types, in Weber's terms. Although my documentation of these ontological phenomena included men and women of different age groups, as presented here they are restricted to men who, during my fieldwork, were aged forty years or older. I constructed these existential forms using a variety of methods ranging from structured interviews and questionnaires to casual conversations in quotidian life. I paid special attention to everyday discourse as well as special events, such as funerals and accidents. Further, I carefully documented what people did and said while farming, hunting, ranching, dancing, and so forth. Before leaving the two villages I discussed my interpretation of these phenomena with local friends. Although I am writing this in present tense, I acknowledge that my interpretation is spatially and temporally specific.

7. Locally, a *tumba* means a piece of land whose forest has been recently felled and burned. Normally a year later, the stumps that remain in the soil are set on fire and uprooted. It is usually after such operations are completed that peasants begin calling the land *conuco* or *parcela*.

8. I am using the concept "ideal signifiers" in Saussurean terms as well as in agreement with Balibar's theory that the national ideology inherent to the constitution of society (state formation included) "involves ideal signifiers" that mark the relationships between members of a community and those from "other type of community" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991:95). Even though the Dominicans' Other is a changing notion that started with the pirates, buccaneers, and merchants of the sixteenth century, Haiti epitomizes the "other type of community" in the Dominican collective consciousness. This phenomenon, of course, has spatio-temporal specificities.

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