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INFORMAL RESISTANCE ON A DOMINICAN SUGAR PLANTATION DURING THE TRUJILLO DICTATORSHIP

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The cane cutters who toiled on the great foreign-owned sugar plantations of the twentieth-century Caribbean were some of the most exploited of Latin American wage workers. Employed only for the five-month sugar harvest, they did long hours of back-breaking work in stifling heat for barely subsistence pay. Because the work was seasonal and many of the workers were temporary migrant laborers from other countries, unionization was difficult and legal protection minimal.

Labor conditions on sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic were (and still are) reputedly among the worst. Cane cutters in the Dominican Republic are generally portrayed as extremely poor, uneducated Haitian immigrants, people who are terribly oppressed and unable to articulate, much less defend, their interests. In a widely read indictment of the foreign-owned sugar industry published in 1940, Dominican writer Ramón Marrero Aristy pictured sugar workers as worn-out, half-starved, disoriented, fatalistic hoards:

"Todas las mañanas, antes de subir el sol, desfila la turba harapienta, maloliente -con una hambre que no se le

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> aparta jamás- camino del corte, como una procesión de seres sin alma... Se han compenetrado instintivamente- pero demasiado bien- de lo poco que significan ante los que están por encima de ellos . . . [C]uando el *mister* da la orden de realizar un trabajo a este o a aquel precio, es necesario hacerlo, puédase o no, para conservar el empleo, pues sabido es que los blancos son infalibles y no rectifican órdenes... [P]or experiencia saben el terrible mal que les traería cualquier protesta."[1]

Forty-five years later, international human rights activists reported that little had changed on Dominican sugar estates; they denounced the forced labor of cane cutters as "modern slavery".[2] Observers of the 1980s, like those of the 1940s, described Dominican sugar plantations as a closed world of total and arbitrary authority in which, to use Marrero Aristy's words, people were "dispuestos a dejarse moler como caña".[3]

Although these writings present a believable picture of the onerous working conditions on Dominican sugar plantations, they portray the cane cutters solely as victims. In contrast, a number of recent studies of everyday resistance by slaves and peasants and of informal bargaining by factory workers would suggest that even people who labor in the most difficult circumstances exercise some control over their working lives.[4]

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[1] Ramón Marrero Aristy, *Over, 15th ed. (Sto. Domingo: Taller, 1989), 95, 42, 44, 42.*

[2] See, e.g., Maurice Lemoine, *Bitter Sugar: Slaves Today in the Caribbean*, trans. Andrea Johnston (London: Zed Books, 1985); and Roger Plant, *Sugar and Modern Slavery A Tale of Two Countries* (London Zed Books, 1987).

[3] Marrero Aristy, *Over*, 86.

[4] See, e.g., Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge Belknap Press, Harvard Univ., 1987), chap. 5; Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (Bloomington Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), chap. 5; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven Yale Univ. Press, 1985); idem, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven Yale Univ. Press, 1990); and Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979).

The purpose of this essay is to examine informal struggles between field workers and management on one Dominican sugar estate, and how foreign administrators interpreted and responded to worker initiatives. It seeks to explore the methods of informal bargaining that the cane cutters used, quite effectively, to "work the system... to their minimum disadvantage."[5]

Little has been written on informal negotiating between cane cutters and plantation managers in the Caribbean for the post-slavery period. A few years back I was fortunate to stumble upon the records of Ozama, a Dominican sugar plantation owned by the British Columbia Sugar Refining Company from 1944 through 1955. The company's archives in Vancouver contain a complete run of the reports that Canadian plantation managers mailed back to the head office every one to two weeks over this 11-year period. The Ozama reports detail production and marketing activities on the plantation and the political developments in the Dominican Republic that affected the company's interests. For the purpose of this study, though, the most revealing part of the reports is that dealing with the recruitment and supervision of labor.

The Ozama records open a window on the everyday processes and interactions that lay beneath what has been assumed to be "the way things worked". They reveal that a significant proportion of cane cutters on the Ozama estate were not seasonal migrants from Haiti, but rather Dominicans and Haitians resident in the Dominican Republic, many of whom were also peasants. Furthermore the Ozama records indicate that the foreign managers were not all-powerful. Administrators often complained of worker insubordination, and they had trouble dictating when, where, and how cane cutters would work. Although Ozama's cane cutters were not unionized, and although no organized strikes ever took place on the Ozama plantation, relations between cane cutters and management appear to have been in constant negotiation and flux.

[5] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Peasants and Politics," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1:1 (Oct. 1973), 13.

Thus a primary problem is how to explain the cane cutters' ability to maneuver. This essay will argue that to make sense of labor-management relations at Ozama, it is essential to understand local practices and power relations. What was happening in the peasant economy, the effects of the Trujillo dictatorship on the lives of the rural poor, and Trujillo's relations with foreign investors in the late 1940s and early 1950s must all be taken into account. This, then, is a micro-history of labor relations on one plantation in a particular political and economic context. It is intended to raise some larger questions about who cut cane, about why and how people did this work, and about the impact of Trujillo's rule.

A few clarifications concerning focus and sources are necessary at the outset. This study concerns the relations between foreign managers and cane cutters. Although of equal interest, the formal and not-so-formal negotiations between management and mill workers are another story. Also, the important issue of ethnicity and labor relations will not be addressed. The archival sources contain no information on the Ozama Sugar Company's[6] attitudes toward hiring Dominicans as opposed to Haitian or British West Indian workers or on relations between Dominicans and Haitians on the estate. Most of the information I do have on cane cutter-management interactions comes from B.C. Sugar's Ozama archive, the richest source presently available on the internal dynamics of a twentieth-century sugar plantation in the Dominican Republic. Having gleaned from the Ozama correspondence the names of Canadian and Dominican employees who worked on the estate 40 years ago, sociologist Walter Cordero and I talked with some of those still alive. Unfortunately, however, time constraints and political tensions made it impossible to interview former cane cutters who had worked at Ozama in the 1940s and 1950s.

[6] The Ozama Sugar Company was a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Columbia Sugar Company from 1944 until 1955.

The historiography

To situate this study, a brief overview of the history of Dominican sugar is useful.[7] Although Spanish settlers on the island of Hispaniola established the first sugar plantations in the Americas in the early 1500s, they could not compete with the more efficient sugar industries the French later developed in Haiti, on the western part of the island, and the British in Jamaica. By 1650 the colony had stopped exporting sugar. For the next century and a half it remained an economic backwater of the Spanish empire, a place where herds of cattle and hogs roamed freely and squatters grew a few subsistence crops. There were virtually no roads and no private property in the countryside, where most land was public or owned in common by free mulattos and the descendants of run-away slaves. Dispersed settlement and itinerant cultivation characterized Dominican rural life. Peasants engaged in swidden agriculture, slashing and burning the forest to form garden plots *conucos* where they produced beans and a variety of root and tree crops to feed themselves. In the north, the Cibao region, a vigorous smallholder export economy developed, centered on tobacco and, later, cacao. Country folk also hunted wild cattle and hogs and gathered forest products; they sold some hides, along with mahogany and honey, to merchant exporters on the south coast. The great majority of Dominicans lived in the countryside; Dominican agriculture and livestock raising were mainly peasant activities; and most rural people engaged only intermittently with markets, whether for urban consumers or for export. Land was

[7] This overview is drawn largely from Roberto Cassá, *Historia social y económica de la República Dominicana*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Sto. Domingo Editorial Alfa y Omega, 1978); H. Hoetink, *The Dominican People, 1850-1900 Notes for a Historical Sociology*, trans. Stephen K. Ault (Baltimore Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1982); José del Castillo and Walter Cordero, *La economía dominicana durante el primer cuarto del siglo xx* (Sto. Domingo Fundación García Arévalo, 1979); and R.W. Werge, "La agricultura de 'tumba y quema' en la República Dominicana," *Eme Eme:* 3:13 (July-Aug. 1974), 47-56. Also useful is Roberto Cassá, "Historiografía de la República Dominicana," *Ecos* 1:1 (1993), 9-39.

abundant and the Dominican Republic had the lowest population density of the major Caribbean islands.

Only in the 1870s and 1880s did the modern Dominican sugar industry begin to take shape. Stimulated by Dominican government incentives, Cuban know-how, and an influx of U.S. investment capital, ten privately-owned sugar plantations with up-to-date mills came to dominate the landscape of the sparsely populated southeastern part of the island. Initially founded by Cubans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans, most of the sugar plantations (and certainly the largest and most productive) soon passed into the hands of North American investors.[8]

The new sugar industry brought the Dominican Republic into the capitalist world economy. Annual sugar exports rose precipitiously from 7,000 tons in 1880 to 100,000 tons in 1914, 300,000 tons in 1925, 400,000 tons in the mid-1940s, and 550,000 tons in the 1950s. From 1910 on, sugar accounted for more than 50 percent of Dominican export revenues. By the early decades of the twentieth century, sugar had become synonymous with contact with the outside world, with capitalism, and with modernity. Foreign sugar planters imported modern technology: they processed the sugar in factories with the newest machinery, and they built the privately owned railroads, which (except for one short track in the north) were the only rail lines in the country. The sugar industry also became the island's major employer. The demands of sugar production created the first large concentration of wage workers in Dominican history.

At the same time, many Dominicans regarded the dynamic sugar region as an enclave because foreigners owned the means of production (the land and sugar mills), much of the labor force was foreign, and most of the sugar was marketed abroad. In contrast to Cuba, though, where U.S. interests not only produced the sugar but also sold it in the United States, Dominican sugar was sold mostly to Great Britain, France, and Canada. The Dominican government and U.S. sugar companies

[8] Ten of the 14 Dominican sugar plantations in the 1940s were owned by U.S. companies, and 3 smaller plantations were owned by the Vicinis, a family of Italian origin resident in the Dominican Republic for several generations.

operating there would have preferred entry to the lucrative U.S. market, but they were excluded after 1925 by the Cuban quota.

Perhaps this anomalous situation facilitated Trujillo's quiet, but spectacularly successful, takeover of the sugar industry in the early 1950s. Soon after the U.S. occupation (1916-24) ended, General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, head of the U.S.-created Dominican National Guard, had assumed political power; he ruled the Dominican Republic for more than thirty years, from 1930 until he was assassinated in 1961. Trujillo is regarded as one of the most powerful and ruthless of the Caribbean dictators (Somoza, Duvalier, Batista) to whom he is compared.[9] Whereas foreign interests had dominated sugar production in the Dominican Republic for more than half a century, in the late 1940s Trujillo (who, with a small circle of associates, already controlled major sectors of the Dominican economy) decided to elbow into the sugar industry as well. After mounting an enormous sugar estate and building what he proudly called the world's largest sugar mill, Trujillo raised sugar taxes so high that most foreign sugar companies could no longer operate profitably. By 1955, all but one had sold out to Trujillo and left the country. Whether motivated by personal greed, nationalistic aims or a combination of the two, Trujillo significantly reduced foreign ownership in the sugar sector in the same years that the Guatemalan "threat" to the properties of the United Fruit Company precipitated a U.S.-sponsored invasion of that country and fully six years before Fidel Castro nationalized the

[9] Useful analyses of the Trujillo regime include Robert D. Crassweller, *Trujillo The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Jesús de Galíndez, *The Era of Trujillo, Dominican Dictator*, ed. Russell H. Fitzgibbon (Tucson Univ. of Arizona Press, 1973); Roberto Cassá, *Capitalismo y dictadura* (Sto. Domingo Editora de la Univ. Autónoma de Sto. Domingo [UASD], 1982); and Howard J. Wiarda, *Dictatorship and Development The Methods of Control in Trujillo's Dominican Republic* (Gainesville Univ. of Florida Press, 1968). See also Eric Paul Roorda, "The Era of the Good Neighbor in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1940," (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins Univ., 1990); and idem., *The Dictator Next Door The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-45* (forthcoming book).

Cuban sugar industry. When Trujillo was murdered, the sugar plantations he owned passed to the Dominican government, which has run them ever since. These enterprises are still in operation, but the importance of sugar revenues to foreign exchange earnings and the Dominican gross national product has diminished considerably in recent years.

Beyond this sketchy outline, the history of sugar in the Dominican Republic is little known. Some good studies exist on Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and on the internal organization of the sugar plantations after Trujillo, but similar work is lacking for the period 1870-1961. Produced by Dominican scholars of the generation of 1965 (who, naturally, were preoccupied with the United States invasion of that year), the historical studies that do exist tend to focus on the impact of the U.S.-controlled sugar enclave on Dominican economic and political development. Based on Dominican and U.S. government sources, these are macrostudies that debate the connections between sugar and capitalism, imperialism, or dependency.[10] The writings of the 1970s and 1980s question whether before 1955 the sugar industry was an exploitative foreign enclave entirely separate from the national economy, or whether instead the sugar sector was linked in vital ways to the rest of the economy, and if so, how and with what effects.

Beyond this central economic question, the historical writings specifically address the labor issue from two viewpoints. In a seminal series of articles, historian José del Castillo details how Dominicans who worked in sugar in the late nineteenth century were replaced by migrants from the British Antilles *cocolos*, and in the 1920s by Haitians who became the field workers while *cocolos* moved into the more

[10] See, e.g., Wilfredo Lozano, *La dominación imperialista en la República Dominicana, 1900-1930: estudio de la primera ocupación norteamericana de Sto. Domingo* (Sto. Domingo: Editora de la UASD, 1976); Franc Báez Evertsz, *Azúcar y dependencia en la República Dominicana* (Sto. Domingo: Editora de la UASD, 1978); and Cassá, *Capitalismo y dictadura.*

skilled mill jobs.[11] Most studies of the Dominican Republic insist that since the 1920s only Haitians have worked Dominican canefields, while poor Dominicans have refused to cut cane. A fundamental question for del Castillo and others, then, is why, in a country marked by rural poverty, the most dynamic sector of the economy provided little employment for nationals.

Roberto Cassá raises a second important issue: that of labor organization and forms of protest. In his recent history of the Dominican labor movement, Cassá analyzes the links of labor organizations in the sugar region to labor organizations in the cities and in other parts of the country.[12] Cassá's study provides insight into the formation of unions during the 1940s with particular emphasis on the Dominican sugar strike of January 1946, spearheaded by the mill workers. But because cane cutters were only peripherally involved in the unions, Cassá tells little about them. Indeed, none of the writings on the workers' movements of the 1940s shed much light on cane cutters. Thus the information on the origins and outlook of the cane cutters and their relations with management in the Ozama archives is of considerable interest.

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[11] José del Castillo, *La inmigración de braceros azucareros en la República Dominicana* (Sto. Domingo Cuadernos de CENDIA, 1978). See also Harmannus Hoetink, "Labour 'Scarcity' and Immigration in the Dominican Republic c. 1875-c. 1930," in *Labour in the Caribbean From Emancipation to Independence*, ed. Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 160-75, and Orlando Inoa, *Bibliografía haitiana en la República Dominicana*, Serie Bibliográfica *Op. Cit.* Num. 2 (Río Piedras: Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, Univ. de Puerto Rico, 1994). On coffee, see Rénald Clérismé, "Migration and Relations of Production in the Dominican Coffee Economy Haitian Workers on El Fondo Coffee Plantations" (Ph.D. diss., Yale Univ., 1996).

[12] Roberto Cassá, *Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista en la República Dominicana (desde los orígenes hasta 1960)* (Sto. Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1990). Rosario Espinal also addresses labor issues in "The Dominican Working Class Labour Control Under Trujillo and After," in *Labour in the Caribbean*, ed. Cross and Heuman, 176-94.

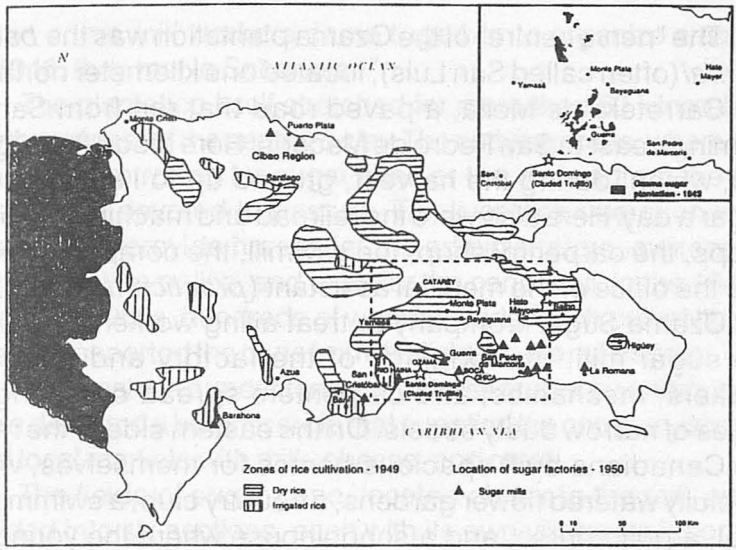
Ozama: the setting

The Ozama sugar plantation is a small to medium-sized estate, situated on the Ozama river 15 kilometers east of Santo Domingo. Established in the 1870s by an Italian-Dominican merchant family, the property passed around 1905 to Santiago Michelena y Bellvé, a prominent merchant-banker of Puerto Rican extraction. Don Santiago expanded the estate and modernized the mill, for which purpose he borrowed more than $1.5 million from the Bank of Nova Scotia in the 1920s. When his heirs could not repay the debt, the bank foreclosed in 1928 and, following a long, acrimonious court battle that left the plantation in ruins, won clear title to Ozama in 1935.[13] In 1938 the bank began to rebuild the plantation, hoping to find a buyer.

Sometime later, the British Columbia Sugar Company, the sugar refinery that supplies western Canada, decided to purchase a plantation in the Caribbean. The directors of B.C. Sugar felt certain that world sugar prices would rise sharply after World War II (as they had at the end of World War I), and they hoped to hedge against inflation by extending their operations from refining into sugar production. In 1944 the company decided to purchase the Ozama plantation, and the Bank of Nova Scotia was delighted to sell.[14]

[13] The records of litigation between the Michelenas and the Bank of Nova Scotia are found in the Santiago Michelena Ariza Collection, Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, Univ. de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras. Additional information on Michelena's economic activities, including his sugar estate, is in the Archivo del Bufete Peynado & Peynado, Escuela de Derecho, Univ. de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Humberto García Muñiz describes this archive in "El bufete corporativo en el Caribe el archivo Peynado & Peynado de la República Dominicana y su importancia para los estudios caribeños," *Op. Cit.* Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, Univ. de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras 8 (1994-95), 53-95.

[14] See John Schreiner, *The Refiners: A Century of B.C. Sugar* (Vancouver Douglas and McIntyre, 1989), 131-32, and Steven P. Palmer, "Exploration of the B.C. Sugar Archives The Ozama Sugar Company and the Dominican Republic, 1944-1955" (Unpublished paper, 1983). On the role Canadian banks played in the Caribbean, see Neil C. Quigley, "The Bank of Nova Scotia in the Caribbean, 1889-1940," *Business History Review* 63:1 (spring 1989), 797-838; and Duncan McDowall, *Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), chap. 5.



Map: Dominican Sugar- and Rice-growing Areas, 1949-50

Note: Río Haina and Catarey were Trujillo's mills.

Sources: Ozama plantation: "Plan of Ozama Sugar Company Ltd. Holdings, drawn by E. C. Pratt, Chief Civil Engineer, Central Romana Corp., Dec. 1943," BCSA, Vancouver. Sugar factories: *Puerto Rico Sugar Manual — Dominican Republic Section* (New Orleans: A. G. Gilmore, 1950), 166. Rice zones: NA, RG 166, Foreign Agricultural Service Narrative Reports (1950-54), Dominican Republic, Forest Products -Sugar, box 128, entry 5, "Annual Rice Report: Rice Production for 1949," Apr. 10, 1950.

Like other Dominican sugar plantations, Ozama was a small country unto itself, or so it seemed to the Canadians from Vancouver when they arrived. The plantation included approximately 46,330 acres of land, 7,380 acres in cane and most of the rest in pasture. Its geographical reach was much larger, however, for it comprised not one continuous tract, but more than a hundred parcels of territory distributed over a wide area, interspersed with other people's properties (see map inset).[15]

[15] The history of the consolidation of the Ozama property is detailed in the notary document that incorporated Ingenio San Luis on Dec. 7, 1925, located in the Michelena Collection. Most of the land that comprised the estate was purchased by Santiago Michelena y Bellvé between 1910 and 1924. The sale papers by which B.C. Sugar transferred ownership of Ozama to General Trujillo in 1955, in the British Columbia Sugar Company archives [BCSA], give the property registry numbers of the numerous tracts of land that made up the estate.

The "nerve centre" of the Ozama plantation was the *batey central* (often called San Luis), located one kilometer north of the Carretera de Mella, a paved road that ran from Santo Domingo east to San Pedro de Macorís. Here stood the sugar mill, which, during the harvest, ground up to 1,800 tons of sugar a day. Here also were the railroad and machinery repair shops, the carpentry shop, the sawmill, the company store, and the office of the medical assistant (*practicante*) hired by the Ozama Sugar Company to treat ailing workers. West of the sugar mill, the lodgings of the factory and railroad workers, mechanics, and carpenters spread out along a series of narrow dusty streets. On the eastern side of the mill, the Canadians built spacious homes for themselves, with carefully watered flower gardens, a country club, a swimming pool, a golf course, and a schoolhouse where the younger children of Canadian administrators could study in English. Sixty kilometers of railroad tied the central mill to the canefields, and, from the mill, oxcarts piled high with sugar bags moved slowly to the plantation's private wharf on the Ozama River. From the wharf a fleet of small boats plied the river, transporting the sugar to ocean steamers waiting at the port of Santo Domingo.[16]

Although it was not part of the plantation proper, no description of Ozama would be complete without mention of the independent village of Sabaneta located just off plantation land, ten minutes by foot west of the central *batey*. Sabaneta mushroomed in the 1940s with clusters of rickety bars and brothels, Sunday cockfights, and independent shopkeepers who tried to compete with the plantation stores, keeping their doors open when the company's stores closed for the night. Sabaneta may have been rowdy, but it was also autonomous: not surprisingly,

[16] The description of the central *batey* and the plantation is drawn from Forrest Rogers' memoir of B.C. Sugar's experience in the Dominican Republic, "Ozama Sugar Company, Limited, 1944-1955" (Unpublished ms., 1956, BCSA) the Ozama operating reports, in BCSA; and the author's visits to the Ozama plantation, June 1990 and July 1991.

when some mill workers came together to organize a union in 1946, they met in Sabaneta.[17]

The plantation itself stretched for more than 60 kilometers north and east of the central *batey*. The outlying areas, where the land was too rolling for sugar cane or too distant from the rail lines, were devoted to pasture. The livestock operation was essential to provide horses for the administrators, overseers, and plantation police, and oxen for the cane haul. In the 1940s and early 1950s, hundreds of wooden carts, each pulled by six oxen, transported the cane from the fields to the rail depots. The estate's livestock superintendent, a Swiss farmer by origin, also ran a dairy and a butcher shop that supplied the company stores and local markets with milk, cheese, and meat.

The fields of sugar cane, located closer to the mill, were divided into six sections, each with its own village for laborers (*batey*), company store (*bodega*), and Dominican overseer (*mayordomo*). The sugar cane harvest (*zafra*) lasted five months, from late December or early January until the beginning of June; and the plantation produced between 25,000 and 30,000 tons of sugar each year. Although some independent cane farmers (*colonos*) sold cane to Ozama for processing, the Ozama Sugar Company itself grew more than 85 percent of the cane that it ground. During the *zafra* the plantation's work force swelled from around one thousand to nearly two thousand as cane cutters flooded into the *bateyes*. We do not know what percentage of cane cutters were Haitian and what percentage Dominican, but an informal company survey in 1947 during the off-season indicated that approximately 50 percent of field workers were Haitian citizens.[18]

[17] Archivo General de la Nación, Santo Domingo (AGN), República Dominicana, Legajos de la Secretaría de Estado del Trabajo, no. 84, 1946.

[18] According to the Ozama operating report of August 10, 1947, the company employed 611 Haitians and 107 people from the British Antilles, all men. Dominican plantations did not employ women as cane cutters, although Ozama used some female and child labor to apply fertilizer after 1945. For a study of women's lives on contemporary Dominican sugar plantations, see Senaida Jansen and Cecilia Millán, *Género, trabajo y etnia en los bateyes dominicanos* (Sto. Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, Programa Estudios de la Mujer, 1991).

The cane was cut using a contract system. The Canadian agricultural supervisor directed the Dominican mayordomos, each of whom was responsible for overseeing the harvest in one section of the estate. The company paid the mayordomos a fixed salary during the off-season, but during the *zafra* it paid by ton of cane delivered to the weighing stations, located at the railroad depots. The mayordomos, in turn, paid the *capataces de corte* (who directed the cutting gangs), cane cutters, cane loaders, oxcart drivers, cane weighers, and watchmen. All work in the field was piecework: all of these people were paid by the ton of cane cut, hauled, delivered, or weighed.[19]

To understand the success of field workers' initiatives, we must keep in mind one basic factor: labor scarcity. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, labor shortages plagued the Ozama Sugar Company and, judging from the fragmentary information that exists, the Dominican sugar sector in general. This situation has several explanations. First, British laws impeded the free importation of workers from the British Antilles. Second, the migration of Haitians slowed after the Dominican army killed between 10,000 and 20,000 Haitians, mainly along the border, in October 1937.[20] Meanwhile, the Trujillo government took stern

[19] Work is organized much the same way on Dominican sugar plantations today. See Frank Moya Pons et al., *El batey. Estudio socioeconómico de los bateyes del Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (Sto. Domingo: Fondo Para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales, 1986); Martin F. Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations Production and Foreign Labor Integration* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

[20] See Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haiti*, vol. 1 (1930-1937) Sto. Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1988; Lauren Derby and Richard Turits, "Historias de terror y los terrores de la historia: la masacre haitiana de 1937 en la República Dominicana," *Estudios Sociales* 92 (Apr.-June 1993), 65-76; Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic and Money *Raza* and Society in the Haitian-Dominican *Borderlands, 1900-1937*," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36:3 (1994), 488-526; and Eric Roorda, "Genocide Next Door. The Good Neighbor Policy, the Trujillo Regime, and the Haitian Massacre of 1937," *Diplomatic History* 20:3 (Summer 1996). After the massacre, the Haitian government opposed the clandestine migration of Haitians to the Dominican Republic for a time. Only in 1952 was the first bilateral agreement signed between Haiti and the Dominican Republic allowing the legal importation of Haitian cane cutters for the Dominican harvest. See Plant, *Sugar and Modern Slavery*, 2, 24.

measures to enforce Trujillo's "Dominicanization of labor" laws, which required industrial and agricultural establishments to hire a majority of Dominicans.[21] But cane cutting was seasonal, and harvest wages were not high enough to attract a plentiful, stable work force of Dominican residents. Finally, Ozama had to compete for workers with the other foreign-owned sugar plantations and with Trujillo's public works projects. What is more, the Canadians made every effort to increase sugar production on the estate, resulting in a growing demand for cane cutters during the 1940s.

In its campaign to increase production, the Ozama Sugar Company put new land into sugar cultivation, most of which it rented from nearby Dominican proprietors. Purchases were less frequent, although the company did employ a Dominican surveyor whose job was to procure land. Locals say that an illiterate peasant *jefe* north of the plantation also got rich by buying up land and selling it to the Canadians. There is no evidence that the company dispossessed local peasants so as to increase the number of wage laborers. Indeed, the Ozama archives contain only one reference to what may have been an eviction: "Clearing of... the Peña property on the Mata-Mamón side of the river is progressing slowly, as there were quite a few houses with *conucos* on this property, and the owners have had to be given time to dig up their potatoes."[22]

To make the plantation as productive as possible, B.C. Sugar's strategy was to use the maximum grinding capacity of the mill by increasing the supply of cane. This involved both growing more cane and eliminating all obstacles to efficient delivery from the fields to the mill. The aim was to keep the mill grinding at full capacity 24 hours a day during the *zafra*, so as to shorten the harvest period yet still produce the maximum amount of sugar. For an efficient, profit-seeking sugar company, this strategy made good business sense.

[21] On Trujillo's labor policies, see Cassá, *Movimiento obrero*. Dominican labor legislation in the Trujillo period is detailed in the annual reports of the Secretaría de Estado del Trabajo, AGN.

[22] Ozama operating report, Dec. 30, 1945.

Worker Behavior

What, then, were the problems the Canadians complained of in dealing with their field workers? Or from a different perspective, what forms of resistance (as the administrators saw it) are detailed in the Ozama reports?

First, while the administrators wanted cane cut and delivered to the mill every day during the *zafra*, they could not convince the field workers to do so. Most workers refused to cut cane the day after payday, which fell on a Saturday every two weeks, and the work force usually did not return to full force until the following Tuesday. Also, almost no one would work on religious or certain national holidays: Día de los Reyes (January 6), Día de la Virgen de Altagracia (January 21), Día de Duarte (January 26), Día de Candelaria (February 2), San Blas (February 3), Viernes de Dolores (one week before Good Friday), Día de la Cruz (May 3), and so on.[23]

Furthermore, B.C. Sugar had difficulty keeping a full contingent of sugar cutters over the entire five-month harvest. The company could not start the harvest before Christmas because it could find no one to cut cane; around Easter the shortage of workers became acute. Some workers went on

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[23] See Ozama operating reports, Feb. 5, 1945, Feb. 22, 1953, Apr. 11, 1954. The custom of not laboring on certain Catholic holidays may have dated from slave times. In 1784, Dominican slaves got 93 days off work for religious observances, according to Martin D. Clausner, *Rural Santo Domingo. Settled, Unsettled, and Resettled* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1973), 69-70. Early in the twentieth century, people took off eight days before and after the annual community *fiestas patronales* honoring patron saints. Municipal (*ayuntamiento*) decrees from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attempted to curtail popular religious festivals, which Dominican employers complained were draining their labor. Padre Antonio Camilo, Bishop of La Vega, interview by Lauren Derby, Sto. Domingo, Sept. 11, 1992. Trujillo allowed the celebrations, attempting to imbue them with new political-symbolic meanings related to his statebuilding project. See Lauren Derby, "Choreographing the Nation: Statecraft as Stagecraft under the Trujillo Regime" (Paper presented to the 17th International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Atlanta, Mar. 12, 1994.) Trujillo created one hundred new holidays; Derby suggests that their profusion and exaggerated official importance may have reinforced the Ozama cane cutters' refusal to work. Derby, personal

pilgrimage to Higuey or returned to their home villages to celebrate Holy Week with their families. Also the rainy season began around Easter, and when the rains fell, Ozama's administrators noted, Dominican peasants planted their rice crops. It seems that at Eastertime many cane cutters abandoned the sugar plantations to work their own small plots of land (*conucos*).[24]

Other laborers worked only the first part of the sugar harvest to make enough money to purchase the identity cards (*cédulas*) that the Trujillo dictatorship required each citizen to carry. The identity cards had to be renewed every year with a cash payment in March or April, under threat of imprisonment or forced labor for noncompliance.[25] Still other workers left sugar plantations toward the end of the harvest when the poor quality of the remaining cane lowered the income that cutters could expect as pieceworkers. Off they would go to seek employment on another sugar plantation where the harvest might last a few weeks longer.[26]

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communication, Apr. 2, 1993. On popular religion and peasant resistance to proletarianization, see also Michiel Baud, "The Struggle for Autonomy Peasant Resistance to Capitalism in the Dominican Republic: 1870 - 1924," in *Labour in the Caribbean*, ed. Cross and Heuman, 132-35. From 1943 until the end of Trujillo's reign, Canadians from the Scarboro Foreign Mission were appointed by Archbishop Pittini to be parish priests in Miches, Seíbo, Hato Mayor, Consuelo, Bayaguana, Guerra, Boya, Monte Plata, Yamasá, Villa Altagracia, Haína, Baní, San José de Ocoa, and Azua. Their perceptions of popular religion and their activities in the D.R. are detailed in Harvey Steele, *Agent for Change The Story of Pablo Steele as Told to Gary MacEoin* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), 61-107; Michael J. O'Hearn, "The Political Transformation of a Religious Order" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Toronto, 1983); and the archives of the Scarboro Foreign Mission in Scarborough, Ontario.

[24] See Ozama operating reports, Jan. 22, Feb. 5, 1945; Mar. 30, Apr. 6, 13, Dec. 28, 1947; Mar. 21, 28, Apr. 4, 1948; Apr. 5, 1953.

[25] Ibid., Jan. 4, 1948; and Manuel Emilio Caminero ("Pindín"), interview by Walter Cordero, Guerra, D.R., Mar. 15, 1991. On the centrality of the identity card to peasant memories of repression during the Trujillo years, see Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicano (MUDE), *La era de Trujillo: décimas, relatos y testimonios campesinos* (Sto. Domingo: Taller, 1989).

[26] Ozama operating report, Mar. 21, 1948.

Even Haitian workers imported specifically for the cane harvest frequently disappeared. When it came time to renew the Haitians' immigration permits, Canadian administrators found that many of the Haitians they had imported were no longer living in Ozama's *bateyes*. Toward the end of the 1940s, a large number of Haitian cane cutters petitioned Ozama's administration to allow them to return to Haiti before the end of the harvest. At first the administrators thought that the Haitians feared that a threatened invasion of anti-Trujillo exiles might exacerbate anti-Haitian feeling in the Dominican Republic. But later the Canadians learned that after they had accepted the Haitian workers' requests for repatriation, the laborers had persuaded the Haitian consul in Santo Domingo to sell them their work permits and had gone elsewhere in the Dominican Republic, seeking other work.[27]

Even within the plantation's boundaries, management had trouble compelling workers to cut cane where they were most needed. It appears that cane cutters preferred working with certain *mayordomos* more than others. In 1946, for example, when Ozama's management transferred overseer Eugenio King from the *central batey* to the *batey* of Mata-Mamón, many cane cutters went with him and the company could not convince them to stay put. This incident suggests that personal ties were essential to the conformation of work gangs and to the allocation and organization of task work on the plantation.[28]

Faced with the ongoing problem of a scarcity of workers and an unstable labor force, how did the company respond? The Ozama Sugar Company could not raise wages in order to attract labor because wages were set at first by the Dominican Association of Sugar Producers and from 1945 on by the Trujillo government (through the Comité Nacional para Regular los Salarios of the Secretaría de Estado del

[27] Ibid., Aug. 24, Oct. 19, 1947; Aug. 15, 1948; Jan. 16, 23, 1949; Jan. 20, 1952; Feb. 8, Mar. 1, 1953; Apr. 18, 1954.

[28] Ibid., May 20 and Nov. 4, 1945. On social ties and networks in fieldwork today, see Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, chap. 8.

Trabajo).[29] The company therefore resorted to non-monetary incentives to attract and retain its labor force. It made efforts to improve housing on the estate by building small cement houses for workers, with communal kitchens, bathrooms, showers, and, in the central *batey*, electric light. It also allocated credit in the company stores and Christmas bonuses to workers as an incentive to return for the harvest.[30] And -a morbid benefit- the company awarded free coffins to the families of workers who died in their employ.[31]

B.C. Sugar also sought to improve its methods of worker recruitment. It sent trucks not only to the nearby towns of Monte Plata, Yamasá, and Bayaguana, but also further west to San Cristóbal, Azua, and Baní, and east to Hato Mayor to bring back cane cutters.[32] The Ozama report of February 19, 1945, a time of acute labor shortage, specified some of the methods used to attract peasants to work on the plantation. According to the report, Ozama's general manager had written to a local official in Yamasá, 20 miles to the northwest, who had promised to provide some workers,

> "summ[ing] up the benefits that could accrue to the people of the Yamasá region as well as to Ozama. [The letter] specifically pointed out that our need was most urgent in the crop season from January to April-May, when the weather normally was too dry for the cultivation work that the people of Yamasá do in their small patches

[29] See Cassá, *Movimiento obrero*. The deliberations of the Comité Nacional para Regular los Salarios for the mid-1940s are in AGN, Legajos de la Secretaría de Estado del Trabajo, nos. 62, 63, 67, 75, 100, and 114.

[30] Ozama operating reports, Dec. 29, 1946; July 18, 1948; Jan. 2, 1949.

[31] See Schreiner, *Refiners*, 134. This paternalistic practice, probably common to the foreign-owned sugar estates, may have built on local custom. The history of a rural area (*común*) bordering the Ozama plantation indicates that when someone died, local carpenters contributed the coffin as "una forma de cooperar con la familia del difunto y ... no cobraban por el trabajo." Lulio A. Blanchard and Teódulo A. Blanchard, *San Antonio de Guerra. Anotaciones históricas* (Sto. Domingo: Amigo del Hogar, 1989), 169.

[32] Ozama operating report, Feb. 5, 1945.

of land; thus one thing would complement another, and the laborers would be able to earn a living in their unproductive dry season. We asked the official to let us know of any complaints the people that worked here before might have against us, so that we could look into these and do our best to eliminate such sources in the future."[33]

In the idle season, *mayordomos* also made trips off plantation to contract Dominicans and Haitians living in the Dominican Republic for the upcoming harvest. As one former *mayordomo* explained, "A man without workers cannot be a *mayordomo*" ["*Quien no tiene gentes no puede ser mayordomo*"]; he had induced country people from the region of Guerra (where he was born) to work on the estate with offers of food and rum.[34]

Beyond such direct efforts to recruit and keep workers, the Ozama Sugar Company modified its way of operating in response to the problem of labor scarcity. It tried to use more workers during the off-season so they would be in place for the harvest. Also, for several years, Ozama began the harvest unusually early so as to mobilize a labor force before the other sugar plantations began their cutting seasons and to finish cutting before the rainy season hit. (This, however, proved impossible.) When labor was particularly scarce during the *zafra*, management occasionally shut down all other activities on the plantation, directing construction and railway repair workers to join the cane cutting effort. But many of these people categorically refused to do so. Though the company offered pay equal to their other jobs, they regarded cane cutting as socially unacceptable, indeed degrading, work.[35] Finally, despite their desire to keep the mill running around the clock during the *zafra*, the administrators admitted defeat. Every two weeks on the

[33] Ibid., Feb. 19, 1945.

[34] Caminero interview.

[35] Ozama operating reports, May 20, June 3, 1945; Apr. 11, 13, Dec. 14, 1947.

Sunday following payday, management closed down the sugar mill, recognizing that no cane would arrive from the fields that day. These Sundays were devoted to cleaning the machinery.

Field workers' first form of resistance, then, was refusal to work the hours, days, and places that management wanted them to; that is, their refusal to become a reliable, compliant seasonal proletariat. These people had their own diverse priorities -whether farming their own land, finding more lucrative wage work elsewhere, or religious or other leisure-time activities- and, given the fact of labor scarcity, there was little plantation administrators could do to "discipline" them.

A second form of resistance involved robbery and destructive carelessness bordering on sabotage. Some reports of theft on the plantation seem to support the idea that the cane cutters, like the surrounding peasant population, were primarily concerned with subsistence. The Ozama report of July 16, 1948, for example, complained that workers were forever trampling the new cane shoots agronomists planted in experimental plots; and when the cane grew a bit larger, the workers ate it. The company lost thousands of fence posts, which workers and local people took for their cooking fires; as well as cattle, which the workers slaughtered at night to eat. Company reports also mention problems with the theft of horses, tools, and light bulbs.[36]

Cases of vandalism are harder to identify because they often appeared to be accidents. For example, frequent

[36] Ibid., Mar. 30, 1947; Jan. 4, Aug. 2, Dec. 20, 1953; Mar. 7, Aug. 15, Dec. 5, 1954. On robbery on the Ozama estate some 20 years earlier, see "Informes periódicos del Jefe de Orden al Administrador Judicial", Summer 1929, Michelena Collection. According to these police reports, submitted while Ozama was in judicial receivership and no one was investing in the plantation, thefts of barbed wire fencing and telephone lines were common. Local people also cut wood illegally and stole planks from company shacks, and others by night cut cane in the fields, which they transported by canoe to Santo Domingo where they sold it. Some ground sugar also disappeared from the sugar mill. In September 1929 a plow that had been taken from the estate was located a week later in San Isidro, 15 kilometers from Ozama's central *batey*. The person in possession of the plow said he had rented it from someone else who claimed to have bought it from yet a third person several days earlier.

derailments on the plantation rail lines damaged the cane cars and delayed the delivery of cane to the mill at harvest time. Many derailments resulted from wet or defective tracks or malfunctioning switches, but switch problems often stemmed from worker error. Plantation administrators generally attributed such derailments to worker negligence, but sometimes they suggested that an accident must have been intentional. Ozama's division engineer described a "typical incident" in which a misset rail switch sent tank cars full of molasses plunging off the wharf into the river. On another occasion,

> "a derailed locomotive in the yard had been finally rerailed with the aid of various jacks, bars, and timbers, the maintenance gang had taken off, and the locomotive started for the shop when it derailed some ten yards from the point of its original derailment. One of the larger timbers had not been picked up and laying close to the tract had served as a nice fulcrum for the side rods of the locomotive to neatly jack itself off the track... We spent a great deal of time and effort improving the deficiencies of the Ozama railway system, but we could never completely match the ingenuity of the operators in this contest involving completely different aims."[37]

Another example of possible sabotage relates to the frequency of knife chokes in the mill. If cane stalks were cut too long, they obstructed the mechanical knifes in the mill, sometimes shutting down the grinding process for hours until the blockage could be removed. Administrators noted that more problems with knife chokes appeared after the company began to mechanize the cane haul, using tractors instead of ox-drawn carts.[38] It seems that there was some worker opposition to the

[37] "Anecdotes of Ozama" (Unpublished ms., 1955 or 1956, BCSA), 1-2. This collection of employee memories of life at Ozama was written just after B.C. Sugar sold the plantation and pulled out of the Dominican Republic. See also Ozama operating report, Mar. 24, 1946.

[38] Ozama operating reports, Jan. 23 and Feb. 6, 1949.

attempt to mechanize the cane haul, which resistance will be discussed later.

The Ozama estate responded to the problem of endemic robbery, as did other Dominican sugar plantations, by maintaining its own rural police, known as *guardacampestres,* who lived in the *bateyes* and patrolled the plantation on horseback. The company also passed bribes to an army post two kilometers away so that the soldiers would help keep order on the plantation. This continued a practice in effect in the 1920s when Ozama (then called Ingenio San Luís) belonged to the Michelena family.[39] As for sabotage, the response was somewhat different. Accidents were so numerous that Ozama's managers felt the need to explain them to themselves. One possible interpretation would have been to see the workers as hostile or antagonistic, and the accidents as deliberate sabotage. Surely administrators harbored a certain fear of the workers: the agricultural superintendent insisted that his assistants, who worked in the fields and were in direct contact with the cane cutters, wear guns at all times.[40] But it would have been difficult to live constantly with this fear. And the Canadians wanted to believe that what they were doing in the Dominican Republic was not only profitable but good for the country and that the workers regarded them positively.[41]

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[39] Schreiner, *Refiners*, 138. On the earlier practice, see Miguel A. Recio to Sr. J. Castillo, Sargento E.N., Jefe del Puesto San Isidro, Aug. 10, 1929, Michelena Collection. In this note Recio, the judicial administrator of Ozama, promised to continue paying the army sergeant the customary ten pesos a month.

[40] Tony Schmand (field assistant at Ozama, 1947-1955), telephone interview with author, Ladner, B.C., Aug. 20, 1990. Despite his boss's orders, Schmand refused to wear a gun in the fields. Gun were hot, they rubbed against your ribs. Besides, he said, the country people could throw a knife with great accuracy at thirty feet: if they wanted to, they could get you in the back, whether you had a gun or not. Schmand's approach was never to carry money (he charged his cigarettes so the workers would know this) and "to treat people as people" (he made sure they got attention when sick and so on). "The natives might swear at you," he related, "but it didn't mean anything." Schmand felt safe in the fields; he was never threatened.

[41] This attitude is expressed at various points in the Ozama reports and Rogers, "Ozama Sugar Company".

As a result, the Canadians at Ozama tended to attribute the frequent accidents not to the native workers' hostility but to their lack of intelligence, and specifically to their inability to handle modern technology. Managers described the Dominicans and Haitians with whom they worked as childlike, superstitious, and incapable of mastering or even really understanding North American technology.[42] Implicit in their reports is the idea that the company was helping to modernize the Dominican Republic by introducing new machinery and agricultural methods, but that locals were fundamentally incapable of making productive use of such technology. Modernization would occur despite the Dominican people.[43]

This image of Caribbean blacks and mulattos (whether Dominican, Haitian or British Antillean) calls to mind racial stereotypes prevalent in the U. S. South before the Civil War. In part this similarity must reflect longstanding racial and cultural images of black people shared among North American whites.[44] But such images probably also reflect the situation faced by both U.S. slaveowners and foreign plantation owners in the Caribbean: apparent worker negligence masking covert resistance. In both the United States and the Dominican Republic, plantation owners attributed the destructive carelessness of workers to their

[42] See "Anecdotes of Ozama."

[43] Ozama's owners and administrators regarded themselves as progressive modernizers. They were particularly proud that Ozama was the first sugar company in the Dominican Republic to apply fertilizer systematically. B.C. Sugar also introduced a new sown pasture grass, pangola, which proved useful to many Dominican cattle ranchers. See Schreiner, *Refiners*, 130-46; and Rogers, "Ozama Sugar Company."

[44] During the 1930-60 period, Canadian immigration policy excluded non-European people. See James W. St.G. Walker, "The West Indians in Canada," Canada's Ethnic Groups Booklet No. 6, The Canadian Historical Association, Ottawa, 1984, 8-11. Canadian racial attitudes are explored in Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada. A History* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971), chap. 14; Harry Gairey, *A Black Man's Toronto, 1914-1980 The Reminiscences of Harry Gairey* (Toronto: MHSO, 1981); and James W. St.G. Walker, "Racial Discrimination in Canadá: The Black Experience," Historical Booklet No. 41, The Canadian Historical Association, Ottawa, 1985.

supposed irrationality, thereby justifying the owners' continuing authority.

The Canadians' belief that Dominicans and Haitians could not learn to use North American technology influenced various company decisions. In 1949, for example, the central office in Vancouver was ready to install shortwave radios to facilitate communication among the various canefields and to coordinate the delivery of cane to the mill. But the estate's managers in the Dominican Republic rejected the idea on the grounds that Dominican overseers could never be taught to use the radios.[45]

The example of Ozama suggests that local reactions to foreign-introduced technology may be central to the images that North American businesses form of Third World peoples. Certainly Ozama's administrators, mostly engineers and agronomists by training, saw the Dominican rural population through this optic. The administrators' accounts recall the technological argument for Western superiority that, according to Michael Adas, has profoundly shaped European attitudes toward non-Western peoples since the Industrial Revolution.[46]

Anxieties about technology, nature, morality and what it means to be human inform cross-cultural perceptions and meditations on power and subordination in both Canadian accounts of life at Ozama (especially "Anecdotes of Ozama") and the famous Dominican sugar novel *Over*. But the Dominican and the Canadian optics do not coincide. In *Over*, Ramón Marrero Aristy inverts the European and North American association of mastering Western technology with being intelligently human and fully civilized. The Dominican novelist depicts foreign plantation administrators as efficient, inhuman machines, and he calls the sugar trains "monstruo[s] de hierro" and "bestias" that vomit people. He portrays the sugar complex

[45] BCSA, Ozama records, fol. "Engineering 4." See also "Anecdotes of Ozama", 7.

[46] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989).

"itself as a cruel machine that ingests and destroys Dominicans: "... el empleado [Dominican mayordomos, *guardacampestres*, and company store managers], a la vez que es carne de trapiche, hace de lubricante de la máquina y de conductor de elementos [workers] que alimentarán el engranaje insaciable."[47]

Getting at the plantation workers' ideas about culture and technology, bodies and machines, is something else again. Occasionally the Ozama reports provide a glimpse of how local people attributed their own cultural meanings to the new technology. One night the Canadians were roused from a deep sleep by a cacaphony of locomotive horns. They rushed outside, fearing that the racket signalled fire or some other catastrophe, only to find that the locomotives were "wailing" to mourn the death of a switchman in a dance hall in Sabaneta, and that this wailing of the locomotives was a customary sign of mourning on the estate.[48]

Deciphering the meanings attributed to technology is central to understanding interactions between foreign managers and Caribbean workers at Ozama. The Canadians installed electricity in the central *batey* in 1947 as an incentive to attract labor, but they were soon mystified by what seemed to be the locals' exaggerated fear of light bulbs and refrigerators and by the theft of light bulbs from company warehouses. Without the workers' stories, it is impossible to interpret what was going on, but the workers' reactions to electricity impressed on the Canadians that their work force had not internalized North American views on technology and that the workers independently generated their own meanings which the Canadians, as foreigners, could not fathom. This disconcerting experience apparently left the administrators uncertain of their own judgements about incentives that might attract labor. When one administrator proposed that setting up a tuberculosis clinic

[47] Marrero Aristy, *Over*, 82, 58.

[48] Ozama operating report, Feb. 20, 1949.

with free testing might give Ozama a potential edge in competing for labor with nearby plantations, others were not so sure. The suggestion was eventually dropped.[49]

Beyond the frequent train car derailments and knife chokes, a particularly clear-cut dimension of sabotage at Ozama was arson in the cane fields. At Ozama, many canefields suddenly went up in flames, particularly during the harvest period before the rains began. Some of these cane fires were accidental, started by a casually discarded lighted cigarette butt, sparks from the railroad, or the negligence of nearby peasants who, burning off weeds before planting, let their *conuco* fires get out of hand. But some were obvious cases of arson: administrators found packets of candles in the fields.[50] Such fires may have been set by individuals with particular resentments against the company. The majority, however, can only be understood in terms of the informal negotiation of pay rates.

Here we come to a third form of everyday resistance -that concerned with negotiating working conditions in the absence of formal union organization. Burned cane gives good sugar only if it is ground within 24 hours. To avoid losing the burned cane, Canadian administrators paid higher wages to cutters who were willing to harvest it immediately. These bonus wages, of course, were transitory (they lasted only as long as it took to

[49] BCSA, Ozama records, fols. "Engineering 4" and "Engineering 18". Recent anthropological research on Africa gives insight into how the meanings, dangers, or fears locals attribute to foreign-introduced technologies can be deciphered. See Luise White, "Cars Out of Place Vampires, Technology, and Labor in East and Central Africa," *Representations* 43 (Summer 1993), 27-50; Brad Weiss, "'Buying Her Grave' Money, Movement, and AIDS in Northwest Tanzania," *Africa* 63:1 (1993), 19-35.

[50] On cane fires, see Ozama operating reports, Apr. 28, May 12, 1946; Mar. 2, 9, 16, 1947; Apr. 1, 1951; Feb. 10, May 11, 1952; Jan. 18, Apr. 26, May 3, 1953; Mar. 14, 1954. For moving fictional accounts of how administrators suspected arson whenever a canefield went up in flames, see Juan Bosch, "Luís Pie," in *Cuentos escritos en el exilio*, 19th ed. (Sto. Domingo Editorial Alfa y Omega, 1990), 51-60; and Marrero Aristy, "*Over*", 123-27. Some left-wing activists in the early 1960s were arrested for cane arson; then the practice was to tie burning rags to horses' tails and send them galloping through the cane. Emilio Cordero Michel, personal communication, June 1990.

get the burned cane loaded). But by 1948, cane fires had become so frequent that the company decided not to harvest some of the burned fields as a strategy to discourage arson.[51]

Another possible explanation for the cane fires has to do with how the cane was cut. According to one Canadian administrator, cane cutters generally worked in teams, moving through a field in the form of an arc and throwing the cut cane into the center. This way of cutting left dispersed patches of cane. Because cutters were paid by the ton (and not by the number of hours worked), they quite logically did not want to take the time to walk back through the fields to harvest the isolated patches of

[51] See Ozama operating reports, Feb. 8, Mar. 14, 1948; Apr. 23, 1950; Jan. 7, 1951. Students of sugar plantations often remark on arson, but interpretations differ. Peter Boomgaard refers to cane burning as a "rough index of frustration" and a "primitive peasant protest", which he contrasts to "modern attitudes towards labor relations." Boomgaard, "Treacherous Cane The Java Sugar Industry Between 1914 and 1940," in *The World Sugar Economy in War and Depression, 1914-40*, ed. Bill Albert and Adrian Graves (London: Routledge, 1988), 164-65. See also Robert E. Elson, "Cane-Burning in the Pasuruan Area: An Expression of Social Discontent," in *Between People and Statistics: Essays on Modern Indonesian History Presented to P. Creutzberg*, ed. Francien van Anrooij et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 219-33). Evidence from various places, however, supports the hypothesis that arson can be a form of wage negotiation. In British Guiana cane burning was infrequent under slavery, but it spread almost immediately after abolition when cane cutters began to be paid. Alan H. Adamson, personal communication, Nov. 1992. David Lincoln cites trial records from South Africa: "On May 20, 1937 twenty-five acres of cane on the Doornkop sugar estates were burned ... As a result of the fire the Mill started crushing immediately and, as all employees were needed for the extra work thus entailed, none of the malcontents were dismissed." "Employment Practices, Sugar Technology, and Sugar Mill Labour Crisis and Change in the South African Sugar Industry, 1914-1939," in *The World Sugar Economy*, Albert and Graves, ed., 228-29. The most revealing analysis comes from a report in 1919 by J.D. ("Santiago") Dod, member of a distinguished Cuban-American sugar family and Cuban correspondent for a U.S. trade journal: "There seems to be a new and very serious menace to the present cane harvest, or, more strictly, the revival of an old one of less perilous times. All managers of plantations when their reliance upon free labor began were always upon their guard against the intentional burning of the poorest cane fields in order to facilitate the cutting of the cane by some one of the most audacious of the gang. But this kind of incendiarism was not frequent before the island became as demoralized as it is today. The reports of the public press from one district ... indicate that the cane cutters there are becoming contaminated by the all-prevailing greed for lucre that is really and truly

cane still standing. For this reason, the administrator suggested, workers tended to set fire to fields in which the cutting was almost completed.[52]

Within the piecework system, cane cutters defended their interests in other ways as well. If the foremen suspended the cutting too often because train accidents, oxcarts mired in the mud, or mechanical shutdowns in the mill created bottlenecks, cutters sometimes quit in disgust and went off to find work on another plantation. Workers also complained about the quality of the cane in certain parts of the plantation because the type of cane planted affected the amount of work and time to cut it. In March 1954, a group of Haitian cutters started a spontaneous work stoppage that lasted three days, complaining that the cane they were being asked to cut was too light.[53] Cutters refused to harvest some varieties of cane, particularly those with many leaves, because they were planted with wide spaces between each stalk and the stalks took more time to strip. Although the

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filthy. Not satisfied with the high wages they are now receiving, they seek to increase their gains where they get a stipulated price for the hundred arrobas, by secretly burning all the fields they commence cutting ... The lighting of a cane field in the spot which will make the fire most destructive is so easily accomplished and it can be done so secretly that, with so many foreign emissaries inciting the laboring classes to commit abuses, this kind of incendiarism may rapidly extend over the whole island. If this should happen, nothing short of shooting upon the spot all caught in the act will ever put an end to the calamity ... Cuba is proving, day by day, how difficult it is for a people born and bred for centuries under the yoke of European autocracy and clericalism to learn that the basis of all true democracy is morality and not trickery, and that unlimited license must in the end be the ruin of Cuba's main industry, the greatest of its kind in the world." *The Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer* 62:22 (May 31, 1919), 350-51. For descriptions of earlier Cuban cane-fires, see Robert Nairne Lauriault, "Virgin Soil The Modernization of Social Relations on a Cuban Sugar Estate. The Francisco Sugar Company, 1898-1921" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Florida, 1994), 293, 402-05. In Cuba, it seems, canefield fires were set as often by *colonos* as by workers. Barry Carr, personal communication, Feb. 28, 1994. This appears also to have been the case in Puerto Rico.

[52] W.R. Hetherington, interview by author, Horseshoe Bay, B.C., Aug. 12, 1988. See also Ozama operating report, May 28, 1947.

[53] Ozama operating report, Mar. 28, 1954.

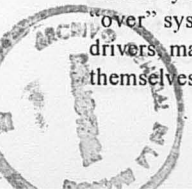
Ozama Sugar Company experimented with many varieties and at any one time planted at least ten different kinds of cane in distinct areas of the plantation, the company had to stop planting several productive varieties because the workers simply refused to cut them.[54]

The workers also disputed the accuracy of the scales where the cane was weighed. In February 1955, Haitian cutters in two different parts of the plantation attacked scale houses. In response the company promised them to "clean" the scales; at the same time the company asked the Haitian consul in Santo Domingo to come talk the most obstinate workers into going back to work. Then the company fired the protest leader and two others who held out, deporting them to Haiti. Nevertheless a week later, still arguing that they were not receiving the full wage for the cane they cut because of tampering with the scales, the Haitians again refused to work for 24 hours. Thus, while the Canadians' prejudices were voiced through the notion that workers could not learn to operate short wave radios, the workers expressed mistrust of their employers in part through mistrust of the cane scales.[55]

Cane cutters also balked at company efforts to reorganize the labor process to complement the mechanization of the cane haul. Mechanizing the haul meant replacing oxcarts with tractors and trucks to transport cane from the fields to the rail depots. In March 1947 the company began experimenting with a cutting technique called wind-rowing in conjunction with trying the tractor haul in one part of the estate. Each cutter was allotted six rows of cane; he piled the cane he cut in a long, continuous stack or "wind-row" between the two center rows, where other men followed along, loading the cane into the tractor. The new system

[54] Ibid., May 9 and 16, 1954.

[55] Ibid., Feb. 6 and 13, 1955. This is not to deny that cane was underweighed on Dominican plantations. Even in the 1980s, weighers generally shortchanged cutters by 20 to 35 percent. The sugar companies kept 5 to 10 percent in an official "over" system, while people in intermediate positions, including weighers, cart drivers, mayordomos, and *capataces de corte*, covertly distributed the rest among themselves. Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 60.



separated the functions of cutter and loader, previously performed by the same person; it also seems to have fragmented the small cutting gangs who were accustomed to working in coordination. Because a laborer under the new system could harvest almost twice as much cane per day as before, the company adjusted the per-ton payment rates downward to make the cutters' daily income equivalent to what they had earned from the oxcart haul. After a few weeks, the company declared the new cutting system a great success -it was fast and cost efficient. But the workers disliked it and refused to cooperate: they complained repeatedly, and their numbers diminished as cutters gradually drifted away from the tractor-haul district.[56]

By 1950 the company had abandoned its efforts to mechanize the cane haul. In addition to resistance from cane cutters (and, presumably, oxcart drivers), the trucks and tractors tended to become bogged down in mud in the rainy season. Also, because wages were low, the oxcart haul was probably cheaper. Although my interviews do not entirely clarify the company's motives for abandoning the mechanical haul, they shed light on interesting variations in management perceptions of field labor. Whereas one of the higher administrators, who resided in the central *batey*, said that the workers covertly slashed the tires of trucks and tractors, a Dutch field supervisor said that this was not so, that the frequent punctures resulted from the tires running over the sharp stakes left when the cane had been cut. The higher administrators, he commented, had no contact with and did not understand day-to-day conditions in the fields.[57]

The behavior of cane cutters at Ozama seems to support James C. Scott's hypothesis that "each form of labor control or payment generates its own distinctive forms of quiet resistance

[56] On the wind-rowing problems and other difficulties with mechanizing the haul, see Ozama operating reports, Mar. 9, 16, Apr. 27, 1947; Jan. 16, Apr. 10, 17, May 15, 1949.

[57] Schmand interview.

and 'counterappropriation'."[58] At Ozama, the piecework system -the system by which field workers were paid by the ton of cane cut- set the context for the various forms of contestation described above. There is no indication that the cutters objected to piecework per se. Indeed, it may have given many of them the flexibility to combine their roles as wage workers and small independent farmers.[59] But within the piecework system itself, field workers clearly attempted to gain the highest pay possible per unit of time. By leaving the plantation to find work elsewhere, setting fire to the canefields, and engaging in some spontaneous work stoppages, cane cutters influenced the decisions of plantation management. The Ozama reports indicate that the administration experimented with new ways of organizing labor and production and that often the informal resistance of the workers frustrated these efforts.

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[58] J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 34.

[59] See Juan A. Giusti Cordero, "Labor, Ecology, and History in a Caribbean Sugar Plantation Region Piñones (Loiza), Puerto Rico, 1770-1950", (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 1995), chap. 2. Giusti suggests that many Caribbean plantation workers also were and are peasants. To understand the "peasant" dimension of "rural proletarian" labor and vice versa, he argues, it is essential to attend to the social relations of village and plantation production, that is to the organization of work and labor processes. Giusti hypothesizes that Caribbean plantation workers exemplify a specific form of peasant-proletarian adaptation originally shaped under slavery and embodied in the task-work labor gang. Although studies of twentieth-century plantations are scarce, several recent works, which explore the peasant aspect of slave life, suggest that slaves preferred piece or task work on the plantations because it left them time to till their independent garden plots. Furthermore task work signified a measure of autonomy: it gave slaves the possibility of self-directing their labor. Phillip D. Morgan points to the "inherent ambiguity of piecework — its potential for either subordination or resistance" and "the ability of workers to regulate piecework and turn it to their own ends." Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations," in *Work and Labor in Early America*, ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1988), 189-220. On piecework and agrarian struggles, see Juan Martínez-Alier, *Labourers and Landowners in Southern Spain* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971); Dale W. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830-1848*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ.

Beyond the three forms of resistance described here, the Ozama reports occasionally mention other incidents, with less direct economic consequences, that nonetheless suggest another facet of worker resistance -satire, humor, and insult. For instance, oxcart drivers always called their oxen by name, and some named their animals after Canadian administrators ("Mr. Tony", "Mr. Smith", "Mr. Angus", and so on). Drivers frequently whipped and swore at their animals, but if the Canadian named took offense, the carter would say "I'm not talking to you, I'm

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Press, 1990), 233-48; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, (Urbana Univ. of Illinois Press, 1992), chap. 2; and Rebecca J. Scott, "Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane Cuba, Brazil, and Louisiana after Emancipation," *The American Historical Review* 99:1, (Feb. 1994), 90, 98. In the Dominican Republic, where slavery ended 50 years before large sugar estates were formed, the institution of piecework apparently was a worker initiative. José del Castillo relates that on Dominican sugar plantations in the late nineteenth century piecework was used for clearing land and routine agricultural tasks, but cane cutters received a daily wage. In the early 1890s (a period of rapid monetary fluctuations and recession in the sugar industry), Dominican peasants insisted on payment by the task, refusing to cut cane for a daily wage. Mill owner William L. Bass reacted strongly against this type of payment system. In 1902 Bass wrote, "the contractors have to subdivide the tasks among the laborers by what is called 'piecework'. And this is only achieved after long and heated debate... [The piecework system is a] custom that has nothing good about it: it offers no advantages and is the tacit recognition that the laborer is in a position to impose his demands on the owner." José del Castillo, "The Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry From Competition to Monopoly, from National Semi-proletariat to Foreign Proletariat," in *Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish Speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Frank Moya Pons and Stanley L. Engerman, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985), 229-31. The Bass citation is from *Reciprocidad* (Sto. Domingo La Cuna de America, 1902), 78-79. The choice of a task-based versus a time-based organization of work holds implications for the kind of personal relations established between employers and laborers. A significant issue, which I hope to address in future work, is the role mayordomos played in mediating labor-management relations. One final comment: when, in the 1940s, the Trujillo government legislated minimum hourly wage rates and the eight-hour day for factory workers, this set off struggles at Ozama between mill, construction, and railway workers, on the one hand, and management, on the other, over how to calculate the equivalencies between time and task payments, and over whether the organization of work by task or by time was more advantageous and to whom.

talking to my bull."[60] In another example, workers asked a new Canadian administrator for the packing crates in which his personal belongings had been shipped so as to use the wood for building material. The administrator, whose name was stamped all over the crates, consented. Some weeks later, a new brothel appeared in Sabaneta with a board on which the administrator's name was stamped prominently displayed on the portal. The Canadians could not help but see it every time they drove along the main road from the plantation into Santo Domingo.[61] These stories convey an image of the workers independently commenting on (and indeed talking back to) their foreign bosses and getting away with it.

Two other events, involving skilled workers, illustrate the vehemence with which some rejected what they regarded as a particular manager's unjust evaluation of them. A train engineer took an administrator to court because, he asserted, the

[60] Schmand interview. See also "Anecdotes of Ozama", 7. The appendix to a document from the 1930 Michelena-Bank of Nova Scotia court case, Michelena Collection, lists the name of every ox on the estate at the time (more than one thousand animals in all). On the social origins of oxcart drivers and their relations with cane cutters, see Moya Pons et al., *El batey*, 44-46. The authors found that children at play in the *bateyes* often pretend they are cartmen, whereas they never play at being cane cutters.

[61] W.R. Hetherington interview, Aug. 12, 1988. See also "Anecdotes of Ozama", 15. On these incidents in which locals mocked the Canadians' authority through the use of their names, Lauren Derby comments, "This may have had a particular significance, given the way public and private identities are articulated by both Dominicans and Haitians. Rural Haitians are loathe to let outsiders (often outside the immediate family) use their "official" names; neighbors, relatives and friends call people only by their nicknames. This practice may have deepened under Duvalier as a way of protecting themselves and loved ones from taxation, local paramilitiary, *tonton macoutes*, etc. In the Dominican Republic it's true as well ... Names are an incredibly important arena in which popular notions of private and public identities are articulated, and the laborers playing with the administrators' names may have played upon this — maybe doing to their names precisely what the people are protecting themselves against when they refuse to give out their "official" names, their public ID. (In vodoun the name is considered part of the body, and like hair and nails can be used in witchcraft)." Derby, personal communication, Apr. 2, 1993.

Canadian had wrongly accused him of robbery.[62] And in 1948 a disgruntled employee in the accounting department hit an administrator over the head with a lead pipe because, he said, the Canadian had insulted him. The punishment was light: a Dominican court reduced the charge of attempted murder to assault and battery, sentencing the aggressor to only six months in prison and a small fine. The political context of the trial may have affected its outcome. According to the plaintiff: The local press gave considerable publicity to the incident and as foreigners, especially Americans, were not liked in the Dominican Republic, that point was given some emphasis. Our lawyers advised me to keep the case as quiet as possible, and further recommended that they not appear in defense at the trial as the whole affair was so obviously in my favor. Later events proved that, as our political lawyers played all sides especially for favour of the Dictator, they did not wish to appear in public in defense of a foreigner.[63]

On leaving jail, the defendant headed back to Ozama to collect some outstanding pay and ask for another job.

The Broader Context

What are we to make of the information about interactions between workers and management found in the Ozama reports? In a memoir written in 1956, a Canadian administrator summed up the experience: "[we had] the normal difficulties of working with an indolent, insolent and ignorant working force."[64] The problems the Canadians encountered help explain this statement. In a multitude of ways, cane cutters evaded and sometimes thwarted the administrators' efforts to rationalize the sugar operation, to make it more efficient and productive. Yet it was necessary to attract workers to the plantation and induce them to participate in the production process, so management

[62] Ozama operating report, Jan. 21, 1955.

[63] "Anecdotes of Ozama," 5-6; Ozama operating report, May 28, 1947.

[64] Rogers, "Ozama Sugar Company", appendix, 64.

was willing to live with these problems and, to an extent, yield to worker initiatives with the larger aim of making a profit. How can the same situation be conceptualized from the workers' perspective? There is no evidence that cane cutters engaged in any deliberate collective resistance against the foreign sugar corporation. Although our understanding of what the workers were doing is murky and incomplete (filtered as it is through managers' reports to headquarters), what comes out clearly is the workers' ability to maneuver within the interstices of existing structures so as to protect their interests.

What was going on at Ozama corresponds in many ways to political scientist James C. Scott's concept of "everyday resistance".[65] To regard armed rebellions or organized strikes as the only real forms of protest, Scott has argued, is to overlook the subtle, covert, often individual ways that country people express their view of the world and act on their concerns. Peasants and workers engage in petty acts of insubordination and avoidance aimed at immediate, practical improvements in their lives. Informal, sporadic and often clandestine, such "passive resistance" may be relatively effective in the long run, for whereas overt protest is often repressed, everyday resistance may alter (or prevent change in) the system in small but concrete ways. What occurred at Ozama were small-scale skirmishes and evasions, actions and reactions, that resulted in mutual accomodation. It should be noted that the ongoing positioning of managers and laborers vis-a-vis each other was played out not only in their behavior, but also in how they interpreted what was going on to themselves and each other. A significant issue was whether or not contention was in fact occurring; that is whether a given incident was to be explained as accident or sabotage, the outcome of ignorance or resistance.[66]

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[65] See J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* and *Hidden Transcripts*. Also helpful on the idea of resistance are Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance The Culture and History of a South African People*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), chap. 8; and Roger M. Keesing, *Custom and Confrontation The Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), chap. 23.

To clarify the broader context that shaped the actions of the cane cutters, on the one hand, and plantation administrators, on the other, two major questions must be addressed. The first question is what the various forms of "everyday resistance" at Ozama tell us about connections between the plantation and the peasant economies. Through the Ozama records we enter into the fluid, interstitial world of peasants who are also wage workers, portrayed so vividly in the writing of Sidney Mintz and others on the Caribbean.[67] Many cane cutters who worked for wages at Ozama were at the same time independent cultivators who still had some access to land. From the Ozama case, some investigators might conclude that the basic problem the Canadians faced was trying to forge a proletariat out of a rural population that clung to noncapitalist roots and values.[68]

This is a plausible interpretation, but it has problems. At the same time that the cutters appeared to be acting on the basis of noncapitalist values, they were striving to make the most money possible within the system of payment by the piece or task - constantly disputing where and how they had to cut the cane, or deserting Ozama for better working conditions. Their behavior

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[66] I am indebted to Purnima Mankekar and Akhil Gupta for this point.

[67] See the following, all by Sidney W. Mintz: "The Question of Caribbean Peasantries A Comment," *Caribbean Studies* 1:3 (Oct. 1961), 31-34; "The Rural Proletariat and the Problem of Rural Proletarian Consciousness," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1:1 (1974), 291-324; *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago: Aldine, 1974); "Slavery and the Rise of Peasantries," *Historical Reflections* 6:1 (1979), 213-53. See also Malcolm Cross and Arnaud Marks, eds., *Peasants, Plantations, and Rural Communities in the Caribbean*, (Guildford, England Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Surrey, 1979).

[68] This was the image of the country people held by many urban Dominicans. "El trabajador rural dominicano ha sido siempre un tipo anárquico," wrote Ramón Marrero Aristy in 1945. Dominican peasants were seen to be unsettled people who, as the descendants of slaves, fiercely valued their autonomy and worked only enough to feed themselves and put a roof over their heads. They were motivated by non-economic factors — social activities, religious practices, leisure time. They were unreliable and undisciplined, resisted engagement with markets, and did not respond to monetary incentives. On this portrayal of the Dominican peasantry, see Raymundo González, "Ideología del progreso y campesinado en el siglo xix," *Ecos* 1:2 (1993), 24-43. Marrero Aristy quotation from "La posición del trabajador," *La*

makes clear that pay rates and the organization of production - that is, control of the labor process- were of intense interest to the workers.

One Ozama report notes that when wages rose, cane cutters worked less.[69] This observation might be interpreted as evidence that the cutters were not interested in accumulating money. Studies in African economic history, however, provide a different perspective. Elliott J. Berg and Robert Baldwin suggest that peasant farmers may resist full-fledged incorporation as wage laborers into a plantation, mining, or urban economy not because they have "traditional" values, but because they prefer to dedicate time and resources to their own village crops. They may seek to gain, through temporary wage work, a fixed amount of money to pay taxes or invest in their own agriculture, but beyond this "target" sum, they will not work more for higher wages. Under such conditions, the relation between pay scales and labor supply is most accurately described by a "backward-sloping labor supply function"; that is, when wages rise beyond a certain threshold, the supply of labor diminishes because workers choose to work for less time.[70]

In the Dominican Republic, peasants may have sent family members as cane cutters to the sugar plantations (particularly in the months of January, February and March) to increase the resources available for investing in their own agricultural activities. Opportunities for peasants to sell commercial crops widened significantly during the Trujillo years. Soon after he came to power, Trujillo launched a major campaign to replace rice imports (which in the late 1920s averaged 31 million kilograms annually, costing more than $1.5 million a year) with domestically produced rice. To this end, the government imposed high customs duties on imported rice; built hundreds

Opinión, Sto. Domingo, Sept. 18, 1945, p. 1, quoted in González, 42-43.

[69] Ozama operating report, Apr. 23, 1947.

[70] Elliott J. Berg, "Backward-sloping Labor Supply Functions in Dual Economies — The African Case," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 75:3 (Aug. 1961), 468-92; Robert E. Baldwin, *Economic Development and Export Growth: A Study of Northern Rhodesia, 1920-1960* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1966), 109-39.

of kilometers of paved roads, which connected town and country for the first time; and constructed irrigation works that brought large tracts of land into rice cultivation. The Ministry of Agriculture also disseminated improved seeds and technical knowledge through *Juntas Protectoras de la Agricultura*, which were established in many rural localities.

The national rice campaign was extraordinarily successful. Domestic rice production increased from 3.5 million kilograms in 1927 to 41.4 million kilograms in 1938, and in 1940 the country became self-sufficient in rice. The area devoted to this crop continued to expand during World War II when the Dominican Republic exported to other Caribbean islands, Colombia, and Canada. After the war, rising domestic consumption kept rice prices high. Although the irrigated areas were highly productive, most Dominican rice was nonirrigated (*arroz de secano*). Dry rice was a peasant crop, raised in *conucos* that averaged 2.3 acres (*15 tareas*) in size. During the Trujillo years, peasants living in the low, swampy area along the Ozama river north of the Ozama plantation turned to rice cultivation; and by the early 1940s peasant production of rice in the nearby regions of Monte Plata, Yamasá, and Bayaguana was substantial. As the map shows, the eastern part of the Dominican Republic -just north of the sugar plantations- became an important dry rice-producing zone.[71] Here we see, then, the coexistence of a plantation economy oriented toward export markets and a growing peasant commercial economy supplying the domestic market.

[71] The account of the rice campaign is drawn from Orlando Inoa, *Estado y campesinos al inicio de la Era de Trujillo*, (Sto. Domingo: Librería La Trinitaria, 1994); *Revista de Agricultura*, vol. 30 (Aug.-Sept. 1939); República Dominicana, *IV Censo agropecuario nacional*, 1950, p. 64; U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 166, Foreign Agricultural Service, Narrative Reports (1920-41), Dominican Republic, Agriculture—Tobacco, box 77, entry 5, and Narrative Reports (1950-54), Dominican Republic, Forest Products—Sugar, box 128, entry 5. *The Revista de Agricultura*, official organ of the Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura, provides a detailed picture of official policy during the Trujillo years, along with reports on the progress of agriculture from various regions. The *legajos* of the Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura, AGN, also are a rich source for the study of Dominican agrarian history.

The intersection of the peasant and plantation economies is, however, even more complicated. The rapid expansion of sugar plantations in the southeastern part of the Dominican Republic in the twentieth century stimulated a population increase in that region. Dominicans from other areas of the country migrated toward the sugar zone, while thousands of foreigners were imported as sugar workers. All of these people had to be fed. Although Dominican merchants inveighed bitterly against the stores run by the sugar companies, alleging that the plantations monopolized commerce, in fact company stores did not entirely supply the demand for foodstuffs. It appears that the sugar plantations provided market outlets for previously subsistence peasants who lived in small settlements on the plantations' inland periphery. Oral accounts suggest that the expansion of sugar production at Ozama during the 1940s stimulated the commercialization of the nearby region of Bayaguana, where peasants began producing food to be consumed on the estate. And sociologist Walter Cordero has found evidence that around 1949, more than two hundred peasants migrated from Baní to the region of Boca Chica, where for several years they grew plantains, yuca, and ñame for the Ozama and Boca Chica sugar plantations. The peasants sold some of their produce to the company stores, and other foodstuffs directly to the cane cutters by sending family members as itinerant vendors through the *bateyes*.[72]

One more link existed between the plantation and peasant economies. In 1951 the U.S. embassy's economic attache reported that rising wages in the sugar sector were stimulating Dominicans to purchase more rice and that rising consumption was reflected in prices favorable to rice farmers, who were putting more land into rice growing.[73] Thus it appears that the government-stimulated internal market for rice, demographic

[72] Demetrio ("Venancio") Guzmán, interview by Walter Cordero and the author, Baní, D.R., Feb. 25, 1992.

[73] U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 59, 839.2317/12-451, Dec. 4, 1951.

growth in the eastern region attributable to the takeoff of the sugar industry, and government-initiated hikes in sugar wages gave peasants new economic incentives to increase production for commercial markets. It is quite possible that many worked part-time as wage laborers on the sugar plantations to gain the capital necessary to invest in their own agriculture, from which they could make a profit.

The preceding analysis contributes to the ongoing debate about the fate of the peasantry under Trujillo. José R. Cordero Michel and others have argued that Trujillo promoted capitalist agriculture on a large scale, resulting in the disposession and impoverishment of the peasantry. In contrast, Orlando Inoa maintains that, as the dictator of a bankrupt country during the Great Depression, Trujillo promoted peasant production in the effort to attain national food self-sufficiency. But Inoa stresses the government's exploitive nature: although the food policy was a success, he says, country dwellers did not benefit because of heavy taxes and forced labor exactions. Richard Turits is in the process of elaborating a third view that seeks to explain Trujillo's longevity in the dictator's populist relationship with the rural population. He argues that Trujillo took a "peasant path" to agricultural modernization, and that the country people did benefit: Trujillo provided peasants with land and political stability, while at the same time transforming traditional, shifting peasant cultivators into sedentary farmers producing for urban and export markets.[74] However, the effects of the rice tax and the government policy that forbade peasants to grind rice at home, thus subjecting them to what may have been exploitive relations with millers, remain to be investigated.

The foregoing overview of relations between the peasant and the plantation economies provides some insight into our second issue for interpretation: the cane cutters' remarkable

[74] See José R. Cordero Michel, *Análisis de la Era de Trujillo. Informe sobre la República Dominicana, 1959*, 5th ed. (Sto. Domingo: Editora de la UASD, 1987), 47-57; Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*; and Richard Turits, "The Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, Property and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic (1930-61)" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, in progress).

ability to flount plantation administrators and get away with it. How to explain the administrators' apparent lack of coercive influence? The Ozama reports leave the reader wondering who is accomodating whom. The Ozama experience is particularly surprising in light of the very coercive plantation regimes in other times and places and the domineering, arbitrary foreign managers depicted in Dominican sugar novels.[75]

One question worth asking is whether or not conditions at Ozama were typical of sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic in the 1940s. Were Ozama's managers so ineffectual because they were novices at running a tropical plantation, that is, because they did not know what they were doing? Were cane cutters in a good position to bargain because the estate was just beginning to produce again after a period of neglect in the 1930s? Did the owners' mildness perhaps stem from their character as meek and tolerant Canadians? Or was it a conscious form of worker management that avoided confrontation? Significantly, whereas in 1946 mill and some cane workers struck or threatened to strike on several Dominican sugar plantations, the Ozama estate was not among them.[76]

Or perhaps there was a coercive side to life at Ozama that plantation managers did not describe in their reports to Vancouver. At first glance, the Ozama records would seem to be a private (and for this reason, quite truthful) conversation among

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[75] See, e.g., Ann Laura Stoler, Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985); and Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert, eds., *Plantation Workers Resistance and Accomodation* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1993). Dominican sugar novels include Marrero Aristy's *Over*, and F.E. Moscoso Puello, *Cañas y bueyes*, 2nd ed. (Sto. Domingo Asociación Serie 23, Amigo del Hogar, 1975). See also Doris Sommer, *One Master for Another Populism as Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 1983), chap. 4; and Berta Graciano, *La novela de la caña: estética e ideología*, (Sto. Domingo: Editora Alfa y Omega, 1990).

76. Ozama operating report, Jan. 20, 1946. Ozama's relatively small size and its location well west of La Romana and San Pedro de Macorís, where sugar labor organizers were most active, may have contributed to Ozama's lack of strikes, though one prominent union organizer (Alberto Larancuent) had worked at Ozama.

businessmen -in James C. Scott's terms, a hidden transcript of the powerful. On second glance, it becomes more difficult to decipher the nature of the source and where its silences lie. Here we have foreigners living and working in a Dominican milieu, writing to compatriots at home where standards of behavior and labor relations might have been different. And we have employees writing to headquarters, reluctant, perhaps, to admit to actions or missteps that their superiors might not approve or understand. What is more, B.C. Sugar was sure that the Trujillo government intercepted its mail: the head office cautioned employees not to criticize the dictator in their reports, and the company devised secret codes to communicate sensitive matters by telegraph. One wonders how such considerations influenced what Canadian managers wrote in the Ozama reports. Certainly it is possible that these business records did not discuss some of the mechanisms used to discipline cane cutters; only extensive interviews with old cutters of the period would clarify whether their perceptions of what was going on coincided with those of management. In the absence of such information, I can but note that conversations with several Dominicans who held middle level positions at Ozama (two mayordomos and the superintendent of company stores) and two Dominican labor lawyers employed by the Canadians turned up nothing to contradict the general picture presented in the reports. None of these individuals maintained that the Ozama Sugar Company treated its workers badly.[77]

[77] Eduardo Matos Díaz (Ozama's labor lawyer, 1946-50), Sto. Domingo, July 5, 1990, and Luis R. del Castillo Morales (Ozama's labor lawyer, 1950-54), Sto. Domingo, June 28, 1990, interviews by author; Augusto Saviñón (former superintendent of company stores), interview by Walter Cordero, Central *Batey*, Ozama plantation, Dec. 12, 1990; and Caminero and Soriano interviews. Eduardo Matos Díaz said there were no major labor problems at Ozama, no big, unresolvable issues. He expressed the opinion that the Canadians were more understanding ("comprensivos") in dealing with their workers than the U.S.-owned South Porto Rico Sugar Company and the West Indies Sugar Company, proprietors of the largest sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic. Luis del Castillo Morales concurred. He thought the fact that there were few Canadians living at Ozama at any one time might have helped them adapt to their surroundings and get along with their work

It is worth stopping here to consider whether we have phrased the question correctly. Perhaps what appears to be the remarkable ability of cane cutters to move around, to defy the estate owners, and to influence their working conditions is not so extraordinary after all. In the late 1970s and 1980s, students of rural Latin America began to revise earlier conceptualizations that portrayed the countryside as a static place composed of closed peasant communities on the one hand, and bounded haciendas or plantations on the other. New studies, which adopt a "history-from-below" approach, call into question the enormous, one-sided power that landlords supposedly exercised over tenants and peons. These studies reveal a much more fluid rural world, a world in which many people were, and are, geographically mobile while at the same time maintaining ties with kin and fictive kin in rural and urban settings. Furthermore, these studies show, rural people often take on a variety of economic roles: small cultivator, casual wage laborer, artisan, itinerant vendor.[78] Clearly these are the conditions (and strategies) that affected relations between workers and management at Ozama. Barry Carr's comment

force. Dr. del Castillo recalled, however, that he had argued nearly one hundred cases in Trujillo's Juzgados de Paz y Trabajo, most initiated by the Ozama Sugar Company against mill, railroad and construction workers for "abandono de trabajo" or "falta de respecto"; but he regarded the cases as of minor importance. Unfortunately I have been unable to locate these court records. No studies exist of labor relations on other Dominican sugar estates with which to compare Ozama. Scattered evidence suggests that conditions of work may have been most harsh at La Romana, the enormous U.S.-owned plantation near the eastern tip of the island. Certainly in the mid-1940s labor-management relations were most conflictual there (Cassá, *Movimiento obrero*, chap. 5). Historian Humberto García Muñiz is studying La Romana: "The South Porto Rico Sugar Company The History of a U.S. Multinational Corporation in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia Univ., in progress).

[78] See, e.g., William Roseberry, "Beyond the Agrarian Question in Latin America," in *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America*, by Frederick Cooper et al. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1993); and Ricardo Salvatore, "Reclutamiento militar, disciplinamiento y proletarización en la era de Rosas," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. E. Ravignani"*, 3:5 (1992), 25-47.

on Cuban sugar workers applies equally well to cane cutters in the Dominican Republic: "The survival and even flourishing of alternatives to exclusive dependence on wage labor available to field workers substantially shaped patterns of worker resistance and accomodation as well as strategies for maximizing well-being and autonomy."[79]

To what extent, then, were labor relations at Ozama characteristic of sugar plantations in the Caribbean or elsewhere in Latin America? Recent studies on post-slavery sugar estates suggest that Ozama was not unique. Not only in the Dominican Republic, but also in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Peru, many field workers were not fully proletarianized. A significant number retained access to small landholdings, and labor shortages were an endemic problem. Faced with multiple forms of resistance to industrial discipline, plantation managers in various settings found it most productive to use incentives rather than extraeconomic coercion or physical force to attract and retain harvest workers. De facto bargaining of the kind described at Ozama seems to have occurred when plantation labor was, for whatever reason, in short supply and when subsistence alternatives were available to workers.[80]

To more adequately explain the vigor of contestation at Ozama, one additional factor must be considered: the role of the state. Plantation regimes usually are most coercive where governments reinforce the landlords' authority and where legislation to channel and tie labor to large estates is rigorously enforced. This did not occur in the Dominican Republic. The Trujillo dictatorship did not buttress the foreign sugar corporations' control over their work force, nor did Trujillo allow

[79] Barry Carr, "Sugar and Soviets The Mobilization of Sugar Workers in Cuba-1933" (Paper presented to the Tenth Latin American Labor History Conference, Duke Univ., April 23, 1993), 7.

[80] See Giusti, "Labor, Ecology and History"; R. Scott, "Defining the Boundaries"; Teresita Martínez Vergne, *Capitalism in Colonial Puerto Rico Central San Vicente in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1992), chap. 5; Arnold J. Bauer, "Rural Workers in Spanish America Problems of Peonage and Oppression," *HAHR* 59:1 (Feb. 1979), 34-63; and Michael J. Gonzáles, "Planter Control and Worker Resistance in Northern Peru, 1880-1921," in Lal et al.,

the corporations to exercise independent police and judicial power within plantation boundaries. Neither in economic nor in political terms was the foreign-owned sugar sector a "state within a state".

Although exempt as foreigners from the personal abuses to which many Dominicans were subject, Ozama's Canadian administrators were well aware that they were living under the Trujillo government. They were required to carry government-issued identity cards. To import machinery and legally employ their work force, they had to pay a wide range of taxes and bribes, many of which went directly into Trujillo's pocket. Ozama's chief administrator had to petition the government for permission to employ Haitian workers, and he met annually with government and labor representatives to set harvest wages.

During the 1940s Trujillo made sure his presence was felt by Dominicans across the country, including those who worked on the foreign-owned plantations. He beamed radio speeches to the countryside; subordinates held election rallies for his Partido Dominicano in the central *bateyes* of the sugar estates; and the Ministry of the Interior and Police virtually appointed the *guardacampestres*.[81] Ozama's management provided transport for workers from outlying *bateyes* to attend government-sponsored election rallies and labor meetings. Ozama's owners, furthermore, seem to have drawn indirectly on Trujillo's power in selecting Dominican mayordomos to manage their labor force. Interviews with two of the 15 mayordomos at Ozama during the B.C. Sugar period revealed that both had been *alcaldes pedáneos*, the lowest-level representatives of

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Plantation Workers, 297-316. For labor-management negotiations on coffee plantations under similar conditions, see Thomas H. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886-1934*. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980), 87-110; and Malcolm Deas, "A Colombian Coffee Estate Sta. Barbara, Cundinamarca, 1870-1912," in *Land and Labour in Latin America Essays on the Development of Agrarian Capitalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 269-98.

[81] See Ozama operating reports, Feb. 14, Mar. 30, Apr. 6, 1947; Oct. 1, 1950.

executive power in the Dominican countryside, before being hired at Ozama.

Alcaldes pedáneos were usually individuals who were well respected locally, often just a niche above their neighbors in socioeconomic standing. Their appointment as *alcaldes pedáneos* confirmed and enhanced their prestige. At the same time, they acted as brokers between the national and the local spheres who could either enforce -or protect their neighbors from- the exactions of national officials (the draft, labor levies, vagrancy charges, fines or imprisonment for missing identity cards). The two *ex-mayordomos* interviewed exemplified contrasting takes on this role. Their stories also illustrate how local people's lives -and their strategies of accumulation- intersected with the sugar plantation but were not encompassed by it. The first, Manuel Caminero, had relied on political connections with the powerful and police training to become *alcalde* and later work his way into the plantation's bureaucracy. Son of a peasant from Guerra, Caminero had worked as a carpenter's assistant on a nearby sugar estate. In the 1920s he traded several oxcarts and draft teams for an automobile and entered the transport business. Working as a chauffeur, he came into contact with the dictator's brother Pedro. Soon Caminero became Pedro Trujillo's trusted client: he slept rolled in a blanket at the foot of Pedro's bed and tasted his food before he ate. Pedro, who exercised political influence in the region east of Santo Domingo, took good care of his loyal friend: after Caminero did his military service, Pedro had him named police chief of Guerra, then *alcalde pedáneo*. Next Caminero worked as a *guardacampestre* at Ozama for two years, rising to the post of mayordomo in the mid-1940s. Despite -or perhaps because of- his familiarity with the more repressive forms of authority, Caminero was disliked by the field laborers. According to the Ozama reports, he had trouble getting them to work well and so eventually lost his job. While mayordomo he had bought and sold horses on the side. When Ozama fired him, he used his savings to buy land for cattle-grazing; after Trujillo took over the Ozama estate, Caminero became a *colono* of the mill.

The second mayordomo, Isaias Soriano, was a peasant *jefe* from the area north of the plantation. His family had ample land, but it was worthless because there were no roads and, therefore, no access to markets. In the 1920s Soriano and his father established the first store in the region with connections by canoe to Santo Domingo. This old man told us that the peasants "loved him", and, when asked why, related a story of benevolent paternalism. When he slaughtered a bull, he distributed two-thirds of it among his neighbors. He rallied local people to repair the church in Monte Plata, and, although the peasants donated their work, he fed them well. In December he always went to pay homage to the Cristo de Bayaguana, an important pilgrimage site in Dominican popular religion. As *alcalde pedáneo* he protected people who had no identity cards. In April 1945, after the Canadians gave him a company store concession in the remote northern part of the plantation, Soriano rented 135 acres of land to Ozama. A few weeks later, he began sending groups of men, who worked with his family growing rice, to help with the cane harvest. The Ozama report of July 15, 1945 noted that the mayordomo of the northern section of the estate "cannot get along with the Soriano family, people who are very useful to the Company." Shortly thereafter, Isaias Soriano was appointed mayordomo instead. The Ozama reports and Soriano agree that Ozama employed him because he could convince local peasants to work for the plantation. The Ozama reports say he was a good mayordomo. For his part, Soriano used his position to get jobs at Ozama for family members, and owing to contacts he made while mayordomo, later was able to put some of his land into sugar production as a *colono*.[82]

Besides the *alcaldes pedáneos*, Trujillo incorporated the sugar plantations into his field of power through labor legislation and a corporatist system of labor mediation. Near the end of World War II, seeking international recognition as a democrat, Trujillo decreed a series of labor laws establishing factory

[82] The *alcalde pedaneo* life stories are drawn from Ozama operating reports, Apr. 2, 16, 23, July 15, Aug. 12, Nov. 4, 1945; Caminero interview; and Isaias Soriano, interviews by Walter Cordero and the author, Sto. Domingo, July 21 and 23, 1991.

workers' rights to a minimum wage, the eight-hour day, paid vacations, and the right to strike. Known as the "interlude of tolerance," the brief period from 1944 to mid-1947 was the only time in Trujillo's rule that he allowed labor and the political opposition some liberties. Pressured by a new U.S. policy of cracking down on hemispheric dictators, Trujillo encouraged opposition parties and briefly permitted political demonstrations, labor rallies, and opposition newspapers. Labor union organizing flourished in the sugar mills and the cities; Trujillo soon worried that the activity was getting out of hand.[83]

After 1946, Trujillo murdered or exiled labor leaders and repressed all independent unions, preferring to conduct relations with labor through a corporatist system of management-labor arbitration boards.[84] According to Dominican labor historiography, the workers' movement ended in 1947, and thereafter the Trujillo regime completely dominated and subordinated labor. The archives of Trujillo's Ministry of Labor (Secretaría de Estado del Trabajo) and the Ozama reports, however, indicate that even after 1947, individual sugar mill, railway, and construction workers raised numerous complaints to the government's arbitration boards alleging that foreign plantation managers were violating Dominican labor laws.[85] These skilled workers received hearings in Santo Domingo, and sometimes they were vindicated. There is no evidence that mill workers identified with cane cutters: judging from the records of their hearings, the mill workers seem to have been most concerned with establishing their rights, as skilled labor, to permanent positions and superior working conditions that would set them apart from unskilled field labor. Nevertheless

[83] See Crassweller, *Trujillo*, 212-20; Bernardo Vega, *Un interludio de tolerancia El acuerdo de Trujillo con los comunistas en 1946* (Sto. Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1987).

[84] See Cassá, *Movimiento obrero*; Justino José del Orbe, *Mauricio Baéz y la clase obrera*, (Sto. Domingo: Taller, 1981).

[85] See, e.g., AGN, Legajos de la Secretaría de Estado del Trabajo, 77, 147; Ozama operating reports, May 9, Dec. 5, 1948; Apr. 2, July 9, 1950; Apr. 15, July 8, 1951.

cane cutters must have been at least vaguely aware of the mill workers' complaints.

They were probably aware of Trujillo's escalating attacks on the foreign sugar corporations as well. After 1948 when Trujillo began competing with the foreigners as a sugar producer himself, he launched a vociferous newspaper campaign that portrayed the foreign sugar interests as exploiters who cared nothing for the welfare of the Dominican people and who violated Dominican laws (particularly the health and housing codes) with impunity. The government sent labor and sanitation inspectors to the estates, and, in the early 1950s, it insisted that the foreign sugar companies donate reserve land to Dominican sugar producers (*colonos*). Meanwhile, the *jefe* raised sugar export taxes each year, intending to force the foreign sugar businesses to sell out to him. In such an environment, it is not surprising that Ozama's administrators were cautious and constrained: although they ridiculed the dictator in private, they were careful not to antagonize him in public.[86] The political context inhibited their social relations with upper-class Dominicans[87]; it may also have constrained their behavior

[86] On Trujillo's campaign against the foreign sugar companies, which culminated in his takeover of most estates between 1953 and 1955, see Claudio Vedovato, *Politics, Foreign Trade, and Economic Development. A Study of the Dominican Republic*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), chap. 4; and Frank Moya Pons, "The Dominican Republic Since 1930," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, vol. 7, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 515. Although Ozama's on-site management always behaved in a conciliatory manner toward Trujillo, B.C. Sugar sought to elicit the Canadian government's intervention against Trujillo's sugar tax hikes in the early 1950s. At this time the Canadian government, which had been represented by the British Embassy, established its first permanent representative, a trade commissioner, in the Dominican Republic.

[87] One Canadian administrator later commented: "You had to be very careful with every Dominican ... because no matter how friendly they were or how decent they were, you weren't ever sure that they weren't under some kind of control. ... Trujillo had a tremendous network of spies ... reporting every single thing that happened. You could never even be sure that your best Dominican friend didn't have a lassoo around his neck if he didn't play ball ... We did socialize with some of the foreign colony that lived in Santo Domingo, but there was very little social life with Dominicans because they were unsure of how close they could get to foreigners due to the political situation at that time." W.R. Hetherington, interview by John Schreiner, Horseshoe Bay, B.C., Apr. 25, 1987.

toward Dominican workers. Tensions between the government and the foreigners reduced the plantation managers' power to coerce their work force and created space for cane cutters to act on their interests using informal means. The government's antagonism to the foreign sugar companies contributed to turning everyday resistance into de facto negotiation.

Not only did the Trujillo regime obliquely encourage worker contestation, but the government itself was in large part responsible for the labor scarcity that induced Ozama's management to bargain with workers. As will be recalled, Trujillo's massacre of Haitians in 1937 and his "Dominicanization of labor" laws constricted the flow of migrant workers to Dominican sugar plantations. At the same time, the Trujillo regime entered into direct competition with the sugar plantations for workers resident in the Dominican Republic. The Ozama reports complain that Trujillo's massive public construction projects in Santo Domingo drew laborers away from the plantation. Furthermore, whereas identity card payments and other taxes may have compelled Dominican peasants to seek new sources of monetary income by working for wages, Trujillo's creation of a domestic market for rice encouraged them to leave the plantations once the rains began and devote themselves to *conuco* agriculture. In the early 1950s, competition for labor was exacerbated when Trujillo himself became a major sugar producer: Dominican army trucks full of soldiers occasionally appeared in Ozama's outlying *bateyes* to take cane cutters forcibly away to work Trujillo's plantations. The Canadians tried to obstruct the army trucks' access by blocking bridges with railway cars, but to no avail.[88]

In this case Ozama's location may have worked to its disadvantage, being near the capital and just south of Trujillo's Catarey sugar plantation. Though the drain of workers did not significantly impede the company's operations (particularly after

[88] Hetherington interview, Aug. 12, 1988.

1952, when an official agreement between Haiti and the Dominican Republic eased the flow of Haitian contract workers), it was a major irritation. In 1956, after B.C. Sugar had been forced out of the country, one administrator articulated the Canadians' frustration with Trujillo's growing economic control: "The dishonest actions of the government are hidden as a guise against Communism, whereas in reality the present Dictatorship is one of the worst forms of Communism in the world today."[89]

Conclusions

This study has presented a different image of the cane cutter from that prevalent in most literature on the Dominican Republic. The picture that emerges from the Ozama reports is of a much more active and imaginative group of people of varying backgrounds who, while living and working under very exploitive circumstances, did all they could to increase their pay and better their working conditions. The absence of formal labor organization does not rule out the possibility that workers may have certain informal means of improving their lot within the existing rules of the game and influencing management decisions in their favor. This is especially true where tensions between government authorities and landlords, labor scarcity, and access to land give workers some bargaining power.

The relations between labor and management depicted in the Ozama reports reflect the particular conjuncture of the 1944-55 period. While an important export plantation sector existed in the Dominican Republic, sugar did not dominate the Dominican landscape, as it did in Cuba with its protected U.S. market. The transformation that sugar wrought in the Dominican Republic was not so far-reaching: in the 1940s large areas, even in the eastern sugar region, were still devoted to peasant agriculture and livestock raising, and most rural Dominicans had some access to land. Thus cane cutters could combine wage work with small-scale agricultural production. Meanwhile an interven-

[89] Rogers, "Ozama Sugar Company", 61.

tionist dictator, who melded nationalist state-building with megalomaniacal schemes of self-aggrandizement, came into conflict with the foreign sugar companies. Tensions between Trujillo and the foreign investors gave cane cutters leverage in their informal struggles with management. At the same time, the brutal repressive apparatus of the Trujillo regime made sure that no protest movements or organized social groups with demands directed against employers or against the government could emerge from the working population. It seems likely that when Trujillo took control of most of the foreign-owned sugar estates in 1954-55, the workers' space to maneuver closed down. To know how management-cane cutter interactions evolved during the last years of Trujillo's rule and thereafter, when most sugar estates became state-run enterprises, would lend insight into how the larger political context shapes the forms that informal resistance takes, its influence and limitations.

In this final section, I want to reflect on some larger questions raised by the micro-history of Ozama and suggest directions for further research. These questions have to do, first, with the history of Dominican rural life, second, with the Trujillo regime, and, third, with interpretations of foreign enclaves.

One key finding of this study is that in the Ozama region a significant number of cane cutters were people with ties to local communities and with their own social networks and circuits of production and distribution. If the composition of Ozama's labor force was not exceptional -if locals played a not insignificant role in the workforce of other Dominican sugar plantations too during the 1940s and early 1950s- the labor issue may provide a focus through which to explore interrelations between the sugar plantation economy, the domestic economy centered on small commodity production, and the Trujillo regime.

What of the subjective dimension of the workers' experience, their motivations and aspirations? Was it attachment to the land, or respect for religious traditions, or need for hard cash, or family ties, or bold defiance of authority that moved cane cutters to establish the work patterns found at Ozama? Unfortunately the cane cutters' voices are silent here,

and, given the distortions implicit in the managers' interpretations and the paucity of local histories and anthropological studies, it would be risky indeed to presume to enter the cane cutters' worlds. However, a few related observations are possible. Work was embedded in social relations both inside and outside the plantation. The lives, identities and survival strategies of the cane cutters (and the mayordomos who supervised them) were not circumscribed by the canefields. In Rebecca Scott's words, "the plantation did not generally define the boundaries of existence"[90] for either Dominican or, it appears, Haitian cane cutters in these years. The Ozama reports and discussions with old people provide glimpses of complex social attachments and cultural practices that existed around and through the plantation, social ties and ways of interacting that were important prior to the advent of the foreign company and continued during their administration. There seems to have been a complex interpenetration of the peasant and plantation worlds to which foreign managers had to adjust so that their field operations would run smoothly. Delving deeper into the history of peasant life in the Dominican Republic (and Haiti, as well) may shed additional light on the organization of work and labor relations on sugar plantations. We need to know more about the contours of community, family and *compadrazgo* relations, economic strategies, the forms and meanings of popular religion, and the workings of local political life. And we need to know more about the roles local intermediaries such as mayordomos and land surveyors played in shaping the transformations set in motion by the foreign sugar corporations.[91]

To make sense of the workers' behavior, it is essential to attend to the economic context as well. In the 1940s and early 1950s, conditions did not exist for the creation of a dependable

[90] R. Scott, "Defining the Boundaries", 89.

[91] Julie Franks addresses this subject in "Transforming Property: Strategies of Political Power and Land Accumulation in the Dominican Sugar Region, 1880-1930". (Ph.D. diss. State University of New York at Stony Brook, in progress). See also Franks, "The Gavilleros of the East. Social Banditry as Political Practice in the Dominican Sugar Region, 1900-1924," *Journal of Historical Sociology.* 8:2 (June 1995), 158-81.

seasonal proletariat on the sugar plantations. Sugar estates did not offer wages high enough to attract a reliable work force; nor were peasants being dispossessed of their land on a scale that would have pushed large numbers onto the plantations as the only survival alternative. In a sense, cane cutters at Ozama did act as proletarians, as free workers moving into and out of various jobs, going where the pay was best. But the plantation, because the wages it offered were so low, could not hold onto them. This seems to have been true for both Dominicans and clandestine Haitian workers, though whether Haitians and Dominicans had different possibilities to bargain within the plantation and different possibilities for mobility, employment, and access to land beyond its borders remains to be investigated.[92] The extent of geographical mobility revealed by the Ozama records is surprising, given that studies of the Trujillo regime generally stress the dictator's control over population movement. We need to know more about how government regulations affected people's ability to move about in this period; we also need to know more about relations among the various foreign-owned sugar plantations and the ways in which they collaborated or competed with each other.

Although Ozama's cane cutters were part-time wage earners, most, it seems, did not depend solely on wage work. Many combined wage work with small-scale agricultural production and often with petty commerce, either simultaneously or over a period of years. If we think of the cane cutters as sons and/or partners -that is, as members of families with complex socioeconomic strategies- this observation takes on greater weight. Certainly rural people in some parts of the country were dispossessed by the foreign-owned sugar estates or by the Trujillo family, bent on expanding its own extensive properties. Yet at the same time, the Ozama records suggest, government policies intended to stimulate the growth of domestic production for the internal market revitalized the

[92] See Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations* for analysis of these issues for the 1980s.

peasant economy in some regions. This development must be taken into account to make sense of the options on which rural people acted during the 1940s and early 1950s. This seems to have been a transitional period from a relatively isolated, subsistence way of life to a more commercially-oriented, small farmer economy. Although the commercialization of peasant agriculture was most obvious in the Cibao region in the north, the Ozama archives indicate that it was also occurring to an extent in the south.[93] In terms of both labor supply and agricultural production, a simultaneously complementary and competitive relation appears to have existed between the sugar and the small-producer economies.

The Ozama records also point toward alternative interpretations of the Trujillo regime. Trujillo is often viewed as a creation and a client of the United States. He is also portrayed as a greedy, domineering tyrant who concentrated all domestic power in himself and ruled by force, repressing and exploiting all sectors of the Dominican population. Researchers who have found peasants in some regions expressing nostalgia for the Trujillo era generally explain that sentiment as a kind of "false consciousness," attributable to the peasants' simple, credulous awe of the powerful and their gullibility to the *jefe*'s occasional pro-peasant speeches.[94]

The micro-history of Ozama provides a regional perspective on the multifaceted role the state played in Dominican economic and social life during the Trujillo dictatorship. It focuses attention on the effects of Trujillo's rule on rural labor and the peasantry, and in a larger sense, on the question of the social bases of Trujillo's power. In pressuring most foreign sugar corporations

[93] On the development of small-scale commercial agriculture in the Cibao region, see Pedro San Miguel, *Los campesinos del Cibao. Economía de mercado y transformación agraria en la República Dominicana, 1880-1960*. (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Univ. de Puerto Rico, 1996); Michiel Baud, "The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture in the Dominican Republic," *Latin American Research Review*, 22:2 (1987), 135-53; and idem., *Peasants and Tobacco in the Dominican Republic, 1870-1930*, (Knoxville Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1995).

[94] See, e.g., Vedovato, *Politics, Foreign Trade, and Economic Development, 28;* and MUDE, *La era de Trujillo*, 86-87.

out of the Dominican Republic, Trujillo took economic decisions that did not tow the U.S. line. And although he was brutal and self-serving, he may both intentionally and inadvertently have opened some possibilities for rural people to act on their concerns. It is time to go beyond the Manichean good and evil dichotomy that informs most writings on the "*Era de Trujillo*". On-the-ground studies combining archival and oral history are needed to explore how the thirty-year Trujillo regime transformed the Dominican economy and society and how people in various sectors of the population and various regions of the country experienced his rule. We need to open up the debate for a more nuanced and complex vision of the regime and its sometimes contradictory effects.[95]

Finally, this investigation suggests some novel approaches to studying foreign enclaves. Enclaves are often assumed to be regions created by the penetration of capitalism from without, controlled by foreign investors, and completely divorced from the nations in which they are situated. Our research on Ozama questions this interpretation by showing how one foreign-owned plantation was embedded in a complex network of local practices and power relations.

Certainly quantifiable economic analysis of such regions is worthwhile: it is useful to study resource flows, the repatriation of profits, and forward and backward linkages to evaluate the impact of enclaves on national development. But to fully grasp the significance of the foreign-owned sugar enclave for Dominicans during the Trujillo period, it is important to engage the social and cultural dimensions of what went on. The Ozama

[95] In the 1940s, Trujillo apparently engaged in a type of populism consonant with that of Anastasio Somoza García in Nicaragua during the same period, as depicted by Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Lead as Equals Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1970* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990). Gould's work provides one possible model for the kind of "history from below" that would contribute greatly to our understanding of the Trujillo regime. Innovative approaches to understanding Trujillo's rule include Turits, "The Foundations of Despotism"; and Lauren Derby, "The Magic of Modernity. Dictatorship and the Culture of Politics in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1962". (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, in progress).

case gives rise to various questions for research. How did foreign multinationals adapt to local conditions? How from specific caldrons of people and resources were new social formations negotiated in specific areas of foreign investment? How was social hierarchy defined, and what were the forms of control, struggle, and bargaining? What images did foreign managers and plantation workers hold of each other, and how did such images influence how plantations operated and changed over time? And in what ways did locals, both within and outside foreign-owned plantations, use the enclave for their own purposes -for economic accumulation, for example, or, in Trujillo's case, as political symbol and political capital?

This alternate perspective sees the enclave as a prism through which to explore connections between local, national, and international spheres, not in a narrow economic or structural sense, but with political, social and cultural dimensions as well. This broader, yet more detailed view calls for attention to variation within and between enclaves. It interprets the "foreign enclave" as a place of interactions and takes seriously the initiatives and experiences of local people (and migrant workers) -those who lived within the plantations, those living around them, and regional and national authorities. To regard not just the foreign corporations but local people as actors too is not to deny that wealth was concentrated in a few hands, that structurally some people held power over others, or that there was coercion and exploitation. But it is to problematize these issues and the relations between structure, perception, and agency; and to emphasize that power has multiple meanings and can be exercised and contested in various ways.