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Canepari, Andrea, ed. *The Italian Legacy in the Dominican Republic: History, Architecture, Economics, Society*. Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2021. Pp. 536 + 468 colour and b/w illustrations. ISBN 978-0-9161-0110-7 (hardcover) \$50.

Beyond its indisputable value in shedding light on Italian immigration to the Dominican Republic, Andrea Canepari's *The Italian Legacy in the Dominican Republic: History, Architecture, Economics, Society* evidences a much larger scope. The book thoroughly portrays critical aspects of the history of Dominican capitalism, which began to consolidate in the late nineteenth century mainly through the business acumen of crucial figures in the Italian immigrant community.

Although it is evident that Canepari's curatorial task privileged a socio-economic history frame, *The Italian Legacy in the Dominican Republic* also reveals a thorough attention to cultural history. This combination makes most of its forty-seven chapters both an illuminating and, at times, eyebrow-raising read for scholars of Italian and Dominican studies. The essay by Frank Moya-Pons that opens the collection is the best example of this textual alchemy. The Dominican historian juggles to present an account of the presence, dating back to the late fifteenth century, of people from the Italian peninsula in what has been known since 1844 as the Dominican Republic.

In Moya-Pons's account, Columbus appears as the "discoverer" of the Caribbean islands. The sinister aspects of the colonial enterprise put in motion by his actions in Hispaniola, namely the extermination of the native population that led the way to the slavery of Africans, ended up being directed towards other Genoese figures of that time, such as the Centurión brothers. To try to counterbalance this fact, Moya-Pons includes a section on the Milanese merchant and traveler Girolamo Benzoni, whose *Historia del Mondo Nuevo* (1565) documents "the atrocities committed during the Conquest of the Americas" (p. 44). Apart from Columbus, another *personage* of Italian origin mythologized by Moya-Pons is Juan Bautista Vicini, "the founder of the country's main corporate dynasty [sic]" (p. 47). According to Moya-Pons, Vicini arrived in Santo Domingo at twelve or thirteen years of age as a protégé of Nicolás Canevaro, a prominent entrepreneur in the import and export trade. At eighteen, Vicini became a partner of Canevaro's company and by the time he reached his early thirties had risen to moguldom in the sugar cane business.

Another chapter worth commenting on among the twenty that comprise the History section of the volume is Antonio J. Guerra Sánchez's on Italian immigration to the capital city of Santo Domingo and the south and east of the Dominican Republic. Guerra Sánchez lists the most eminent Dominican families with ancestry in the Italian peninsula, including the Bilinis, Bonas, Bonettis, Piantinis and Pelleranos. He presents a portrait of each of them, highlighting their relevance in contemporary Dominican society. In a similar hagiographic tone, Edwin Espinal Hernández focuses on Italians in the Cibao region, in the northern part of the Dominican Republic, whose presence "began to manifest itself from 1886 onward" (p. 75). Espinal Hernández emphasizes the protagonists of the small-scale commercial circuit and other areas of Italian solid influence. His attention to such figures as Fantino Falco, who is revered for his pastoral work and educational initiatives; architect Guido D'Alessandro Lombardi, who designed the National Palace; and Francesco Grecco, a shady, itinerant entrepreneur who brought cinema to the Dominican Republic in 1900, brings a more ample view to the topic at hand.

The remaining sections include chapters on ecclesiastical and political history, architecture, literature and the arts, economics, science, journalism, and law. The essays vary significantly in terms of depth and style. Some of them are profoundly researched and documented, such as Myrna Guerrero Villalona's piece on the mark of Italian sculptors in Dominican public art, Jeannette Miller's on "Italy's Influence on Dominican Art," and Raymundo González's on Raffaele Cifferi's pioneering work in the development of the fields of botany and agricultural science in the Dominican Republic. Other essays are mere eulogies of celebrated icons of Italian descent in diverse areas, particularly the economic realm. Indeed, while the panegyric tone characterizes the entire corpus, it reaches a particular high point when it comes to portraying the life and business sense of the members of the Dominican economic elite who happen to be of Italian ancestry. Mu-Kien Adriana Sang Ben's chapter on tourism tycoon Frank Rainieri Marranzini is an excellent example. Sang Ben, a celebrated Dominican historian, describes Rainieri Marranzini as a "dreamer who worked hard to make his utopia a reality" (p. 432). Wisely, in the first endnote, Sang Ben explains that the piece comes from a book "commissioned by Grupo Puntacana" (p. 448), Rainieri Marranzini's company. Most contributors to *The Italian Legacy in the Dominican*

Republic: History, Architecture, Economics, Society are not shy in presenting similar motivations.

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