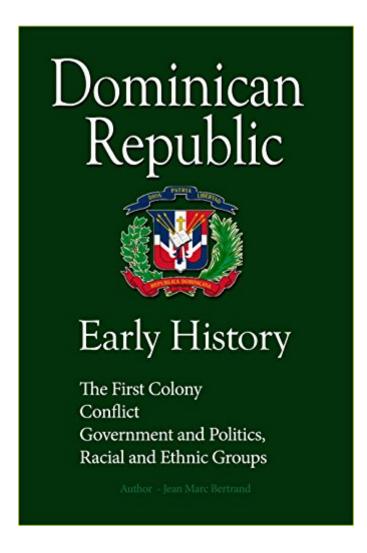


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Dominican Republic Early History, People And Environment: The First Colony, Conflict, Government And Politics, Racial And Ethnic Groups





Synopsis

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

Book Information

File Size: 875 KB Print Length: 161 pages Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited Publication Date: July 15, 2016 Sold by: Â Digital Services LLC Language: English ASIN: B01IKID03W Text-to-Speech: Enabled Not Enabled X-Ray: Word Wise: Enabled Lending: Not Enabled Screen Reader: Supported Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled Best Sellers Rank: #625,981 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #31 in Books > Travel > Caribbean > Dominican Republic #43 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Dominican Republic #163 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Caribbean

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