

History

In the year 1492 Christopher Columbus touched the coasts of the Island and discovered in its inhabitants an Indian unknown race called Tainos –which in the arawak language means good or noble. The Tainos lived in the Island since the year 800 A.D. Dedicated to a sedentary life, simple but rich in religious and agricultural traditions, created in our Island one of the most outstanding cultures of the Caribbean area. Nevertheless, the discovery and its conquest methods exterminated this race in a period of approximately 50 years, which limited the impact of such Indian culture on the Dominican life.

Art. Samples of cave paintings have been found in different locations of the Island, such as in the caves of “Las Maravillas” and “Pomier”; also, when going around the Enriquillo Lake we can appreciate the famous “Caritas” or Little Faces.

Other caves, well known for their Indian paintings are in the National Park of the East in “Los Haitises”

The Tainian hand crafts of the Island are of superior quality of those of the other islands, most of the artifacts, besides for daily life activities, where used for religious-magical purposes. Two of the most famous artifacts of the tainian art are the Hammock and the Macuto (wicker bag).

With the establishment in the year 1492 of the first Fort in La Española –name given to the Island after the discovery- the Island starts a trans-cultural process which defines the Dominican, son of the cultures encounter, product of the race mixture, “population mixed in beliefs and costumes; product of the Spanish conquer and the African slave, with a drop of Indian blood on its background”.

La Hispaniola was the first European colony of the New World, and in it’s Capital City, Santo Domingo – also called First City of the Americas – where originated the first colonial cultural and social institutions, the first fortress where built as well as the first churches and the first cathedral, the first hospital and the first monuments and the first university.

At the end of the XVI century La Hispaniola was the source of great benefits thanks to its mineral abundance and the system of sugar cane plantations. Nevertheless, the gold mines where emptied, which caused a massive exodus of the population of the colony. French buccaneer who used the island as contraband bridge took advantage of this situation to invade and appropriate of the western part of the Island where they founded the colony of Saint Domingue, based on the exploitation of the plantations with African slaves.

With the Agreement of Ryswick, in 1697, Spain tolerated as a fact the occupation of the French in the Western part of the Island. A century later, in 1795, during the Haitian revolution, Spain ceded the colony of Saint Domingue to France.

Toussaint Louverture invaded in 1801 the Eastern part of the Island, for which the French responded sending in 1802 a representative, Mr. Leclerc, Napoleon’s brother in law, accompanied by a powerful army in order to claim the territory.

The French governed Santo Domingo for a period of six years until they were expelled out of the territory by a Dominican group headed by Juan Sanchez Ramírez who reincorporated the Eastern part to the Spain colony.

In 1822, after 12 years of relative peace, the Haitians again invade Santo Domingo. In 1844 a group of Dominican patriots headed by Juan Pablo Duarte, proclaimed the independent State of Dominican Republic.

Internal differences impaired the development of the governmental institutions, which led to a new annexing to the Spanish crown (1861 – 1863), this caused the denominated War of Restoration and the re-denomination of independent Republic.