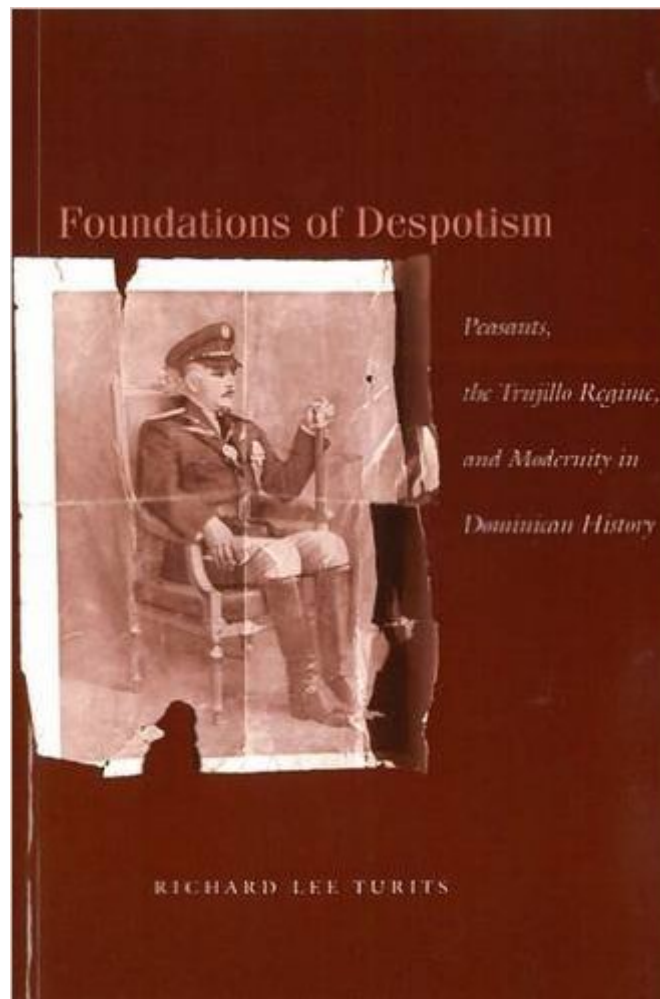


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Foundations Of Despotism: Peasants, The Trujillo Regime, And Modernity In Dominican History



Synopsis

This book explores the history of the Dominican Republic as it evolved from the first European colony in the Americas into a modern nation under the rule of Rafael Trujillo. It investigates the social foundations of Trujillo's exceptionally enduring and brutal dictatorship (1930-1961) and, more broadly, the way power is sustained in such non-democratic regimes. The author reveals how the seemingly unilateral imposition of power by Trujillo in fact depended on the regime's mediation of profound social and economic transformations, especially through agrarian policies that assisted the nation's large independent peasantry. By promoting an alternative modernity that sustained peasants' free access to land during a period of economic growth, the regime secured peasant support as well as backing from certain elite sectors. This book thus elucidates for the first time the hidden foundations of the Trujillo regime.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For me this book was an eye-opening history of the foundation of Generalissimo Trujillo's long-lasting power. When I picked up this title I sought to know, beyond the oppression and excesses, HOW and WHY Dominicans put up with the guy for thirty years. As with Fidel Castro that long a reign takes much more than troops and torture to maintain. Turit's book offered many lessons on statecraft, nation-building and Trujillo's role in their development in DR. The largest lesson from this book was that despite the cruel and twisted aspects of his story Trujillo was actually a highly effective head of state whose early policies did great good to the infant nation. His regime sped up and solidified economic processes that unshackled DR from being a marginal backwater. Principally

this meant 'domesticating' our Dominican grandparents who were for the most part stubbornly nomadic ranchers and gatherers. None had succeeded in this for centuries. He drew the Dominican national boundaries, both territorially and tragically in the sense of identity. He almost literally created the state apparatus of DR. Most shockingly to me he successfully redistributed land to the common man the way so many Latin-American movements of the left promised and often failed to deliver. This last point is the one around which Foundations is centered. Clearly Trujillo acted out of greed and self-interest, but his cunning was in seeing where his interests aligned with those of our then often impoverished, landless Dominican grandparents. Foundations is written in an academic, densely foot-noted style and doesn't have a thrilling narrative. Unless you bring your own curiosity as I did you won't find it as gripping as titles on Trujillo's lurid dark side.

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