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Domingo del Monte from Havana between 1824 and
1845

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**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
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Abstract

The aim of this research is to study the informal channels of communication built by Domingo del Monte, and the circle of authors around him, during the transition from the Ancien Régime to liberalism, in order to spread their identity project out from Havana, through the island of Cuba and into the Iberian Peninsula. This group was made up of both intellectuals and members of the Havana sugar oligarchy. Their purpose was to work for a better position for the island within the framework of the Spanish liberal state in construction throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. Due to censorship, the faction could not use political speech making to achieve its aims. This meant that the group had to look for an alternative way to express its ideas, and literature became the weapon.

Keywords

Communication network, state, liberalism, autonomy, Economic Society.

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Introduction

The history of empires, during the transition from the Ancien Régime to liberalism, has been written from a historiographical standpoint that considers states were built by metropolitan groups of power from their metropolises.¹ However, in recent years, some writers have shown us how, in the process of assembling states during the nineteenth century, the power elites of the so-called ‘colonial peripheries’ confronted the state projects that reduced them to the category of colony, and tried to get a more advantageous situation for their territories.² This article is at the heart of this debate and it aims to clarify, from this perspective, the form in which it was settled in the foundations of a Cuban identity project which gave a conscious identity to a region of the Spanish Empire, the island of Cuba, that had lacked it until then. This cultural network was developed by a group of intellectuals with the support of a part of the Havana sugar oligarchy. Their objective was to look for a more advantageous position for the island of Cuba in the framework of the Spanish liberal state that was under construction throughout the nineteenth century. The originality of this research is that it deepens knowledge of that process through the study of the communication channels built by Domingo del Monte and the circle of authors around him (del Monte’s group), between 1824 and 1845.

* I wish to thank Matthew Brown for overseeing the early writing of this paper.

¹ Karl Marx, *El colonialismo* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1970); Max Weber, *Estructuras de poder* (Buenos Aires: Leviatán, 1985); Emmanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York: Academy Press, 1974).

² Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Studies have helped developments in this direction. Partha Chatterjee, “A Brief History of Subaltern Studies”, in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* vol. 22, pp.1537-41; Gyan Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism”, *American Historical Review* 99:5 (1994), pp.1475-1490; Edward Said, *Orientalismo* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2004); Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge and History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp.3-54; Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.2-15.

To carry out this study, it is fundamental to understand that the concept of 'nation', such as we understand it today, is a recently created construction in history. Historiography, however, has taken time to understand this fact. From the nineteenth century, the term 'nation' was used to designate those human groups that were believed to share some cultural characteristics. This legitimised their possession of political power, that is, as an independent state or a relatively autonomous government inside a wider political structure. But studies about the nation and nationalism have changed a lot in the last forty years. Hans Kohn or Carlton Hayes had no doubt that nations were natural realities, and they debated only the elements which defined them.³ All authors, before these, were forced to make an almost canonical review through race, language, religion, and the historical past. Towards 1960, Elie Kedourie observed that states needed the support of the population. At the same time and for this reason, a state could not allow anyone to debate the cultural identity that supported its uniqueness. Because of this, states made the effort to guide the population's will, to educate it. The national problem, concluded Kedourie, was an educational question, and the main promoter of political education was the state. But to outline the problem in this way meant giving a place to inheritance. Instead of accepting national identities as natural realities, historians began to see them as artificial creations, moved by political interests.⁴ The fundamental studies of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm, among others, have continued on this path over the last thirty years.⁵

Subaltern studies have also contributed, from the 1980s, to advances in this direction. This school of historiography has underlined the relative historicity of the state-nation as a political organisation. It has allowed us to understand the history of empires and colonial relationships from the point of view of the colonised, to understand the role of peripheral groups of empires in the construction of nations. Along the same lines, the comparison between different models of political evolution and between regions or territories inside empires, proposed by 'comparative history', has helped us to put into relation the role of the nation-state, and to understand the internal complexity of these territories. Finally, 'trans-national history' has stressed the relationships between human groups in 'different imagined communities'. This approach has also allowed us to reach a more complex vision of the internal relationships established in the heart of imperial organisations. These were not only structural relationships polarised in central states (settlers) and peripheral states (colonised), but also entities that were sustained in much more complex relationships (of an economic, social and cultural nature). This has allowed us to discover the different voices that communicated in that relationship and the processes of miscegenation that took place.⁶

³ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: a Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944); Carlton Hayes, *Nationalism: a Religion* (New York, 1960).

⁴ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London, 1960).

⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nacionalismo* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1998); Benedict Anderson, *Comunidades imaginadas. Reflexiones sobre el origen y la difusión del nacionalismo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nación y nacionalismo desde 1780* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1992).

⁶ Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, 'Estados, naciones y regiones en perspectiva europea. Propuestas para una historia comparada y transnacional', in *Alcores. Revista de historia contemporánea*, (forthcoming). I appreciate the author allow me to read his article; Ranajit Guha, *Las voces de la historia y otros estudios subalternos* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001); Marc Bloch, «Pour une histoire compare des sociétés européennes», *Revue de Synthèse Historique* 46 (1928), pp.15-50; M. Espagne and M. Werner (eds.),

With this historiographical perspective as background, I will now move on to explain this in the Spanish Empire. In this case, we must bear in mind that from the late eighteenth century, and particularly after the arrival of Napoleon's army in the peninsula in 1808, the Spanish Empire was undergoing a profound transformation in the structure of the Ancien Régime and moving towards a liberal-capitalist system. The concept of the king's vassals was substituted with that of citizens, the right to private property was secured, liberal constitutions and the sharing of power developed, and territory ceased to be the king's patrimonial possession and instead a national state developed.⁷ This system of liberal organisation of the state, after some vacillating and the loss of most of the American territories, advanced in the peninsular territory of the Empire after Fernando VII's death in 1833. A *Consejo de Regencia* (Regency Council) took power and was presided over by Fernando VII's wife, María Cristina, and after this by Espartero, until Isabel II became of age. At the same time the liberal state moved towards centralisation. In this process, the overseas territories (including Cuba) were reduced to the category of colony.⁸

However, during the decade of 1820, Havana was transformed into one of the most important economic centres in the Spanish Empire. This was possible thanks to the enrichment of the farmers' group led by Francisco Arango (1763-1837), and in which the families Aldama, Alfonso and Soler were also integrated. After some time, this group wanted its economic weight reflected in the leadership of the society to which they belonged. For that reason they tried to use political speech-making and liberal legislation as an instrument for change. But this was only possible, in a very restricted way, during the period between Fernando VII's death, at the end of 1833, with the restoration of liberalism, and 1837, when the island was excluded from the liberal structure in construction through the expulsion of its deputies from parliament. Thus, at the same time, this group also developed an identity project through the literature, and Domingo del Monte (1804-1853) was the one to build it. We mustn't forget that the censorship laws which governed the island and the peninsula during most of the period of this study prohibited the formulation of political ideas in writing, although they allowed, despite censorship, for writing on science and literature. To give literary form

Transferts : les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle) (Paris : Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988).

⁷ Josep Fontana, *La crisis del Antiguo Régimen* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1979); Eric Hobsbawm, *Las revoluciones burguesas* (Barcelona: Labor, 1985); Alberto Gil Novales, "Tras la revolución: Europa a partir de 1800", *Trienio* 38 (2001), pp.5-19.

⁸ After some hesitation, the liberal rising in Santiago de Cuba in 1836, led by the governor of the Eastern Province of the island of Cuba, Manuel Lorenzo, served as an excuse to justify the exclusion of Cuba in the *Constitución de 1837*. This meant that the island would be governed through the *Leyes de Indias*, valid for a system of Enlightened Despotism, but not for the growing Cuban economy and society of that time.

Although this was the government's attitude, in the Peninsula not all the liberal sectors agreed with the measure. The most critical sectors were those that had interests in the economy of the island of Cuba and they thought that such a restrictive policy was dangerous. Archivo Histórico Nacional (afterwards AHN), Ultramar, leg. 4603, nr. 36; Josep María Fradera, *Colonias para después de un Imperio* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2006); Juan Pérez de la Riva, *Correspondencia reservada del capitán general don Miguel Tacón, 1834-1836* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 1963), pp. 31-32; Albert García, "Tradicció liberal i política colonial a Catalunya. Mig segle de temptatives i limitacions, 1822-1872", in Albert García et. al., *Catalunya i Ultramar. Poder i negoci a les colònies espanyoles, 1750-1914* (Barcelona: Fundació Portuària de Barcelona, 1999), pp. 77-106. José Álvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa: la idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2002); D.A. Brading, *The first America. The Spanish monarchy, Creole patriots, and the Liberal state 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

to the ideas he wanted to put across, del Monte gathered together, in Havana, a nucleus of intellectuals centred around several newspapers published by the Economic Society, first, and at a particular *tertulia* (private meeting), later. Through the poetry and the novel, del Monte and his group described the characteristics of the 'wild' and 'untamed' nature of Cuban, but also its main economic activities and its population's peculiarities⁹. The system was completed with the transmission of this thinking through the rest of the island and the metropolis. With this objective in mind, he used the friendships that he maintained, through correspondence, with some of the most forward thinking people in the principal towns. These were generally members of the delegations that the Economic Society supported in those areas. Instead, the Havana faction was nurtured through the ideas and works received from other towns on the island and from abroad, largely from the Peninsula, from different areas of the United States, Paris and, in smaller measure, London.

The formation of the nucleus of thinkers of Havana around the Commission of Literature

Two intellectuals from Havana, Tomás Romay Chacón (1764-1849) and José Agustín Caballero (1762-1835) played a fundamental role in the foundation of the Economic Society there at the end of the eighteenth century and both defended the necessity of expanding the liberal project in Cuba. Nevertheless, they were in a minority in their thinking among the intellectuals of the island and the difficulties they found in their way were large. But, in 1802 Juan José Díaz de Espada y Landa, recently appointed bishop of the diocese of that city, arrived in Havana. He was a Basque clergyman well known as a liberal. Immediately he entered into contact with the government's more cultured sectors and was named director of the Economic Society. From there, the bishop supported financially the Seminar of San Carlos, where Caballero was teaching based on liberal principles throughout the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Among his students were Félix Varela (1787-1853), and, later on, José Antonio Saco (1797-1879), José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862), and Domingo del Monte.¹⁰

At the end of 1823 absolutism was restored and many of the group's liberal followers had to leave the island although Romay, Caballero and Espada himself were able to remain in Havana because, although they were liberal, they had been shown to be 'very faithful to the Crown'. Nor did Domingo del Monte have to leave, although his political and intellectual activities were curtailed. For that reason, he decided to travel to Europe to make contact with the intellectual atmosphere on the Peninsula and to take a degree in Law. During his stay there, del Monte met the Romanticist peninsular writers, and all of them taught him how to express political thought through literature.¹¹

⁹ José María Auilera Manzano, *La formación de la identidad cubana. El debate Saco-La Sagra* (Madrid: CSIC, 2005), pp. 18-20.

¹⁰ Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, *Obispo Espada. Ilustración reforma y antiesclavismo. Selección, introducción y notas* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1990), pp. 5-22 and 98-143; VVAA, *Diccionario de la literatura cubana* (Havana: Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística, 1984), vols. 1 and 2.

¹¹ Alberto Lista, Agustín Durán, Manuel José Quintana, Dionisio Solís, and José Nicasio Gallego, among others. Letter of Durán to del Monte, Madrid, 29 December 1829, in Domingo del Monte, *Centón epistolarío* (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2002), vol. 1; Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, "Literatura. Edipo, tragedia", *El Puntero Literario*, 10 April 1830; "Elogio a los poetas sevillanos, extractado del *Diccionario geográfico de Miñano* escrito por D. Félix José Reinoso", *El Puntero Literario*, 6 February 1830; "Noticias literarias", *El Puntero Literario*, 23 January 1830; "Poemas", *Suplemento al Puntero Literario*, 6 February 1830; José Nicasio Gállego, "La resulta del Dos de Mayo", in José Nicasio Gállego,

On return from this trip to Europe del Monte remained some time in the United States, which allowed him to renew contact with Félix Varela, who had founded the newspaper *El Habanero* (1824-1826), and José Antonio Saco who published *El Mensajero Semanal* (1828-1831) alongside Varela's *El Habanero*. In both newspapers these men defended liberal political ideals and sketched out a cultural project for the island different to that which was being developed from the peninsula. But, due to the prohibition imposed by the censors on political works, these newspapers were smuggled into Cuba, which meant that the reach of their ideas was very limited. For this reason, they adopted another strategy which consisted of introducing the principles of the new identity project, giving foundation to the liberal idea, through literary, historical and scientific works, the publication of which was allowed by the colonial government of Cuba. This is what del Monte had learned when in the Peninsula¹².

To develop this plan, in the first instance, it was necessary to join with intellectuals inside Havana and the island, and this could only be done with people beyond the suspicion of the metropolitan government who resided in Cuba. Domingo del Monte was the most suitable figure to co-ordinate the most brilliant minds because, of all the collaborators of *El Mensajero Semanal*, he was the most linked to Saco and Varela and he lived in Cuba. For this reason, when he arrived in Havana, he entered into contact with the foremost intellectuals of the day in the city and its surrounding area. He was able to co-ordinate many of these people through the publication of several newspapers through which they promulgated the ideas of the group (del Monte's group). Two of these works were *El Puntero Literario* (1830) and *La Moda o Recreo Semanal del Bello Sexo* (1829-1831).¹³

At the same time Domingo del Monte's group, Francisco Arango included, became influential in the Economic Society, especially in the *Sección de Educación* (Section of Education), where del Monte was nominated as secretary. In 1831 they obtained permission to create a *Comisión Permanente de Literatura* (Commission of Literature), inside the Section of Education. Two years later they made a request to the Queen for the conversion of the Commission into an independent *Academia de Literatura* (Academy of Literature). Although the Academy opened up, it was closed a few days after for the colonial government because the Captain General felt that it spread ideas in favour of the independence of Cuba.¹⁴

Although the experiment of the Commission of Literature was repressed, during the years that it functioned it allowed for the beginning of the construction of the cultural structure that del Monte and his circle sought because, with its help, they began the publication of the *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (1831-1834), where they introduced

Versos de José Nicasio Gallego (Philadelphia: Imprenta Española del Mensajero, 1829); Domingo del Monte, *Escritos de Domingo del Monte* (Havana: Cultural, 1929), vol. 2, pp. 104-120; Urbano Martínez, *Domingo del Monte y su tiempo* (Havana: Unión, 1997); Paul Benichou, *Creación poética en el romancero tradicional* (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), pp. 7-9, 14-15 and 18-38.

¹² Monte, *Escritos*, vol. 1, pp. 21-35; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*, pp. 110-20.

¹³ Monte, *Escritos*, vol. 1, pp. 36-70; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*, pp. 131-37.

¹⁴ The members of the Commission were Domingo del Monte, Manuel González del Valle, Ignacio Valdés Machuca, Agustín Govantes, Nicolás de Cárdenas Manzano, Blas Osés and Vicente Osés, Felipe Poey, Prudencio Hecheverría O'Gaban and José Antonio Saco. Domingo del Monte, "Exposición de las tareas de la Comisión de Literatura", *Actas de la Sociedad Económica de La Habana* (afterwards *Actas*), 1830 and 1831. In 1836 a new Section of Literature opened inside the Department of Education. *Memorias de la Sociedad Económica de La Habana* (afterwards *Memorias*), February 1836; Aurelio Mitjans, *Historia de la literatura cubana* (Madrid: Editorial Américas, 1918); Juan J. Ramos, *Historia de la literatura cubana* (Havana: Cárdenas y Compañía, 1945), vol. 2.

some of the works which expressed their thoughts. A literary competition on pre-selected topics and with the two areas of poetry and prose was founded inside the Commission, in 1831, and had the intention of publicising young Havana and Cuban authors who contributed with their work to building the new identity project.¹⁵ With the same intention, the Commission took charge of, and took a great deal of interest in, the writing of a dictionary. The initiative for its creation came from Domingo del Monte, who also devoted part of his intellectual work to philological studies, although the person who wrote the dictionary was Francisco Ruiz. This work, begun in 1830, was devised to compliment the *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua* (*Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Language*), to introduce the characteristic words of Havana and the island that did not exist in the Peninsula or words that had a different meaning in Cuba.¹⁶

The closing of the Commission of Literature, in 1834, was a harsh blow for the intentions of Domingo del Monte, because it meant an end to the official channel through which he and his group could spread their ideas. After this event, he cultivated his political and cultural project more or less through a *tertulia* (private meeting). Although del Monte's meeting remained unofficial, he didn't consider it as such; he didn't give a rigorous regularity to these meetings and they didn't take place in an academy or official centre, but instead in Domingo del Monte's own home. This was in order to avoid the official pressure that was the result of the arrival of Miguel Tacón as the *Capitanía General* (Captain General) of the island in 1834, when persecutions against meetings of more than two people increased because Tacón feared these encouraged conspiracies against the government. To del Monte's house went his friends Manuel and José Zacarías González del Valle, Ramón de Palma, José Jacinto Milanés, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés and Juan Francisco Manzano, all of them dedicated to the construction of the cultural network through the writing of poetry; Cirilo Villaverde who, with Anselmo Suárez Romero, was concentrating on the writing of novels with the same aim; and Blas Osés, José de la Luz and José Luis Alfonso. Friends from other towns on the island also participated in these literary meetings when they travelled for any reason to Havana, for example Anastasio Orozco or Gaspar Betancourt.¹⁷

As a result of these meetings the idea arose of publishing some of these works in periodicals. The first periodical to materialise was a yearly one, *El Aguinaldo Habanero*, directed by Ramón de Palma and José Antonio Echeverría, and which included the best poetic creations that had been written over the whole year by the most outstanding authors of del Monte's group. The first year, 1837, although it was very slanted, was published, but for the following number censorship was stricter and the quality of the texts diminished. For these reasons, the editors decided not to publish in that year and to keep the works for 1839, but in the end the project was left unfinished.

¹⁵ Domingo del Monte, "Tareas de la Comisión de Literatura", *Actas*, 1832. José Antonio Echeverría won the poetry competition in 1831 with his work José Antonio Echeverría, "Oda al nacimiento de la serenísima infanta doña María Isabel Luisa", Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (afterwards BNJM), Sala Cubana, Echeverría. The prose competition was not so successful.

¹⁶ The dictionary was published years later by Esteban Pichardo, *Diccionario provincial casi razonado de voces cubanas*, (Havana 1849).

¹⁷ Joaquín Llaverías, *Contribución a la historia de la prensa periódica* (Havana: Publicaciones del Archivo Nacional, 1957), vols. 1 and 2; Francisco Calcagno, *Diccionario biográfico cubano* (New York 1878), vols. 1 and 2; VVAA, *Diccionario*, vols. 1 and 2; Monte, *Centón*, vols. 1 to 7; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*, pp. 143-171.

It was this that probably influenced Palma and Echeverría who founded, and began to direct, *El Plantel*.¹⁸

In September of 1838 the printer Ramón Oliva, convinced by Domingo del Monte and his entire group, contributed the money necessary to deposit at the censorship office for the publication of a magazine entirely devoted to literature, *El Plantel* (1838-1839), which would be printed on his own printing press. This journal was to be directed by Ramón de Palma and José Antonio Echeverría, although Oliva was to be the editor in order to be able to intervene and secure the money he had contributed to the censor's office as guarantee. At the end of 1838, Oliva, using the right that his editorial position gave him, introduced some articles with which Palma and Echeverría disagreed. For this reason, both decided to leave the direction of *El Plantel*. After which, Palma directed *El Álbum* (1838-1839). At the same time Vicente de Castro Palomino started to publish *La Cartera Cubana* (1838-1840) which reserved one of its sections for literary and historical works, and Antonio Bachiller directed *La Siempreviva* (1838-1840).¹⁹

The construction of the communication network in the island of Cuba and the Iberian Peninsula

In all the centres of debate organised by del Monte in Havana, the main participants were the members that lived in this city, although some intellectuals from Matanzas and, in smaller measure, of Puerto Príncipe, also participated and put across their ideas through journals or published books. But if del Monte wanted his thoughts on the cultural and political formation of the future to be successful, it was necessary to spread them between different factions distributed over the entire island, and not only in Havana, although Havana was to be the nerve centre. To spread his project throughout the island and beyond, del Monte used an institutional infrastructure that was being created at the time: the *delegaciones provinciales* (provincial delegations) of the Economic Society of Havana. Of course, he also used the personal friendships that he maintained with the most forward thinking people in different towns of the island, and these were generally members of the delegations that the Society supported in these places, through correspondence.²⁰ These men reprinted in the newspapers of their cities the works that had been brought out in the publications in Havana and del Monte's group took charge of sending them by mail. In turn, these men sent to del Monte the best writing from their own cities, when they had them. Yet, this relationship was unequal and more went from Havana toward the rest of the towns than vice versa, with some exceptions, as we will see now.

The Delegation of Matanzas was the one over which Domingo del Monte exercised most influence because he had always had strong links with that city and with what happened in it. His mother and sisters lived there and his wife's family had their biggest plantations in that area. In Matanzas he knew not only José Miguel Angulo, but

¹⁸ The problem was to get the censors named by the Captain General, as consequence of the press law of 1834, to accept publication without censoring all the works. *Ley de prensa y de libros de 1834*, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (afterwards ANC), Gobierno Superior, leg. 652, nrs. 20434 and 20499. At this time new censors were nominated and were paid well in the hope that they would take their work more seriously and censor all works before their publication. Archivo General de Indias (afterwards AGI), Ultramar, leg. 777, nrs. 50 and 51 and leg. 778, nr. 54.

¹⁹ Llaverías, *Contribución a la historia*, vols. 1 and 2; VVAA, *Diccionario*, vols. 1 and 2.

²⁰ His *Centón epistolario* is an important source. Domingo del Monte used correspondence with the aim of giving fluency to conversations and ideas and to exchange newspapers and foreign authors' works.

also Félix Tancó, Jaume Badía, J. Padrines, and, during the time he lived there in 1835, he conversed a great deal with the poet José Jacinto Milanés, Pedro José Guiteras, and with Esteban Pichardo.²¹

Del Monte organised for Félix Manuel Tancó to be nominated as secretary to the Delegation of Matanzas (opened up in 1829) between 1829 and 1831, and after that as censor. Inside this centre, and financed by it, *La Aurora de Matanzas* (1828-1857) was published, the official newspaper of the city. Initially directed by Tiburcio Campé, José Miguel Angulo was then appointed its director and Félix Tancó editor. During this time, del Monte's group wrote many of the literary and scientific articles for the newspaper.²² Between 1833 and 1834 several members of del Monte's group at Matanzas and Havana also wrote articles in the newspaper *El Pasatiempo* (1833-1834), which had been founded by Campé inside the Society.

Fernando VII's death in 1833 and the promulgation of the *Estatuto Real* in 1834, meant an amnesty for the liberals who had earlier gone into exile, like Tomás Gener, the liberal deputy of Catalan origin who represented the island of Cuba in parliament during the Liberal Triennium, who returned to Matanzas. At the same time, because of the closing of the Academy of Literature, Domingo del Monte decided to move to Matanzas. Gener and del Monte met there and immediately took control of the Delegation of the Society. The Catalan was appointed director and del Monte the secretary, the two most important positions. Without delay they created a library and a Section of Education inside the Delegation, to influence improvements in primary education. José Miguel Angulo was elected as its secretary and Julián Alfonso Soler as its vice-director.²³

After Tomás Gener's death, at the end of 1835, and, shortly after, the return of Domingo del Monte to Havana, the Delegation of Matanzas was left without its leading thinkers, until Blas Osés moved there from the capital and, thanks to Angulo, was chosen director of the Delegation in 1839. He occupied this position up to 1841, to be substituted by the same Angulo. During this period Guiteras, Padrines, Milanés, and others friends began to meet with the aim of discussing literature and history.²⁴ They also organised for Guiteras and Milanés to direct *La Aurora de Matanzas*, and that the position of theatre censor go to José Miguel Angulo.²⁵

The Delegation of the Society in Puerto Príncipe had been one of the first ones to be constituted. However, it was abandoned rapidly until in 1828 it was revived and

²¹ Domingo del Monte maintained a great friendship with Heredia during this entire period. Letters from José María Heredia to Domingo del Monte, 15 March 1825, 24 May 1826, 8 November 1826, 15 April 1827, 14 January 1829, 23 October 1830, 26 November 1836, and 10 January 1837, letters of Merced Heredia to del Monte, Matanzas, 20 April 1836, 12 May 1836, 16 March 1840, letters of Juan Padrines to del Monte, Matanzas, 9 July 1836 and 1 August 1837, letters of Esteban Pichardo to del Monte, Matanzas, 9 March 1837, 29 January 1838, 2 August 1838, 24 March 1840, and 7 May 1840, in Monte, *Centón*, vols. 1, 3, and 4.

²² *Memorias*, 1828; Urbano Martínez, "Algunas consideraciones en torno al desarrollo de la imprenta en Matanzas", *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí*, 76:2 (1985), pp. 93-103.

²³ José María Casal, also part of del Monte's group, was named censor: "Exposición de las tareas que han ocupado a la diputación patriótica de Matanzas", *Memorias*, May 1836.

²⁴ Letters of José Miguel Angulo to del Monte, 23 February 1836, 24 March 1836, and 7 April 1836, in Monte, *Centón*, Vol. 3. Domingo del Monte, before departure of Havana, had edited Blas Osés a report of instructions on how he should direct the society. Letter of José Miguel Angulo to del Monte, Matanzas, 25 May 1836, and letter of Blas Osés to del Monte, Matanzas, 18 July 1836, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 3.

²⁵ Letter of José Miguel Angulo to del Monte, Matanzas, 27 November 1838, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 3; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*.

maintained a permanent and sustained activity throughout the period. Del Monte knew about the importance of this strategic city, because of the existence of the *Audiencia* (a legislative and judicial body) and for that reason, from his arrival on the island in 1829, he tried to establish contact with the intellectual liberal élite in the town. In 1833 he wrote to Manuel Monteverde and sent him several publications from Havana to examine. Monteverde promised to send del Monte several of his works for publication in the capital city, but he failed to do so.²⁶

A short time later, in 1834, del Monte found a new opportunity to publicise his thoughts in Puerto Príncipe when his friend, Anastasio Orozco, an old friend of del Monte's family, obtained a position of *letrado* (lawyer) in the *Audiencia*.²⁷ Once in Puerto Príncipe, Orozco got to know Ignacio Agromonte, director of the Delegation of that city between 1833 and 1836. Agromonte named Orozco director of the newspaper *La Gaceta de Puerto Príncipe* (1819-1848), whose main editors were Gaspar Betancourt and Rafael Matamoros, and clerk of the Delegation of the Society. At once Orozco established a correspondence with del Monte with the aim of exchanging news and literary information.²⁸ Orozco and Betancourt pushed for the foundation of a school for children in the city, under the protection of the Delegation, and also participated in the creation of an academy of mathematics, and, later, created a school for girls and an academy of English.²⁹ To be able to carry out these projects they obtained the positions of director and vice-director of the Delegation in 1837, and with it control which they maintained from then on until the beginning of the 1840s.³⁰

Orozco also supported Betancourt in the fight that he began for the construction of a railroad from Nuevitas to Puerto Príncipe. He had planned this project years before and it was fundamental for the economic development (in a capitalist sense of the word) of the capital city of the Central Province, Puerto Príncipe, because this railway line would give the city access to the sea. From the start this project suffered many delays for lack of funds, but once José Luis Alfonso became director of the *Junta de Fomento* from 1843, it got the economic help necessary for its realisation.³¹ Betancourt also planned the creation of the *Junta de Población Blanca* to lobby for the substitution of slaves with white labour, and he even began to make some experiments of this type in two of his own country properties.³²

²⁶ Letter of Manuel Monteverde to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 1 December 1833, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2.

²⁷ Domingo del Monte and Andrés Orozco's fathers were friends, according to the former. In May 1834 Orozco was named adviser of the military and economic power of Puerto Príncipe. Letters of Orozco to del Monte, 3 May 1833, 16 July 1833, 1 May 1834, 2 May 1834, 7 May 1834, 16 June 1834, 4 June 1834, and 6 June 1834, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2.

²⁸ Letters of Orozco to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 3 September 1834, 10 November 1834, 10 December 1834, 3 January 1835, 16 February 1835, 8 March 1835, and 1 August 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2 and 3.

²⁹ Letters of Orozco to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 29 April 1835, 2 May 1835, and 28 May 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 4.

³⁰ "Exposición de las tareas de la Diputación patriótica de Puerto Príncipe hecha por su secretario en la junta general", *Memorias*, February 1838; "Extracto de las tareas realizadas por la Diputación de Puerto Príncipe", *Memorias*, December 1839; "Informe de los trabajos en que se ha ocupado la Diputación patriótica de Puerto Príncipe durante 1840", *Memorias*, December 1840.

³¹ "Camino de hierro", *Memorias*, January 1837.

³² *Guía de Forasteros de la Isla de Cuba*, 1838; letters of Orozco to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 22 February 1836, 25 April 1841, 6 June 1841, 30 July 1841, 5 December 1841, 12 January 1843, 29 January 1843, 2 April 1843, and letter of Gaspar Betancourt to del Monte, 12 December 1841, in Monte, *Centón epistolario*, vol. 5.

Santiago de Cuba was a city with a very strong identity because it had been the first city of Cuba, a bishopric, as was Havana, and also headquarters of the archbishop. All this meant that the local oligarchy was mistrustful of the prime position held by Havana and the exclusion that this might mean for the rest of the Cuban territory. For this reason, almost from the moment that the Consulate was founded in Havana, the city asked the government to settle some of its institutions in Santiago de Cuba, because the taxes obtained from the port of this latter city were invested in the western area and nothing arrived in the eastern part of the island.³³

The first Economic Society of Cuba was established in this eastern town in the eighteenth century. However, it rapidly declined and was then abandoned. In 1825 it was re-established by the governors of the province, José Emigdio Maldonado and Francisco Illas y Ferrer, and, although in 1828 it worked as a dependent delegation to the Society of Havana, from 1831 it developed its own, independent character.³⁴ After early uncertainty, the group of liberals constituted by Prudencio Hecheverría O'Gaban, Hilario Cisneros Saco, Juan Bautista Sagarra, José Ramón Villalón and Francisco Muñoz del Monte, Domingo del Monte's cousin, obtained the main positions in the Economic Society of Santiago de Cuba. Later on, Blas Osés who came from Matanzas to Santiago because he obtained a position in the administration, joined Muñoz del Monte's group in the Economic Society.³⁵

Domingo del Monte knew the peculiarities of the Santiago area and the complexity of the disputes that were occurring in the heart of its Economic Society and, for that reason, he knew that it would be much more difficult to use that organisation to spread his ideas. Nevertheless, part of his family lived in Santiago de Cuba, including his cousin, Francisco Muñoz del Monte (1800-1868), a small farmer with liberal ideas with whom he had always had a great friendship because both wrote and read literature. In addition, this cousin was censor of the Society of that department between 1828 and 1829 and he belonged to Hilario Cisneros Saco and Juan Bautista Sagarra's group which held the governing positions of this institution; for these reasons he was a perfect person for del Monte's plans.³⁶

In 1834 Francisco Muñoz was named editor of a newspaper, *El Redactor de Santiago de Cuba*, paid for by the Society of that city, and in it he inserted articles from newspapers and magazines that his cousin sent him from Havana, and he even requested literary works for publication from Domingo del Monte, for example José María Heredia's poetry.³⁷ But Muñoz del Monte was also attracted by Juan Kindelan's liberal ideas which were very near to the constitutional spirit of 1812 and distant from the

³³ This explains why, during the liberal periods, the city of Santiago and all its province was seen to be the place where the liberal system, embodied in the *Constitución de 1812*, was more welcome, because this constitutional text foresaw the foundation of delegations and autonomous city councils which benefited Santiago de Cuba. Fradera, *Colonias*; Jesús Raúl Navarro García, *Entre esclavos y constituciones. El colonialismo liberal de 1837 en Cuba* (Sevilla: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1991).

³⁴ *Guía de forasteros de la isla de Cuba*, 1828. However, the *Actas* say that on 31 March of 1832 the Society of Havana founded a delegation in Santiago. *Actas*, 1831.

³⁵ They alternated in the positions of director, secretary and censor.

³⁶ To begin with, Domingo del Monte sent Francisco Muñoz del Monte several copies of the *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, which interested the latter a great deal. Once contact was established, they agreed to open subscription to the *Revista Bimestre Cubana* in the city. Later on, in 1833, he sent a copy of *Rimas Americanas* to Muñoz del Monte, a great resource for poetry, and the latter gave his opinion.

³⁷ Letters of Francisco Muñoz del Monte to Domingo del Monte, Santiago de Cuba, 10 October 1831, 26 December 1833, 23 October 1834, and 13 November 1834, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2.

moderantismo of del Monte's circle and political ideas. This led him to support the governor Manuel Lorenzo in 1836, when he proclaimed the *Constitución de 1812* in the Eastern Province of the island, in spite of Miguel Tacón's, the Captain General's, opposition. The rebellion finally fell flat and its main leaders were banished to the Peninsula, among them Francisco Muñoz del Monte, and this meant a setback to del Monte's plans because he was left without anybody to trust in the city.³⁸ Before this, in 1838, Manuel González del Valle, Domingo del Monte's collaborator, tried to begin correspondence with José Bautista Sagarra, who had been the secretary and after that the director of the Society of Santiago and who, although he belonged to Muñoz del Monte's group, had not been implicated in Lorenzo's rebellion. Del Valle sent some of the works of the group to Sagarra; he was interested more and more in this faction works and he supported the ideological-political theories of González del Valle and del Monte, complaining that the Eastern Province was so isolated and that everything was happening in Havana.³⁹ At that time Blas Osés moved, due to his position in the administration, from Matanzas to Santiago de Cuba and, of course, Francisco Muñoz del Monte, who had already returned from his exile in the Peninsula, was able to influence matters so that Osés was voted director of the Society of that city in the elections of 1841. He occupied this position for two years.⁴⁰

At the beginning of the 1830s there were delegations of the Economic Society of Havana in Santi Spíritu, Trinidad and Santa Clara. Del Monte did not exercise any influence over these, although he attempted to through the establishment of printing works and local newspapers to publish news from abroad and of the rest of the island.⁴¹ In 1835 the Society also multiplied the number of delegations in villages near Havana, with the main aim of spreading primary education through the maintenance of one or several schools which were to be put under the supervision of the Society, and, in some cases, high schools which had been established earlier.⁴²

Domingo del Monte was aware of the importance of publicising the literary works that the intellectuals around him were producing in the metropolis where he looked for support for his nascent cultural project. He was able to reprint many of the works of the group in publications in the Peninsula. During his stay there at the end of the 1820s, del Monte met Ángel Iznardi, Salustiano Olozaga, José M. Mesa, Tomás Quintero, Alejandro Oliván, and other peninsular authors, as well as Anastasio Orozco Arango, who were of Cuban origin.⁴³ He also made contact with a man from Havana who was very influential in parliament, Andrés Arango, Francisco Arango's nephew and in turns Anastasio Orozco's uncle. All these people, in the period previous to

³⁸ Navarro, *Entre esclavos*. Domingo del Monte's group always thought that Lorenzo's rising in Santiago de Cuba was a mistake and its direct consequence was the expulsion of the deputies of the island from parliament.

³⁹ Letters of J. Bautista Sagarra to Manuel González del Valle, Santiago de Cuba, 18 December 1838, and 3 January 1839, in Monte, *Centón*, and vol. 3 and 4.

⁴⁰ Letter of Blas Osés to del Monte, Santiago de Cuba, 2 June 1841, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 5.

⁴¹ Letter of José Benito Ortigueyra to Manuel González del Valle, Santi Spíritu, 13 March 1833, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2.

⁴² The Delegation of Guanabacoa settled in 1836, that of San Antonio Abad in 1837, that of Güines and San Juan de los Remedios in 1839. *Memorias*, July 1836, January 1837, December 1839 and December 1841.

⁴³ Letters of Orozco to del Monte, Madrid, 25 February 1829, 25 August 1830, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 1; José Antonio Fernández de Castro, 'Larra y algunos románticos de América', *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* 1:5 (1950), pp. 189-203; Salvador Bueno, "Ascenso y afirmaciones de las letras hispanoamericanas", *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* 6:1 (1955), pp. 93-107.

Fernando VII's death, pressed in favour of the cause of del Monte's group by supporting their literary work through articles in the newspapers and magazines of Madrid.

Particularly intense was the correspondence that del Monte maintained with Andrés Arango and with Ángel Iznardi who, between 1834 and 1849, published *El Eco de Comercio, La Crónica y El Universal*.⁴⁴ With both he also exchanged newspapers and news from the other side of the Atlantic, transforming the publications of the three into a reference point for the rest of the newspapers of the Empire.⁴⁵ During his stay in Madrid, del Monte also met Salustiano de Olozaga, partner and friend of Iznardi. Together with this latter, del Monte planned an edition in Havana of the works of Jovellanos, and a dictionary of synonyms of the Castilian language and even, later on, a history of Spain from Havana.⁴⁶ Del Monte also maintained correspondence with Tomás Quintero, a Colombian settled in Madrid who, with Andrés Arango, was the author of the transformation of the Commission of Literature into an Academy of Literature without the knowledge of the Economic Society of Havana and of the Captain General of the island. The petition for its foundation was sent directly to the Ministry of Grace and Justice, and in addition they got the Minister of Development to introduce it to the King without letters from the Captain General or the Economic Society's approval.⁴⁷

Political pressure through the literary channels of communication

Domingo del Monte's group considered the identity project they created to be the ideological support to their political project. Alongside literary and historical activity, they developed, through previously existing channels of communication, a more properly political pressure. This, however, between 1823 and 1833, was very limited because Fernando VII reintroduced an absolutist system which lasted until his death. Nevertheless, many of the writing friends del Monte made on the peninsula during his trip, were also political, for example Andrés Arango, Salustiano Olozaga, Ángel Iznardi, José M. Mesa and Alejandro Oliván, and with them he conversed at length on questions surrounding the identity project. During his stop in the United States while returning to

⁴⁴ Letters of Ángel Iznardi to del Monte, Madrid, 18 February 1835, 6 April 1837, 10 October 1838, 11 November 1838, 9 February 1840, 25 March 1840, and 23 April 1840, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 1.

⁴⁵ At the beginning they exchanged *El Español* by the *Noticioso y Lucero de La Habana* and after that the *Noticioso y Lucero* for *El Correo Nacional*. Andrés Arango published articles on the island in *El Correo Nacional* and in *El Corresponsal*. Letters of Iznardi to del Monte, 25 June 1830, 24 July 1830, 30 September 1830, 26 November 1830, 24 March 1831, 26 April 1833, 24 February 1834, and April 1834, with Andrés Arango, 25 June 1836, and 29 November 1839, with Andrés Borrego, 1 December 1837, 29 December 1837, and 13 October 1839, in Monte, *Centón*, vols. 1 to 4.

⁴⁶ Letters of Salustiano Olozaga to del Monte, Madrid, 25 November 1828, 25 February 1829, 24 April 1829, 10 October 1829, 11 November 1829, 26 March 1830, 25 June 1830, 24 July 1830, and 26 October 1830, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 1.

⁴⁷ Tomás Quintero and Andrés Arango also took charge of the exchange of newspapers. They sent del Monte *El Correo Literario* and *Las Cartas* in exchange for the *Noticioso y Lucero de La Habana* and *Revista Bimestre Cubana*. Letters of Tomás Quintero to del Monte, Madrid, 25 July 1832, 24 October 1832, 25 December 1832, 26 August 1833, and 29 September 1833, of Andrés Arango to del Monte, 30 August 1836, 24 February 1837, 25 April 1837, and 29 March 1839, letter of E. Carrillo to del Monte, 26 December 1836, letter of Andrés Borrego to del Monte, 1 December 1837, and 29 December 1837, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 1 to 4. During the 1840s, Andrés Arango continued sending books and works to Domingo del Monte and he even intended to donate all his collection of books, almost a thousand, to the library of the Economic Society.

Letters of Tomás Quintero to del Monte, Madrid, 4 March 1833, 26 March 1833, 26 July 1833, 26 August 1833 and 24 September 1833, and letters of Andrés Arango to del Monte, Madrid, 27 September 1832, 25 October 1833, 14 June 1834, 6 November 1835, and 31 December 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2.

the island, he shared what he had learned in Madrid with the liberal exiles of the Liberal Triennium there: Tomás Gener and Félix Varela, as well as José Antonio Saco.⁴⁸

At the same time as this activity was going on abroad, in Havana, Francisco Arango, José Antonio Saco, and Domingo del Monte, formulated, through articles in the newspapers that the group controlled, the characteristics of the political system proposed for the island. In a very moderate way, Arango expressed his opposition to the process of the centralisation of power in the *Ordenanza Real de 1825*, through which the metropolitan government gave absolute power to the Captain General over all the political questions that affected the island, fearing that the new American liberal republics were a danger to the status quo on the island of Cuba. But Arango believed that the American republics had the money and the men, provided by the English and Anglo-Americans, to obtain independence for the island of Cuba and that the Captain General's authority, by itself, would not be enough to face these dangers.⁴⁹ However, the most powerful voice at this time was that of José Antonio Saco who, in 1831, published an article in the *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, in which he opposed the report of the regent of the *Audiencia*, Joaquín Bernardo Campuzano. This proposed the application of the *Ordenanza de Intendentes de 1803* for the reformation of the administration. This *Ordenanza* asked that the military and economic power be formed into one joint authority with the political government, that is, it proposed a centralisation of political and economic power. Saco opposed this and for this reason he revised a report written in 1830 by José Pizarro y Gardín, count of Fernandina, because of the petition made to him by the commission formed for the study of the reformation of the public administration in the government of the *Real Consulado de La Habana* (Royal Consulate of Havana).⁵⁰

Fernando VII's death at the end of 1833 was positive for liberalism, because the Queen's government needed the help of the liberals to govern, in opposition to the most conservative sectors that favoured the king's brother, Carlos María Isidro.⁵¹ The race to participate in the liberal system had begun, and del Monte's group fought to have a place in the new system, to ensure that their principles were kept in mind. For that reason they started up the entire communication network. In the first place, when the *Estatuto Real* was promulgated in 1834, even though Tomás Gener and the whole del Monte faction considered it a political anachronism because it limited the liberal system, Andrés Arango used his influence in parliament to have three representatives from the island named at his direct proposal and, therefore, it was automatic that those elected were members of his group. The appointed *próceres* were Francisco Arango and Juan Montalvo, for the Province of Havana, and Juan Kindelán (then substituted by Juan Bernardo O'Gaban), for the Eastern Province.⁵²

⁴⁸ Letter of Salustiano de Olozaga to Domingo del Monte, Madrid, 24 December 1833, and letter of Anastasio Orozco to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 5 July 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*; Aguilera Manzano, *La formación de la identidad*.

⁴⁹ Francisco Arango Parreño, "Consulta sobre los riesgos que amenazaban a Cuba al terminar el año 1825", in Francisco Arango Parreño, *Obras* (La Habana: Dirección de Cultura, 1952), vol. 2, pp. 399-403.

⁵⁰ "Dictamen que a la Junta de Gobierno del Real Consulado de la Habana presentó a una comisión de su propio seno sobre la reforma de los ramos de la administración pública", *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, nr. 7.

⁵¹ Álvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa*; Fontana, *La crisis*; Fontana, *La quiebra*.

⁵² Letters of Andrés Arango to Domingo del Monte, Madrid, 25 April 1834, 11 January 1835, and 3 March 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 2. Andrés Arango was, between 1829 and 1834, the representative of the City Council of Havana in parliament, where he defended the interests of Arango's group. Arango wanted to try to place the biggest number of Cubans in peninsular administrative positions. With regard to

When the *Constitución de 1812* was proclaimed in 1836 in the Peninsula, the Havana group of Madrid exercised pressure in order to get an electoral law favouring them again. The landowners of the island had the right to choose three representatives, one for each of the three provinces. At the same time the networks created by del Monte through the delegations of the Economic Society and of his own family in the main cities of the island, among which were Puerto Príncipe and Santiago de Cuba, worked to obtain elected representatives favourable to their interests. Del Monte wanted one of the deputies to be José Antonio Saco, but it was unlikely that he would be elected for the province of Havana since Saco had participated in the Cuban Academy of Literature and Tacón had expelled him. For this reason, del Monte thought of presenting Saco for the Eastern district. To accomplish this, del Monte appealed to his cousin, Francisco Muñoz del Monte, who opened the way for him by giving up his own candidacy and by pressurising land owners to vote for Saco.⁵³ For the Havana department Francisco Arango's partner in the Consulate, Juan Montalvo, was elected without great difficulty. The problem was in the Central Province. Although del Monte and Anastasio Orozco Arango hoped for Gaspar Betancourt, the latter did not accept and Francisco de Armas y Carmona was elected, a person opposed to the interests of del Monte.⁵⁴ However, that parliament was dissolved before its representatives arrived in Madrid from the island, in order to summon a constituent assembly at the end of 1836, and for that the island of Cuba provided four delegates. Del Monte's group prepared and Nicolás Escobedo and Juan Montalvo and Castillo were elected as deputies for Havana, and José Antonio Saco was successful again for Santiago de Cuba.⁵⁵

Although they had fought for a favourable electoral law that allowed them to have the maximum number of parliamentarians in Madrid, the circle around del Monte was aware that the island would never obtain a great enough number of deputies to allow them to be decisive in parliament in questions that affected Cuban territory. For that reason, from the outset, Andrés Arango, Tomás Gener, Francisco Arango, and José Luis Alfonso, and all of their contacts, were convinced that it was necessary to fight for an autonomous government for the island. With this aim, they also used the networks created by del Monte in the peninsula and in the island of Cuba.⁵⁶ In 1834, while the government wrote the *Estatuto Real*, the Ministry of Development charged Francisco Arango to write a report in which he laid out the most convenient way of establishing a

del Monte, his idea was to place this in the Audiencia of Havana, when the judicial reformation took place, but it was not possible. Letters of Andrés Arango to del Monte, Madrid, 3 April 1835, 24 April 1835, 26 June 1835, 10 October 1835, 26 April 1836, and 25 June 1836, in Monte, *Centón*, vols. 2 and 3.

⁵³ Letter of Francisco Muñoz del Monte to Domingo del Monte, Santiago de Cuba, 5 February 1835, and 5 May 1836, letter of Andrés Arango to del Monte, Madrid, 11 January 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vols. 2 and 3. Manuel I. Mesa Rodríguez: *Apostillas en torno a una gran vida: Domingo del Monte* (Havana: Imprenta el Siglo XX, 1954); Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*; Navarro, *Entre esclavos*; Antonio Valverde, *José Antonio Saco: aspectos de su vida* (Havana: Editorial Siglo XX, 1930); Raúl Lorenzo, *Sentido nacionalista del pensamiento de Saco* (Havana: Trópico, 1942); Francisco J. Ponte Domínguez, *La personalidad política de José Antonio Saco* (Havana: Imprenta Molina, 1931); Luis Mariano Pérez, *Estudio sobre las ideas políticas de José Antonio Saco* (Havana: Imprenta Avisador, 1908).

⁵⁴ Letters of Antonio Serapio Orozco to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 1 April 1836, 10 May 1836, 4 July 1836, 6 September 1836, 3 October 1836, 20 August 1838, letters of Gaspar Betancourt to del Monte, Puerto Príncipe, 4 June 1836, 14 August 1836, 18 September 1836, and 19 September 1836, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 3; Mesa, *Apostillas*; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*.

⁵⁵ Letters of del Monte to José Luis Alfonso, 23 July 1836, 23 November 1836, 5 February 1837, and letters of José Luis Alfonso to José Antonio Saco of 2 May 1836, in BNJM, Sala Cubana, Alfonso.

⁵⁶ AHN, Ultramar, leg. 2, nrs. 2 and 3, and leg. 4603, nr. 36; AGI, Ultramar, leg. 81, nr. 17.

civil governor who would be responsible for substituting the Captain General in the island of Cuba. In the report he published, Arango continued with the strategy of trying to wear away the enormous power of the Captain General, an indispensable element for the development of an autonomous power. He proposed the decentralisation of the power of this position through the creation of a *Diputación Civil* (Civil Delegation), that is, an autonomous assembly of government with legislative power.⁵⁷ However, the Captain General, Miguel Tacón, opposed this project and in 1835 the Queen declared that the civil governor's functions and responsibilities corresponded to those of the Captain General.⁵⁸

At the end of 1836 the constituent assembly was summoned and del Monte's group, after having failed to create an autonomous assembly between 1834 and 1836, felt that the participation of some of their members in the elaboration of the new constitution was another good way to get autonomy. This could be achieved if it were recognised in the first place that it was necessary to develop a group of *Leyes Especiales* (Special Laws) to govern the island and, in second place, they must maintain the number of Cuban representatives in the new parliament. However, peninsular liberalism was always very reticent about, or contrary to, the autonomy of the island of Cuba, and it found and used Lorenzo's rising in the eastern part of Cuba, at the end of 1836, as the perfect excuse to justify the expulsion of the Cuban deputies from the chamber of representatives, promising that in the future a system of Special Laws would be developed and would allow Cubans to be governed in an autonomous way.⁵⁹ This proposal implied the renunciation of individual rights and citizenship, the basis on which liberal constitutions are made, and it proposed the exclusion of the island from the liberal structure.⁶⁰ Also, the Special Laws were never developed and, for that reason, Cuba and the rest of the overseas territories continued to be governed through the *Leyes de Indias*, applied by central government.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Francisco Arango Parreño, "Indicaciones sobre el gobierno civil en Cuba", in Arango, *Obras*, vol. 2, pp. 620-631.

⁵⁸ Pérez, *Correspondencia reservada*; Domingo del Monte, "Informe sobre el estado de la isla de Cuba en 1836", in Monte, *Escritos*, vol. 1, pp. 6-7. Letters of Andrés Arango to del Monte, 30 November 1834, 22 July 1835, 6 November 1835, 26 May 1836, 30 August 1836, 31 October 1836, and letter of Tomás Gener to del Monte, 14 June 1835, in Monte, *Centón*, vols. 2 and 3.

⁵⁹ At this time the contacts of the Saco group grew with their representation in parliament. Letters of Saco to Luz, 30 January 1835, 3 March 1835, 24 April 1835, 26 May 1835, 24 December 1835, and 27 December 1836, in José Antonio Saco, *Obras* (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2000), vol. 5; letters of Luz to Saco, 29 October 1833, 30 May 1836, 2 May 1837 and 7 July 1837, in José de la Luz, *Obras* (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2000); letters of Luz to del Monte 19 May 1835, 10 May 1837, in Luz, *Obras*, vol. 5. Rafael María de Labra, *América y la constitución española de 1812. Estudio histórico-jurídico* (Madrid: Tipografía del Sindicato de Publicidad, 1914), pp. 109-158; Valverde, *José Antonio Saco*; Lorenzo, *Sentido nacionalista*; Pérez, *Estudio sobre las ideas políticas*.

⁶⁰ Letters of del Monte to Olozaga of 26 May 1836, in BNJM, Sala Cubana, Monte; Monte, *Escritos*, vol. 1, pp. 241-255; Mesa, *Apostillas*; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*.

⁶¹ The metropolitan government created a commission for the study of the government of the Overseas territories, in those where there was no representation. The commission concluded with the promise of publishing throughout the legislature Special Laws for the government of these territories, but they were never published. Letter of del Monte to José Luis Alfonso, Havana, 4 March 1837, in BNJM, Sala Cubana, Monte; letter of Saco to José Luis Alfonso, 29 March 1837, in Saco, *Obras*, vol. 5; letters of Ángel Izardi to del Monte, Madrid, 11 December 1837, and 2 October 1838, letters of Salustiano Olozaga to del Monte, 20 March 1837, 27 July 1844, 9 September 1844, 14 October 1844, and 1 January 1845, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 3 and 6; Josep María Fradera, *Gobernar colonias* (Barcelona: Península, 1999), pp. 71-88; Fradera, *Colonias*.

At the beginning of 1837 a new stage opened up, since the island of Cuba had been left without representatives in parliament, it had not got an autonomous government and it was administered based on a code of laws characteristic of Enlightened Despotism, the *Leyes de Indias*. Firstly, Domingo del Monte redirected the work of the group on a political level, with the aim that the Special Laws be passed. Since the group did not have delegates in the metropolitan parliament, he sought for the most receptive peninsular deputies to defend Cuban interests in this institution, that is, Jaume Badía and Alejandro Oliván, although he also wrote to Olozaga and Iznardi.⁶² However, it is necessary to keep in mind that at the beginning of the 1840s, with changes in government, his political friends, who until then had occupied positions of responsibility, were deprived of their positions. All this meant that the pressure exercised was weakened.⁶³

Secondly, del Monte also tried to get the most influential members of the Havana oligarchy to exercise their power on central government through writings that would complement those that José Antonio Saco was publishing in the peninsula. In August 1838, del Monte went to Count O'Reilly who permitted him to publish a letter in his name directed to the government, in which he requested an autonomous assembly for the island.⁶⁴ At the request of Andrés Arango, del Monte also produced a declaration, signed by all the members of the city council of Havana, sent to the parliament in 1838 as well, to be able to raise the “*cuestión cubana*” in Madrid.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, in the Peninsula, José Antonio Saco published, in 1837, the *Reclamaciones del diputado a cortes por la provincia de Cuba sobre la aprobación o desaprobación de sus poderes*. On 21 February he published, together with the other two Cuban representatives, Juan Montalvo and Francisco de Armas, *Protesta de los diputados electos de la provincia de Cuba a las cortes generales de la nación*, and, a few days after their expulsion from parliament, *Examen analítico del informe de la comisión especial nombrada por las cortes*, and in all of these he defended the necessity of creating an autonomous government in the island.⁶⁶

Thirdly, and last, del Monte tried to sensitise peninsular public opinion about the necessity of promulgating Special Laws for the government of Cuba. With this aim he published articles in the *Correo Nacional*, edited by Borrego, and *El Eco*, directed by Ángel Iznardi.⁶⁷ From the beginning of the 1840s Andrés Arango wrote articles on the island for *El Corresponsal*, and he also reached a financial agreement with the director of *El Herald*, so that one day a week he gave them a page on which del Monte's group could introduce ‘paragraphs on the island’, which they used to lobby for the return of

⁶² Letter of del Monte to Jaume Badía, 25 April 1838 and 22 June 1838, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 3.

⁶³ Letters of Olozaga to del Monte, London, 21 March 1844, 8 April 1844, 22 April 1844, 15 May 1844, 27 May 1844, 26 June 1844, 17 July 1844, and letter of Alejandro Oliván to del Monte, Madrid, 17 August 1844, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 6.

⁶⁴ Letter from Count of O'Reilly to the minister Ofelia, 30 August 1838, in BNJM, Sala Cubana, O'Reilly.

⁶⁵ Domingo del Monte, “Proyecto de memorial a S.M. la Reina, en nombre del ayuntamiento de La Habana pidiendo Leyes Especiales para la isla de Cuba. 1838”, in Monte, *Escritos*, vol. 1, pp. 55-94.

⁶⁶ Saco, *Obras*, vol. 2.

⁶⁷ Letters of Ángel Iznardi to del Monte, 26 January 1836, 2 October 1838, and letters of del Monte to the editor of *El Correo Nacional*, 4 May 1838, 31 May 1838, and 30 June 1838, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 3; Martínez, *Domingo del Monte*.

Cuba's lost representation, especially when, in 1845, parliament approved another new electoral law.⁶⁸

Conclusions

The Spanish Crown, more through circumstance than by conviction, was forced to convert peninsular territory into a nation state composed of citizens during the first half of the nineteenth century. At the same time that these transformations were being made in the metropolis, the different governments had to think about what part the American domains played in the Spanish nascent state. Most peninsular liberals, and a part of the Havana elite, were not in favour of inserting the overseas territories into the process of formation of the liberal state, and instead wanted to give them a politically inferior category through legislation, thus maintaining the status quo. However, a group of intellectuals from the island, supported by some of the most powerful families of the Havana sugar oligarchy, did not feel comfortable with the position of colony to which their territories were relegated in the new liberal state⁶⁹. Their answer was to try to get a more favourable situation for their own interests and those of the island inside the new state under construction. For that reason, they supported and actively participated in the construction of a concept of Cuban autonomous identity as distinct from that of the peninsular.

Domingo del Monte and the circle of intellectuals that surrounded him were responsible for giving form to this project. With this objective, they used literature as their instrument, they developed a concept of identity that gave unity to the island of Cuba and they connected their history to the Castilian tradition, of which they were considered part. This identity project was not born fully armed, but rather it was negotiated and modified over time, until it acquired a quite defined form by the end of the 1830s. During these years, Domingo del Monte and his collaborators managed to get their ideas to all the cities of the island through non official ways, and this before a network of roads had been developed between the different towns of the island. Del Monte began to forge a dependence for the rest of the island on Havana and, therefore, he reproduced in the Cuban territory the pattern, based on the leadership of the Castilian élite and centralised in Madrid, that he had rejected when it came from the peninsula. Also, thanks to these communication channels, it was possible to make the del Monte group's project known in the metropolis and in the main European and American cities.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Letters of Andrés Arango to del Monte, Madrid, 29 December 1841, 4 November 1844, 7 December 1844, 2 January 1845, 21 March 1845, 15 April 1845, in Monte, *Centón*, vol. 5 and 6.

⁶⁹ Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (Nueva York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Louis A. Pérez, *On becoming Cuban: identity, nationality and culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Shery Johnson, *The Social Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); Joan Casanova, *Urban labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850-1898*, (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1998).

⁷⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Cultura y literatura* (Barcelona: Península, 1968), pp. 1-24; Edward Said, *Cultura e imperialismo* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2001).