



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (175)

TEXT: *Cosas Añejas* (1891)

AUTHOR: César Nicolás Penson

EDITOR: Rita María Tejada

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the Prologue by Rita María Tejada and historical/literary studies of the Dominican Republic)

1. CÉSAR NICOLÁS PENSON: A NINETEENTH-CENTURY DOMINICAN MAN OF LETTERS:

Multifaceted Career:

César Nicolás Penson (1855-1901) was a prominent Dominican intellectual, journalist, and lawyer, deeply involved in the civic and literary life of Santo Domingo. He pioneered daily publications in the Dominican Republic and left a significant mark on its 19th-century literary landscape.

"Cosas Añejas" as a Landmark Work:

Published in 1891, *Cosas Añejas* is considered one of the most representative works of 19th-century Dominican literature and Penson's magnum opus.

2. THE GENRE OF "TRADICIONES" AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:

Rescue of the Past:

Cosas Añejas belongs to the "tradiciones" genre, akin to Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones Peruanas*. These narratives aim to preserve the past, collecting popular tales, legends, and customs from oral tradition and historical archives.

Blend of Fact and Fiction:

Penson, like Palma, skillfully weaves together historical events, real figures, popular superstitions, and personal anecdotes, creating a "novelized history" that captures the spirit of the Dominican people and their environment.

"Tradition" as Defined by Penson:

Penson defined tradition as a particular event, perhaps known to few, that gains "prestigious charm" over time or due to its inherent importance, distinguishing it from merely modern occurrences.

3. IDEOLOGICAL CURRENTS: ANTI-HAITIANISM AND HISPANOPHILIA:

Pervasive Anti-Haitianism:

A central and controversial theme is the strong anti-Haitian sentiment of the era, which Penson reflects. This attitude, rooted in the historical Haitian occupation of the eastern part of the island (1822-1844), portrays Haitians with negative stereotypes as "savage" and a threat to Dominican identity.

Hispanophilia and Patriotism:

In contrast to anti-Haitianism, Penson's work often exalts a filiation towards Spain ("Madre Patria"), viewing it as a protector of European values and a counterpoint to



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perceived Haitian "barbarism." This Hispanophilia, while seemingly nostalgic, serves to reinforce a particular vision of Dominican nationality.

Social and Political Commentary:

Penson uses his narratives to comment on contemporary political life, social customs, and economic changes, often expressing conservative views and criticizing liberal governments while advocating for order and progress.

4. LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND HISTORICAL DETAIL:

Rich and Eclectic Language:

Penson's writing features a rich linguistic palette, combining cultured language with popular phrases, regionalisms, proverbs, and foreign expressions, reflecting the linguistic diversity of his time.

Vivid Descriptions:

The narratives are notable for their meticulous descriptions of 18th and 19th-century Santo Domingo's urban landscapes, architecture, fashion, food, and daily life, providing a valuable historical document.

Author's Annotations:

A distinctive feature of *Cosas Añejas* is Penson's own extensive notes, clarifying vocabulary, historical facts, and cultural references, which are integrated into this edition for enhanced accessibility.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

The "Tradiciones" Genre:

Discuss the significance of the "tradiciones" genre in 19th-century Latin American literature. How did it contribute to the formation of national identity and historical memory?

Anti-Haitianism in Penson:

Analyze the portrayal of Haitians and anti-Haitian sentiment in *Cosas Añejas*. What historical events and societal anxieties fueled this discourse, and how is it reflected in the narratives?

Hispanophilia and Dominican Identity:

Explore the role of Hispanophilia in Penson's work. How does Penson reconcile an affinity for Spain with the assertion of a distinct Dominican identity?

Historical Accuracy vs. Literary Freedom:

Discuss the balance between historical fact and literary embellishment in Penson's "tradiciones." How does Penson's personal involvement and opinions shape the historical accounts?

Language and Social Class:

Examine Penson's use of a diverse linguistic register, including colloquialisms and specialized jargon. How does this reflect the social stratification and cultural nuances of Santo Domingo?



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Social Critique and Political Commentary:

Identify instances where Penson inserts his personal opinions on politics, society, and morality into the narratives. How does he use his literary platform for social commentary?

Comparison with Ricardo Palma:

Compare the thematic and stylistic similarities and differences between Penson's *Cosas Añejas* and Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones Peruanas*.

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Penson, César Nicolás.** *Cosas Añejas*. Stockcero.
- **Tejada, Rita María.** (Editor of this edition, her prologue provides critical analysis).
- **Alcántara Almánzar, José.** "Prólogo" to *Cosas Añejas*.
- **Balaguer, Joaquín.** (For his analysis of Penson's work).
- **Henríquez Ureña, Max.** *Panorama histórico de la literatura dominicana*.
- **Palma, Ricardo.** *Tradiciones Peruanas*. (For comparative study).
- **Peguero, Valentina and de los Santos, Danilo.** *The Dominican Republic: A National History*.
- **Sagás, Ernesto.** *Racial Politics in the Dominican Republic*.



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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. Who is the author of *Cosas Añejas*?

- A) Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda
- B) Francisco Calcagno
- C) César Nicolás Penson
- D) Aurora Cáceres

Correct Answer: C

2. What literary genre is *Cosas Añejas* primarily categorized as?

- A) Historical novel
- B) Epic poetry
- C) "Tradiciones" (collection of popular tales and customs)
- D) Autobiographical memoir

Correct Answer: C

3. What specific historical sentiment is a central theme in *Cosas Añejas*, particularly regarding Haiti?

- A) Admiration for Haitian independence
- B) Anti-Haitianism
- C) Calls for Haitian-Dominican unity
- D) Neutrality towards Haiti

Correct Answer: B

4. Penson's work is often compared to that of which other Latin American author known for similar collections of national traditions?

- A) Gabriel García Márquez
- B) Ricardo Palma
- C) Jorge Luis Borges
- D) Juan Rulfo

Correct Answer: B

5. What is the tone of Penson's language, as described in the introduction?

- A) Exclusively formal and academic
- B) A blend of cultured language with popular expressions and social critique
- C) Simplistic and childlike
- D) Strictly objective and devoid of personal opinion

Correct Answer: B

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