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Hispaniola - hell or home? : Decolonizing grand narratives about intercultural interactions at Concepción de la Vega (1494-1564)

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8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 Summary

This dissertation has attempted to better understand colonial intercultural interactions by analyzing the previously excavated, but unanalyzed, archaeological material stored at the Concepción archaeological site. It is important to examine the events which occurred at Concepción during this crucial period. It must be remembered that from 1492 to 1509 - 17 years - Spanish colonization was focused solely on Hispaniola (Deagan 1996: 136), and Santo Domingo and Concepción were the largest settlements on the island at that time.

This research has focused on the use of all artifacts (not just ceramics) in nondomestic areas, as opposed to the *chaîne opératoire* of artifact manufacture (Pestle et al. 2013, 4). This was due to an interest in identifying how much information about the site's lifeways can be obtained from such material. The present research was more focused on problem solving, rather than chronology or typology approach, which was partly impossible to do due to the excavation biases. More specifically, the research attempted to answer the following questions:

- What environmental, sociocultural, and biophysical intercultural interactions that occurred at Concepción in the early colonial period, contributed in the formation of today's multicultural Dominican society?
- How is this evidenced in the various avenues of inquiry (ethnological, historical, archaeological, architectural, etc.) available?
- What are the Grand Narratives related to Concepción?
- Can a Small Narrative present a decolonized version of what occurred at Concepción?

This research has used a Processual-Plus Approach, which combines Postprocessual theory and a processual methodology (Berman 2014, 4). More specifically, the processual Spatial Distribution Analysis approach was combined with Post-Processual concerns dealing with gender and labor. The data used came from various avenues of inquiry, including historical records, architectural data, excavation data, and the archaeological assemblage recovered during the 1976-1995, and 1996-1998 excavations at the Concepción site. It is important to note that the distribution of various artifacts, not only ceramics, were prioritized in this study. More specific detail about this is found in Chapter 2.

Previous archaeological interventions at Concepción were compiled in Chapter 3 in chronological order. It attempted to recreate archaeological documents as much as possible, emphasizing the excavations undertaken in from 1976 to 1995.

Meanwhile, Chapter 4 presented a chronology of military, political and diplomatic events which affected intercultural interactions at Concepción from 1494 to 1564. The chapter was divided according to the pertinent environmental/landscape interactions, prioritizing the different types of settlement patterns.

Chapter 5 focused on biophysical and sociocultural intercultural interactions, as well as social classification at Concepción. It also discussed the labor activities where interactions could have occurred.

Chapter 6 presented how artifact distribution patterns helped identify structures on the macro level, and artifact use at a micro level at the Fort campus and the Monasterio de San Francisco campus, the two previously excavated areas of the Concepción site. A set of artifacts were picked to be plotted based on historical data, and on those that had complete recorded context data. Possible structures/activity areas were identified at each campus, as well as the Associations (artifact groupings).

Four major structures/activity areas were identified at the Monasterio de San Francisco Campus: the church, the burials, the convent, and the basurero (large southeast trash pit area) (Fig. 10). Eight structures/activity areas were identified at the Fort Campus: Wooden structure #1, Masonry Fort (1512); Masonry Fort (1543), Wooden structure #2, Fort Midden area, southeastern Tower Structure, House #1 and House #2 (Fig. 9).

The layout of structures at the Fort campus suggests a change from a more Medieval layout (Wooden Structures #1, 2), to a Grid Plan Town structure (Masonry Fort -1512, Fort Midden Area, southeastern Tower Structure, House #1 and House #2) (Fig. 9). There is no evidence of a layout change related to the 1543 Fort, which would have been a result of the Pueblo Tutelado plans. Interestingly, it does appear that the masonry forts both functioned as a Casa Fuerte, given the low number of artifacts found in its inside areas.

Through this research, it has been possible to determine that the presence or absence of particular artifacts can inform on lifeways, deathways and interactions at a more site-wide scale. Both the deposition pattern of the artifact, and its context, can help confirm where these activities took place at a structural level. For example, the presence of large amounts of cupellation items at the Fort campus (Fig. 9) suggests that metal smelting and cupellation took place at Concepción, but its distribution pattern suggests their use as a construction element, and cupellation itself took place elsewhere.

The life histories of the selected artifacts were reconstructed, in an effort to determine their various uses. This was mainly done through the identification of those artifacts that were, or were not, used as construction material; as well as through the identification of non-midden contexts. It was possible to identify some possible use-areas for non-ceramic materials, such as glass and clothing elements, as well as for griddles.

Chapter 7 presented an inductive interpretation of intercultural interactions at Concepción, in spite of excavation biases, and incomplete documentary sources. All three types of intercultural interactions, environmental, sociocultural, and biophysical, were identified, as well as the importance of the interplay between them. Additionally, it explored the interplay between the conceptual and the practice/material (Sluyter 2001; Vargas-Arenas 1990). Special attention was paid to the moments of conflict between these two processes, which offered evidence of resistance and agency against the colonial domination policies. The data used for these interpretations came from previous chapters, and from extrapolation and comparison to similar sites around the Caribbean of a similar time period. However, due to Concepción's inland location, and the early time period, comparisons to other sites have been tentative, and more investigations must be undertaken.

This interpretation shows that, during this period of study, colonial authorities were concerned with controlling men and their activities at the economic, political, material scale. The most overt population control mechanism was physical separation. Various social and environmental hierarchies were instituted, including settlement patterns, labor assignment, and sumptuary laws.

Although all three types of interactions were present at Concepción, they did not equally influence the material assemblages of the Fort and Monasterio de San Francisco campuses. This interpretation points to a stronger influence from sociocultural interactions (sumptuary laws and resistance to them, for example) at these sites, than those played by biophysical interactions (i.e. *casta* classifications). Meanwhile, there seems to be a greater influence of environmental interactions on the Fort campus than on the Monasterio de San Francisco campus, in great part due to the Fort's campus position close to the central section of the Ibero-American Grid Town Plan.

8.2 Decolonial Analysis of Grand Narratives

As stated before, in postmodern and critical theory, Grand Narratives aim to legitimize a particular historical meaning, often with the purpose of accruing political power, and controlling perceptions of the world (Lyotard 1984; Voss 2015, 354, 356). They eclipse all other possible narrations pertaining to a particular place and/or time, and are often mistaken as reality (Voss 2015, 353, 354). Chapter 1 presents two Grand Narratives related to the interpretation of intercultural interactions at Concepción from 1494 to 1564, one coming from history (Hell on Hispaniola) and the other from archaeology (Grand Narrative of Benign Culture Change).

The Hell in Hispaniola Grand Narrative describes the early Spanish colonial period on Hispaniola as brutal, a time during which the Spanish were only concerned with mining gold, resulting in the extinction of Indigenous peoples due to hard work in the gold mines and European disease. Consequently, African slaves were brought in as

substitute labor. The Battle of the Santo Cerro, believed to have occurred in the Concepción area, plays a small, but important, role in this narrative, particularly in Dominican textbooks of the period (García 1906). This narrative recounts how the Spanish defeated the local Indigenous peoples thanks to the help of the Virgen de las Mercedes (Charlevoix 1730, 399; Díez-Burgos 1971, 29; García 1906, 34; Kulstad 2008, 40; Rueda 1988, 78). The Spanish claimed this event was the start of the Spanish way of life not only at Concepción, but in all of Hispaniola (Guitar 2002; Kulstad 2008).

Meanwhile, the Grand Narrative of Benign Culture Change (Voss 2015, 356) stems from the use of other disciplines, such as archaeology, to interpret early New World colonial sites, given the subjective discourse used in written texts (Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 4; Jamieson 2004, 433; Keegan and Hofman 2017, 243; Kulstad 2008, 16; Rangassamy 2013, 15; Sauer 1966, 29). Archaeology presents a more tangible representation of past societies through the deposition patterns of the material assemblage left in the ground (Deagan 1996, 154; Deetz 1977; Gonzalez-Ruibal 2015, viii; Harris 1974, 4; Jamieson 2004, 433; South 1977). These patterns serve as material correlates (Deagan 1981; Deagan 1983) for activities and cultural processes undertaken within a particular landscape, by the community's inhabitants of a particular community (Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 4; Kulstad 2008, 17; McGuire and Paynter 1991; Scott 1994, 3; Singleton 1998). However, this meta narrative highlights non-violent cultural and genetic mixing, often forgetting the unequal power relationships that are part of colonialism dynamics (Voss 2015, 354).

An analysis of these two Grand Narratives based on the findings of this investigation, shows that neither is totally absolute nor totally untrue. However, rather than being an "either/or" matter, this is more of an exercise in complementation. Since Grand Narratives are, for the most part, interpretations based on only one source, they only present part of the story. To more accurately recreate lifeways and deathways in the early colonial period, it is necessary to use various avenues of information/inquiry (Deagan 1982, 32), as proposed by Decoloniality.

As stated above, Decoloniality focuses on the complexity and ambiguity of colonial lifeways (González-Tennant 2014, 44; Liebman 2008, 5, 2013, 3; Silliman 2010, 49; Voss 2008, 861). This does not imply a rejection of the status quo, but rather an acknowledgement that artifacts and interactions may be functioning at more than one level at a time (Potter 1992, 126; Silliman 2010, 39). Fernando Ortiz (1940, 1947) explained this interaction as a counterpoint, a relationship between voices and/or instruments that is, at once, harmonically interdependent, and independent in rhythm and contour. This is related to the way in which Dominican social studies teachers describe Dominican culture - it is a merengue song played by several instruments at once - drums (representing Africa), accordion (representing Europe), and guira (representing Indigenous peoples). If one is missing, it is not a merengue (*sensu* Moya-Pons 2008, 325; Mieses-Burgos 2000[1943]; Ortiz 1940, 1947) (See Chapter 7).

Additionally, Decoloniality within Historical Archaeology advocates for the prioritization of the voice of the colonized (Liebmann and Murphy 2011a; Mignolo 1999, 239). Too often, within the coloniality of power, interactions occur between people who travel and arrive, and others who are stationary and receive, with priority given to the travelers (Mignolo 1999, 239). This priority can reach a point where the “stationary receivers” (and their culture) are objects of discussion, and yet they themselves are not invited to participate in the debate (Mignolo 1999, 241).

Also, as explored in Chapter 2, this counterpoint includes an interplay between the conceptual and the practice/material (Sluyter 2001; Vargas-Arenas 1990), also known as a “play of tropes” (Fernández 1991). Conceptual processes identify the “ideal,” intended process that exists in the mind (Sluyter 2001, 425). These are often manifested in the colonial-administrative policies (Silliman 2010, 42). The practice/material processes deal with what was done (Sluyter 2001; Vargas-Arenas 1990). This includes not only the material record, but the associated actions related to these processes. The moments of conflict between these two processes give evidence of resistance and agency of non-Spanish groups.

Conceptually, the “ideal” colonial interactions included domination (Deagan 2011, 55; Rothchild 2015, 183), as well as classification structures created to explain where different individuals are located in relation to power. This was justified as necessary to convert all to Catholicism and the proper, “Spanish,” life (Deagan 2011, 43, 55). Also, colonial authorities were concerned with controlling men and their activities at the economic, political, material scale. Concern for women and their activities came later, with the implementation of the Castas System in the 17th century (Rothchild 2015, 183).

Ideally, for a more complete view of lifeways at a particular site and particular place using the Historical Archaeology approach, not only are various avenues of inquiry needed, but also various scales of inquiry. One scale of inquiry deals with primary data from various disciplines, while the next level examines Grand Narratives, usually based on the interpretation secondary data. In this dissertation, this process seems to point to show that, at a larger scale (Site and Building), as well as when studying the artifacts themselves, there seems to be more concordance with intended use. Meanwhile, at an Artifact Distribution Pattern Scale, there is more evidence of actual use, thanks to the identification of activity areas. Stated more plainly, artifact context is essential to understand artifact use, and more readily identify resistance and agency.

8.3 A Small Narrative about the colonization of Concepción and Modern Dominican Society

It is appropriate, then, after analyzing the data obtained from the various avenues of inquiry used in this dissertation, particularly the archaeological, to propose a Small

Narrative about Concepción. As stated before, Small Narrative discourses cover shorter time periods and are more site-specific (Carvajal-López 2016a: 23). This Small Narrative will attempt to link the data produced within this dissertation to La Vega's modern-day carnival celebrations. This narrative will present an alternative, decolonized, view of Concepción's colonial period. To do this, we will attempt to connect the bells found in the archaeological record with the bells used in modern-day Carnival costumes.

The Hell on Hispaniola Narrative (historical) believes that bells were used by Indigenous peoples to carry the gold tribute to the Spanish for smelting at Concepción after their great defeat at the Santo Cerro. The bells' large presence in the archaeological record is believed to be evidence of the importance of the gold industry, and of the large amount of Indigenous peoples enslaved within the tribute system.

However, this research, based on various avenues of inquiry, has found that the historical record also has evidence of the use of rumbler bells in activities more related to Spanish lifeways, such as on horse harnesses and as possible musical instruments. More importantly, there seems to be a strong connection to the use of bells as clothing decoration (See discussion in Chapter 6). The different artifact distribution patterns present a difference between the intended and actual use of bells at the site, creating a music-like interdependence between these mininarratives (See previous section discussion on merengue/counterpoint).

Meanwhile, the La Vega Carnival is believed to be the oldest in the New World (Valdez 1995). Its costumes, pageantry, and its recreation of rebellion against authority, remain an important part of popular carnival celebrations in the Dominican Republic today (Orbe 2017; Tejeda 2018; Valdez 1995). The *Proceso de Alvaro de Castro*, a lawsuit undertaken in 1532, provides what may be the first evidence of the La Vega Carnival, which at the time included horse racing (Patronato 1995: 213). The horses probably wore harnesses covered in bells for these special occasions. Big carnival celebrations are still held in the city's new location every Sunday in February (Museo del Carnaval Vegano 2018; Tejeda 2018).

The main character represented in the celebrations are the *Diablos Cojuelos* [Limping Devils], which wear intricate masks, elaborate body suits, and capes edged with bells (Castillo 2017; Museo del Carnaval Vegano 2018; Orbe 2017; Tejeda 2018) (Fig. 21-24). It is interesting to note that the *Diablo* outfit includes capes, corselets and pointed hoods, the items of clothing identified with elite *vecinos* and sold illegally by Alvaro de Castro to nonelites in his 1532 trial (Patronato 1995). It is important to note that wearing clothes in this style in the 16th century would have violated the sumptuary laws.

In the Carnival tradition, power is inverted (Silliman 2010, 50), and the invisible becomes visible, and the secondary becomes primary. Inversion within this narrative implies the use of the material/practice elements as the main base of the story, with the

conceptual data filling the gaps. Ambiguity is highlighted, as opposed to suppressed (Silliman 2010, 49).

The proposed Small Narrative about colonial Concepción would embrace this ambiguity. Concepción is not the place of the first submission of Indigenous peoples to invaders, but rather the place of constant remembrance of the resistance against these invaders. The use of bells on the modern-day costumes is not a linear tradition, but rather represents resistance/disregard for the dominant rules and codes. The ambiguous distribution of bells in the archaeological landscape shows the disregard for the assigned space imposed by the Ibero-American Grid Town Plan (and its implicit division between peoples). The Diablos Cojuelos's use of capes edged with bells, mocks the 16th century sumptuary laws regarding clothes. The mixing of all peoples in the revelry subverts class divisions.

This research has shown that a more detailed re-examination of data related to the Concepción archaeological site can offer a more nuanced, decolonized, perspective of lifeways and deathways during the early colonial period of the Dominican Republic, and all of the Caribbean.

8.4 Future Research

The investigations undertaken for this dissertation are just the tip of the iceberg. More research in various avenues of inquiry must be undertaken to better understand lifeways at Concepción during its occupation of the Concepción site. Particularly, it is important to focus on three investigative processes: excavation, artifact classification, and historical research.

In terms of excavation, the Monasterio de San Francisco and Fort campuses are only two areas of the Concepción site. It must be remembered that the site is more than 1 km². There is a need to excavate the rest of the site using strict scientific methodology as done at La Isabela and Puerto Real to create a more accurate view of the early 16th century colonial period on Hispaniola (see Deagan 1999; Woods 1998). Of particular interest is the excavation of the Cathedral area, immediately next to the Fort. Other areas of interest, yet to be identified within the site, include domestic/habitation areas for both Europeans and non-Europeans .

Artifact classification is another area of future research, given that artifacts at the site have been classified using broad categories, as opposed to the more fine-grained categories used at La Isabela (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 2002b), or Puerto Real (Deagan 1995). Of particular concern for this research is the fact that majolica ceramics need to be classified to a more detailed level (See FLMNH Ceramic Typology Classification) to be able to identify different use-areas related to their intended and real use. This would be done using the Florida Museum of Natural History classification system to be able to compare to other Circum-Caribbean/Spanish colonial sites. Research should also be done to identify prestige wares to learn more about class and/

or social mobility (Jamieson 2004, 445). Non-European ceramics from the site and their classification are currently being studied by Marlieke Ernst, a PhD student from Leiden University.

The stored faunal remains need to be analyzed. This should be done by an expert in European banyard animals since most of these remains have been identified as such earlier (Deagan 1999; Woods 1998). Unfortunately, due to excavation biases, small sized remains, often corresponding to local species, are scarce (See Chapter 3). It would be useful to identify whether these remains are related to foodways, or cattle ranching for hides.

Finally, it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth investigation of historical sources at the Archivo de Indias in Spain. Currently, this research is focusing only on the city of Santo Domingo. Special consideration should be given to those subjects that are of interest to anthropologists/archaeologists, such as cultural adaptation, ethnicity, and household level activity) (Deagan and Scardaville 1985, 34-35). Research about “invisible” peoples, particularly the enslaved, should also be considered.

8.5 Final Consideration

In short, this dissertation has attempted to present an aspect of lifeways at Concepción during the study period (1494-1564).. Its purpose is to inspire future historical, archaeological and architectural researchers to go beyond what is presented here, confirm or refute this research, and perhaps propose other narratives that better fit the data. Concepción played a large role in the Spanish colonization continuum and its importance must be revealed to the public those beyond the archaeological site’s immediate area, and beyond the Dominican Republic.