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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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SUMMARY

This dissertation attempted to examine the intercultural interactions at the Concepción de la Vega archaeological site during its occupation from 1494 through 1564, using a Decolonial approach. Situated in present-day Dominican Republic (Hispaniola island), this site was one of the earliest and most affluent Caribbean colonial history. The Decolonial approach used here critically analyzed and reinterpreted primary data about Concepción from the point of view of those colonized, particularly non-elite, Indigenous and African descent peoples.

This was done through the analysis of previously excavated, but unanalyzed, archaeological material stored at the Concepción archaeological site. 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. The present research was more focused on problem solving, rather than on building a chronology or typology, 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?

The main results of the investigation were based on an inductive interpretation of the intercultural interactions at Concepción which was achieved in spite of the archaeological excavation biases, and the incomplete documentary sources. This interpretation helped analyze both the Grand Narratives related to Concepción, and the types of interactions encountered.

Two Grand Narratives were identified as relating to Concepción, namely the Hell in Hispaniola and the Benign Culture Change metanarratives, the first coming from history, and the second from archaeology. 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 to more accurately identify intercultural interactions.

All three types of intercultural interactions, environmental, sociocultural, and biophysical, were identified, as well as an interplay between them. Another interaction explored was the interplay between the conceptual and the material, where moments of conflict between these two processes offered evidence of resistance and agency.

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.

Most importantly, 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, deathways and cultural interactions during the early colonial period of the Dominican Republic, and all of the Caribbean.