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Indigenous ancestors and healing landscapes : cultural memory and intercultural communication in the Dominican Republic and Cuba

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CHAPTER 10. Synthesis and Conclusions. At the Crossroads of Healing Landscapes

Remembrance and Oblivion

This final chapter assesses the present-day healing landscapes of the Dominican Republic and Cuba in relation to their historical background as known from the written records and to the cultural memory of the contemporary inhabitants. Coinciding with the major objectives of the Nexus 1492 project, which focus on the histories and legacies of the indigenous peoples in the Caribbean across the historical divide, one of the objectives of this thesis was to examine present-day healing landscapes and their link to the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean. This aim led us to review some of the fragmented references to the medicinal histories of the region. Moreover, for assessing long-term historical transformation it is necessary to address contemporary perception and engagement with the past, which are an integral part of the context and mechanism of the circulation of medicinal cultures. After explaining in general terms how indigenous people (ancestors) are invoked in cultural memory, this chapter will review the associated landscape features. This will lead to a reflection upon how the image of the indigenous past is perceived and how the past practices are reinterpreted within the present. Through this discussion we will gain insights into the value of the cultural memory concept for historiography and into the value of the healing landscapes concept for landscape theories. This chapter will be rounded off by drawing some final conclusions, suggesting several follow-up avenues with future research potential.

Historical formation of Cuban and Dominican Medicinal Cultures

One of the objectives of this research was to provide more information on how the Dominican and Cuban medicinal cultures have been constructed. A review of some of the aspects of medicinal history in the region suggests that the contemporary medicinal cultures are likely to have originated from a complex multidirectional exchange of botanical, medicinal knowledge and underpinning worldviews among different populations of these islands. One crucial historical event that shaped the history of the healing landscapes was the European conquest in 1492. The subsequent colonization of the Caribbean spurred a series of movements and multidirectional exchanges of peoples, worldviews, illnesses, and remedies. Despite the overwhelming devastation, diseases, and a large number of deaths, the present-day healing landscapes are also testimonies of survival, resilience, and creativity in finding new remedies.

Within the historical formation of contemporary medicinal cultures this study has highlighted the need of considering the particular historical developments of small locations, the role of the colonial relations, religious institutions, and individual healers.

Contrary to Fernando Ortiz's idea about a failed indigenous transculturation, indigenous descendants had various opportunities to contribute genetically and culturally to the foundation of different Cuban and Dominican settlements. Some indigenous individuals and communities survived the hostile period of the conquest and colonization in the regions of the study. As the historical overview of early colonial towns in Eastern Cuba showed, indigenous residents were present at their foundation. The spatial proximity of indigenous people and newcomers of different backgrounds enabled (but did not guarantee) the exchange of botanical knowledge and broader dispersal of medicinal cultures. In fact, indigenous descendants lived in various Cuban and Dominican locations long later after their supposed disappearance. Small pockets of indigenous inhabitants lived in both urban and rural areas throughout the colonial period. In some locations, such as Boyá and Holguín indigenous descendants were recorded even in the 19th century. This increases

the probability of transmission and continuity of their medicinal knowledge. Any continuity should, however, be understood as taking place within an ongoing process of transculturation.

The analysis of changes, adaptations, and continuities in that medical history is complicated by colonial bias, which is frequently present in accounts of indigenous culture and conceals some of the meanings and uses of the landscape. Although many plants rapidly became export commodities, the registers about medicinal properties of specific plants are limited, especially when compared to the uses that are known among the contemporary population. This emphasis of one specific use of a plant could later be interpreted as a loss of information. To illustrate this, the present-day use of tobacco by Dominican and Cuban healing practitioners as a means of communication with the invisible world opposes Ortiz's suggestion that the status of tobacco shifted in the colonial period from that of a sacred plant to that of a secular leisure commodity. In fact, some of its contemporary ritual uses resemble those employed by Kalinago *boyé* (shamans) recorded in the first half of the seventeenth century (Breton 1665). Likewise, it cannot be ruled out that tobacco was already used in exchanges during the pre-colonial time (Honychurch 1997; Allaire 2013). To conclude, in a context in which a sharp distinction between sacred and profane is unlikely to have existed, a shift in the meaning of tobacco from sacred to secular seems to be far from absolute.⁴¹⁷

The case of tobacco illustrates how multiple uses and meanings of plants may obscure the reconstruction of their transformation over time even when they are still relatively well documented. In other cases, the only historical information that we have about the indigenous knowledge of the ancient flora is their names. Although later authors such as Sloane (1707) or Chateausalins (1854) included more detailed and better illustrations of medicinal properties of plants, these works were created after centuries of transculturation and as such are problematic for the reconstruction of what might be considered indigenous legacy.

The critical comparison of fragmentary colonial sources with present-day traditions enables us to further assess the process of transculturation. Various aspects of medicinal history and contemporary healing practices can complement each other. Demographic history may partially explain the present-day ratios of native and exotic flora used in medicinal practices. In Boyá and Jiguaní, both locations with the long presence of indigenous descendants, we find widespread use of native medicinal plants. Given the demographic history of these locations we may interpret this use as a (partial) continuity of native plant knowledge; although we lack detailed historical sources about the concrete extension of that knowledge and about the exact modalities of its transmission. The fragmented indications that we do have, suggest that the general mobility and intercultural contacts of the population allowed for multiple possibilities of exchanging botanical and medical knowledge as well as associated ideas.

The example of tobacco demonstrates how power relations (between religions) may also have influenced the transfer of meanings. The early colonial medicinal cultures were shaped by a complex mechanism of colonial relations. The botanical knowledge was also a means of indigenous social resistance and self-protection. Indigenous peoples were aware of the colonizer's weakness in this aspect. On the other hand, this may have hampered the colonial appropriation of their knowledge and so may have contributed to its loss. In certain locations indigenous people were recognized as botanical experts throughout the 16th century. This recognition may have facilitated the appropriation of some of their wisdom by patients who had another worldview.

The later phases of colonial medicinal history are also marked by this general power struggle, which took the form of a "spiritual conquest" by the dominating group and of an expropriation of lands and knowledge. Not surprisingly, the Spanish acquisition of indigenous botanical knowledge was highly

⁴¹⁷ This conclusion is in fact not so far from Ortiz' view as one might think. Ortiz spoke about changes in what he considered *the most widespread meaning or use* of tobacco. He was well aware of the fact that tobacco continues to be used in local religious practices and has also medicinal uses.

selective, and did not necessarily include the original etiologies or beliefs about human/nature relations. Given in the general poor medical care throughout the colonial period, the common people had to rely for their health on non-institutional medicinal specialists (including those of indigenous background) and their botanical knowledge. Combined with the lack of ecclesiastical control, the medicinal practices of the past were likely to be incorporated in the non-institutional beliefs of healers and patients.

The conquest of Cuba and Hispaniola lead to a profound reinterpretation of existing landscapes according to new religious, economic, and political practices, which left material and conceptual imprints. New sacred places were consecrated and became important historical sites while others were desacralized and even demonized. In accordance with the social inequality of the colonial world, the religious views of the colonized were mentioned only incidentally. The consideration of ethnographic and historical data suggests that both the European and the African newcomers coincided with the indigenous peoples in perceiving divine powers in the Caribbean landscapes. Sometimes, as the case of Antonio Congo or, in general, the present-day notion of indigenous commissions and divisions suggest, new meanings were constructed in awareness of the historical presence of prior inhabitants. The richness of different cultural practices and meanings associated with different Caribbean landscape features today bears witness to the resilience of the colonized people and the ability of the newcomers to adapt to the new surroundings. It also indicates a complex historical process of intercultural communication, which has largely remained invisible.

The colonizers and the enslaved people alike reinterpreted radically the newly encountered landscapes in accordance with their own worldviews. Thus Cuban and Dominican flora was integrated into worldviews with underpinnings of non-local origins. African *orishas* are attributed power over specific plants, places and landscape features. European Saints have manifested themselves in various natural shrines. Some differences in the interpretation of the landscape may be explained by distinct demographic developments. Thus the symbolism of flora and its categorization into distinct realms of spiritual entities varies across the local population. While Dominican plants have an ‘owner’ or *misterio* that would not be specified, in Regla de Ocha nearly every plant is attributed to an *orisha*. In the spiritual tradition of Jiguaní plants do not have any owners but in Managuaco all medicinal plants are seen as the domain of the indigenous commission.

In European Spiritism plants generally are not considered to have a spiritual owner. The attribution of plants to indigenous commission, therefore, seems part of local epistemologies (e.g. about the indigenous predecessors being carriers of this knowledge). The widespread popularity of Spiritism in Jiguaní, Holguín and Bayamo province reflects demographic tendencies of the second half of the 19th century with a great part of the population being identified in racial categories as “white”. The Spiritism imported from Europe to Cuba in that same period was likely to build upon (or was at least influenced by) local religious practices, which reflected a population with a relatively small size of enslaved people of African origin (Holguín 9,5%, Bayamo 10% and Jiguaní 4%) and “free peoples of color”. Espiritismo del Cordón shows that the European form of spiritism was adapted to a new context.

The volume and different moments wherein the African ancestors were brought to both islands have shaped the particular characteristic of local religions and distinct flora symbolism Regla de Ocha and Dominican 21 Division. The fact that more than 90% of the captives of the whole Transatlantic Slave Trade were brought to Cuba in the nineteenth century explains also the preservation of ritual languages, sacred narratives (*patakis*) and African features in religious beliefs.

Although the different African peoples (Ewe-Fon, Yoruba, Kongo) may have had distinct interpretations of specific flora, they shared the concept of the animated landscape, and often similar ideas about certain sacred trees and plants, some of which they considered as dwellings of deities and ancestors. Also the

custom to ask for permission before collecting the medicinal plants in the sacred forests was widespread (e.g. Quiroz 2015; Herskovits 1938).

A different religious background in the area of origin, but also cultural loss or change due to enslavement may be the reason why 21 Division does not attribute *lwas* to specific plants. Keeping in mind Bastide's argument about the importance of brotherhoods in urban areas as institutions that passed on the ancestral knowledge, we may attribute this characteristic also to cultural loss that was particular to the rural areas where the Dominican healers were interviewed.

Although, the demographic history is a good reference point for understanding the local development of spirituality and the characteristic of the medicinal cultures, the local aspects should not be seen as isolated from the situation in other locations. The individual creativity of a healer and religious groups like brotherhoods should not be underestimated. Healing specialists of non-local origin had to find ways of curing with unknown flora. The newcomers were looking for plants that were similar to known taxonomic families, but they also experimented and observed other people and animals to discover the medicinal properties of so far unknown plants. In addition, the trade, the presence of diverse religious institutions, such as the Catholic church and the brotherhoods, together with the mobility of healing practitioners and the local population at large, were likely to reinforce each other as factors that introduced and amalgamated African and European influences.

Brotherhoods (*cofradías*) promoted cohesion and collective action also in matters of health. Traditionally brotherhoods are discussed as important elements in the transfer of medicinal cultures of African origin, because within these institutions people could reorganize according to ethnic lines and/or regional origins. The members of Cuban and Dominican brotherhoods might consist of the same colonial categories (*zapes*, *mandingas*, *biafaras*, *aradás*) but also have quite distinct backgrounds (e.g. the Saint John brotherhood in Santo Domingo). The interaction of present-day brotherhoods and their members during the patronal celebrations like the one in Boyá once again show how knowledge could cross the colonial boundaries. The mobility of brotherhoods also problematizes Bastide's (2011) observation that these institutions were less influential in rural areas. Likely, the mobility of members of *cabildos* and *cofradías* was already present during the colonial period – especially among free and freed strata of the population, and especially after the emancipation – with all its consequences for long-term intercultural communication.⁴¹⁸

Based on the historical references about brotherhoods in Cuba and Hispaniola, we may expect influences from different West African peoples (principally proceeding from what is now Senegambia, Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo, and Angola) in the contemporary healing tradition. Accordingly, influences of the Lucumí brotherhood, composed by Yoruba (from what is now Nigeria and Benin) are still discernable in the present-day Regla de Ocha, as well as influences from the Bantú (Congo and Angola) in Palo Monte and Regla Conga, and from Ewe-Fon people in Regla de Arará and Fon influences in 21 Division.⁴¹⁹

Brotherhoods were important for the continuation of medicinal traditions but they offer us also points of departure for tracing the changes. If we assume that certain contemporary healing practices have a long tradition, then it may be argued that the brotherhood composed of members from Allada (present-day Benin), which was dedicated to Saint Cosme and Saint Damian, might in the same way as today be dedicated to the twin deities that are still venerated by Fon-Egbe, Ewe, and Yoruba. However, tracing such direct parallels is complicated because of the many different symbolic elements (colors, parts of the

⁴¹⁸ For more on the historical information about the historical demographic formation of communities in rural areas see (González 2011).

⁴¹⁹ For the similarities see e.g. Bascom (1984).

hagiography, qualities they represent, places associated with them) that could be used to communicate the meaning of the divine personages to the devotees. Accordingly, Saint Michael, who was considered to have the power to cure smallpox in late seventeenth century Santo Domingo among Ewe and Fon speakers (the second largest group of captives at the time), might be used as a symbol of Sapata, their smallpox god.

However, many more groups of captives followed, which constantly adapted and reinterpreted the elements and meanings of their ancestral religion. These again could integrate different religious influences from West Africa but also Roman Catholic teachings. The fact that today Saint Michael is the patron of Belie Belcán in the Dominican 21 Division seems to be based on the character of Saint Michael as the archangel who fought the devil, so that he is now consulted by persons who seek protection against evil and enemies.

Thus, it is difficult to reconstruct the development of the present-day healing landscapes because it is obscured by the fragmentary characteristic of the information regarding medicinal, religious, and demographic histories. This exercise is even more complicated if we lack information about the today's healing practices and local epistemologies. Being part of a larger project that generated new data about the immediate transformations after the European invasion of the Caribbean, this study focused on some of the contemporary facets of healing landscapes. It provides an overview of the rich symbolism, paying attention to sacred and miraculous healing places, plants and other landscape features. Some of these landscape features function as mnemonic tools of the indigenous past, which might provide some contrast to the descriptions given by historical sources, but also indicate possible continuities. The concept of cultural memory was a vector for understanding people's perception of and engagement with the past as an integral part of the context and mechanism of transmitting medicinal knowledge and related cultural traditions.

Constituents of healing landscapes

Healing landscapes were defined as all agents that are said to promote physical, mental, and spiritual health. Following this definition this study has collected data that illustrate several key aspects of the rich Cuban and Dominican healing landscapes. These landscapes include healing and ritual specialists, plant remedies and in general the divine and ancestral beings residing or manifested in places, vegetation, and natural features.

Approaching healing landscapes from a holistic perspective, this study situates the general importance of the landscapes for individual health and wellbeing as well as for the quality of life of the community within the broader ecological knowledge and associated traditions of the people concerned. The intimate link between the wellbeing of rural communities, environments, and worldviews is evident in the important role that ecological and botanical knowledge plays in daily life, foodways, crafts, and agriculture.

The quality of life of these communities is linked to their surrounding landscapes. The physical health of people living in agricultural settings depends on their ecological knowledge, which they use in daily practices as well as in the time of illness. Similarly, the more psychological aspect of wellbeing is sustained through the support of divine agencies and spiritual entities. This mutual support can become materialized in, for example, offerings brought to the dwelling of these spiritual entities. Needless to stress that both aspects – the physical and the psychological, the material and the immaterial – are intimately connected, in accordance with religious worldviews, cultural memory and social ethos. The wide-spread popularity of San Isidro, the processions including collective prayers for harvest and rain, and other customs assuring the protection of the harvest, as well as ritual treatment of the flora, are just a few examples that illustrate how the vital role of the environment is reflected in cultural practices.

From the data overview emerge three particular actors that promote physical, mental, and spiritual health. Apart from the official medical care, the most important agent in promoting health and wellbeing in the Caribbean are healers, or ritual specialists, who act as mediators between the patients, the community and the divine. Spiritual mediums, religious initiates in Regla de Ocha and 21 Division literally embody the normally invisible *orishas*, *lwas*, ancestors, and spirits in order to establish diagnoses and suggest remedies.

Among the established causes of illness there are both observable and not directly observable causes. In this regard, the adjective ‘healing’ in ‘healing landscape’ might sound misleading to some readers, as we have also mentioned agents that cause illness. It is important to acknowledge, however, that many *orishas*, *lwas*, other divine beings may be both beneficial and detrimental to human health. This has been also observed in other cultural contexts (e.g. Reyes Gomez 2017; Artist 2016).

The remedies may include a careful application of medicinal plants, or interaction with deities, Saints, and spirits whose agencies are engaged through healing rituals at home-altars and natural shrines. From Dominican healers’ biographies it is evident that the reception of the *lwas* is involuntarily and may take place anywhere. This is especially the case before the healers are initiated and before they accept the gift to heal. This should be understood in the context of a worldview wherein the Great God can be manifested in different natural elements through the *lwas*.

Directly after hospitals and doctor’s surgeries, the house-temples and home altars in 21 Division, Regla de Ocha or Spiritism are the most prominent healing places in both the Dominican Republic and Cuba. The altars and house-temples are symbolically linked to outside landscapes through offerings, symbolic representations of specific places or other relevant elements. Also, in Regla de Ocha, different ritual paraphernalia, symbols, and attributes of divinities or ancestors, represent or refer to meanings of outside landscapes. Similarly, at the homes of Cuban Espiritistas we would find protective plants, stones from ancestral places and flower offerings for deceased loved ones.

In agreement with previous Adrian Gomes’ explanation (chapter 8), most of the healing would take place at the healer’s house-temple. Although visiting them on irregularly basis, and less frequently than the house-temples, Dominican and Cuban patients seek their recovery also in Catholic churches and chapels, or at pilgrimage sites (e.g. Sacred Hill, the sanctuary of the Virgen of Charity in Cobre), as well as historical sites, such as places reminiscent of the slave trade, the life of enslaved peoples, or monuments of ancestral resistance. While in many cases the integration of these sites into the religious realm could be justified by visible material human imprints, other loci were only known as dwellings of divine entities or ancestors from sacred narratives and other oral traditions.

Both in Dominican 21 Division and Regla de Ocha the *orishas* and *lwas* may manifest themselves in the four natural elements, as well as in specific places, where they may give counsel and advice about which remedies to use, including plants and ritual baths. The air together with several caves, mountains, rivers, water pools, waterfalls, sea, mountains, and hills, are identified as dwellings of *lwas*, Saints, ancestors and spirits, which might be both detrimental and beneficial. Also, in Cuba adherents of Regla de Ocha considered that certain divinities may become manifest in the landscape or may be encountered at specific places, for example: Elegua at crossroads, Chango in palm trees or in thunder, Obatala in mountains, Ogun in hills and *manigua*, Babalu Aye as guardian of the hospitals, Yemaya along the sea coast, Oshun at river banks, Oya in cemeteries. Certain divinities such as Olofi may be encountered everywhere, while nearly every tree has a specific *orisha* as its owner. Catholics pay visits to Saints at natural shrines – including caves, sacred hills, and trees – to promote health and wellbeing. Occasionally adherents of Cuban Spiritism consider specific places more apt for establishing a connection with spiritual entities.

An important component of healing landscapes are the hundreds of medicinal plants, including trees and herbs of both native and exotic origins, that are used across different religious denominations for medicinal and ritual purposes. Plants are particularly important in the countryside, where they are regularly used for curing physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. A division of the plants into broad categories of (1) ritual plants, which cure the mental and spiritual ailments, and (2) medicinal plants, which have biomedical effects on the body, would be too simple. In cases such as the described baths both ritual and medicinal plants are complementing each other and working together. Studies on Surinamese plants used in baths, potions, and rituals show that these plants also have physical healing properties, which might be one of the reasons why sacred plants are (considered) sacred (Van Andel et al. 2013). Ethnopharmacological research on ritual plant use in Benin and Gabon confirmed that the local plants used in baths also had biological effects because of their medicinal properties (Quiroz et al. 2016).

The spiritual significance of certain trees display Catholic, West African and also Caribbean indigenous notions of sacred landscapes, which have been fused in the Caribbean context. The meaning of ceiba display Catholic and African reinterpretations of indigenous symbolism. The traditional prohibition of felling certain trees such as *jobo*, *ceiba*, and *higo* because that might cause physical harm to the person should also be seen in the light of local histories, where indigenous and/or African roots may be prominent.

In contrast to the portrayal of Caribbean people as being too fragmented and uprooted to have any spiritual relationship with the local landscape, the present-day healing landscapes are rich with symbolism and expose how some elements of indigenous culture continued and how newcomers were able to adapt to the new environment, replicating some of their old worldviews and oral literary traditions in a creative manner. The newcomers reinterpreted the newly encountered landscapes according to their memory of previously known landscapes and according to the ecological insights from their homeland but also in relation to the new locale, and to the people dwelling in these landscapes before their arrival. Even though there may not have been direct contact, the ceramics from the precolonial period recovered from altars of different healers or homes of patients are an explicit indication that the precolonial past has been integrated into contemporary people's memory.

After examining how the image of indigenous peoples is invoked in the present in general terms, a review of which landscape features are associated with the indigenous peoples will help to summarize how the indigenous past is perceived and represented within the healing practices. This discussion will lead us to reflect upon the value of the concept of cultural memory for historical and ethnographic studies of the Caribbean and upon the use of the concept of healing landscapes within modern landscape theories.

Memory of indigenous ancestors

One group of agents presents in the surrounding landscapes and influential in the wellbeing of both individuals and communities is that of indigenous ancestors. In accordance with Halbwachs' observation that individual memory is shaped by interactions of individuals with others in the context of social groups, the individual memories concerning the indigenous past in both islands are shaped by the institutional and public domains of knowledge production. Consequently, the most intimate experiences such as dreaming, the perceptions of the indigenous forefathers in the landscape, or their embodiment during a trance are contextualized in that broader social framework. These domains are inseparable in oral tradition, in which information may be compared to other testimonies or traditions but often is entangled with individual memory. The individual memory is then collectively shaped by state-sponsored institutions like schools, museums, and mass-media, literature (scientific, fiction, poetry, prose), popular culture (movies,

documentaries, songs), cultural artefacts (art, souvenirs, monuments, archeological artefacts, commercial products, money, city emblems, flags etc.) and places, paths, and other physical landscape features. The historical consciousness is equally codified in collective traditions, but also formed through individual interactions with the past by dwelling in (historically and/or religiously charged) landscapes.

Within the healing landscapes the indigenous past is reenacted in multiple manners. One of the most conscious ways of connecting to indigenous predecessors is the acknowledgment of their presence now (coevalness), and particularly the recognition of their agency in the context of health and wellbeing. The indigenous ancestors are believed to be present in different places and on different occasions. Indigenous ancestral forces are consulted (e.g. in matters of healing), commemorated, and asked for guidance, favors, or protection to benefit individuals in different situations. Indigenous ancestors may manifest themselves in dreams, through their embodiment in the healers, and by means of different signs (drumming, braided hair). Their power may also reside in certain objects, and their presence may be sensed or seen in specific places, most frequently in caverns, water pools and less frequently on mountains.

In Dominican 21 Division, the indigenous ancestors are both beneficial and potentially dangerous to one's wellbeing. The danger of the indigenous ancestral agency is exemplified by the case of children or individuals that are reported to have "*corriente del indio*". As we have seen, such individuals were warned to be cautious when around certain places such as bodies of water and caverns as these were potentially dangerous and could provoke illness, soul loss, or even death. The "*corriente*" is a spiritual link that sometimes is based on remote kinship, or phenotypical resemblances. The latter aspect is likely to have been retrieved from the official identity politics wherein the denomination "Indian" is used for a specific European determined phenotype, in close connection with the existing racism in Dominican society.

In Regla de Ocha the agency of the indigenous ancestors was acknowledged by different contributors. Within this spiritual realm, the indigenous predecessors are helping to protect against enemies and malevolent influences; they may manifest themselves at altars and some archaeological sites. Specific plants, like *acullá*, *jíba*, and *sunflower*, are attributed to them. Also, Cuban Espiritistas invoke indigenous commissions with specific prayers in general matters of wellbeing in house-temples, occasionally in caverns, or everywhere where indigenous ancestors felt well, where there was a good *fluidity*.

The memory of the indigenous forefathers is retrieved within the surrounding landscape, which is impregnated with the human past, as visible in the remains of human settlements, in living heritage or other activities, as well in ideas associated with the flora. Toponyms like Pool of Indian or Cave of Indian frequently encountered in local landscapes are an indication of how certain places remain associated with indigenous ancestors. The following paragraphs will discuss whether and how this link can be conceived as a memory of the indigenous past.

Water sources and caves as ancestral places

Despite profound material modifications and environmental changes, landscapes are constants that have had a unifying effect on people who came to the Caribbean over the last millennia. The rich cultural and religious history of their habitation has left marks on the way these landscapes are "read" and engaged with today. Some of these landmarks are directly associated with the agency of indigenous ancestors. The interpretation of this phenomenon has to take into account the cultural diversity of the social groups that dwell in the landscape and that have created their own specific cultural memory framework.

Among the prominent places that are associated with indigenous predecessors in the Dominican Republic are freshwater sources. Specific water pools in rivers, waterfalls, and rapids, are dwelling places of the indigenous spirits throughout all the Dominican regions.

Currently, waterbodies have multiple meanings: they are loci where the potentially dangerous ancestors, as well as the deceased in general, may be perceived, but they can also be the path to find the virtue to heal. The leitmotif of healing power found in the subaquatic realm is also expressed in narratives about midwives or healers travelling to the subaquatic kingdom where they received a reward (their virtue to heal). The motif of subaquatic travels following the path to the world of the deceased and to renewal, but also the figure of the Master Boa giving people the wisdom to protect and heal themselves have parallels in Kalinago narratives (1941, 1952).⁴²⁰

In general, narratives about these deep pools are like warnings to behave with caution, as these places may be dangerous for human individuals: their soul might be taken away and brought to the subaquatic domain of the spirits. The narratives about children, or persons with *corriente*, which were taken away, also resemble, at least to some degree, those from the indigenous communities on the mainland. The Ashaninka and Araweté, for example, also tell about invisible beings inhabiting the water sources which have been tricking, seducing, and abducting children, women, and travelers (their souls) to their underwater houses (Santos-Granero 1998; Viveiros Castro 1992). The same being can also potentially be beneficial by controlling the population of fish. Similarly, the Makuna Water Anaconda is the Spirit Owner of an underwater *maloca*, which is the place where the reincarnation and rebirth of people as fishes begins. More frequently, people would engage with these freshwater sources on special occasions like a ritual bath, patron feast or healer's initiation. These celebrations are moments when gratitude is being expressed and relations with the spiritual world are renewed. The indigenous ancestors receive offerings during the feasts of Saint Francis, Carmen, or Christmas in Bánica, Saint Michael in La Jaiba, and Saint John's feast in La Mancha. In these cases, the commemoration of indigenous ancestors is part of collective celebrations of patronal *lwes* of communities or healers. The ancestral veneration within the context of collective celebrations must be understood as part of a general acknowledgment of other forces, but also as the expression of a special link with the celebrated *lwa*/Saint.

The centuries of ontological encounters and long-term transculturation, have made the waterbodies on these islands places with multiple meanings, which proceed from different origins. The indigenous sacred narratives about Great Flood, Divine Twins and possibly also the Great Serpent or the Master of the Water have not been preserved in their totality. The narrative about the Great Serpent, though, shows that there is some continuity of the indigenous worldview in the contemporary population. Therefore, also present-day narratives about indigenous ancestors or Divine Twins may echo indigenous ideas, fused with views that were imported after 1492. African-derived spiritual beings like Oshún, King of the Water, and Simbi, illustrate how diasporic communities appropriated the new spaces according to their own worldview, but also may have connected to fragmentary information stemming from the pre-colonial population. Similarly, the cult of the Virgin of Holy Waters in Boyá and the Virgin of El Cobre is to be understood as the result of long term transculturation, in which continuities and changes took place and new cultural forms emerged.

Other prominent places associated with the indigenous ancestors are caverns. Caribbean caverns have inscribed themselves into the cultural memory in multiple ways. Caverns are loci of (sacred) history, and have been calling the attention of adherents of different worldviews, of amateur and professional archaeologists, but also of looters searching for imagined treasures in these "enchanted" places. A significant number of indigenous cultural representations (in rock art or on artefacts, see Fig. 81), objects

⁴²⁰ Taylor (1952): "They reached the shores of the Orinoco and plunged into its stream ... They emerged upon the opposite bank ... (as) two young lads; and upon the water ... there floated two empty turtle shells. They never came back to Dominica; and at least one of them died, but the other, was thought to be still living". The river seems to function as a liminal place. Another narrative tells about a little girl who was carried by Mama d' l'Eau (the protector of fishes) across a river to a place where she received from the Godmother the means how to mislead Fou-Fou, the kolibri bird, which was chasing her.

(ritual, sacred objects), and human remains have been found in Caribbean caverns, and rock shelters (Hayward et al. 2009; Berman et al. 2013; Schaffer et al. 2012; CITMA 2007).



Figure 81 A threepointer with serpent-like motives found in one of Dominican caverns, the Museum of Alto de Chavón.⁴²¹

The examples discussed in chapter 9 highlight the caverns as places of indigenous ancestral presence with specific value for healing. Currently in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, adherents of different religious currents (Spiritism, Dominican Vudu, *Regla de Ocha*, and Roman Catholicism) consider caves as places of manifestation or agency of divine beings, Saints, and remote predecessors, which may intervene in matters of human wellbeing.

For adherents of 21 Division and Cuban Spiritism, but also for Catholics, some caverns are empowered by indigenous ancestors. In Bánica and Mancha, cavern celebrations are devoted to Catholic Saints, but indigenous spirits (*lwa*) are expected to join in the celebration, and offerings are left for them on the ground, at specific points, at petroglyphs, or at water associated places. Being a part of a patronal celebration, these commemorations of indigenous forefathers should help establishing or maintaining a positive relationship between devotees and the Saints, spirits or *lwas*. Opinions might differ, however, about the beneficial character of the indigenous agency. The celebrations are occasions to ask for advice and remedies, but also to let the *lwa* participate in the communal feast. The interaction with ancestral forces within this context includes expressions of gratitude for ancestral guidance, warnings, and protection in times of illness or crisis. The whole is an experience and reaffirmation of a *communitas* that extends into the spirit world.

The liminal character of caves as places that permit the passage from one world to another lends itself to veneration of ancestors in general. In this respect a dead person of local origin was consulted in the

⁴²¹ For more on the history of these pieces see Breukel (2013).

Gibara cavern, and in the Mana cavern offerings were brought to Barón del Cementerio/San Elías, the head of the *guedés*, who embodies the powers of death and fertility.

The ways in which indigenous predecessors are remembered should be situated within the different modes of ancestral commemoration across 21 Division, Regla de Ocha, Roman Catholicism and Cord Spiritism. The remembrance of the indigenous past fits the ancient American and West (Central) African ancestor worship as well as European customs to commemorate deceased relatives on All Souls' Day.

The present-day beliefs in afterlife are expressed on All Souls' Day. Like in Europe, also on both islands the deceased are commemorated on November 2nd by visitation of cemeteries, where the graves are cleaned, decorated, and given offerings. Cubans and Dominicans personalize their offerings for the deceased according to what the individuals liked during the life (mostly tobacco, rum, or coffee). Within 21 Division, at this day devotees bring offerings to the earth division, the *lwas* that are in charge of the dead, to Barón del Cementerio, his daughter Saint Martha and his children, the Guedes, in the graveyards (Tejeda Ortiz 2013).⁴²²

Beliefs about the role of the deceased in present-day life may also be expressed during funerals. In the Dominican context we find them in customs such as placing offerings under the altar and covering mirrors to avoid that they absorb the souls of the deceased (Andújar Persinal 2013).⁴²³

Like indigenous ancestors, the deceased can manifest themselves in dreams, asking for the help of the living, or offering to help those alive, especially their loved ones. On special occasions the deceased can also incarnate in the body of the healer or spiritual medium. The deceased arrives with the same voice that he/she had when alive, asks about his/her family members, and answers their questions, asks for certain things, gives recommendations to resolve family problems or removes obstacles that might inhibit harmonious coexistence (Andújar Persinal 2013; Tejeda Ortiz 2013).

Beliefs in ancestral indigenous agency are also visible in Catholic liturgy, 21 Division and popular religious expressions. The devotees believe that the souls of the deceased persons may roam around in the landscape until they have done penance for their sins. According to Christian teachings, the souls of indigenous peoples like of those other non-Christians are bound to go to hell. The placement of indigenous ancestors in caverns and water bodies also fits an idea of popular Catholicism wherein some souls do not reach their final destination and remain at intermediate places in penance. Different archaeological sites scattered throughout the landscapes are material reminders of settlements and sites of past activities. These sites are often situated at riverbanks (Ulloa Hung 2014).

The indigenous antedecents are also associated with other memory places in local landscapes (e.g. Palenque Gibara, La Negreta, SepiSepi, El Cobre, *manigua*, *el monte*, hills), some of which are known only from archaeological remains, others only from oral history. As the cave of Gibara shows, a cave can also be a memory place of an African ancestor. According to historical and archaeological evidence (e.g. Pereira Pereira 2008) and oral testimonies of fugitives (Montejo's biography in Barnet 1966), caverns were hiding places of Maroons during the slavery period. Caverns and other memory places are of importance not only as heritage sites but may also be an interesting point of departure for archaeological surveys and historical analysis.

The identification of ancestral origins should be understood in the light of the politics of identity and personal preferences of the practitioners. Given the relatively recent forced migration from Africa, some of the Cuban contributors were aware of direct genetic links with specific African ancestors. Among adherents

⁴²² The King of the Graveyard symbolizes the first deceased who were buried in the graveyard. He is the guardian of all the deceased, a protector against negative energies, and helps in lottery. Like the whole division he works with the earth element.

⁴²³ Kalunga in Kongo means Atlantic Ocean (Brown 2012).

of Regla de Ocha or Cuban Espiritismo the awareness of genealogical links with Africa was not an obstacle for admitting the agency of indigenous predecessors. As we have seen, such a recognition of indigenous predecessors was also common in Dominican 21 Division, Haitian Voodoo, Brazilian Candomblé, and Surinamese Winti.

People's self-identification with particular ancestors is certainly influenced by both formal and informal knowledge production, which includes past colonial discourse. The association of indigenous ancestors with caves may echo, for example, the early chronicles about uncivilized people (Guanahatabeyes and Siboneyes) living in the caverns (Las Casas 1951). On the other hand, Pané registers narratives about such places being associated with ancestral emergence among the indigenous inhabitants. Similarly, among the Wayuu, the cavern Jorottuy Manna is the site of origin of the Sun (Kaf), the moon (Kashi) and the people (Perrin 1987). Together with a small well at Cabo de la Vela, this cavern is the passage through which the dead go to the sky world. The rich archaeological evidence of primary and secondary burials in caves suggests a connection with beliefs about the hereafter (La Rosa Corzo & Robaina Jaramillo 1995; CITMA 2007). In view of this complex of ideas, we suspect that the ancient mortuary depositional practices may have been directed towards ancestors. Drawing a parallel with the Kalinago cavern that was used to consult Bákamo, the Divine Serpent who gave people plants to protect them, ancient offerings in Cuban and Dominican caverns may also have been directed to such divine beings. Future studies may clarify the possible link between the testimony from Bánica that stated that the Great Serpent descended from Saint Francis hill. Saint Francis cavern illustrates how the meaning of places like this has been profoundly transformed by the last five hundred years, yet retains great importance in sacred history until today.

There is still insufficient research on the symbolism of caverns among peoples that speak an Arawakan language. According to Von Humboldt the Venezuelan Guacharo cavern, which he called the "Acheron" of the Chaimas and other indigenous peoples from the Orinoco region, was famous as a place of passage to the underworld and the hereafter. This belief even gave rise to the expression "to descend to Guacharo", which was an equivalent of "to pass away". Today the same cavern figures as an ancestral cavern in the oral tradition regarding the indigenous heroine Urimare, who until now is commemorated in Venezuelan Spiritism. Similar traditions, ideas and practices may be behind the archaeological marking of such places: nearly five hundred rock painting sites have been recorded in the Dominican Republic (López Belando 2006) and nearly two hundred in Cuba (Fernández Ortega 2006), many of which are situated in caverns. Experiences in other parts of the Americas indicate that future cooperation between researchers and indigenous experts from the mainland (native speakers) holds an important key for understanding the meanings and values encoded by the pre-colonial cultures of the Caribbean.

Healing landscapes as expressions of cultural memories of indigenous past

One of the principal questions of this investigation was: how do healing landscapes encapsulate cultural memories of the indigenous past? Needless to say, the past of all peoples and cultures is a social (re)construction by people living in the present. In many countries, such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic, as well as Mexico, Peru or Bolivia, the indigenous past is part of a foundational narrative that provides the basis for collective identity. This identity is rooted in the cultural memory that is shaped by formal institutions. In order to construct a national history, several Caribbean and Latin American education systems tend to present an image of the indigenous past of the country as a prehistoric cultural phase, which is essentially a closed chapter of history without any continuity into the present. Throughout the Americas the pre-colonial peoples were generally interpreted in colonial terms as "uncivilized", "*not yet Christian*",

etc. Their cultural heritage was seen as “primitive” and should be abandoned under the “civilizing” influence of the colonizers, who were going to instruct the natives in “true culture and religion”. Similarly, the enslaved peoples were seen and treated as lower than human. This Eurocentric ideology was the justification of conquest, colonialism and slavery. Modern perspectives still suffer from this discriminatory and paternalistic mindset. Descendant populations, surviving in rural areas, are associated with poverty and underdevelopment, and may still become victims of different variants of racism and exploitation.

There are several reasons why this biased image is so persistent in present-day societies. Firstly there is the degree in which the vocabulary and concepts from primary historical resources have been incorporated in present-day texts and so keep exercising a strong influence. The perpetuation of certain vocabularies and concepts without their historical contextualization leads to a continuous transfer of ideologies and values that are biased and do not have place in the contemporary democratic societies. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that the colonization has caused a severe fragmentation of the knowledge about the people that has suffered all this exploitation. The accidental references in many primary historical sources generated during the colonial period make the search for more information about the past of historically marginalized groups often difficult, though not an impossible or unfruitful journey. Thirdly, the old disciplinary division between the archaeologist focusing on material remains, the historian focusing on written documentary sources, and the anthropologist and sociologist focusing on present-day communities and their knowledge has reinforced the disconnection between the present and the past. The study of the cultural memory and heritage of those historically marginalized will benefit from an interdisciplinary approach.

Written history is just one way of registering and remembering the past. Following Ortiz’ metaphor of counterpoint cultural memory was proposed as a counterbalance and complement to the image that emerged from the biased colonial archives and material records. Besides explicit ways of remembering the indigenous ancestors, there are at certain places more subtle connections with the indigenous past in terms of cultural continuities. While certain traditions might be recently initiated or invented, others may be continuities that have persisted during several generations, decennia or even centuries.

The past of the indigenous ancestors has been approached through archaeological studies, the primary focus of which is often disconnected from the social realities of communities living in present. Unlike in other contexts (e.g as in Mesoamerica or the Andean region), the ongoing cultural traditions in the Caribbean are generally not carried by direct descendants who have also strong linguistic continuities (indigenous people, speakers of Native American languages). The occurrence of an enormous genocide and great cultural loss, resulting in the fragmentation and even colonization of cultural memory, is undeniable in regions of this study. Although this memory cannot be separated from the colonial discourse, it may offer a new new perspectives to complete and contrast the big narratives of the shared past.

Disentangling continuities

Various elements of present-day Caribbean healing practices and ecological knowledge resemble what is reported by historical and ethnographic accounts from the Caribbean (including the Lesser Antilles) and the South American mainland. This concerns some of the concept of illness, the healers’ invocation of spiritual beings, the knowledge and use of plant remedies, the selection of healing places, plants and other ingredients, as well as the ideas regarding animated landscapes and the custom of making collective pilgrimages to and performing ritual cleansing at sacred places. Yet these elements have also counterparts in Europe and Africa.⁴²⁴ Particularly the African heritage is very visible (e.g. in the names of lwas and

⁴²⁴ For more on the European roots of some of Cuban religious celebrations see Brea López (1998).

orishas), while the syncretism with Catholic Saints and their cult is obvious. The following section will examine this process in more detail. It will highlight the cultural traits that might be (but not necessarily are) continuities of ideas and practices deemed to be existent among indigenous peoples at the time of the conquest, and contextualize these in the demographic history of selected locations.

Boyá

Two Dominican locations, Boyá and Bánica, represent exceptions in Dominican history because of the long-term presence of indigenous descendants throughout the colonial period. In Boyá this presence has been documented from the second half of the 16th century through the 18th, and perhaps until the end of the 19th century. The local church and its patron, the Virgin of the Holy Waters, have an explicit connection with the indigenous population since the second half of 16th century when the church was founded and in the middle of the 17th century when the Virgin of the Holy Waters was highly esteemed.

According to oral history, the Virgin of the Holy Waters appeared in an orange tree in Boyá, which is said to have stood at the place where later the church was established. This manifestation has a clear parallel in the narrative about the miraculous appearance of the Virgin from nearby Higüey who also manifested itself in an orange tree. Yet the appearance of divine beings in trees or flora is a rather universal motif and has been registered also among the indigenous people of Hispaniola.

The roots of the cult of the Virgin of the Holy Waters are in Spain: she has been focus of cult in the town of Villaverde del Río (in the province of Sevilla) since the late 13th century, when Catholicism returned to that region as a consequence of the Reconquista. She is a patron of springs and flowing water and invoked as a protector against drought. Legend has it that she appeared to a shepherd. It is claimed that her cult and sanctuary go even further back in time and were founded by Saint Isidore of Seville (560-636).⁴²⁵ In the 16th century the image became increasingly famous, the Virgin being brought out in processions to ask for rain. Later she came in the custody of the Franciscan order (Hernández Rodríguez and Rodríguez Becerra 2015). Obviously, the connections with the area of Seville and with the Franciscans may have played an important role in the dissemination of this Virgin's veneration to the Americas.

If the Virgin travelled with the same name and hagiography from Spain to Boyá in the second half of 16th century, the small-size local indigenous population may have interpreted her character according to their own traditions, which in that period would still have preserved some traces of the pre-colonial worldview. The reference to this Virgin as an indigenous lady in the collective prayers during the patronal celebrations links her explicitly to the indigenous past. However, which elements might be identified as continuities of indigenous worldview?

As the Mother figure and the element Water are universal symbols, valued across different cultures, the Virgin of the Holy Water of Boyá may have fused with an indigenous image symbolizing the same or similar values.

De Goeje (1943) refers to comparable Virgin Mothers among the indigenous peoples of the Guyanas. One of these is said to be without beginning, without navel because she is unborn, and immortal. Among the Kaliña, Amana is the foundation of the universe: she sheds her skin continually as a serpent, she is the representation of continual change, the essence of time, mother of all things, and she can take all shapes. She is one of the water spirits, which are called Oriyo in Arawakan and Okoyumu in Kaliña (De Goeje 1943).

⁴²⁵ Saint Isidore of Seville (560-536) should not be confused with Saint Isidore Laborer (1070 -1130).

Friar Pané recorded the pre-colonial indigenous concept of a Divine Mother who was invisible, without beginning, and immortal in heaven. She was called by the names Atabei, Iermaoguacar, Apito and Zuimaco.⁴²⁶ Arrom (1989) suggested that the name Atabeira derives from *itabo*, lagoon, and *era*, water, while De Goeje had Attabeira come from an Arawakan word for mother, *ata*, and/or beginning, *atenwa*.⁴²⁷ The deciphering of the names would benefit from an emic perspective, in-depth knowledge of the languages and worldview of indigenous peoples of the Guyanas and Suriname. This, in turn, would provide a firmer base for reconstructing the way in which by the indigenous inhabitants of Boyá may have received and interpreted this Catholic image.

As Penard (2006) suggests, the concept of the Virgin Mother exists also among other indigenous peoples of America. The miraculous nature of a Virgin who is at the same time mother is, therefore, likely to be understood as a symbol across different cultures. Similarly, a female deity with the power to regulate bodies of water occurs in different cultures. The presence of such archetypal characteristics would have facilitated the integration of this image into the local belief system by the inhabitants of Boyá in the 16th century.

A plausible reconstruction would be that the syncretism or rather symbolic synergy that would have occurred in the 16th century was handed down from one generation to the next and so became gradually more and more influenced by and integrated into religious expressions from abroad. By the midst of the 17th century, when the Virgin was held in great esteem, probably there were among her devotees indigenous people of local and non-local origins (e.g. from La Tortuga). The circulation of indigenous beliefs took place in a context in which the indigenous population fluctuated strongly through successive periods. In addition, local religions were likely to be exposed to external religious influences, including those of nearby Monte Plata, where enslaved peoples were living in the 18th century or those of the brotherhoods from Bayaguana.

The present-day reference to the Virgin as an indigenous lady is likely derived from the widespread traditions about indigenous people living under water. This association can be based on her name and hagiography, which belong to the water domain. The connection with the indigenous past is obviously rooted in the general awareness that Boyá's first inhabitants were indigenous people, who are also said to have built the church. The material reminders, such as Enrique's grave, statues of indigenous faces at the church, ceramics displayed among the church's holy relics, or San Isidro holding a *coa* (digging stick), together with publications about the local history (Zambrano 2009) and the local collection of some indigenous artefacts, all reinforce this historical consciousness. The memory of the indigenous past is reenacted in explicit ways through patronal celebrations, oral traditions and oral history referring to the foundation of the settlement.

The cultural memory of the indigenous past is also more subtly embedded in daily practices and traditions. Ancestral indigenous knowledge could in part be passed down through living material heritage like kitchen utensils (calabash plates, *bateas*), alimentary, and pottery making. Some inhabitants make pottery from local clay sources, a tradition which should be further examined for identifying possible indigenous continuities in its manufacturing process. And last but not least, one of the important continuities in the oral tradition is the story that seems to contain elements of the Great Serpent narrative.

In Boyá, the continuity of ancient medicinal culture is difficult to evaluate because the only active healer discontinued her practices a few years ago as her son destroyed her altar after converting to the

⁴²⁶ These names are given in Whitehead's transcription. They were earlier transcribed by Arrom in the same way; only he separated Yermao and Guacar, a division motivated by the friar's note that she had five names. D'Anghiera registered these names as Attabeira, Mamona, Guacarapita, Iiella, Guimazoa. Las Casas transcribed the name of the mother of the gods as Atabex.

⁴²⁷ In their analysis of Caribbean toponyms, Granberry and Vescelius 2004 have argued that water is *na* or *ne*. Penard registered *toena* for water.

Pentecostal faith. From the information gathered, it is clear that the majority of the recorded plants used for medicinal practices were native to the New World. Some of the native plants were also used to treat smallpox. The exotic species from Africa, and from Europe are applied to matters of spiritual protection, cleansing and improving one's fortune or love life. Besides the orange tree in which the Virgin manifested herself, also the guano, piñon and ceiba are considered to be mysterious and sacred, but only the latter has also a negative association. When collecting the plants prayers are directed to the Virgin of Remedies and Jesus, but also to the plant itself with the *misterio* that empowers it and gives it strength for healing. As previously mentioned, indigenous communities in the Guyanas also acknowledge the animating force of trees and plants (De Goeje 1943). Similar use of apazote, ceiba, or *Jatropha* spp. in Boyá has been earlier recorded also in Dominica.

Within this context, Mrs. González Moreno's self-identification as one of the indigenous descendants may be justified by her having the same last name as one of the indigenous families in the beginning of the 17th century (suggesting that knowledge may have passed through her family line from one generation to another), but can also be seen as a more general metaphor for her personal spiritual connection with the powers of nature (which is not limited to Boyá).

Bánica

The rock-art in the Saint Francis cave suggests that the first human settlements in the Bánica region likely date from before the arrival of the Europeans. The circumstances and date of the foundation of Bánica are unclear. Although it is widely accepted that the town was founded by Canarian families, the hypothesis that it was one of the first villas founded by Velazquez cannot be ruled out. It is interesting in this respect that Moreau de Saint-Méry at the end of 18th century mentioned that Baniqueros continued to identify with their indigenous ancestry and that this historical link could be proven. Saint-Méry's account should be viewed in the context of several inhabitants having Canarian and West African roots. These diverse origins are also reflected in present-day religious life and medicinal cultures.

The celebration of Saint Francis follows the Roman Catholic tradition of patronal feasts. The selection of both Saint Francis and Virgen del Carmen, whose hagiographies are both related to mountains and caves, could be interpreted as a careful choice in conjunction with the characteristics of the local landscape. The selection of a cavern as a holy place might follow a tradition of the Islas Canarias, where one of the caverns was a dwelling place of the Virgen de la Candelaria, continuing the spiritual meaning it had among the Guanche prior to the religious conquest. The different elements of the feast of Saint Francis – such as processions, circumventing the calvario, ex-votos, vows expressed in humble attire identifying them with Saint Francis, and the general idea of pilgrimages to sacred places in order to recover health – are also known from Spain and other European countries.

Saint Francis' teachings about the human relation with nature, and about the sun, moon and animals being our relatives, would have been appealing to indigenous and African peoples. Similarly, the part of his hagiography, where this Saint resided in a cave on his journey to achieve divine power (or his divine power to heal), would have been recognizable for indigenous people. One of the miracles attributed to Saint Francis was that he cured a man by washing off his affliction with skin disease (leprosis). This miracle could remind indigenous people of similar acts of their own Divine healer, one of the Divine Twin brothers (Caracaracoli), Bákamo or other divine beings/zemí. The selection of the patronal Saint may also have been the consequence of an identification with the *Iwa* Loko, who is the guardian of vegetation, who gives healing properties to plants and transmits botanical knowledge to healers – his representation in neighboring Haiti is precisely the image of Saint Francis.

Some Baniqueros and pilgrims perceived the ancestral agency at the cavern and certain parts of the river Aitibonito and some surrounding springs. The association of indigenous forefathers with earth and water can be explained as a consequence of the fusion of indigenous traditions with Kongo beliefs about Simbi and Dahomeyan beliefs about Toxosu. Names such as *Dorsú*, *marasás*, Simbi an dlo, Simbi Macaya, King of Earth, King of Water, together with the importance of Divine Twins, suggest connections to Ancient Dahomey and Kongo. These are also prominent regions of the first two hundred years of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to this part of the world. Other components of the celebration can be considered as African influences: the collection of white calcic powder from the wall of caverns, the manifestation of indigenous ancestors through the head of the devotees, or the importance of drumming (type of *palos*) to make the *lwas* descend.

The present-day importance of the holy cavern and the river Aitibonito, and their link to indigenous predecessors may also derive from the narrative about the Great Serpent, which was known by at least three Baniqueros. This narrative has clear links with the sacred narrative of the Kalinago about the origin of plants for protection. As this narrative identifies a cavern and a river, these might have a symbolical value within the indigenous worldview. Inhabitants of the Bánica region may have been in contact with indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles in the 16th century because enslaving voyages to the Kalinago territories were organized during that period (Deive 1995). Yet, the local presence of indigenous people in that period remains to be confirmed. The Great Serpent narrative might also have arrived in the Greater Antilles through pre-colonial exchanges of ideas and peoples (see chapter 7).

The role of the indigenous ancestors in the Saint Francis celebration may reflect indigenous beliefs about the role of ancestors in health, and their association with the subaquatic and subterranean realm as the eternal world of invisible beings (De Goeje 1943). The present-day symbolism of subaquatic kingdoms as ancestral places, sources of regeneration and cures, has parallels among indigenous peoples on the South American mainland (see chapter 2). A further parallel is the conceptualization of rivers as loci where the art of healing comes from, or as symbolizing the road or journey to another sacred place (cave).

If the commemoration of the indigenous ancestors has any pre-colonial roots, it seems to survive until the present day because of its incorporation into the Catholic tradition of patronal celebrations. Regardless of the many unanswered questions that remain, it is clear that certain places have inspired peoples across cultural differences and through the centuries to reflect upon the mysterious workings of the universe.

Other locally mentioned components of medicinal cultures, like etiologies, have also parallels elsewhere. For example the concept of bad air (*mal aire*) is well documented for medieval Spain, but may also involve indigenous ideas about negative influences of the wind deities (documented for Mexico). Soul loss because of the violation of a prohibition has parallels among indigenous peoples of South America and in Africa. In the particular context of the visit of the spring in La Descubierta, the idea of soul loss is closely related to features of African origin. The incarnation of an indigenous spirit, the experience of being devoured might be influenced by Haitian ideas about an attack by the *lwa* (compare also the predatory relations mentioned by de Castro 1998 or Århem 2001). The prohibition of cutting the jobo tree has similarities with cases documented in the Guyanas and Suriname, and teaches us about respecting the life (spirit) of the vegetation and securing the natural balance.

Other medicinal customs like the use of tobacco and maracas to invoke *lwas* are most likely derived from native Caribbean heritage (De Goeje 1943). Among the selection of sacred trees are Catholic and West African influences, but also possible American influences. The crops for offerings were native (corn, peanuts, beans), but also exotic (coffee), and strongly integrated in the local economy. The animals brought

to Saint Francis were delivered like a live offering. Local plants are awakened and asked permission before their collection. The prayers aren't directed to a specific owner of the plant like in Regla de Ocha.

In contrast to the situation in Boyá, there are no individuals in Bánica who would identify as indigenous descendants. Some inhabitants, however, feel a strong spiritual link with the indigenous forefathers. The historical consciousness about the indigenous past is expressed in the belief that the church of the Patron Saint was built by indigenous people and in the recognition of their agency in the cavern, where together with Saint Francis, they occasionally manifest themselves. Like in Boyá, material reminders of ancestral presence are scattered throughout many households in Bánica, where we encounter hammocks, kitchen utensils (like calabash plates and spoons), culinary traditions like cassava making, and the use of *bixa*. Last but not least, indigenous words survive in some names of flora and fauna, toponyms, or technical vocabulary (e.g. related to cassava making) – a study of the local lexicon may yield more insights in the future.

Boca de Mana

Compared to Bánica and Boyá, we know even less details about the colonial history of the indigenous descendants in Boca de Mana. While indigenous descendants were living in Baní and Buenaventura in the early decades of the 16th century, their presence afterwards is unclear. If there were any in the later period, the provincial histories suggest that they were integrated into the population, where people of African and European ancestry and Creoles predominated. Yet, the possible contact between indigenous descendants and newcomers at the beginning of the 16th century invites us to reflect upon whether any elements of the indigenous worldview may have played a role in the motivations to select the cavern as a place for the celebration of Saint John's feast, as it contains an aspect of ancestral commemoration.

Again, any possible indigenous influences may have been integrated into or fused with the beliefs of African and European origins. The commemoration of the indigenous predecessors as part of Saint John's feast may have its origin in pre-colonial Caribbean ancestor cult as well as in West African respect for the deceased. According to Catholic models, caverns were miraculous and sacred places, and sometimes they were conceived as entrances to the purgatory.⁴²⁸

A first, most obvious factors in the selection of the cavern for ceremonial activities in the past and present may be the impact of such liminal places on the human body and psyche, as it is apt to create a sense of transcendence. The precise motives for the selection of Saint John as patron Saint for this location remain unclear, but most likely they stem from the spirituality of Mrs. Viviana de La Rosa, who came from Baní where Saint John is the patronal Saint. Whether the figure of Saint John was previously associated with any other spiritual entity, which in the meantime has been lost or changed, remains unclear. Like in the case of Saint Francis, the biography of Saint John the Baptist may have appealed to people of different religious backgrounds as a symbol of the healing and cleansing power of water, of both the destructive and the regenerative power of water, or simply of water as life force, of crucial importance for humans and other beings in this world.

The selection of the cavern as a place for the celebration of Saint John's feast might be rooted in pre-colonial worldview. There have been more components of the celebration in Mana that have parallels among different indigenous peoples of the Americas. Among these were: seeking health through pilgrimages to the sacred places such as caverns, asking permission before entering sacred places, physical presence of divine beings at the celebration, the ritual use of tobacco, drums and chanting, food offerings,

⁴²⁸ See for the European conception of caverns as entrances to the purgatory Walsh Pashulka (2015).

together with the general beliefs about caves as sacred liminal places where contact with divine powers and ancestors can be established.

The belief in the healing power of the water from the cavern, the accommodation of offerings for indigenous ancestors at places where water accumulates could all refer to pre-colonial beliefs about water as a dwelling place of deities and ancestors, as a symbol of the flow of time and for regeneration, or as a connecting element between the visible and invisible worlds. In Jamaica many caverns that in the past have been used in indigenous rituals are situated close to water sources or contain a water source. In some cases (e.g. in Mona) caverns were the only source of freshwater (Samson et al. 2017).

Another factor in the selection of this Saint may have been his feast day (24 June), which, as a counterpart to Christmas (24 December), is associated with the summer solstice, a phenomenon that, of course, is observed worldwide as a key element for distinguishing the seasons. A study by Jansen & Perez (2015) shows that such coincidences in time organization facilitated the process of fusion and synergy between Mesoamerican and European time perceptions and related symbolism in the Mexican context. Accordingly, the summer solstice may have been a point of mutual recognition and facilitated the process of transculturation of indigenous, European and African beliefs in Mana.

In Boca de Mana, like in other locations on the island, present-day agricultural activities are guided by the lunar calendar, integrated into the European liturgical calendar, which serves to organize Caribbean patronal celebrations and other ritual activities. The lunar calendar seems to have been in use in West Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean at the time of European colonization of the Caribbean. The celebration of Our Lady of Mercy falls two days after the September equinox. In Boca de Mana, however, this Virgen is celebrated on the same day as the Virgen of Charity in Cuba: on the 9th of September. Such anomalies merit further attention to identify their possible seasonal, astronomical or symbolic reasons.

Simultaneously, some of these features may have African roots. More details are necessary to establish this link. To illustrate this point: the idea about the physical presence of divine or spiritual entities (*lwas*) may come from different cultures. Its form, however, indicates African roots. Within the 21 division *lwas* incarnate in the head of the *caballos*. In addition, the spatial proximity of small points of other *lwas* (Barón del Cementerio, Santa Marta) to the place where the indigenous forefathers reside in the cavern indicate an African incorporation of indigenous ancestors into their own pantheon of deified deceased persons. The plentiful images of *lwas*, including their names like Tindjo (probably from Haitian Creole Simbi dlo), traditionally respected among the 21 Division, only further confirm that these places have been sacralized according to West African beliefs. This is only to be expected, given the history of Haina and Nigua, which were for a long period sugar plantation regions.

Spanish (Canarian) influences are obvious in the very figure of Saint John, a very popular Catholic Saint until the present. Other components of the feast such as messianic figures, the circumventing crosses, stones representing penance, the importance of the holy images, the use of water from sacred places as a blessing and for healing, all can be found also in European pilgrimages to sacred places.

Traditional foodways (including the preparation of cassava bread, the culinary use of guayiga, corn or bixa), with the use of basketry (from guano), and kitchen utensils (*bateas*, plates of calabash) indicate continuity of indigenous legacy in this sphere. Such material culture was common in rural areas in the 18th century and has been observed until today in different locations, which may be linked to the poverty level in the region.

La Jaiba

In the location La Jaiba archaeological surveys (Ulloa Hung & Herrera Malatesta 2015) have established a long-term pre-colonial occupation. Elements of the indigenous culture in this region may have been transferred to the newcomers at the time of first colonial encounters and the subsequent *encomienda* period, and possibly even much later in the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century when some indigenous descendants (*mestizos*) were still living in Satiago region.

The name of the pool Tamare strongly reminds us of Tamare, one of the main personages from the Venezuelan narrative about the origin of Maracaibo (which emerged from a great flood caused by the great lord Zapara) (Pérez Escalarin 1996). While none of the inhabitants of La Jaiba mentioned this narrative, many suggested that Tamare was an indigenous name. This pool may have been named by the healer who was known to have used it three generations ago. As there is very little known about the biography of this healer we must take into account the possibility that was inspired by the Venezuelan narrative. It is difficult, however, to assess to what extent this narrative was known at the time or available as a published text in the Dominican Republic. It should be noted that indigenous people from the surroundings of the lake Maracaibo were also victims of the slave trading voyages that captured people and brought them to Hispaniola during the first half of 16th century.

The ingredients of the bath reveal also Old world origins (Europe, Asia), New World (especially those aromatic herbs resembling European ones), or those symbolic such as sunflower that imported to Europe from (North) America during the early 16th century.

The cavern La Iglesia and Poza Encantada at El Burén were places where Saints and *lwas* could manifest themselves and where they were invoked in cleansing ceremonies. During such ceremonies both Catholic saints (Virgen Altagracia, *San Gregorio/Santo Medico*), and *lwas* such as Ogún, Anaïsa Pie, and Metreselí, but also the *indigenous misterios* were invoked. The selection of *lwas* that is invoked in here was dependent on the healers training, and problem that is in need of being solved. The mentioned *lwas* and saint invoked at El Burén are popular among the Catholic devotees and those of 21 Division.

Like in Bánica, indigenous ancestors were commemorated on occasions near pools and in caverns. The justification for consulting deified indigenous heroes is rooted in the historical consciousness of the religious specialist, who might not have this spiritual link but would recognize the ancestral agency at certain places, especially where tangible signs (archaeological findings) of ancestral dwellings have been encountered. Archaeological findings at the site El Burén suggest that these places had spiritual importance for the pre-colonial inhabitants. Further analysis of the objects via carbon dating may yield more historical depth and inform us about the successive phases of their functioning.

The present-day association of indigenous ancestors with the subaquatic domain as the place where they have originated from, and departed to after passing away has parallels in the origin narratives of various linguistically related peoples on the South-American mainland. These beliefs may also be reinforced by the observation that many of the archaeological sites are situated at riverbanks.

The idea of mutual caring between man and the invisible world often materializes in food; flower offerings are rather universal and found not only among different indigenous peoples of the Americas, but also in Africa. Residues of possible offerings were found in Caribbean caverns and sinkholes.⁴²⁹ Already Martyr d' Anghiera suggested that the indigenous peoples of Cuba were bringing offerings (necklaces and ceramic vessels with food and water) to one of the first icons of the Virgin brought by Hojeda to Cuba, and reflected upon the possibility that these were reminiscent of the ancestral cult to the cemís.

⁴²⁹ For example guácima seed in La Aleta (Beeker et al. 2002).

Jiguaní

Like in the above-mentioned cases, indigenous people lived in the Jiguaní region long before the first Cuban colonial encounters. One of the first historical references to an indigenous community here comes from the 1530s and there is a later one from the 1680s, thirty years before the town was officially established by a founder of indigenous ancestry. Based on the subsequent demographic development, it is again likely that indigenous cultural elements have fused with European and West African heritage.

The foundation of Jiguaní implied also the selection of the patronal Saint for its church. Jiguaní is the only known Cuban town where reportedly an indigenous descendant engaged himself in that selection. Can we discern in the choice of Saint Paul a nexus between the religions of the Old and the New World? Did his fame as the Apostle of the Gentiles, as the person who first persecuted the Christians and later converted himself to Christianity play any role? Again, what Manuel de Rojas', the founder of Jiguaní of indigenous origin, real motives were to choose Saint Paul is purely a matter of speculation.

The strong tradition of Cord Spiritism suggests that local spirituality has developed in its own unique way, in which the spiritual entities of the deceased are very much respected. Cord Spiritism is based on the European model of Kardec' Spiritism but includes a local expression of collective prayers through the cord. Some popular knowledge sources such as Ecured indicated that the cord formed by the attendees of the spiritists' mass resembles the *areíto* (circular dance) described by the early chronicles.⁴³⁰ In my view, the Cord Spiritism mass displays some features that are present in Kaliña ceremonial dances.⁴³¹ However, such features can also be found in ceremonial dances that do not have any historical relationship with the Caribbean.

The surrounding landscapes – including elements such as San Pedruscón, sacred trees like the ceiba, anacagüita, symbolism of pumpkin, and medicinal flora – are other ways in which local spirituality is expressed. Different native and exotic plants serve for spiritual protection of houses and their inhabitants, as remedies against different diseases and are of great value in daily activities. Some uses of these medicinal plants (apazote, bixa, cotton, guyaba, jaboncillo, verveine, tabacco) in Jiguaní overlap with indigenous practices found on Dominica (See Table 9).

There are more traditions that display similarities with indigenous worldviews. Among these are the appearances of deceased persons in dreams, the act of transforming oneself in a dream into an animal, the narratives about *cagüeyros*. Like different female contributors from the Dominican Republic, Jiguaní women were prohibited in the past to enter the field when being in their period. Other possible continuities we find in the application of the lunar calendar to different activities such as: collecting cocoa clay for making a burén, painting house walls, or cleaning the floor, as well as selecting the wood for building a house, collecting plants, planting crops, and cutting hair.

Continuities are evident in foodways (cassava, great variety of corn dishes including ayaca, atol, chicha), material culture (basketry, pottery, *piraguas*, *jibe*, *batea*, *canoa*, *burén*), fishing with poisonous plants, using fishing traps like *nasas*, the use of *fotuto* (conch shell) for announcing messages, the use of *maracas* in healing and the use of loan-words (technical and biological terms) from indigenous

⁴³⁰ See in Ecured part on Espiritismo de Cordón en Guisa retrieved from https://www.ecured.cu/Espiritismo_de_Cordón_en_Guisa [accessed on 31 April.2018].

⁴³¹ The circular cord that is formed by the attendees of the spiritual mass has reminded some investigators of the historical description of the pre-colonial ritual dance (*areíto*). Indeed, the collective experience of dancers, rhythmically leaning and bending, beating with their feet, stepping forward and backward, swinging their arms, connecting with other dancers while singing in chorus, among devotees of Espiritismo del Cordón may be compared to the ritual practice of, for example, Kaliña dancers.

languages.⁴³² All these examples, including those traditionally recognized as indigenous heritage (such as the basketry, pottery, and fishing) need more research in order to verify the details and developments of these continuities, as all these may have been modified according to the skills and knowledge of other populations arriving in later colonial periods.

The memory of indigenous ancestors is supported by the active role of the local historian, family histories, the local museum, or publications about the foundation of the town. Rich oral traditions, including the use of songs to recall and transmit historical events, narratives about great *majás*, *jigües* and owls announcing death, and dogs bringing bad luck ... all these may communicate some of the indigenous messages in modified versions today. Especially, the story about the boas seems to be a secularized version of the religiously charged narrative about the Great Serpent.

Barajagua and Managuaco

Indigenous people lived in small settlements like Barajagua before the Spanish conquest and their descendants continued to do so much later, through the 16th, the 17th, the 18th, until the second half of the 19th century. Indigenous offspring lived in both urban and rural settings of the region, and co-existed with indigenous people of non-local, and mixed backgrounds. Simultaneously, different lines of evidence suggest that the Catholic faith transformed but did not completely obliterate all continuities of indigenous culture (e.g. in mortuary treatment at Chorro de Maíta). In Barajagua and Managuaco indigenous descendants were exposed to institutional instruction in the Catholic faith, since the foundation of the first hermitage of the miraculous Virgin of Charity in the early 17th century or since that of the hermitage in Managuaco at the end of the 17th century. The numerous registers of events of “spiritual conquest”, such as the baptisms of indigenous people, suggest that these were not the first or last encounters with the Catholic Church. The fragmented picture of the past of these locations offer us points for reflection about the continuities within rural areas marked by a history of small-scale agriculture, animal husbandry and illicit trade.

Various authors have discussed the Virgen of Charity as an example of a Catholic image with echoes of indigenous beliefs (Trincado 1997; Oliver 2009; Ortiz 2012; Peña et al. 2014). These authors have suggested several points of coincidence as indications of syncretism. In my view, the co-existence of features from worldviews that resemble each other in their meaning or form is likely to facilitate a process of transculturation, which may be the reason why the image has been incorporated. We must keep in mind, however, that such co-existence does not automatically or necessarily lead to symbolic synergy and that what now may appear to us as coincidences was not necessarily perceived as such by the indigenous people in those days.

Different attributes may be used to find symbolic or religious parallels between the Virgen of Charity and pre-colonial deities: e.g. being protector (from a storm), being mother, being the Mother of a Divine Being, being associated with the moon (in her image), or having a link to water. Some parallels are part of her hagiography. The Virgin was found by three children, two of which had an indigenous background and one an African background. This suggests the on-going presence of indigenous people (probably acculturated into colonial society) in Barajagua at the time (like in some other places in this region in the same period). The selection of the waterfall with a small pool as the first place for building the small hermitage for the Virgen might indeed be rooted in (remains of) indigenous worldview.

⁴³² Among these linguistic continuities are words like: ayaca, babiney, cativía, caguayo, cuchubey, naiboa, ñape, jiribía, macana, quaniquiqui, guacaica.

As the plurality of meanings of the Saltadero for present inhabitants of Barajagua indicates, this place is sacred: multiple divine and spiritual beings dwell here. The present-day symbolic associations (the river being Ochún, or the bay being sacred because it is the place where Yemayá and Ochún meet) would suggest that the selection of the first hermitage might also have been inspired by beliefs of African and Creole origin. Under the supervision of the indigenous boy the Virgin disappeared on various occasions and returned repeatedly with wet clothes to her altar at the Saltadero. The returning water symbolism could be a reference to a fusion of the values associated with water and with the Virgin.

The significance of the waterfall for the indigenous people in the 16th century remains an enigma. The contemporary meaning is closely related to the oral history of the settlement as being the first hermitage of the Virgin of Charity. As such it holds a great spiritual value until today, even though the official Mass is celebrated in the church. According to oral tradition, this place is also linked to Great Boa. Although the narratives of the Virgin and the Great Majá (who is here considered beneficial) are connected to the same place, these are by no means considered as related or fused: one (that of the serpent) is considered a legend while the other (that of the Virgin) is a truthful story about a divine being. According to one of the contributors, the Virgin may be a representation of Simbi, the Lady of Waters, whose description displays similarities with the Great Serpent narrative. Contemporary oral tradition about the Mother of Water, the Great Majá living in this place, also recognized as Simbi, supports the hypothesis about a synergy of worldviews.

For the inhabitants of Barajagua the Virgin is a caring mother during droughts, sickness, or other periods of crisis. This archetypal role of the Virgin/Mother seems to be appealing across different religions. Therefore, the image of the Catholic Virgin should neither be understood as a replacement of some “pagan idol”, imposed by the missionaries, nor as a “mask” or “veneer” to cover the continued veneration of an indigenous deity under another name. This image, like so many similar cases, is the result of a complex interaction of religious ideas from different cultural backgrounds: syncretism in the sense that different ideas fused into a new unity, or rather symbolic synergy in the sense that one religious interpretation reinforces the other.⁴³³ These cases allow us to contemplate universal values that humans have in common regardless of their religious background.

The present-day interpretation of the appearance of a Great Serpent as a sign of prohibition to contaminate this place, as retold by inhabitant from Managuaco, may again reflect the continuity of the indigenous teachings about the balance between people and natural forces, but at the same time may express modern ecological concerns or just a preoccupation or feeling of guilt on the part of the contributors. In a similar fashion, the connection that Mr. De Los Santos made between the narrative about the Great Serpent in Pedro Santana and the destructive power of Aitibonito during the cyclone David, reminds us of the dangerous character of the river in the Dominican Republic. Thus, the message included in the narrative about the Great Majás living in Cuban rivers, or the jigües, may have a didactic function even though its status has shifted from a sacred text, containing a symbolic narrative, to a “legend”, “myth” or “folktale” because of the secularization of society and because of the marginalization of the beliefs of the colonized peoples.

The meaning of the Saltadero has to be situated in the context of beliefs of a community where also Spiritism plays an important role and where followers of Regla de Ocha are present. In this location too we find that ceiba and anacaüita have a spiritual meaning, while the ritual use of tobacco and maracas are important components of local medicinal practices.

⁴³³ See also the examples of the Virgin of Boyá, Saint Francis in Bánica, the Virgin icon by the cacique at Cueybá, the Virgin of Guadalupe venerated by indigenous descendants in Caney (and, of course, in Mexico).

In Managuaco, among the adherents of Cord Spiritism the spiritual development, health recovery, and spiritual protection is sought through the contact with ancestors, which include groups of indigenous and African spiritual entities. On special occasions, people seek the advice of indigenous predecessors in the surrounding landscape, including a small cavern because indigenous people are thought to reside in these places. Sitochi, Queen of Waters, provides guidance through dreams and in private expressions of spirituality, embedded in the local landscape. Other spiritual activities, such as ritual cleansing performed with the help of Oshun (the river flow), or asking permission before entering sacred places like Monte, have also parallels in Regla de Ocha. The Jiguaní, Barajagua and Managuaco rivers and especially their deep pools are dwellings of *jigües*, which adds yet another layer to the meaning of local landscapes with their long religious history.

We have seen the importance of the oral tradition about the Great Serpent as an emblematic identifier of indigenous cultural memory. This narrative, earlier registered only in the Lesser Antilles, Suriname and Guyanas, offers new insights into the religious and medicinal history of Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The continuity of this narrative until today in Boyá and Bánica is likely related to the long-term presence of indigenous descendants in these locations. The present-day continuity of this narrative in Managuaco, Barajagua and also Fray Benito might be the result of specific transmission by indigenous inhabitants (either local or from other locations), but may also be indicative of the wide distribution of narratives with this motif. Anyway it seems to reflect the presence of indigenous offspring in diverse locations in the East Cuba, including Holguín province, which is also suggested in the most recent studies of Valcárcel Rojas and Pérez Concepción (2014) and Valcárcel Rojas (2016). In addition, it suggests a pre-colonial or colonial exchange of ideas and peoples between Cuba and Hispaniola on the one side and other islands (specifically Dominica, where this narrative has been well documented) and the mainland on the other.

In Barajagua the aforementioned cultural practices deserve further analysis in order to assess any possible continuities in more depth. One of the practices found both in Barajagua and Managuaco is the collective healing, wherein various members of the groups enter into communication with the invisible world, so that the medium may transmit the diagnosis and the remedy to the patients. In these healing practices tobacco and maracas were important elements for making this contact with the other world. Also here we encounter more material continuities in basketry (including *jibe*, *catauro*), craftwork (*batea*, *coa*, *burén*, *jícara*, wood colorants), lunar calendar, alimentation (cassave, masamoro, tamales, pinol, corn wine, other dishes), the technique of fishing through poisoning the water with plants, and the presence of loanwords from indigenous languages in the local vocabulary (e.g. *macuyo*, *catibilla*). Another such element is the general notion of animated landscapes in which specific sacred trees are important, such as ciguaraya, cedro, piñon, and ceiba (in which the Virgin was hidden). Lastly, like in other locations, we can find narratives about *cagüeyros*, and the idea that owls announce death.

Continuities and heritage loss

The previous presentation of the data from islands might direct some readers to wonder whether continuities and loss of the indigenous heritage can be explained by different historical trajectories. As comparison was not the aim of this study I will briefly elaborate on a few ideas about the pool and caves.

The symbolism of pools as gateways to subaquatic kingdoms where the indigenous ancestors live is to be found in many Dominican locations where no prior historical records to the indigenous descendants are known. Its widespread character can be related to the moment when this information might be passed on by the indigenous people to other ancestors, the integration of its symbolism in 21 Division, the relevance

of this information through the generations or just general preservation of oral traditions in rural regions of the Dominican Republic. The Great Serpent and boa narratives have been encountered in both regions of the study where indigenous descendants were living during the colonial period. Oral traditions evidently are not bound to one place but may travel freely across regions. When the knowledge from oral tradition has also other means of transfer (ritual offerings to the Virgen of Barajagua, offerings brought at Charco Tamare, or physical reminders of ancestral agency) its likelihood for preservation seems to increase.

The discussed celebrations in cavern setting illustrate that other factors important in this transfer are: the accessibility of the caverns (which was more restricted in different Cuban places), the organization relying on authorities which maintains influence in the place (Bibiana de la Rosa, the church in Bánica), its long-durée use and the cross-cultural liminal character of these places. Continuities and loss might be furthermore explained by the intra-and-inter-island heterogenous cultural and religious histories, including differences in industrialization, urbanization and literacy rate. These are related to general shifts in the means of transfer of cultural memory (in Assmann's term from oral to literal society to perhaps mass media oriented society). Differences have also been caused by historical contingencies.

When highlighting the continuities of the indigenous heritage one of the first striking features is the continuous perpetuation of stereotypes in the representation of indigenous and formally enslaved peoples.⁴³⁴ The main sources perpetuating this negative representation are according to my observation the school textbooks. These are important formative sources shaping how individuals position themselves vis-à-vis the problematic past as well as the continuity and protection of their cultural heritage. The colonial discourse is enweaved in the oral tradition at large. An example is the narrative about naked "Indian women" combing their golden hair at the river pools and enchanting passersby with their beauty. This semi-erotic image of the deceitful beauty of indigenous women reoccurs in stories about *ciguapas*, mythical creatures, naked, with long hair, whose feet facing backward reveal their magical character. *Ciguapas*, depicted as creatures that lurk men into their dwellings in order to kill them, resemble the ancient narratives about Amazons, which according to Martyr D' Anghiera were living in Martinique (called Madanina or Matinino in the indigenous language). Whatever its origin – it could be based on indigenous beliefs and then influenced by Ashanti oral tradition, European imagination or Creole folklore – this narrative is clearly influenced by the colonial categories of race.

I would like to close this paragraph with stressing that the tendency of both colonial Christianity and western modernity to disqualify other worldviews in terms of "superstition" ("witchcraft", "magic", "primitive, pre-logic or mythical thinking" etc.) only impedes adequate understanding. In order to learn from each other, a respectful intercultural translation is necessary. Phenomena described as spiritual or religious by a traditional culture actually often are comparable with what is defined as psychological in a western vocabulary. Different cultural expressions to describe illness such as those of feeling of being consumed from inside should first be seen as comparable also how for example also European patients in time of spiritual crisis use symbols and metaphors to convey their experience and impact of the disease (see e.g. Harrington 2012). Often these metaphors are embedded in our terms e.g. cancer is derived from the Greek word for crab, cancers, like crabs, creeping along and eating away the flesh and the lives of patients (Harrington 2012). The soul loss or feeling of being possessed by the lwa could also be compared to the western idiom to emotional and psychological trauma and sometimes psychiatric illness, which would be addressed through psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy etc (see e.g. Hanwela et al. 2012). Similarly, the references to ancestors, deities, spirits and misterios in Dominican and Cuban cultures, may for a non-

⁴³⁴ Some of the present-day stereotypes may also be influenced by images of the indigenous peoples from North America, because of their relatively prominent presence in Hollywood movies, popular literature etc.

local readers correspond to memories, awe with the natural beauty and fascination with hidden, extraordinary, beyond conception and understanding workings of the universe (creature feeling, *mysterium* in Otto's vocabulary, see Turner & MacKenzie 1977). When reading these accounts it is important to keep in mind that different cultures define etiologies and healing in their own specific vocabularies, but often seem to address the same aspects of human experience.

The interpretation of any Caribbean living heritage in terms of indigenous cultural continuity remains a highly speculative endeavor. The impact of the European invasion of the Caribbean was enormously detrimental to the indigenous communities. The illnesses, violent oppression and exploitation led to a nearly total erasure of peoples, languages and worldviews, including ancient medicinal knowledge. Fragmentation by conquest, colonization, and forced assimilation together with the profound demographic and cultural changes, have created an obstacle for deconstructing the colonial bias included in the written texts and for reconstructing the history, which often lacks detailed accounts, so that cultural continuity is difficult to pinpoint. This study has shown that the voyage seeking such continuities in the Greater Antilles is highly complex and without definitive conclusions. It does suggest, however, that one of the important vehicles of continuity is the ability of parties to identify key concepts and features that resemble (and make sense in) their own cultural universe. This co-occurrence leads to strategies to mask the preservation of own values, but also to create new symbolic synergies. Cultural memory has two aspects: it may serve to contrast the biased colonial archives, but it also carries in itself the imprints of five hundred years of cultural hegemony.

Systematic excavations of cavern settings may in the future verify the historical depth of the relation between the water element and the offerings. Certainly, many discontinuities and ruptures in the cultural memory are to be expected. Oblivion is part of the colonization of memory. But we find also a process of transculturation in which the creativity and the convictions of other populations rewrote (and contributed to) the meanings of these places – even so, these new layers of meaning are shaped in conjunction with the memory of the indigenous predecessors.

Healing landscapes within landscape theories

A final research question brings us to reflect upon how interpretations of healing landscapes can be situated within current landscape theories. The concept of healing landscape was used as an umbrella term to integrate approaches to human health from a holistic perspective. The term combined insights from previous botanical and anthropological studies (Cabrera 1954; Roig y Mesa 1974; Portorreal 2011; Germosén-Robineau 2005; Ososki 2004; Roersch 2016; Bolívar Aróstegui 1998; Quiroz-Moran 2009; Deive 1988; Tejeda Ortíz 2013; Brendbekken 1998), which addressed medicinal plants, some facets of religious views of landscape features, or present-day healing practices in the region.

When looking at all agents that at present have an active role in the health and wellbeing of the contributors, I have tried to highlight the relation between these different components of landscapes. The concept 'landscape' has been used to bridge the dichotomies between nature/culture and time/space, and to describe the relational character of the human wellbeing and health and the historical dwelling in the landscape. The health of people and their quality of life are inextricably linked to the health of their environment. Cultural practices both constitute and are constituted by the relationship between the physical aspects of the environment (physical, environmental factors, and man-made objects) and the immaterial cultural aspects (the spectator's view of landscapes, e.g. as a painting, involving specific perspectives, rituals, narratives, knowledge etc.).

The intimate relationship between people and the landscape they feel a part of has profound consequences for concepts of illness and health.⁴³⁵ This awareness of the interdependency of humans and the environment is culturally expressed and codified. Some of these local examples were: the concept of illness (e.g. deriving from a violation of the prohibition of cutting trees), the doctrine of signatures in order to identify the cures, the divine manifestation in landscape features involving Saints, *orishas*, *lwas*, and other divine beings. These cultural expressions of contiguity between the social and natural have been observed in teachings of diverse religious systems about the origin of the world, including how and why the invisible beings or forces can manifest themselves in the material surroundings. These teachings, including sacred narratives like *patakis*, or biographies of famous healers, establish links between the community and different landscape features, which are periodically reaffirmed during pilgrimages, communal celebrations or other ritual engagements with these places or landscape features.

Unlike the approach followed by several previous studies, the definition of healing landscapes used here includes also human agents. The inclusion of healers, plants, places, but also other landscape features like airs into one category serves to overcome the modern anthropocentric separations between nature and culture, between positivist notions of inanimate objects and animated subjects, divine beings and other manifestations of nature as a divine creation. These boundaries were trespassed by the very concept of illness, as well as by the ability of healers to incorporate the *lwas*, *orishas*, ancestors, and other normally invisible forces that may reside in landscape features.

This study did not collect sufficient examples to also address the symbolism related to the animal world in a systematic manner. Various animals (about owls, cocuyos, dogs, snakes, and turtles) are told in narratives including the spiritual references. Given the fact that pre-colonial material culture is often decorated with zoomorphic and anthropo-zoomorphic motives the understanding of present-day animal symbolism may bring new insights into an analysis of their importance in spiritual realm.

The concept of landscape was only used to summarize and translate, not to replace local expressions. The examples used here to illustrate the mutual relation between people and environment, were selected by the author from the available information collected during her fieldwork and not by the contributors themselves. The focus on the healing landscape is one of various approaches to agency and life-giving sources in landscapes, highlighting the relevance of these for health and wellbeing.

Many of the aforementioned aspects were earlier described under the heading of sacred landscapes in for example the Mesoamerican context (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2008; Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2016; Jiménez Osorio & Posselt Santoyo 2018; Aguilar Sanchez 2017). With the exception of the cavern of Saint Francis, which was consecrated by the local Church authorities, none of the previously discussed places, plants, or healers were said to be “holy” or “sacred”. These terms have been used within institutionalized religion (as an aspect of colonial rule) for more than five hundred years in the region. This historical context affects their meaning and associations. For devotees these terms did not encompass all non-consecrated, intrinsic, invisible powers, which also might be potentially dangerous for health. The most common description of these aspects that devotees used in the Dominican Republic was: “*tiene un misterio*”.

The long-term process of discriminating and downgrading the religions of the historically marginalized populations has influenced the definition of their official status. As a consequence many places, reliquaries or acts performed by adherent of 21 division are still considered by many as clandestine witchcraft and perceived as incompatible with terms as “sacred” or “holy”, which are generally used in the Catholic

⁴³⁵ In particular the concept of illness as being taken away, being devoured by the *lwa* or impacted by the evil eye, being bewitched, as a disturbance of the balance between hot and cold element, or a disturbance of community harmony caused by societal conflicts among persons or an imbalance occurring in the relationships among the divine realm, intermediaries and patients.

context. Consequently, some sacred narratives became secularized or downgraded to “myths” and “(folk)tales”.⁴³⁶

Given the often-contested nature of practices whose religious underpinnings and values belonged to different religious groups, I opted first to focus on the therapeutic potential of the landscape in order to create more empathy and understanding among atheists, agnostics and members of other religious groups. At the end of the day, many of the aforementioned testimonies do not reflect the atheistic views, which are held by a large part of the Cuban and Dominican population. Different accounts exemplified the deep spiritual value attributed to aspects of nature and their importance to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The faith in plant, remedy, and deity was an important element in the process of recovery.

History has taught us that faith can be beneficial for health and wellbeing, but that, when being manipulated in order to legitimize xenophobic and extremist ideas, and oppress other beliefs, it can also cause violence and death. The negative attitudes towards 21 Division in the Dominican Republic today display many similarities with the biases of colonialism, which demonized such practices in order to justify its own religious and political order.⁴³⁷ Future studies from an emic perspective should however consider and address how to decolonize and enhance the emancipatory value of terms such as “sacred” and “holy”. It is possible that other terms might be more apt to communicate the meanings they stand for in order to achieve more recognition for some of the historically marginalized beliefs.

The concept of healing landscapes was also based on the concept of illness, which is included in the general awareness of the interconnectivity and interdependence of humans and nature. By emphasizing the healing aspect, my attention is focused on the potential of some healing landscapes to improve physical, mental and communal wellbeing. When reading about the Caribbean healing landscapes, readers may also think of the worldwide beliefs in the salutary effects of the environment exemplified in curative waters, spas or sacred sites of religious pilgrimages in Europe itself, in Africa or elsewhere in the Americas. The concept of healing landscapes brings together various sacred places like Lourdes, Bath, sacred groves of Ghana or Benin, Ceiba in Cuba, but also extend the observation to other natural elements including winds (*winti*, Greek: *airs*), and those of other invisible beings dwelling in our landscape. The comparative aspect of this concept helps to recognize the common values and shared preoccupation with basic needs of our becoming, such as a healthy environment.

The aim of this dissertation was not to prove the effectiveness of these practices. The evaluation of many holistic practices including the medicinal properties of plants, their dispensing practices, and dosage has yet to be carried out. While the value of plants has been traditionally well acknowledged – it has been the objective of centuries of colonial exploitation and bio-piracy, which continues to be a reoccurring problem across the world – the effectiveness of other healing traditions, such as ritual baths or visitation of healing places, merits attention as well and should be studied seriously rather than *a priori* discredited. The baths at the Sulphur spring La Zurza used at least for two hundred years indicate that ancestral knowledge can be beneficial both as a cure of physical ailments (Sulphur used for skin ailments) and as a factor

⁴³⁶ The exotic divine and normally invisible beings might have been incorporated within indigenous worldviews, which regardless of their differences shared several universal principles of human spirituality with the newcomers. The status of these divine beings might of course vary but their animating forces whether perceived as positive or negative fitted with the ideas about nature animated by *orishas*, ancestors, spirits, *jigües* living in the river pools situated in wider landscapes animated by *cagüeyros*, *bakás*, *cucuyos*, owls and other mysterious and metamorphic beings whose meaning in the meantime may have become subject to secularization. Some of these beings (again, like owls) were believed to be bad omen also in Spain, but might also relate to pre-colonial beliefs about these – possibly spiritual – beings (see Arrom 1989 on the symbolism of the owl).

⁴³⁷ In the past, much criticism has been directed at traditional healing practices and its practitioners. This criticism seems to be rooted not only in religious bias, but also in the often unregulated nature of these practices, which sometimes enables individuals lacking proper knowledge of medicinal plants to lure vulnerable and ill people into paying for unwarranted therapies. The majority of healers interviewed during this study acknowledged the limits of their abilities and of the efficacy of their remedies. In the case that the client needed licensed medical attention that they were not able to offer, they suggested to the patient to seek medical aid at an appropriate institution. Many healers focused on mental care and health rather than on physical ailments.

promoting psychological wellbeing (a relaxing environment, the psychological sense of support because of having the divine on our site).

As earlier studies about Africa, the Americas, and Europe indicate, several of these practices might indeed be valuable for improving mental and/or physical health of individuals and communities. Similarly, the consults with traditional healers should be also more appreciated for their therapeutic function in their psychological support of individuals and communities. The pilgrimages to various sites could be argued to have a positive effect by removing patients from daily stress and by creating a sustained concentration on the ethical principles of the community and the comfort of ancestral religious faith. As Post et al. (2014) suggested for the pilgrimage to the South African Motouleng cave, *“the movement from station to station under the guidance of a spiritual leader constitutes a profound spiritual experience for the pilgrim and a transformed sense of healing and reunion with culture and belief”*. In addition, other authors like Talbot (2002) have emphasized the potential of pilgrimage for recovery from physical and mental ailments.

Many rituals aiming to improve wellbeing actually created a sense of security, self-esteem, control over social difficulties for the contributors to this study, who often are living in (extreme) poverty, with lack of access to medical care, low literacy rates (among the elderly), unemployment, violence (especially high rates of domestic violence against women), epidemics (*zika*, *chikungunya*), continuous environmental degradation, and natural disasters. In particular, people depending economically on their agricultural work have been among the most vulnerable to the effects of climatic change. This became apparent as a series of hurricanes (Irma, María, and Mathew), extensive droughts, floods, and coastal erosion hit the visited region on numerous occasions during the time of the study. Although the perceived social differences were much less pronounced in the affected Cuban communities, the local economy, agricultural production, and health care have been hugely disadvantaged by the embargo and state of Cuban economy. The lack of certain medical drugs on the Cuban market provoked governmental attempts to integrate holistic medicine into conventional medicine.⁴³⁸

My approach to healing landscapes from a cultural memory perspective was first motivated by the observation of the role of ancestors in the health of the descendants in diasporic communities. Ancestral commemoration and the participation in communal celebrations have potential for improving mental health by providing people with a sense of belonging to a community and place. The sense of belonging is considered in social psychology as a fundamental human need, a powerful factor that influences people's health (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Walton & Cohen 2011). In connection with this view, communal celebrations are meaningful for creating social cohesion and a sense of stability, which builds upon the balance, reciprocity and harmony that is required among the visible and invisible beings.

Approaching landscapes from a cultural memory perspective allowed us also to address their role as a mnemonic tool. Being seemingly constant features, landscapes are unifying factors for the different population groups that came to these Caribbean islands. Despite profound material modifications, the Caribbean landscapes were and are a rather stable background and matrix for human activities, lifeways, and worldviews. Landscapes are an integral part of a people's becoming and cultural memory, incorporating continuities, multi-directional changes related to historical process and events, connecting the contemporary inhabitants to the past as well as to the visible and invisible worlds. The cultural memory perspective allows us also to address the connections of the present-day dwellers in these landscapes with their ancestors and with the heritage that they have left behind.

⁴³⁸ In 2017 there has been again a drug shortage. In cities like Holguin and Santiago one can find green pharmacies, which sell some remedies from plants such as anamú, romerillo, tilo, garlic, onion etc.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of healing landscapes in the Caribbean was their capacity to contrast colonization, including long-term dehumanization, displacement, disintegration, and violent oppression. Healing landscapes encoded the cultural memory, which speaks about ancestral resilience, creativity, cohesion, and ways to heal as individuals but also as a society. Healing landscapes are also testimonies of how communities preserved some of their ancestral beliefs and wisdoms, created new and rich religious ideas and practices, and cultivated healing traditions emplaced in new loci. The history of these landscapes also reveals how diasporic communities appropriated new landscapes, transformed them into places of habitus, ceremonies, and pilgrimages, thus giving them new layers of significance, often in relation to the history of their forefathers. The rich religious and literary symbolism that animates the Cuban and Dominican landscapes together with multiple meanings of certain places, such as Barajagua, show that, in spite of a constant creation of differences by the colonial authorities, creole populations shared important common values and were able to create new communities in which different meanings could coexist. Finally, healing landscapes manifestly contradict the still popular simplified notions about the Caribbean communities as being without profound roots in their landscapes, therefore lacking any spiritual relation with their surroundings. From this perspective, landscapes are not sources of alienation; on the contrary, landscapes have been connecting contemporary inhabitants with their ancestors, and thus help us to remember our common past.

The creativity, resilience, and strength that local communities have developed to overcome these hardships in both areas do not erase the suffering or underestimate ongoing social conflicts. There is much room for improvement of wellbeing and the health of communities and individuals in this region. In spite of the world-fame of Cuban medical care, Cubans suffer from large shortages of pharmaceutical medicines. The rich botanical knowledge and medicinal cultures should be cherished, and could serve as an inspiration for constructing more equal and sustainable futures with collective knowledge empowering these communities. One of the steps towards this development is to comprehend the value of present-day healing landscapes, because these have potential of to be cultural codification of insights that emerge from long, intimate interactions with the environment. Joint interdisciplinary efforts in cooperation with local institutions, while respecting local epistemologies, are a key approach for enhancing the wellbeing and health of the communities.⁴³⁹

Future directions of research

This study elaborated several aspects of medicinal cultures and their past. The focus on indigenous legacies should not distract the reader from the rich heritage of multiple origins in present-day medicinal cultures of both islands. As the biography of Onesimus, the enslaved individual who introduced the practice of inoculation (against smallpox) from Africa to North America, illustrates, important medical discoveries are owed to the knowledge of those most marginalized. As healing traditions still constitute an important part of daily life and are often combined with the modern medicine prescribed by physicians, more research should be conducted in order to establish the phytochemical and pharmacological evaluation of herbal medicine, their dispensing practices, dosage and effect in combination with other herbs or medicines. Such research should also advocate and promote the concrete recognition of the intellectual property rights of the communities involved. In a similar way, the future approaches of medicinal histories in the Caribbean

⁴³⁹Among these institutions are for example: Experimental Station of Medicinal Plants "Dr. Roig" – Cuba, Botanical Garden Dr. Rafael Moscoso, UASD, Lab. Central de Farmacología, Facultad de Ciencias Médicas de la Habana, and Caribbean collaborative efforts like TRAMIL.

will benefit from interdisciplinary approaches integrating paleopharmacological, phytochemistry, ethnographic, historic, and archeological data.

This study once more highlights the richness of the reservoir of historical information enmeshed in oral traditions. The works on oral histories of Maroon communities in other parts of the Caribbean, like Suriname (Price 1983) or Jamaica (Tanna 1993) demonstrate their potential as sources of historical data. Previous publications by Lydia Cabrera, Barnet, and Feijoó are examples of seminal works that illustrate the diverse genres of rich oral tradition in the Cuban context.⁴⁴⁰ As Vansina (1987) proposed, not all information of oral tradition can be seen as a reliable source for history, but it has rather to be understood for what it is, a unique source of evidence upon which the historical process has left its traces. Price (1983) reflected upon the value of special forms of oral tradition among the Maroons for their ability to preserve and transmit historical knowledge. The significance of oral tradition has been recognized in the research of Caribbean history, though the losses have been enormous (Alleyne 1999). From a memory perspective, oral traditions are to be considered as continuous reflections upon the past, and they indicate what past is believed to be relevant in the present. A future study on landscape biography would benefit from research on toponyms like that of Higman (2009), or Granberry and Vescelius (2004), or the work of linguists such as Valdés Bernal (1991).

In addition, the spatial character of remembering, combined with various cognitions of time, is an important avenue to explore for future heritage studies and for policies aiming at the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage. Different examples of memory sites and healing landscapes may guide scholars, readers and the national authorities to appreciate their universal value as cultural heritage and their importance for local histories and identities. These examples, together with recognized heritage sites such as Viñales Valley, First Coffee Plantations in Southeast Cuba, Jamaican Blue and John Crow Mountains, show the richness and worldwide importance of non-monumental mixed heritage sites in the Caribbean. Before any nominations of these places on the UNESCO's World Heritage List, it should be carefully assessed what the impact of such a registration will be on ongoing cultural practices and on their value for the wellbeing and health of the carriers of these traditions.

Future investigation of intangible cultural heritage should pay attention to divergent demands among the local people with regard to the publication of certain information. Some aspects of their worldview may be profoundly religious, therefore secret and prohibited to publish. As my colleague, Adrian Gomes (2016) explained in another context, the publication of such secret knowledge in violation of this principle amounts to a destructive attack on the indigenous culture and the indigenous community:

“Knowledge pertaining to spiritual healing which is linked to sacred sites does not belong to the individual alone, but also to the community. By respecting the sites, we protect and control them. Thus, any developmental project for the community will not function well without the full participation of the community. Researchers should take note of this. Also, if development of the land must take place, resource management is crucial so that future generations can benefit from the resources including the sacred sites...The narratives associated with the water bodies and other sacred sites are not secret...Publication of certain information about Wapishana knowledge is not allowed by the Wapishana people, though I am not sure if this has been adhered to in the past by “western” researchers. Over a decade ago, a “western” researcher gained the confidence of our villagers and was shown parts of the forest our villagers traversed. He was given information on the locations of some valued plants, including medicinal ones.”

⁴⁴⁰ For more valuable sources see <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/manzano/manzano.html#p102>

This Wapishana scholar continues to explain: *“At the request of the people, he was not allowed to published where exactly they are found...Also, the publication of spiritual prayers of the Wapishana in Guyana is prohibited. For this reason I was taken aback when I saw some Wapishana spiritual prayers alongside some Wapishana and Portuguese Christian prayers/hymns in a booklet, published in Brazil. It could be that some Wapishanas over there, for one reason or another, divulged information on Wapishana spiritual prayers and gave permission to the missionaries to publish them in the booklet. By the Wapishana standards I know, this should not have happened. Based on our belief that our spiritual prayers are passed on orally, I would go as far to say that the spiritual prayers in Wapishana may not be effective if one attempts to apply them from the written material. I am not sure if our Wapishana leaders together with our marunao healers would ever allow the publication of our spiritual prayers. On the Guyana side, such publication by Wapishana themselves and non-Wapishanas is strictly prohibited.”*

Therefore, future research in the Caribbean and Circum-Caribbean areas should take into account the principles and standards of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), which demands the full respect for the intellectual property rights of the communities and for their right to determine, co-design and co-direct research as part of giving their Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Although these guidelines were developed for the Indigenous Peoples as instruments to protect their rights, which have been violated on a large scale, it is recommendable to further assess their relevance as standards in the case of all historically marginalized populations, also those in the Greater Antilles, which might not be direct descendants of the original inhabitants with preserved languages but are (also) descendants of enslaved and diasporic populations. These standards were designed to secure the rights of those who share the experience of colonialism in the past and suffer equally its consequences in the presence.

This study set out to examine in what way the knowledge of the present-day societies can provide us better insights into the pre-colonial and colonial past and vice versa. The concept of memory offers us an interdisciplinary bridge over the barriers that separate the present from the past. Throughout the study I have considered the voices of contributors as crucial epistemological factors that underpin the relevance of the past in the present with a potential to decolonize contemporary ideas about the past. They show the room for resistance, the coping mechanism with those colonial legacies, and, most importantly, they offer an emic view of the past. This approach was by no means meant to exploit the present-day medicinal cultures, or to make contemporary societies a mere object of study with the aim of creating some grand theory about cultural developments. This reflection does, however, bring us closer to an understanding of the impact of the colonial past on the indigenous inhabitants, the present-day population, and the large cultural transformations that were triggered by the European invasion. Knowledge of the interests of present-day communities and of the context in which the past is being (re-) interpreted is a necessary premise for making studies of history and heritage socially relevant.

From a holistic perspective healing in societies with colonial history lies first and foremost in overcoming the social division created by colonialism and by its justification through pretensions of racial and religious superiority. From the same perspective our communal wellbeing is only possible if we are going to reconstruct relations with each other and our ancestors in a caring and respective way. This implies improving social justice and the participation of historically marginalized segments of the population, as well as doing away with the stereotypes and stigmas that emerge from (neo)colonial relations. It is an essential condition to recognize all human rights including those of freedom of belief.

Remedies in the Caribbean landscape can also be envisioned as rhizome in which the connection between self and other transforms into a hybrid force that challenges the colonial rule. The Cuban and Dominican rivers are pathways to the re-membering of *our common* ancestors, acknowledging them as an

important source of inspiration, wisdom, and moral guidance in order to reinforce our collective wellbeing. The traumatic colonial history, which is haunting the consciousness and affecting the wellbeing of many people (Fanon 1952), does not disappear if suppressed through cultural amnesia; rather as Morales (2001) has stated, active remembering may produce remedies for the present and future generations.