



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

**From closed museum spaces to inclusive cultural meeting points:
connecting indigenous heritage collections and communities in the
Dominican Republic**

Alvarez, A.V.

Citation

Alvarez, A. V. (2021, December 8). *From closed museum spaces to inclusive cultural meeting points: connecting indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3247080>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3247080>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

**FROM CLOSED MUSEUM SPACES
TO INCLUSIVE CULTURAL MEETING POINTS**

Connecting Indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic

Arlene Verónica Álvarez

2021

Leiden

**FROM CLOSED MUSEUM SPACES TO
INCLUSIVE CULTURAL MEETING POINTS**

Connecting Indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit te Leiden,
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus prof. dr. Ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op 8 december 2021
klokke 16:15 uur

door

Arlene Verónica Álvarez

geboren te La Romana (Dominicaanse Republiek)
in 1973

Promotor

Prof. dr. C.L. Hofman (Universiteit Leiden)

Co-promotoren

Dr. M. De Campos Françaço (Universiteit Leiden)

Dr. J. Ulloa Hung (Universiteit Leiden)

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. J.C.A. Kolen (Universiteit Leiden, voorzitter)

Prof. dr. M.E.R.G.N. Jansen (Universiteit Leiden, secretaris)

Prof. dr. P.J. ter Keurs (Universiteit Leiden)

Prof. dr. B. Berard (Université des Antilles, Martinique)

Prof. dr. V. Flores Sasso (Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, Santo Domingo)

Prof. dr. M.E. Berger (Universiteit Leiden)

Image cover: Finn van der Leden

This research has been funded by the *KNAW-Meriam Prize* for female scientists awarded to Prof. dr. Corinne L. Hofman in 2013 (Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences). It has also received support from the ERC-Synergy Nexus 1492 project financed by the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC grant agreement n° 319209.

Dit proefschrift volgt de Ethische Code van Universiteit Leiden.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	11
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	17
CHAPTER 1. Introduction	19
1.1 Introduction	19
1.2 Aims of the study	20
1.3 Research questions	21
1.4 Research design and context	22
1.5 Significance of the study	24
1.6 Ethical considerations and limitations of the study.....	24
1.7 Main concepts and definitions used in the study	26
1.8 Overview of the chapters.....	29
CHAPTER 2. Museology and community engagement with heritage collections in Caribbean context and beyond	31
2.1 Introduction	31
2.2 Objects of wonder and evidence	31
2.3 Studies of Indigenous collections.....	33
2.4 From colonial collecting to modern museology in Europe, America, and the Caribbean	37
2.5 Communities and their connections with museum collections.....	40
2.6 The ethics of collecting, displaying, ownership, and access	46
2.7 Digital connections with heritage	49
2.8 Dominican education, Indigenous heritage, and collections.....	53
CHAPTER 3. Theoretical and methodological framework for connecting communities and Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic	57
3.1 Introduction	57
3.2 Collections and connections in the shadow of colonial thought.....	57
3.3 Critical museology for Dominican Indigenous heritage	59
3.4 Examining Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic: The methodological perspective.....	63

3.5 Methodological procedures.....	65
3.5.1 Indigenous heritage collections data	66
3.5.2 Inventory of collections	66
3.5.3 Survey and interviews	68
3.5.3.1 Survey.....	68
3.5.3.1.1 Participation criteria for survey completion.....	69
3.5.3.2 Interviews and participants.....	72
3.5.3.2.1 Transcription of interviews	77
3.5.4 Participant observation.....	78
3.5.5 Documentation and archival data	79
3.5.6 Data processing and analysis.....	80
3.6 Research bias and validity.....	83
3.7 Ethics and privacy	83
CHAPTER 4. Heritage issues and museums in the Dominican Republic: A diachronic perspective	85
4.1 Introduction	85
4.2 Dominican society.....	85
4.3 Cultural heritage and Indigenous heritage collections	88
4.3.1 Dominican heritage legislation recounted	89
4.3.2 International context of Dominican heritage legislation	100
4.3.3 Formation of Indigenous heritage collections in a Dominican context.....	103
4.4 Dominican heritage issues today	106
4.5 Heritage market issues in the Dominican Republic	110
CHAPTER 5. Inventory of Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic.....	115
5.1 Introduction	115
5.2 Inventory of Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic	115
5.2.1 Public museums and institutions with Indigenous heritage collections.....	116
5.2.1.1 Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Antropológicas (INDIA)	116

5.2.1.2 Museo Panteón Yacimiento Arqueológico de La Caleta	118
5.2.1.3 Museo del Hombre Dominicano	120
5.2.1.4 Faro a Colón.....	124
5.2.1.5 Museo del Parque Nacional Histórico y Arqueológico de Villa de La Isabela.....	125
5.2.2 Public Indigenous heritage collections today	127
5.2.2 Private museums with Indigenous heritage collections	128
5.2.2.1 Sala de Arte Prehispánico – Fundación García Arévalo	128
5.2.2.2 Museo Arqueológico Regional Altos de Chavón	129
5.2.2.3 Museo Regional de Antropología – Biblioteca de la Universidad Central del Este (UCE).....	134
5.2.2.4 Museo Dr. Aristides Estrada Torres – Biblioteca Municipal y Centro Cultural	135
5.2.2.5 Sala de Antropología Signos de Identidad – Centro Eduardo León Jimenes (Centro León)	135
5.2.2.6 Museo de Laguna Salada – Profesor Tremols.....	137
5.2.2.7 Museo Taíno César Estrella Bruzzo	138
5.3 Commercial and private display practices	140
5.3.1 Museo de Arte Taíno	141
5.3.2 Conquista Park	141
5.3.3 Museo Taíno Sabana Grande de Boyá	142
5.3.4 Museo Taíno Magua Ojo de Agua, Salcedo	142
5.4 Private Indigenous heritage collections today.....	143
CHAPTER 6. Community attitudes and access to Indigenous heritage collections	145
6.1 Introduction	145
6.2 Access and attitudes toward Indigenous heritage collections	145
6.2.1 The survey	145
6.2.1.1 Basic demographics of respondents.....	146
6.2.1.2 Provinces with Indigenous heritage collections and the types of communities that participated in the survey.....	149

6.2.1.3 <i>Visiting habits, values assigned, and access to Indigenous heritage collections by responding communities</i>	150
6.2.1.4 <i>Analysis of survey results</i>	168
6.3 Public and private concerns regarding the management of Indigenous heritage collections .	174
6.3.1 <i>The interviews</i>	174
6.3.2 <i>Analysis of interview findings</i>	190
6.4 Participant observation.....	195
6.4.1 <i>Community interaction with Indigenous heritage objects</i>	195
6.4.2 <i>Local community meetings and local community members</i>	197
CHAPTER 7. Discussion: connecting Indigenous heritage collections with communities.....	209
7.1 Introduction	209
7.2 Critical museology as a lens for Indigenous heritage collections and community connections	211
7.3 Critical community connections through improved access	216
7.3.1 <i>Access through geographical decentralization</i>	217
7.3.2 <i>Access through the documentation of objects</i>	219
7.3.3 <i>A thorny legislative path to heritage access</i>	225
7.3.4 <i>Attitudes toward access to Indigenous heritage collections</i>	229
7.4 Ways of accessing Indigenous heritage collections through multivocality and inclusiveness .	232
7.4.1 <i>Access through the establishment of institutions</i>	234
7.4.2 <i>Access through education</i>	235
7.4.3 <i>Access through displays</i>	237
7.4.4 <i>Access through the hills</i>	237
7.5 A cultural house for the contextualization of access to local Indigenous heritage	239
7.6 Integration of Indigenous heritage beyond traditional museum borders.....	241
7.7 Technology for access and protection	242
CHAPTER 8. Conclusion and way forward.....	245
8.1 Critical community connections for preserving and protecting Indigenous heritage collections	245

8.2 Indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic.....	248
8.3 Recommendations and implications for future research and practice	250
8.3.1 <i>The role of museums in deconstructing the remoteness of the Indigenous past</i>	251
8.3.2 <i>Critical areas of responsibility for the care and connection of Indigenous heritage collections</i>	252
8.4 Final thoughts	255
REFERENCES.....	257
APPENDICES	283
APPENDIX A Survey	283
APPENDIX B Survey target groups by location.....	291
APPENDIX C Protocols for interviews.....	293
APPENDIX D Interview questions	295
SUMMARY IN ENGLISH.....	297
NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING	299
RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL	303
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	307

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. Map with locations and numbers of public and private museums with Indigenous heritage collections open to the public per selected province. Map by Finn van der Leden, courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2020. 72
- Figure 2. Map of the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean/Central America region. Map by Finn van der Leden, courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2020. 86
- Figure 3. Administrative Regional Map of the Dominican Republic with macro-regions and political division featuring the 31 provinces and the National District. Map source: Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de la República Dominicana, Macroregion, 2020. 87
- Figure 4. Organizational chart of the Ministry of Culture. Vice Ministry of Heritage is highlighted at the bottom left of the figure. Adapted from the Institutional Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Ministry of Culture of the Dominican Republic, 2018. 107
- Figure 5. School students performing for the scheduled October 12 celebrations, Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology, La Romana, 2014. Photo by author, 2014. 109
- Figure 6. Forgeries stored at a dealer’s house in the eastern region. Photo by author, 2014. 112
- Figure 7. Archaeological ceramic fragments mixed with forgeries on sale at a flea market in the Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo. Photo credit: Menno Hoogland, 2013. Reproduced with permission. 112
- Figure 8. Map with the locations of public and private museums with Indigenous heritage collections open to the public, per province. Map by Finn van der Leden, courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2020. 116
- Figure 9. Façade and vitrine display of the Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Antropológicas (INDIA). Photos by author, 2016. 118
- Figure 10. Map of the La Caleta Town reflecting the main excavation sites. Map source: Herrera Fritot, R. and Youmans, C. L. 1946. "La Caleta: joya arqueológica antillana." La Habana. Editorial LEX. <https://dloc.com/UF00075427/00001/1x>. 119
- Figure 11. Roofless and windowless remains of a building that was constructed to protect the Indigenous graves found at the La Caleta archaeological site. Photo by author, 2018. 120
- Figure 12. Partial list of the original 1972 inventory done as part of the documentation for objects excavated at the La Caleta archaeological site, on file at the Centro de Inventario de Bienes Culturales. Photo by author, 2016. 120
- Figure 13. Collector Samuel Pion showing Cohoba wooden idol with part of the collection on the background at his home before 1979. Photo courtesy of the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology, 2018. 130

Figure 14. Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology’s 2013 summer camp participants learning about Indigenous hunting and food gathering practices. Photo by author. 2013.....	132
Figure 15. Students interacting with the boxes and artifacts from the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology’s Valija Didáctica. Photo by author, 2017.....	134
Figure 16. Display vitrines of Profesor Tremols’ collection at his home in Laguna Salada. (Photo by author, 2017).	137
Figure 17. Profesor Tremols posing on the motorcycle he used on trips to locate Indigenous heritage objects. Photo by author, 2017.....	138
Figure 18. Façade and display cases Museo Taino Cesar Estrella, known by the local community as the Guanamico Museum. Photos by author, 2016.....	139
Figure 19. Gender of survey respondents. Image by author, 2018.....	147
Figure 20. Occupation of survey respondents. Image by author, 2018.	147
Figure 21. Map that shows the provinces where the survey was administered. Map by Finn van der Leden, courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2020.....	149
Figure 22. Google Earth map of the Laguna Salada municipality, Valverde Province, 2021 Google Earth Maps: https://earth.google.com/web/@19.6986551,-71.0544802,305.26970285a,22313.03262771d,35y,4.11742172h,54.91950758t,0r	196
Figure 23. Google Earth map that highlights the Paso de los Hidalgos conquest trail, Laguna Salada municipality, Valverde Province, 2021. Google Earth Maps: https://earth.google.com/web/search/Paso+de+Los+Hidalgos,+Dominican+Republic/@19.72371543,71.04323388,306.5	196
Figure 24. First meeting with local community members from El Molino, Cruce de Guayacanes, Valverde Province. 2013 Photo courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2013.	198
Figure 25 Official agenda of the event prepared by members of the local neighborhood association Junta de Vecinos El Vigilante. Photo by author, 2019. (Personal translation of the content of community agenda for the Community Day written by the board members of the Neighborhood Association El Vigilante).....	201
Figure 26. Mayor of the Laguna Salada municipality narrating the local history of the area. Photo by author, 2019.	202
Figure 27. Local poet reciting a famous Dominican poem about Indigenous chief Anacaona as part of the cultural presentations for the Community Day. Photo by author, 2019.....	203
Figure 28. Singers of the traditional chants Salves as part of the cultural presentations for the Community Day. (Photo by author, 2019).....	203

Figure 29. Community members enjoying the official presentation in El Cruce de Guayacanes of the El retumbar del Caribe Indígena documentary. Photo by author, 2019..204

Figure 30. Community members sharing childhood memories related to the types of objects found in the El Flaco and El Carril excavation sites that were exhibited as part of the cultural presentations for the Community Day. Photo by author, 2019.....205

Figure 31. Page of the first inventory for the Samuel Pion collection done by the Museo del Hombre Dominicano. Photo by author, 2015.222

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Relevant legislation related to Indigenous heritage issues in the Dominican Republic.	92
Table 2. Age range of survey respondents.....	146
Table 3 Museums visited by survey respondents.	152
Table 4. Activities performed by survey respondents during their visits to museums.	154
Table 5. Aspects of Indigenous heritage collections that survey respondents consider important. Respondents were able to select more than one option.....	155
Table 6. Aspects of Indigenous heritage collections that personally interest survey respondents.	157
Table 7. How important survey respondents consider knowledge about Indigenous heritage to be for the economy, the creation of cultural policy, and for understanding Dominican society.	158
Table 8. What survey respondents say about a visit to Indigenous heritage collections helping them understand who they are.	159
Table 9. What survey respondents say would make them better connect with Indigenous heritage collections museums under the custody of museums.	161
Table 10. Most important services museums with Indigenous heritage collections can offer to meet the needs of the community.	163
Table 11. Survey respondents’ preferred way to obtain information about cultural activities.	165
Table 12. Survey respondents’ use of computers.	165
Table 13. Survey respondents’ access to internet.	166
Table 14. Important information to have available in digital format according to respondents.	167
Table 15. How important survey respondents think it is to have digital information about Indigenous heritage collections available free of charge.	167
Table 16. Other experiences and opinions survey respondents have regarding how the community can connect with Indigenous heritage collections.	168

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research has been made possible through the support of Prof. dr. Corinne Hofman and the Nexus 1492 ERC Synergy project. Professor Hofman granted me a scholarship from the *KNAW-Meriam Prize* for female scientists that she received from the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences in 2013. I am grateful for the opportunity to transform my professional concerns into the academic experience of a lifetime.

I want to also express my special appreciation to Dr. Mariana Françaço and Dr. Jorge Ulloa Hung for their co-supervisory support throughout the years. Dr. Menno Hoogland I thank for behind-the-scenes support, Dr. Roberto Valcárcel, for the enriching reviews and comments, Emma de Mooij and Finn van der Leden for the always supportive coordination and editorial help, Tibisay Sankatsing Nava for the reading support regarding decolonization approaches, and to Dr. Emily Mace for her questions and words with care that brought the narrative closer to home. Kristen de Joseph and Zara Ali I thank for their keen, and kind, editorial eyes. This work could not have been done without the anonymous collaboration of everyone that accepted to participate by either responding to surveys or allowing for an interview. I am grateful for their time and willingness to share their thoughts and opinions. Quiero expresar mi agradecimiento también a la Familia Torres, a Argelia, Harry, Hérico y Jonhattan por contribuir a que esta investigación fuera significativa. I would like to also thank Dominique Bluhdorn for allowing me to integrate research time as part of my museum work.

To Ernesto and Lucia, my deepest love and gratitude. They have accompanied me on this long journey with patience and understanding, for at least half of their life. Gracias también a mis madres/tías/abuelas, a mis divinos hermanos y primos, a la familia de cerca, la de lejos, y la que ya no está—de alguna forma todos han sido parte de esta aventura académica. Clenis Tavares también está incluida en mi tribu familiar, gracias amiguita. Katarina Jacobson, Jana Pešoutová, Sony Jean, Angus Martin, it has been an honor, and lots of fun, to last on this academic canoeing trip with you all. Thank you to the community of Laguna Salada and Loma de Guayacanes for their participation on this study; you are source of inspiration for making heritage connections possible now, and in the future.

