

**A DECOLONIAL ANALYSIS
OF
*LA CATEDRAL DE SANTO DOMINGO PRIMADA DE AMÉRICA***

by

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Thesis directed by Assistant Professor James Córdova

Abstract

This study examines the participation of historically erased Taínos and West Africans in the construction and meaning of *La Catedral Primada de América*, not simply as “contributors,” but as active agents and creators of its form and meaning in the culturally plural place of Hispaniola during the sixteenth century. A critical review of literature on *La Catedral* reveals how the early configurations of Imperio-Christian narratives of colonizer/colonized helped to shape later art-historical configurations of nationalism by carrying forward models of racial superiority from the time of Imperial Christian expansion to the nationalisms of the post-revolutionary period of independence. This is important because it demonstrates how the Dominant Narrative leaves no room for peoples and meanings outside of the Imperio-Christian worldview. A close reading of colonial slave records reveals interesting clues about the colonial society of Hispaniola and the substantial numbers of Taíno and West African co-participants of the church. To consider how these individuals understood, or imagined, their new center of worship, I consider the most salient aspects of their sacred-aesthetics and apply them to an analysis of the church. West African, Taíno, and Euro-Christian perspectives reveal *La Catedral* as an architectural composite of meanings that has not previously been discussed in the literature.

To the memory of the Taíno and West Africans who participated in the building of
La Catedral de Santo Domingo

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Thesis

This thesis examines the contributions of West African¹ and Taíno² artists to *La Catedral Primada*³ in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and argues that they should be honored not as ancillary players, but as core participants in a building history that was multifaceted in its unfolding. The exclusion of these co-participants from earlier accounts of this structure can be construed as a by-product of the approach that has traditionally been taken to architecture in the Americas.⁴ Many of the labels scholars have used to categorize early modern architecture in the region emphasize cultural convergence, typically of the autochthonous and the foreign.⁵ However, while some emphasize the purely Hispanist tradition, others proclaim the purity of indigeneity, and still others celebrate a utopic *mestizaje*, or hybridity. These labels and categories for art and architecture are also implicated in a broader cultural context by sustaining narratives that promote historical amnesia.⁶ Further, classification systems not only reveal an underlying preoccupation with ideas of race (that is, racial purity or mixture), but also enact a historical erasure that occurs when certain (“superior”) histories are privileged over (“inferior”) others, and when histories still reflect “Renaissance notions regarding the supremacy of the idea over praxis,” as Susan Verdi Webster has pointed out.⁷ To wit, these tendencies assign a double power dynamic of superior/inferior in naming types and styles, and in maintaining ideas of master/slave. That is, authorship that gives full creative license to the “master” architect while characterizing the skilled Taíno and West African participants as passive laborers capable only of following instructions. By virtue of privileging narratives of colonizer/colonized, a number of co-participants are left out of the story, or even erased.

In the case of the first church of the Americas, *La Catedral Metropolitana de Santo Domingo*, colonial records show that both “yndios” and “negros” participated in the construction. A subsequent chronicle reveals a number of side chapels founded by confraternities of “negros” and “negros criollos.” Not only did Taínos and West Africans contribute to the construction and financing of the church, but we know that Black confraternities used the church. This thesis discusses these previously unacknowledged co-participants while critically examining Euro-centric tendencies in previous scholarship on the church. I argue that the metanarratives of colonialism and nationalism continue the legacy of colonization and disallow alternative stories, therefore, colonizing history itself.⁸ Following critical studies on cultural intersection, agencies, and decolonial theory, and keeping in mind Robert Young’s call to understand “coloniality” alongside modernity, my thesis provides a critical, alternative architectural history of *La Catedral Primada* that considers West African and Taíno contributions and imaginaries on equal footing with those recorded by the Spanish.

Framing This Study

Most histories of the *La Catedral* include the “discovery” of Cristobal Colón, the exploits of the privateer Sir Francis Drake and the late gothic Imperial style, Isabelline. A look at the last eighty years of art and architectural history of the Americas sheds light on how the formation of the field has been implicit in the reification of these Euro-centric master narratives. The field grew out of nationalistic agendas roughly during the first half of the twentieth century, leading up to World War II.⁹ For example, scholars and architects from Argentina, namely Martin Noel (1888-1963) and Angel Guido (1896-1960), promoted colonial architecture as part of an agenda of regional patriotism while producing tomes on colonial art and architecture.¹⁰ With this trend toward nationalism came what art historian Gauvin Bailey calls the *renacimiento colonial* from

the 1920s-50s as a Latin American alternative to International Modernism.¹¹ In Mexico, while serving as the director of the *Dirección de Monumentos Coloniales*, Manuel Toussaint (1890-1955) contributed to the neo-colonial trend seen in the regional nationalisms elsewhere in Latin America.¹² In Peru, architects and scholars Emilio Harth-Terré (1899-1983) and Ricardo Mariátegui Oliva proclaimed the merits of promoting colonial arts as a patriotic imperative.¹³

The political climate in Europe, approaching the Second World War, also influenced the scholarship of Latin America as many scholars began to emigrate from the U.S. and Europe to Latin America. Among them was Hungarian-born Pál Kelemen (1894-1993), who contributed one of the first studies of Latin American architecture that mentioned (and was sympathetic to) the “workmen of the New World.”¹⁴ The French scholar Germain Bazin published articles on the colonial architecture of Brazil, which he called Luso-Brazilian architecture. The American Harold Wethey should be noted as one of the first scholars of Latin American art to entertain the mixing of “Indian” and Euro-Catholic styles in Andean Peruvian architecture.¹⁵ The German émigré Alfred Neumeyer also considered a broader cultural context by considering the universality of folk character as an explanation of indigenous contributions to the architecture of Peru.¹⁶ Acknowledgment of an indigenous presence was the impetus for George Kubler’s very influential work, “On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art,” in which the author debunks the notion of native survivals by elaborating his five-part model, or process, of extinction, in which he asserts that what many consider indigenous folk art is really “a product of copying” that is devoid of symbolic meaning.¹⁷ What Gauvin Alexander Bailey calls the “Great Debate” has resulted in the division of the field, today distinguished by specializations and studies, that focus on the purely “indigenous,” mestizo, or European.

Today, architectural scholars, especially those concentrating on New Spain and Peru, have begun to organize around tropes of cultural intersection. However, researchers in the Caribbean have delayed in adopting a similar discourse. Felipe Hernández discusses this delay in Latin American architectural studies as well as the need for consolidating research on cultural intersection and architecture.¹⁸ His anthology, *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America* (2005), seeks to operationalize the concept of “transculturation.” That is, by “challeng[ing] foundational, homogenizing and hierarchical methods of architectural analysis, transculturation becomes a “multidimensional and endless interactive process between various cultural systems.”¹⁹

Along these lines, North American art historians such as Tom Cummins, Jeanette Favrot Peterson, Eleanor Wake, Samuel Edgerton, Dana Leibsohn, Carolyn Dean, and Susan Webster have all engaged the architecture of the Americas by challenging colonial narratives and ways of knowing and using theoretical tropes such as “hybridity,” materiality, and agency to contribute new approaches to the architectures of the Americas during the early modern era.²⁰

The present study enters into this theorized vein of architectural studies, which emphasizes hybridity, coloniality, and agency. Additionally, it draws upon the concept of the “art matrix,” as well as a comparable concept in Media Studies, the “circuit of culture,” which describes the processes of culture “through which any analysis of a cultural text or artifact must pass if it is to be adequately studied.”²¹ The “matrix” and “circuit” are systematic approaches to the same issues and concerns: what can be learned from the physical aspect of the cultural object, who are the agents involved, how is the thing used, and by what rules (or enforcement). As a part of a *matrix of visual culture* *La Catedral* is not limited as an autonomous object but is a dynamic, fluid, active force that participates in culture and its systems of meanings.²² While this thesis

offers alternative meanings and perspectives, and new possibilities for future study, it does not profess knowable evidence. This project is more concerned with paving new avenues than it is with establishing facts or fixing a new narrative. The interpretive framework of this project is, accordingly, based on my reading of the church supported by archival and literary patterns and sacred-aesthetic epistemologies.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter One, this study approaches these concerns by deconstructing the literature on the church, analyzing records of slavery, and Taíno and West African sacred-aesthetics in order to sieve out some of the main narratives, learn more about these co-participants, and reconstruct alternate meanings of the church. A more detailed outline of my goals follows.

In Chapter Two, I do two things. First, I destabilize the historical primacy of the dominant narrative by pointing to the colonial or Imperio-Christian perspective of its literature from the sixteenth century to today. Second, I perform a close reading of colonial slave records and court proceedings to uncover more information about the Taíno and West African co-participants of the church.

In Chapter Three, I emphasize some of the most salient aspects of Taíno and West African ways of understanding sacred objects and sites. I explore alternative meanings for *La Catedral* by adding Taíno and West African sacred-aesthetic perspectives of form, material, and space to its dominant narrative.

In the conclusion in Chapter Four, I develop the possibilities of extending this project. This future study includes research on the religiously syncretic *confradías* (confraternities) that emerged in the sixteenth-century and it examines how meaning is created through ritual performance. I also point to other materials, forms, and questions of culture that may be more

deeply explored in the archives and early literature, and end by considering the broader implications of my study.

My project interrogates questions of architectural hybridity by moving beyond the common colonized/colonizer classifications and the dichotomy of Spanish master-and-slave labor by looking at *La Catedral* as a culturally plural place. Discussing colonial visual culture has wide socio-historical implications linked to race and imperialism.²³ Our exclusion of everything non-Christian-Euro-White, draws our attention to our own personally mediated forms of prejudice and racism. The very notion of categorizing and thus fixing history without considering these implications reveals an expansionist manifest-destiny mentality. Rather than naming (e.g., medieval, or Baroque), or fixing a cultural object to one time, place, and story, I use a decolonial lens along the lines of Walter Mignolo's "decolonial paradigm." It is a lens of multivalence that considers cultural objects as a part of a larger network of relations. It reads between the lines of the dominant narrative and challenges its colonialist assumptions by working reflexively and in a cross-disciplinary manner. The church acts as a useful case study, as a nodal point from which to move through time and explore the imaginaries, materiality, representations, and organizing mechanisms connected to the church. Accordingly, I shed light on the problematics of imperialistic and divisive naming, which imbues the study with "the logic of coloniality" by troubling "the patterns of understanding inherited from the European Renaissance . . . by playing them against the disarticulation and rearticulation of knowledge inherited from colonial and neo-colonial legacies."²⁴

Notes:

¹ I am studying the Yoruba culture and people. Using this term, however, has many implications—more generally that of a homogenizing and colonial view, which freezes a region of Africa and its arts in a past time and place. One perspective is that the term is laden with polemics of historic ethnic identity. Or, as Suzanne Blier explains, “tropes of indigenous primacy” defined colonially. I use “Yoruba” to conceive of a transatlantic concept of the sacred-aesthetic of the peoples who historically and mythological originate from ancient Ife; Suzanne P. Blier, *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power, and Identity, c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 34 & 41; Further, due to the long history and large concentration of slave trading in West-Central Africa, a region culturally and historically dominated by the Yoruba culture, Yoruba peoples now occupy the areas of present-day Nigeria, Benin, and Togo. For example, a third of the one million enslaved from the Bight of Benin arrived at Saint-Domingue. Kevin Roberts, “The Influential Yoruba Past In Haiti,” *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, eds. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 177-178. The first Africans arrived in the Americas from the Iberian Peninsula via the Muslim caravan routes which transported enslaved Africans from the Niger River Valley to Mediterranean trade centres or via the trade along the Gold Coast established by the Portuguese in the 1440s. Enslaved Africans began being transported from the Portuguese entrepôts of Sao Tomé, an island in the Gulf of Guinea, and Luanda on the mainland, directly to the Americas after 1530 and 1570, respectively. Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11-20. In terms of studying visual culture, art historian Babatunde Lawal has said, “The unity in diversity now evident in Yoruba art and culture is the result of several centuries of cultural, linguistic, and artistic interaction among the differently and previously antagonistic ethnic groups.” Babatunde Lawal *Visions of Africa: Yoruba* (Milan: Five Continents Editions, 2012), 12.

² The title “Taíno,” is not without problems; like “Carib” it was a colonial invention that helped to classify and justify the enslavement of the original inhabitants of what we now know is the Caribbean, based on early Spanish knowledge of phonemes (appearance, behavior). Having said this, I acknowledge the right and authority of neo-indigenous movements that seek to reclaim their “Taíno” and “Carib” identities, just as they were stripped away from them during the early modern period. Nevertheless, I will use Taíno to describe the inhabitants of Hispaniola upon contact with Spanish colonizers who stripped their identity from them during the early modern period. Joé R. Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols: The Web Spun by Taíno Rulers Between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2009), 28.

³ Befitting its formal and historical character, this church has had many names. *La Catedral Primada* is the name used in Santo Domingo today on street signs and by locals. The official Catholic title, *Basilica Catedral Metropolitana Santa María de la Encarnación Primada de América* and the reduced Basilica Cathedral of Santa María la Menor also appear as La Basilica and as *La Iglesia* in the earliest records and maps. I will be using *La Catedral* hereafter.

⁴ The linear, or sequential, organization of the history of progress is a tradition carried forward from the era of Humanism, the “Age of Discovery,” and colonization. It has much to do with who writes history, who is represented in history, and who gets left out, or erased.

⁵ For example: Strictly Hispanic, Hispano-Baroque, Hispano-Inca, Hispanic-Indian folk art, Hispanic-Andino Baroque, Andino Baroque, Andean Planiform, Mestizo Baroque (or Baroque Mestizo), European Mestizo, Peruvian Mestizo, Peruvian Baroque, Peruvian-Bolivian colonial baroque, Spanish Colonial, and Indo-Christian, to name a few.

⁶ Author Richard Lee Turits argues that the racialized opposition between Haitian and Dominican is a part of what constitutes Dominican national identity. Further, this construction of identity “rests on [the] historical amnesia of the pre-massacre frontier world, of its culturally pluralist nation as well as its transnational community.” Richard Lee Turits, “A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* (2002): 635.

⁷ Susan Verdi-Webster, “La voz del anonimato: Authority, Authorship, and Andean Artists in the Construction of Colonial Quito,” *The Arts of South America, 1492-1850, Paper From the 2008 Mayer Symposium at the Denver Art Museum* ed. Donna Pierce (2010): 57.

⁸ Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 165.

⁹ Gauvin Bailey et al., “Spain and Spanish America in the Early Modern Atlantic World: Current Trends in Scholarship,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 62 (2009): 3-7.

¹⁰ Bailey, “Spain and Spanish America,” 3-4.

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Manuel Toussaint, *La catedral de México y el sagrario metropolitano. Su historia, su tesoro, su arte* (1948), Elizabeth W. Weissman, “Manuel Toussaint 1890-1955,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 36, No. 2 (May 1956): 268.

¹³ Ricardo Mariátegui Oliva, *Una joya arquitectónica peruana de los siglos XVII y XVIII: el Templo de Santiago, o de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Pomata* (1942), xii; Bailey, “Spain and Spanish America,” 3.

¹⁴ Pál Kelemen, *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 25; See his earlier work *Battlefields of the Gods: Aspects of Mexican History, Art, and Exploration* (1937), and *Medieval American Art: Masterpieces of the New World before Columbus* (1943).

¹⁵ See Harold E. Wethey, *Colonial Architecture and Sculpture in el Peru* (1949); Germain Bazin, *L'architecture religieuse baroque au Brésil*, Vols. I & II (1956-8).

¹⁶ Alfred Neumeyer, “The Indian Contribution to Architectural Decoration in Spanish Colonial America,” *The Art Bulletin* 30 (1948): 104-121.

¹⁷ George Kubler, "On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art," in *Studies in ancient American and European art: The collected essays of George Kubler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 66-74; also in Samuel K. Lothrop et al., *Essays in Pre-Columbian Art and Archeology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 14-34. His model privileges types of survivals based on social utility. It begins with economically based commodities like plants and animals, continues to crafts and bodies of knowledge, aesthetic symbols and, lastly, religion.

¹⁸ This was the focus of a collection of interdisciplinary papers read at the Transcultural Architecture in Latin America Conference in 2001, organized by Hernández and later published in 2005.

¹⁹ Felipe Hernandez, "Introduction: Transcultural Architectures in Latin America," *Transculturation Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Publications, 2005), xi. This book looks at the power of structures and discourses that are absent in the scholarship of Latin American architecture. Among the issues that *Transculturation* presents are new interpretations of popular architects and their work, new readings on architectural materials and vocabularies, and inquiries on gender, and "minority" architectures. Most notably the readings connect significant concepts in colonial theory and geopolitics, concepts that are relatively new to the world of Latin American architectural discourses.

²⁰ Dana Leibsohn and Carolyn Dean, "Hybridity and its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12, no. 1, (2003); Carolyn Dean, *A Culture in Stone: Inca Perspectives on Rock* (2010); Susan Verdi-Webster, "La voz del anonimato: Authorship, Authority, and Andean Artists in the Construction of Colonial Quito," *The Arts of South America 1492-1850* (Denver: The Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian & Spanish Colonial Art, Denver Art Museum, 2008); also see the work by art historians Jeanette Favrot Peterson, Eleanor Wake, Samuel Edgerton, Gauvin Bailey, and Tom Cummins for architectural histories that challenge conventional art historical methods and epistemologies.

²¹ The "art matrix" as posited by Donald Presiozi and Claire Farago in their 2012 manifesto, *Art Is Not What You Think It Is*, is a critical theory that calls for a systematic approach to art. That is, rather than considering the form, content, and context as separate entities, the "art matrix" considers the art/cultural object itself, the agents responsible for its creation, and the function of the object as parts that make up a "dynamically evolving relationship." Much can also be learned from the treatment of cultural objects in media studies. Stuart Hall's "circuit of culture," which looks at five processes of culture—representations, identities, production, consumption, and regulation—for the analysis of any cultural object. Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Anders Koed Madsen, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of a Sony Walkman* 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 8.

²² Farago et al., "First Incursion," 23; Du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies*, 3.

²³ Walter D. Mignolo, “On Describing Ourselves Describing Ourselves.” *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 14.

²⁴ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 25.

CHAPTER II

DECONSTRUCTING *LA CATEDRAL*: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL CANONS

“History is an institution that legitimizes the telling of stories of *happenings* simultaneously silencing other stories, as well as stories of the silence of histories.”¹

“[A]ll we can read (or see in maps) about the place of the Americas in the World order is historically located from a European perspective that passes as universal.”²

A critical analysis of the literature on *La Catedral Primada* demonstrates how scholarship that relies on a Eurocentric model perpetuates a monolithic view of history that is emphasized in the historical sources, and which silences or erases Taíno and African actors from our collective story. I explore the history of Hispaniola’s slave economy in this chapter, based on sixteenth-century documents that testify to the Taíno and West African participation in building *La Catedral*. In doing so, I make a connection between the historical erasures created by the early colonial narratives of the church to historical erasures that continue to this day in scholarship as a consequence of nationalistic agendas and academic colonization.³

Colonialist and Nationalist Histories

The architectural scholarship on *La Catedral* being published in Santo Domingo says much about how the story (and the meaning) of the church was produced from sixteenth-century perspectives as well as from the perspective of Santo-Domingo-based scholarship published by the archdiocese and state organizations. Although chroniclers mention *La Catedral* in the early period of Spanish colonization of Quisqueya/Aiti (the Taíno names for the island), its story begins in the seventeenth-century with the ekphrastic prose of the second archbishop of Santo Domingo, Alessandro Geraldini (1455-1524), the Italian born Humanist scholar and poet.⁴ In his prayerful poem entitled *Mariana*, which dedicated the church to the Virgin, Geraldini writes of

the “*clásicos arquitectos*” (classical architects) and “*talladores*” (workers) in verses fifteen and sixteen but offers no further detail of their identities.⁵ Further, Geraldini conflates *La Catedral* with Rome as the center of the world in verse eighteen of *Mariana*: “For undergirding the Crown, from the seat of Rome, bestowing holy laws upon the whole world, and as Universal Teacher of peoples.”⁶ The accounts that followed also took on this missionizing, colonial view of the *La Catedral*. Many of the writings that chronicle the church during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were undertaken by clergy such as Luis Jerónimo Alcocer’s (1598-c.1664) *Relación sumaria del estado presente de la Isla* written in 1650 of the peoples, places, and things, of the city and Gil González Dávila’s (c.1570-1658) “Teatro eclesiastico de la Santa Iglesia Metropolitana de la Santo Domingo y vidas de sus obispos y arzobispos” (1649-55).⁷

More comprehensive writings on the church appear in twentieth-century monographs, moving from a missionizing, imperialist view of the church to a pattern of nationalism, a trend throughout much of Latin America at this time.⁸ For example, *La Catedral* (1933) by historian Luis E. Alemar (1883-1945), at the time a member of the Dominican Academy of History and administrator at the National Archives, covers the history of the church’s construction, the architectural elements, and the men who governed and were buried in the crypt.⁹ Later, the German émigré Walter Palm consolidated the dispersed writings on the colonial city (by Alcocer, Utrera, Angulo, and Buschiazso). Palm can be said to have brought *La Catedral* to the attention of the world and through his vast research strengthened Santo Domingo’s bid to be added to the ranks of World Heritage Sites in 1990.¹⁰

The air of nationalism continued in works by the Spanish expatriate, María Ugarte, who moved to the Dominican Republic in 1940 and penned a series of articles and reports, as well as books on colonial monuments and on *La Catedral*.¹¹ A 2007 tome, *La Basilica*, published in

Santo Domingo by the Archdiocese uses the same nationalistic narrative. It delineates the church's placement in the scheme of European stylistic development, "the great men" of the church, and the strategic use of the church as cultural patrimony, in order to advance the city to the standards and ranks of the European-based World Heritage agenda.¹² Due to this national commitment to cultural patrimony, which is premised on European systems of classifying structures and sites, the Taíno and West African co-participants and systems for understanding structures and sites have been largely left out of the story. To wit, in *La Basilica*, Part Two, entitled "Arquitectura de la Catedral," mentions the enslaved Taíno and West African laborers briefly, only to deny any contribution that would problematize the European interpretation of the church.¹³

On another level, much of the literature on *La Catedral* follows Palm's model of measuring sixteenth-century Caribbean architecture against European traditions of progress and nationalism based on (neo-classical) Renaissance ideals about art and architecture. That is, *La Catedral* is inserted into a prefixed, linear teleology of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-Classicism in order to measure its worth in terms of a European value system. The Palm model also relies on Kubler's extinction narrative of the native populations and is Panofskian in its cementing of period-style with nationalism.¹⁴ Styles are not defined and fixed at certain points along a linear history, but rather, they combine, morph, and travel across borders and periods creating endless composites. In the case of *La Catedral*, a church that evades any ability to be classified or fixed in time because of its complex structural and representational meanings, this attempt at nationalism and academic colonization is most evident in its historically given name or style and nationalistic moniker, "Isabelline," named for the Spanish Catholic monarch, Isabel, and for the early period of Spanish colonization.

While there have been many books written on Caribbean architecture, most dealing with a particular island or European colony, there are few which look at *La Catedral* as a culturally active and plural form of visual culture, as imbued in a *matrix of visual culture*. To illustrate how the Imperio-Christian narrative influences a nationalistic agenda, I will consider two surveys that include the history of *La Catedral* in the early modern history of Caribbean architecture as a form of the Imperialist narrative, the center-periphery that has been forwarded from the church's inception as *La Catedral Metropolitana* in 1511.¹⁵

In the *Caribbean Baroque: Historic Architecture of the Spanish Antilles* (1996) Pamela Grosner uses a superior/inferior Imperial model, or center-periphery model, to describe the historic architecture of the "Spanish Antilles," which she defines as Jamaica, Hispaniola, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. She notes that hers is the first attempt at a consolidated history of the architecture of this cultural region. The chapters begin with an overview of the "Spanish Antilles" that defines the region for the reader and provides an historical backdrop from the time of Columbus' arrival through the period of colonization. It is important to note that while Grosner accounts for the populations of "Indians," she ends this brief history with the decimation of the Taínos of Puerto Rico in 1582.¹⁶ Spanish architecture is discussed in Chapter Two, while Chapter Three discusses the "Progression of Styles in the West Indies." The following chapters are divided first by building type then by island (excluding Jamaica). *La Catedral Primada* is discussed in the chapter on religious architecture where it is included between the sections on the "Isabelline Churches" and the "Baroque Churches," although Grosner says that *La Catedral Primada* leans towards the former. The passage includes information on the Spanish architects, the plan, the style, the form, and an interior illustration of the presbytery.¹⁷ In general, Grosner's Caribbean Baroque adheres to a teleological approach in her development of styles, an approach

that is facilitated by her inclusion of an illustration of the most “Baroque” façade of the church, the west facade. In so doing, she makes a strong visual case for what we are seeing, the “Baroque” character, while omitting any images of the mixed exterior facades of the north and east entries that would confuse and disrupt the Baroque classification of her book.¹⁸

Two years earlier, in *Historic Architecture in the Caribbean Islands*, Edward E. Crain, who likewise claims to offer the first survey of the region, provides an architectural history of the Caribbean, describing the most historically and architecturally “valuable” structures built before World War II.¹⁹ His geographical scope extends the traditional parameters of the Caribbean Sea to include the Bahamas. The first chapter, which is a brief three pages, covers the “pre-Columbian period,” “Spanish Exploration,” and an encounter with “Caribbean Amerindians.” This chronological introduction quickly dispenses with the topic of the Taíno people in order to move on to the process of empire building. Chapter Two covers island-specific background on urbanization while Chapter Three looks at the “Sugar Plantation.” The proceeding chapters are organized by building type and are further categorized by “European powers” in the following order: English, Spanish, French, and Other. In the chapter on “Religious Buildings” we find *La Cathedral of Santa Maria la Menor* under the section on the “Dominican Republic,” discussed briefly in terms of style, and form. There is mention of Christopher Columbus’ remains being relocated as well as the contemporary Dominican artist responsible for the stained glass windows, José Rincón Mora.²⁰ Although the author considers migrations from Africa and Asia, his story maintains an imperialist view of the visual culture and peoples of Hispaniola; the analysis stops short of cross-cultural analysis that is equal across cultures.

Both scholars rely on a model established in Taíno studies in the 1950s by Irving Rouse. Rouse used ceramic artifacts as the basis for his model of classifying the Classic, Western, and

Eastern types of Taíno, a European model that sought to define the underdeveloped or “primitive” peoples of the greater Taíno Nation. This widely used model is, however, problematic because it projects a Eurocentric obsession with the Classical era, a belief that it represented the height of civilization, a concept known as classicism. This privileging of the Classic is constitutive of the development of the Western Canon of art history, or the limited view of history that privileges the “superior,” White, European, Male, Masters to the exclusion of all other supposedly “inferior” peoples.

From Geraldini in the sixteenth century, privileging the Classical Greco-Roman center, we follow a thread to Palm in the twentieth century, who also privileges and adopts the conventions of a European center against an uncivilized peripheral “New World.” While Grosner and Crain provide much needed historical context for our understanding of the Caribbean architecture that emerged from the colonial period, they rely heavily on the same superior/inferior, or center-periphery Imperialist narratives. By doing so, the authors disallow a complicated history—the careful consideration of its form, its agencies, and its function—in favor of the convenience of taxonomies and a teleological architectural canon. Further, the Marxist slant of the Roussean paradigm they use, that of the division and classification of the visual culture and peoples of the Caribbean in terms of a “Classic” center with an East and West periphery, presumes an economically and politically dependent relationship between advanced center and sub-par or underdeveloped periphery.

The Santo Domingo-based literature and surveys ascribe to the Spanish-Imperial version of history as the wellspring of their nationalist narrative. The reward that progress promises, that of a metropolitan center, and a “civilized” society, is at the same time a perpetual reification of the hierarchical Imperio-Christian center that creates an inferior global periphery in order to

maintain its superiority. This version of history leaves no room for the Taíno and West African co-participants and, in essence, erases their stories.

A Slavocratic Society

In spite of this resounding historical erasure, sixteenth-century sources testify to the presence and participation of West African and Taíno workers in the construction of Santo Domingo's *Catedral Primada de América*. Reports issued during the period of Spanish colonization reveal stories of slaveholders who disclosed (and also concealed) much about the quantity and social strata of their enslaved workforce, the workforce that built *La Catedral*. Before I analyze these records, it is important to understand the racialized power dynamic that is created as a result of a burgeoning slave economy created by colonial settlers who understood their mission in terms of an Imperio-Christian right justified by Aristotelian ethics.

A useful axiom for understanding the Imperio-Christian sentiment towards the sixteenth-century Caribbean and its peoples is “without Indians there are no Indies.”²¹ Predicated on the exploitation of the indigenous for personal wealth, this was the driving force behind the development of a series of systems created to organize and ultimately enslave the Taíno and West African peoples, an enslavement that was legitimized by the Aristotelian ethics of “just war” and “natural slavery.”²² These concepts were the basis of a debate in the mid sixteenth century. Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566), protested the atrocities committed against the natives of the “Indies” by then governor of Hispaniola, Ovando, and the city's encomenderos, who were not willing to give up the lucrative source of labor. Las Casas was joined by the Spanish Humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490-1573) for an official debate at Valladolid, Spain.²³ Sepúlveda was on the other side of this debate arguing that it was not only just but the right of the Spanish nation and throne to rule over the “barbarians.” This famous

debate was set in motion by an earlier debate held for Charles V in 1519 in Barcelona, Spain between the Franciscan bishop of Darien, Juan Quevedo, and de las Casas.²⁴

These so-called universal laws of “just war” and “natural slavery” justified the colonizers’ capture and enslavement of what they deemed the “barbaric” race of natives. The Taíno of the Caribbean were displaced from their homes and relocated to labor camps owned by Spanish clergy, administrators, and settlers. As early as 1495, a system of tributary servitude was set in place.²⁵ Similar to the *corvée* system of early France, *repartimiento-encomienda*, or the royal distribution and commission of the Taíno population, helped establish the standard for the colonial programs of New Spain and Peru.²⁶ What began as a tributary system was followed by a more organized *encomienda* system ordered by Queen Isabella in a Cédula Real addressed to the governor, Fray Nicolás de Ovando in 1503.²⁷ In this more organized system, “public service” was enacted as a strict form of tribute and/or labour for the state. Though this decree was in part an attempt to keep track of dwindling numbers and protect the natives of Hispaniola by the queen, it resulted in a de facto form of enslavement. On paper the *Taínos* of Hispaniola were not legally slaves, but on the ground they were indeed functioning as the property of the colonizers, assigned to Spanish masters under the presumption of a civilizing education of work and proselytization. While maintaining their lucrative slave-based plantation and mining economies, or “slavocratic”²⁸ society, colonizers became more expansive in their search for free labor, hastening the process of the Caribbean slave trade, which brought indigenous groups from the islands south of Puerto Rico to Hispaniola.²⁹

This search for a larger slave pool, however, did not result in the abolition of local enslavement. As historian Carlos Esteban Deive indicates in *La Española y la Esclavitud del Indio*, this trade resulted in upwards of tens of thousands enslaved Africans brought to

Hispaniola who were put to work with the Hispaniolian Taíno, who were all subject to the same treatment and hardships of labor.³⁰ As early as 1501, and extending into the early nineteenth century, the Atlantic slave trade brought roughly four million Africans to the Caribbean with the largest numbers going to Cuba and Hispaniola.³¹

It is important to point out that “colonization and the justification for the appropriation of land and the exploitation of labor in the process of the invention and building of America required the simultaneous ideological construction of colonial racism.”³² Although race and slavery both find their historical antecedents well before the period of European colonization,³³ well-known scholar of African–American Studies, Henri Louis Gates Jr., has said that the sixteenth-century European innovation was to conflate color with the idea of perpetual slavery, a renewable resource that passed down from generation to generation.³⁴ In fact, scholar of cross-cultural medieval studies, Geraldine Heng, who wrote a two-part article on “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages,” notes that “race has no singular or stable referent” and may merge with and function as class, gender, and sexuality.³⁵

In the building up of the city of Hispaniola and its church, *La Catedral*, colonial-era documents reflect an emerging slave-based society embedded with ideologies of “natural slavery” created to organize “New World” peoples and society. One example deals with a system the Spaniards created to classify and list Taínos on a work period list in which the *cacica/cacique* (Taíno ruler) occupied the top position. Following were the elite *naborias* and the commoners. Thus, the labels “*cacique*,” “*naboria*,” “*naboria de casa*,” and “*indio de servicio*” were created to stratify their new workforce according to a Spanish understanding of social hierarchy. These labels reflect the type of tributary enslavement; for example, *caciques*, who had not already been slain in previous battles, were maintained as the symbolic leaders of the tributary encampments,

the *naborias* likely trained in various professions; the *indios de servicio* worked the mines, fields, and construction projects of the city. It seems that because the enslavement of the Taíno people was technically outlawed in Queen Isabella's revision of the tributary state in a 1503 Cédula Real, *encomenderos* were less than accurate with their records.³⁶ The trans-Atlantic distance allowed the local colonizers to interpret and, therefore, manipulate the 1503 decree. That is to say, that as long as they did not record the exact details—female/male, individual names, and the specific nature of the work of the individual Taínos in their *encomiendas*, they could avoid breaking the law against enslavement. According to these *encomenderos*, their workers remained under their *cacique* ruler and worked much like free vassals for an education in Christianity—an oppressive Imperio-Christian viewpoint. It is also important to note that these *repartimiento-encomienda* censuses have been used widely to corroborate the rapid “decline” and “extinction” of the Taíno peoples. However, these records include only the Eastern parts of the islands and often do not include women, children, and the elderly. They certainly do not take into account any of the Taínos outside of the tributary system such as those that fled to the mountains to avoid enslavement, or the various groups brought in from islands south of the Mona Passage.³⁷ Despite these dehumanizing erasures, which occluded the names of the “*naborias*” and “*indios de servicio*,” there exist records attesting to their presence, and offering clues about their collective identity.³⁸

Reading Contrapunctally for Co-Participants

In a record on the *Repartimiento* of 1514, by the Spanish Crown, there are a number of Taínos, “*indios de servicio*,” working for the construction of *La Catedral* (Figure 1).³⁹ From this distribution and commission of the Taíno, *repartimiento-encomienda*, we know that there were fifty Taíno allotted to the construction of *La Catedral*. Since the *cacicas/caciques* were listed, we

have some clues about where the people that began the church construction came from. The fifty Taínos were listed under the rulership of *cacica* Catabano, which is also the name of the region in the Caicimu-Higüey territory.⁴⁰ Another list indicates that *cacica* Catabano had a total of two-hundred-and-eighty-four *indios de servicio* under her chieftainship.⁴¹

Although this is the only explicit list of Taíno co-participants that helped construct *La Catedral*, a closer study of the 1514 *Repartimiento* documents reveals a fuller picture of Taíno participation. According to the same 1514 list, every carpenter, stonemason, blacksmith, sawyer, and potter working in Santo Domingo were each allotted two high-ranking Taínos, *naborías*. Based on the workshop traditions of the proto-guild brotherhoods in Spain, and based on the tradition of training the native elite in Peru and Mexico directly following this period, we can safely posit that these elite Taíno were selected to be trained in the various professions involved in building the city of Santo Domingo and *La Catedral*.⁴²

Although the governor of Hispaniola (1502-09), Nicolas de Ovando (1451-1511), does not occur on the *Repartimiento* list of 1514, we know that the Taínos of his *encomienda* worked on the church. In one of the oldest court proceedings of the American colonies, *Tapia v. Ovando* (1509), a complaint by the early Spanish dignitary, the plaintiff Christobal de Tapia, against then governor Nicolas de Ovando was heard at a *residencia*.⁴³ Among other scandalous accusations, Ovando was charged with holding a monopoly of “yndios” and of a “discriminatory allotment of labor.” In what could be described as an “yndios”-for-public-works racket, Ovando wielded a certain power by virtue of his large workforce.⁴⁴ Notably, the defense stated that the governor, in fact, supplied many “yndios” for the purposes of public works and for the construction of *La Catedral de Santo Domingo*.⁴⁵ Since we know that the distribution of Taíno *cacica/cacique* was commensurate with the rank of the Spanish official, we know that he was likely awarded a high-

ranking *cacicazgo*. However, more archival work would be needed to understand the identity of the *cacica/cacique*.

The large allotment awarded to high-ranking officials on the *repartimiento* list and the revelations of the court case suggests that it was common practice to loan one's workforce if you held a large monopoly of Taínos, such as would be awarded to the station of governor. It is plausible, therefore, that the governor at the time of the *repartimiento*, Diego Colón, was expected to contribute his *encomendado* for public works, especially those building projects deemed most central to the construction of the city. Diego Colón received three-hundred-and-ninety-eight Taínos in tributary servitude. Unlike other officials, Colón's numbers are more detailed and list thirty-six elderly, sixty-one children, three hundred "*indios de servicio*" and a *cacique* listed as "Cayacoa (Gonzalo Fernandez)."⁴⁶ This might point to another contingent of Taíno from Higüey who participated in the creation of the church.

Church purchase records from 1585 reveal the licensing of eighty "*esclavos negros*" ("black slaves"), who were purchased for the "maintenance of the church facade."⁴⁷ Only a few years later in 1588,⁴⁸ one hundred West African men participated in the rebuilding of the city and church. Again, in 1599 the dean and church council requested another one hundred "slaves" for the construction of the church.⁴⁹ One can imagine the numbers that were subsequently requested led up to the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804, when several earthquakes were felt in Santo Domingo. According to the historian Luis E. Alemar, in his work *Santo Domingo, Ciudad Trujillo* (1943), several earthquakes affected *La Catedral* in 1662, 1673, and 1751.⁵⁰

Despite the large discrepancies in the records of the Spanish colonial settlers, if we approach the extant records and literature with what Edward Said calls a contrapunctal reading,⁵¹ that is, reading the Imperial narrative for its many counterpoints, or, more simply, reading in

between the lines of colonial histories, we are able to intuit many intersecting avenues of a cultural story yet to be explored. For *La Catedral*, a contrapuntal reading reveals the region and peoples of Higüey as a large source of Taíno contribution. For the West African populations, the records reveal upwards of three hundred men who are documented participants in the maintenance and rebuilding of *La Catedral*.

Notes:

¹ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 29.

² Ibid., xii.

³ See Walter D. Mignolo, “Colonial And Postcolonial Discourse: Cultural or Academic Colonialism?” in *Latin American Research Review* Vol. 28, No. 3 (1993): 120-134.

⁴ Luis S. Escobal, *Biografía de la Catedral Primada de las Indias* (Santo Domingo: Alfa y Omega, 1977), 27-29 & 51. Also see Leo M. Kaiser, “The Earliest Verse of the New World,” in *Renaissance Quarterly* Vol. 25, No. 4 (Winter, 1972), 429-439; *Itinerarium* (published posthumously in 1631) written in Latin during his voyage and finished in Santo Domingo in 1522, describes Geraldini’s journey to the “New World.” A second poem titled “Ode de Adventu Suo ad Terras Aequinoctii” served as a commemoration of his entry into Santo Domingo.

⁵ Escobal, *Biografía de la Catedral*, 43-46.

⁶ “Porque ciñendo la Tiara, desde Roma, donde reside, da leyes santas al orbe entero, como Maestro Universal de los pueblos”; Escobal, *Biografía de la Catedral*, 45.

⁷ Escobal, *Biografía de la Catedral*, 53-61 & Pedro Henríquez Ureña, *La cultura y las letras coloniales en Santo Domingo*, (Santo Domingo, Linkgua, 2010), 79. Not to be confused with the conquistador of the same name, D’avila was the appointed historian of Seville and the Indies from 1643 to the time of his death. The essay on the *La Catedral* appears in his *Teatro eclesiástico de la Primitiva Iglesia de las Indias Occidentales* vols. I & II (Madrid, 1649-1655).

⁸ Bailey, “Spain and Spanish America,” 5-7.

⁹ Lopez-Penha et al., “La Basilica Metropolitana,” 239.

¹⁰ In coordination with several state agencies and the church, Palm is the most cited scholar on *La Catedral* of the twentieth-century, Lopez-Pehna et al., *La Basilica Metropolitana*, 238-40; Among other works of literature, Palm brought together the major works on the church including Cipriano de Utrera, *Universidades* (1932) & *Para la Historia de América* (1959); Diego Angulo Iñiguez, *Historia del Arte Hispanoamericano* (1945); and Mario José Buschiazso, *La Arquitectura Colonial en Hispano América* (1940) & *Historia del Arte Hispano Americano* (1945-50).

¹¹ Lopez-Penha et al., “La Basilica Metropolitana,” 240.

¹² José Chez Checo, *Basilica Catedral de Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Arzobispado Arquidiócesis de Santo Domingo, 2007).

¹³ Specifically, Sasso Flores uses the fact that Taínos built thatch structures to quickly dismiss their ability for constructing stone buildings, “Arquitectura de La Catedral,” 215-16 & 241; In a

book on Dominican architecture from 1492- 2008, Esteban Prieto Vicioso dismisses African contributions to the development of Antillian architecture based on what he considers the lack of formal similarities, Esteban Prieto Vicioso, “Arquitectura Vernácula y Popular,” in *Historia Para La Construcción de la Arquitectura Dominicana 1492-2008*, ed. Gustavo Luis Moré et al. (Santo Domingo: Grupo León Jimenes, 2008), 53-54.

¹⁴ The German art historian Erwin Panofsky attempted a universal(izing) system for understanding art that includes a three-step process: a basic, or *primary*, understanding of what one sees, a secondary understanding that requires knowledge of culture and icons, *iconography*, and, a final synthesis that interprets the primary and secondary icons, symbols and cultural meanings, *iconology*. This system presumes not only a fixed subject that understands art based solely on European tradition, but also a fixed object that is to be read the same way throughout time. See Erwin Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art” in *The Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1955). For an accessible analysis of the history of art history in relation to concepts such as the universalist theory of aesthetics, subjectivity, and objectivity see Keith Moxey, “Motivating History,” *Art Bulletin* vol. 77 n. 3 (1995): 392-401, and *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹⁵ While I have chosen to select the more recent offerings in the architectural history of the Caribbean, I would still like to credit an earlier and important work by David Buisseret, *Historic architecture of the Caribbean* (London: Heinemann, 1980).

¹⁶ I am finding some consistency in this historical preface, which at times provides a census statistic and more often a specific date of disappearance, therefore, officially vanquishing the natives. This complicity with eighteenth-century extinction narratives provide for a tidy, chronological narrative of exclusively Spanish architecture.

¹⁷ Pamela W. Gosner, *Caribbean Baroque: Historic Architecture of the Spanish Antilles*, (Pueblo, Colorado: Passeggiata Press, 1996), 91.

¹⁸ Grosner does include a north facade illustration of the *Catedral Primada* in the Chapter devoted to Hispaniola, under civil architecture. This main entrance was later extended to accommodate the cabildo after an earthquake in 1615. This wing includes an arcaded portico, with municipal offices above, and an open balcony above the entry archway. The portico, here, is more consistent with what the contemporary person may understand to be proper municipal architecture.

¹⁹ Edward E. Crain, *Historic Architecture in the Caribbean Islands* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), ix.

²⁰ Edward E. Crain, *Historic architecture in the Caribbean Islands*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994). 203; the art was commissioned by the church in the 1980s according to the artists’ own chronology. See “Artist Chronology,” *JoseRinconMora.com*, (accessed December 17, 2013) <http://joserinconmora.com/jose-rincon-mora-artist-chronology/>.

²¹ Luis Arranz Márquez, *Repartimiento y Encomiendas en las Isla Española: El Repartimiento de Alburquerque de 1514* (Madrid: Fundación Garia Arévalo, 1991), 25-26.

²² Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1959), 1-11, 13; Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 115; David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 289-289.

²³ Arranz Márquez, *Repartimiento y Encomiendas*, 133-140; Arguments on either side of the Valladolid debate (1550–1551) can be found in the treatise by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, “Concerning the Just Cause of the War Against the Indians” (1547) and Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1542, published 1552); Also see de Las Casas *Apologética Historia Sumaria* (1552) and José de Acosta, *De Procuranda* (1540-1600), which defined and classified the “barbaric” races in order of their literacy and “civility”; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 15-18.

²⁴ Quevedo argued that war was justified against the natives because they were inferior, “barbarian,” born natural slaves. The Spaniards of the sixteenth century defined barbarism as “all non-Christian peoples and more loosely might be used to describe any race, whatever its religious beliefs, which behaved in savage or uncivil ways.” De Las Casas, using the very same Aristotelian principles, retorted that the natives were, in fact, born naturally free by virtue of their ability to reason; he, therefore, condemned the Spanish for their sins against the native people of Hispaniola. This debate was set in motion by an earlier sermon in 1511 by the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos, who criticized the atrocious treatment of the natives by the Spaniards. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 24 30-31; Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, 16-17; Lawrence A. Clayton, *Bartolomé de las Casas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), 179.

²⁵ Arranz Márquez, *Repartimiento y Encomiendas*, 62.

²⁶ Luis Arranz Márquez, *Repartimientos y Encomiendas*, 11 & 64; Kelly Wallace-Donahue, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America: 1521-1821*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 24.

²⁷ This decree was enacted in order to address a local decline on the island of Hispaniola, most likely resulting from sickness and disease.

²⁸ The Barbadian scholar of English and Afro-American literature, Keith Albert Sandiford explores the ways two colonial texts, Richard Ligon’s *History of Barbados* (1657) and Matthew “Monk” Lewis’ *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1834), represent the consciousnesses of Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans during the “slavocratic” period of the “West Indies.” Theorizing a colonial Caribbean-Atlantic imaginary sugar and Obeah discusses the prefiguration of power structures, master/slave as a parallel to sugar/obeah, as an order/counterorder model

revealed by enslaved imaginaries; Keith Albert Sandiford, *Theorizing a colonial Caribbean-Atlantic imaginary sugar and Obeah*, (New York: Routledge, 2011).

²⁹ De las Casas was against the expansion carried out earlier in *El Requerimiento* (The Requirement) of 1513, in which the Spaniards rowed up to the shores of the Caribbean islands with a document that essentially read, be converted or be at war. By accusing the islanders of cannibalism Spaniards were able to bypass the Requirement altogether on the premise that they could not reason with savage peoples, Hank, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, 13 &17.

³⁰ Carlos Esteban Deive, *La Española y la esclavitud del indio*, (Santo Domingo: Fundación García Arévalo, 1995), 1; Virginia de Los Angeles Flores Sasso, “Obra de Fábrica de La Catedral de Santo Domingo Primada de América: Sus 20 Años de Construcción Desde 1521-1541” (PhD diss., Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, 2006), 249.

³¹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Yacovone, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (Carlsbad: Hay House, 2013), 22.

³² Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 15.

³³ Contempt for the non-Christian “Moors and Jews,” who had just been exterminated and expelled from Spanish lands in the late fifteenth century, was recast in the Americas with the encounters with the Taíno and West Africans. The racialized preoccupation with the good/white, or bad/black binary was being codified as early as the thirteenth-century. As an institution, slavery existed at least as early as the Babylonian *Code of Hammurabi* (c. 1754 BCE). The seventh law code, inscribed on a stone stele, condemns to death the illegal purchase or theft of a slave of another man. “The Code of Hammurabi,” *The Avalon Project*, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School, 2008. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp>

³⁴ Louis Gates Jr. et al., *The African Americans*, 17.

³⁵ Heng, “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages,” in *Literature Compass* Vol. 8 No. 5 (2011): 262. This is the first of a two-part article. Also see “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race” in *Literature Compass* Vol. 8, No. 5 (2011): 332-350. An analysis that considers *La Catedral* in terms of gender and sexuality would offer a much needed perspective of the church. See also, Noel Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery among the Saracens in Late Antiquity (ca. 250–630 CE),” *Antiquité Tardive* 19 (2011) 237–66

³⁶ Flores Sasso, “Obra de Fábrica,” 249.

³⁷ Arranz Márquez, *Repartimiento Y Encomienda*, 247.

³⁸ This is not unlike the patterns of recording enslaved peoples in the antebellum South. Historian of African-American Studies Vincent Brown speaks to this type of historical erasure saying, “[r]emoving people from genealogy is very important to making a slave. So if I only call you by

your first name and never by a family name, I'm indicating to everybody...that you have no family. You're just Sam. You're just Sarah. Right? So they'll occupy a station that everybody will publicly recognize is at the lowest rung of society." Vincent Brown, "Episode One: The Black Atlantic 1500-1800, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* with Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Public Broadcasting Service* (October 2013), 28:01-48.

³⁹ Flores Sasso, "Obra de Fabrica," 249; Luis Arranz Márquez, *Repartimientos y encomiendas*, 561.

⁴⁰ Arranz Márquez, *Repartimiento Y Encomienda*, 561.

⁴¹ Ibid.; Flores Sasso, "Obra de Fabrica," 253; Ursula Lamb, "Christobal de Tapia v. Nicolas de Ovando: A Residencia Fragment of 1509," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Duke University Press, 1953), 251; The fact that the chief is a woman is not surprising since there are many recorded *cacicas*, reflecting what most scholars agree was a matrilineal society. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that *cacica* Catabano did not take on a Christian name, especially since this was common practice. When the Christians learned of a Taíno name exchange ritual, which consisted of a mutual exchange of names after the oral recitation of lineage, and legend, they soon took advantage of the practice to secure allegiances with the Taíno rulers. Among the listings of *cacica/cacique* names, some include Taíno and Christian names, while others only reveal the Christian names, erasing the names and legacies of the leaders, peoples, and lands. Along with the name exchange ceremony, areytos, and ancestor cemí constituted a form of oral history that was not fully appreciated by the lettered Christian convention of writing (literacy). The Taíno were in fact transmitting their history. It would be advantageous to approach the study of Taíno literacy along the lines of Tom Cummins' *Narrating Native Histories: Beyond The Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies In The Andes*. In this book, Cummins stresses the importance of understanding literacy beyond the confines of texts to include forms of social and visual literacy.

⁴² Flores Sasso, "Arquitectura de La Catedral," in *Basilica Catedral de Santo Domingo* ed. José Chez Checo Santo Domingo: Arzobispado Arquidiócesis de Santo Domingo, 2007), 224-25. Flores Sasso traces the traditions of stonemasons to the historical province of Cantrabria and the Basque region.

⁴³ A *residencia* is a hearing concluding an official's term. Complaints were presented in support of and against the performance of the official. The suit brought on by Tapia constituted a considerable portion of Ovando's trial, which resulted after a long period of feuding between the two colonists. According to Lamb, after being passed to the higher court, the *alto consejo*, the charges were presumably dropped "to the irritation of the crown. Lamb. It is also notable that the testimonies of this hearing survived in part due to the lengthy journeys across the Atlantic. Flores Sasso, "Arquitectura de La Catedral," 253; Ursula Lamb, "Christobal de Tapia v. Nicolas de Ovando: A Residencia Fragment of 1509," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Duke University Press, 1953), 427-441.

⁴⁴ Flores Sasso, “Arquitectura de La Catedral,” 253; Lamb, “Christobal de Tapia v. Nicolas de Ovando,” 432-33.

⁴⁵ Flores Sasso, “Arquitectura de La Catedral,” 253; Lamb, “Christobal de Tapia v. Nicolas de Ovando,” 427-441. Also see Demorizi Rodríguez, *El Pleito Ovando-Tapia. Comienzos de la vida urbana en América*. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Rodríguez Demorizi, 1978).

⁴⁶ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, 35-6, 191 & 197; There is an interesting discrepancy here, one that might lead to interesting findings. Cayacoa was powerful ruler of the Higüey territory and according to José R. Oliver, he was killed among those who fought in the Battle of Higüey (1503-04). This makes his appearance on the 1514 list questionable. His wife is also on the *Repartimiento*, as Cacica Inés de Cayacoa, the Cayacoa on this list may be a male relation who fulfilled the role as tributary leader in order to maintain a properly functioning *encomienda*, that is to say, to keep the Taíno from becoming independently commissioned. This Taíno were, probably for reasons of war, not tied to a *cacicazgo*-based *encomienda* and were called *allegado* on the 1514 list. This is another ambiguous place to study.

⁴⁷ Flores Sasso, “Arquitectura de la Catedral,” 216.

⁴⁸ This date is only two years after Francis Drake led the attack on Spanish ships and colonies at the onset of the Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1604). Frank Moya Pons, “Prologue” in *Imágenes Isulares Cartografía Histórica Dominicana* ed. José Checo Checo (Santo Domingo: Banco Popular, 2008), 79; Abelardo Jiménez Lambertus and José Checo, “La Catedral de América,” in *Arte Sacro Colonial En Santo Domingo*, ed. Arq. Elena Vives De Rodríguez (Santo Domingo: Fundación de la Zona Colonial Inc. and Banco Popular, 2002), 17.

⁴⁹ Flores Sasso, “Arquitectura de La Catedral,” 216.

⁵⁰ Jose Ramon Baez Lopez-Pehna and Eugenio Perez Montas, “La Basilica Metropolitana Primada De America: Catedral de Santo Domingo,” in *Restauracion de Antiguos Monumentos Dominicanos: Planos E Imagenes* (Santo Domingo: Universidad Nacional Pedro Henriquez Ureña, 1986), 238.

⁵¹ Edward Said, “Resistance and Opposition” in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 191-262, Digital. Said says, “As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (*Culture and Imperialism*, 51). Described in different terms, a part of what it means to read contrapunctally, is to read the “works of the imperial period retrospectively and heterophonically with other histories and traditions counterpointed against them, to read them in the light of decolonization...” (*Culture and Imperialism*, 161). Said describes this in the metaphor of journey: The decolonizers “voyage in” the metropolis as an “interesting variety of hybrid cultural work” (*Culture and Imperialism*, 244).

CHAPTER III

ALTERNATIVE MEANINGS: COMPLEMENTARY DUALISM & *LA CATEDRAL*

“Meaning is constructed—given, produced—through cultural practices; it is not simply ‘found’ in things.”¹

“[C]ultural meanings do not arise in things but as a result of our social discourses and practices which construct the world meaningfully.”²

The goal of this chapter is to open up the field of meaning beyond the Western Canon by adding to it the meanings of the Taíno and West African sacred-aesthetics. This chapter decenters, or decolonizes, the Imperio-Christian and nationalistic narratives of *La Catedral* by exploring the church as a “full matrix of relations,” as an extremely dynamic location where people, structures, and public/private spaces meet.³ To do this, I will analyze the decorative ensemble of the West Façade to which I will apply some of the central aspects of the Taíno and Yoruba sacred-aesthetic signifiers including the head and sacred cave sites. In taking these particular signifiers into account, I do not intend to speak for those historical actors. Neither do I attempt to limit Taíno and West African capabilities of understanding and interpreting the church from multiple viewpoints including Christian, and complexly syncretic viewpoints. Instead, I offer a way of understanding how the city’s Taíno and West African co-participants perceived *La Catedral* based on archival and literary patterns, and sacred-aesthetic ways of knowing. I carry out a visual analysis of the cathedral that takes into account these viewpoints to understand what it means to its different creators and users. Much can be learned from the perspective of two cultures that value the activating force of a sacred object or site, in distinction to the authority given to original form, of the European analog. For example, Taíno and Yoruba sacred systems indicate that the value of such sacred objects and sites is determined by their ability to act on behalf of the petitioner rather than based on how similar the object is to an original form.

Furthermore, the decorative or aesthetic elements of the sacred object or site serve only to facilitate such a spiritual transaction.

Reading the Western Facade

An atrium with walls finished in pointed merlons encloses the western or main façade of *La Catedral*. The ground within this space is laid in stone and is apparently marked by a converging set of cartographic lines, ideologically connecting (correlating) this space to European markers of territory on the early modern map and the cardinal points of the Christian cosmos (Figure 2).⁴ This double-arched façade is the most photographed entry and many scholars have referenced its classical pediment, architrave, frieze and cornice. Overall, the building is a simplified structure covered with elaborate surface decorations, what many traditional Western scholars refer to as the plateresque style.⁵

The decorative assembly of the western façade includes various representations of empire, including the shield of the Habsburg emperor, Charles V, with the double-headed eagle of the Romano-German empire flanked by a heraldic shield from which hangs a pendant-like sheep crowning the central composite column of the portico.⁶ The flared double archway reveals a series of foliate decorations lining the intrados, or the underside, of the archways. The tympana are inlaid with stained glass. Moving-outward from the center, the twin arches are flanked by three statues on either side. These statues convey the missionizing exploits of the Catholic monarchs. On the lower level, the figures include the four authors of the Gospels: Saint Matthew who represents man, Saint Mark representing the lion, Saint Luke the ox, and Saint John the eagle. On the upper portion, there are two apostles on either side: Saint Peter holding the keys to heaven and Saint Paul holding the sword of his martyrdom.⁷

This decoration continues to the large set of pilasters flanking either side of the portico, which are covered in a number of imperialistic icons of heraldry including herculean columns, a crown insignia, four-legged fauna, mythical griffins, and hybrid humanoids. It is important to understand that these more abstract representations of empire signified an early modern European worldview. This ensemble reveals a preoccupation with the monstrous beasts and races on the edges of the world with its “gothic” blend of mythical creatures, beasts, and man.⁸

The frieze above the pilasters shows another compellation of figures and motifs including several putti, zoomorphic figures, floral embellishments, and grotesques (beasts).⁹ At the center of the frieze, in high relief, is a medallion that encircles a female bust thought to be Minerva. Not the central figure of Christianity, Jesus, or his Virgin Mother but the pagan Roman goddess of wisdom, the arts, and ultimately war takes place as the central face marking the entry of the church.¹⁰ There also exist the harpy and centaur of Greek mythology; hybrids that are half human and half animal, not Christian signs and motifs but heathen icons, not visually unlike the grimacing-faced idols that they condemned (Figure 3). As you look closely, there is an impressive pattern of monstrous faces that appear in low relief all over the ornamented surface of *La Catedral*.¹¹

The conceptual motif of the face and structural elements of space open the scope of analysis by moving beyond a narrow comparison of architectures. Further, a fuller spectrum of visual culture, such as sacred objects in stone, wood, and other organic materials and sites, offer a deeper understanding of how both Taíno and Yoruba constructed meaning. The cross-media approach I use is best described in Homi Bhabha’s elaboration of Baudrillard’s “aesthetic and cultural space” as follows:

The value of art lies not in its transcendent reach but in its translational capacity: in the possibility of moving between media, materials, and genres, each time both marking and remaking the material borders of difference; articulating “sites” where the question of “specificity” is ambivalent and complexly construed. Its is in conformity with the ideas that Baudrillard suggests that the postmodern passes beyond representational forms of icon, image, and symbol, where hermeneutic truth is finally determined in the mirror of “nature.” He urges us to engage with an aesthetic and cultural space where “the real and the imaginary are confounded in the same operational totality.”¹²

It is with this creative flexibility of interpretation, “between media, materials, and genres” that I approach the Taíno and Yoruba perspectives that follow.

For the Yoruba and Taíno this space and structure, with its myriad representations, could have signified in very different ways. It is important to consider, here, the sacred and aesthetic perspectives of Taíno and Yoruba co-participants. The Taíno and Yoruba cultures of the sixteenth century understood the world as a form of complementary two-ness. Common among the motifs found in the sacred-aesthetic of these two cultures is the face, or head, and sacred sites such as the cave, which function as spiritual sites that facilitate the mediating powers and are represented as liminal spaces of the inner-outer world. I start with a comparison of the images of the frieze, containing the flora, creatures, and faces of medieval mythology to the intricately carved ceremonial masks and divination sculptures of the Yoruba as well as the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic ceremonial effigies of the Taíno.

The Head

The head figures prominently in Yoruba divination trays from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, which typically feature a central head figure around which a geometric

design or vignette frames a circular or rectangular tray used for ceremonies (Figure 4). A terracotta vessel dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth-century displays a half-human-half-buffalo face with large horns, flared nostrils, and protracted tongue. A foliate design springs from the “monstrous face” that is set on a background of consistent mosaic-like patterning and rosettes. Further, the face has been interpreted as *irúnmolè*, an earthly spirit messenger, or an intermediary between worlds (Figure 5).¹³ A set of palace doors (*Ìlèkùn àfin*), of king Ògògá, features a series of vertical relief scenes that are bisected by two long panels of twenty-six heads alternating between light and dark (Figure 6).¹⁴ This prominent display of heads featured on the palace door functions by attracting the viewer through the concept of outer beauty (*ewa*)¹⁵ and by revealing glimpses of the inner workings of the palace with frieze style reliefs and vignettes of individuals in ritual/civic performance.¹⁶ In this way, the façade of the palace symbolically serves as the face of the royal-sacred palace inviting devotees to enter through its *ewa*, an enabling force of the *àse*, the supreme divine force.

The head or skull features prominently in Taíno belief as the site of the “soul of both the living world, *guaíza*, and the dead world, *opía*. The skull of a deceased person is, therefore, frequently used for the construction of ancestor *cemí* figures.¹⁷ Further emphasizing the skull’s role as a repository of the soul in life and death are the eyes. Often inlaid with mother of pearl, covered in gold or other luminous materials, the eyes represent the “liminal orifices” of the soul, allowing the soul to see and to be accessed by the outer world.¹⁸ The identity, the expressive force of life and death is, therefore, expressed in the head, or face.¹⁹

Among the head forms that could be compared to the abstracted faces of *La Catedral* are the Taíno effigies seen in *duhos* (ceremonial seats) and three-pointer stones, as well as the double-headed effigy vessels. The most widely circulated Taíno cultural objects, trigonolites, the

three-pointer cemí stones²⁰ often feature an effigy face surrounded by delicate geometric patterns and other zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures (Figure 7).²¹ Describing the three pointer stones, José Arrom has said, “It is evident that the strange intertwining of circles, loops, crosses and triangles is astonishing for its precision of line and calculated symmetry. This amply proves the capacity for visualization and consummate skill of the Taíno sculptor.”²² Likewise, the *duhos* typically features a head in high or low relief with roundel-like shapes above the joints and head that have been interpreted as the axis points through which the spirit enters and leaves (Figure 8).²³ The identity, the expressive force of life and death is, therefore, expressed in the face.²⁴ *La Catedral’s* Minerva relief panel transforms as a cemí spirit, an entry point for the divine enabling force of the Yoruba *ase* and the Taíno *cemí*. Among the many otherworldly faces on the church are countless opportunities to attract the devotee to participate in the inward and outward flows of the universe.

Decoration As Attraction

The perceptual dualism that represents the kinetic force of the cemí spirit and the *ase*, demonstrated by the inner-outer flow of the head, continues in other forms including the birds, canines, and other decorative features.²⁵

What did the Taíno and Yoruba make of the large double-headed eagle centered above the door, for example? For the Taíno the likeness of a bird, often carved onto stone slabs (petroglyphs) or sculpted in wood and stone as an abstracted figure, and sometimes carved as a double-headed, or bicephalic figure, was associated with the primordial sky realm and with the various bird deities. In fact, from early Spanish chronicles we know that the Taíno thought that the Spaniards had fallen from the primordial sky realm of the bird.²⁶ In this way, the image of the Habsburg eagle above the entry to the door of the church did not only speak as an ancient

European sign of heraldry and Imperialism but, perhaps, as a cemified sky bird, suspended between the door and the upward thrust of the triangular pediment, joining the heavenly and earthly realms.

For the Yoruba, the bird also has special significance. Often represented by the egret feather that adorns the crowns of kings, Yoruba elders interpret the more general performative function of the bird as symbolic of the intermediary role of the ruler between his people and the *orisha* (deities). The bird also represented the link between the king and his divine lineage to Odùduwà, who used a bird, representative of the divine spirit, *àse*, to create the Yoruba homeland at Ilé-Ifè.²⁷ In this way the imperialistic motif of the bird (and crown) defining the entry of *La Catedral* could be interpreted as a sign of the king, and his intercession to the *orisha* on behalf of the people.

On the east side of *La Catedral* stand a cluster of canine waterspouts, once used to redirect the water from the face of the church (Figure 9). Gargoyles of this nature were popularly used on “gothic” buildings during the late Middle Ages and at times took the representational form of the bizarre. From a Taíno perspective, animals were spirit-helpers and deities often took the form of various animals. The dog spirit *Opiyelguobirán* was the “escort of the soul,” and guided and watched over the spirits of the dead (Figure 10).²⁸ For the Yoruba, the dog, like other animals, also served as a sort of helper. Featured in the towering masks of the Èkìtì, ijèsa, and Ìgbómìnà Yoruba, which are worn atop the head, the Epa masks represent the major deities or cultural heroes and often feature *ajá*, the dog to whom the “mystical powers . . . [are] expected to reinforce the function of the given mask.”²⁹

Since the Yoruba concept of art, *onà*, begins with Olòdúmarè commissioning Obàtálá (the deity of creativity) to mold the first human form of clay, Yoruban ways of understanding art

are inextricably linked to sacred belief.³⁰ To wit, the iconography and symbolism of the human head—as the outer shell that can use beauty (*ewà*) to attract attention to the inner self, the supreme self where the divine force *ase* is activated—is central to traditional Yoruban epistemologies of art.³¹

This way of understanding inner-outer sacredness applies similarly to the face of a palace or shrine, as mentioned earlier. Moreover, if the façade of the church carries the value of the face, what of the widely used decorative feature of *La Catedral*, also identified for its imperial/national period style as “Isabelline beading” (Figure 11)? Notably found around nearly every entry point—windows, archways, and chapels—could this decorative feature also be read as representative of *ceṃi* or *ilèkè* beads? For the Taíno, as cemified objects, the beaded necklaces represented the connection with certain deified ancestors and therefore to a religious and political lineage.³² Since the earliest examples of coral beads were dug up from the ocean, the Yoruban *ilèkè* beads are worn to solicit the blessings of Olókun, the deity of the sea and wealth. Beads also have a general sacred-aesthetic significance as an empowerment of the visible outer self through decoration.³³ Therefore, mediating the motion of natural elements (think light and bodies) into the internal space, or sacred center, are the beaded moldings that have new meaning as the intercession between devotee and deity for the Taíno and Yoruba alike.

Materiality

The Taíno and Yoruba sacred-aesthetic can tell us much about how material was endowed with meaning. Most of the material for the church was brought from the Santa Barbara *canteras* (quarries), not six hundred meters away from the church site, now approximately at the end of the road called Calle de los Canteros.³⁴ This local material, calcified coralline, proved to be remarkably durable and sufficient in quantity (Figure 12). Other local materials from the

nearby banks of the Ozama River provided the lime, brick, and tile for the church. Local oak was also used in large quantities, including for the episcopal seat, mandated by the Cédula Real of 1510, in which the king called for the clearing of forests to be used for the building of the church and other works.³⁵

Cemí figures from 1000-1500 CE³⁶ have been found in a variety of materials including many of the same materials used for the church such as stone, calcified coral, wood, and gold.³⁷ The selection of these materials speaks to a Taíno animistic practice deeply rooted in the nature around them—the “vital essence,” or the potential dynamism of any material form.³⁸

[The] Taíno-Language term *cemí* refers not to an artifact or object but to an immaterial, numinous and vital force. Under particular conditions, beings, things, and other phenomena in nature can be imbued with *cemí*. *Cemí* is, therefore, a condition of being, not a thing. It is a numinous power, a driving or vital force that compels action; it is the power to cause, to effect, and also denotes a condition or state of being.³⁹

In his ethnological study of the religious practices of the Taíno, Fray Ramon Pané, recalls the process of localizing the *cemí* spirit, in which any Taíno may stumble upon moving (animated) organic matter (“a tree that is moving its roots”) and being sensitive to such subtle movements in nature the passerby would call upon a *behique* (spiritual leader and healer) to perform a *cohoba* induced ceremony in which its personhood was determined. Along with its titles, names, and legends, the form of the *cemí* spirit was bestowed (its zoomorphic/anthropomorphic configuration and its decorative elements) during the ritual, and a relationship to a particular human “trustee” or partner was formed.⁴⁰ Thus, a variety of materials can be expressed in a concrete form; the activating force of *cemí*, therefore, is central here.

The Yoruba sacred-aesthetic is also understood in terms of two-ness and includes various organic materials as well as a spiritual system for color. African teak (*Afromosia*), for example, is used for carving the ceremonial double-axe staff due to its association with the thunderstorm deity Sango.⁴¹ Cowrie shells, valued for the sacred purity of its white color, referred to the daily practice of praying to one's inner head.⁴² To the Yoruba "the physical head is no more than the outer shell (*orí òde*) of the "inner head" (*orí inú*) which can activate the enabling force (*àse*) of the Supreme Being in the individual, determining that individuals personality and destiny."⁴³ The decorative elements of *La Catedral*, from this perspective, draw the spectator in by its outward *ewa* (beauty).

The Cave

Did the Christians understand the activating force of *ewa* when they created their highly ornamented church facades? Were the new fair-skinned Christians sensitive to the moving *cemí* spirit of nature when they cleared the forests near the Ozama River? And what of the massive stone structure? How did this figure into a Yoruba or Taíno worldview? Since their central religious structures were made of wood and palm,⁴⁴ how did they understand the highly decorated monolithic structure at the center of the newly defined territory? To understand the church as an entire unit, a large stone monolith, I consider the Taíno connection to a natural stone monolith, the cave. According to Taíno myth, their people came from a cave called *Cacibajagua* (Cave of the Jaguar Tree),⁴⁵ in the mountain of the Caonao province, called Cuata.⁴⁶ The cave is a link to the subterranean world and some scholars have argued that caves served as sanctuaries for the Taíno.⁴⁷ Further, ceremonial seats, *duhos*, have been found deep in the caves of Hispaniola leading many Taíno scholars to believe that certain *duhos* had special powers that needed to be contained in the powerful cave structures or sanctuaries.⁴⁸ Since *duhos*

were *cemí* that physically and spiritually mediated the connection between the *behique-cacique* and the supernatural *cemí* world, the appointment of these seats in the deep spaces of the cave could also be understood as creating a distinction between private, public, and liminal spaces. With this image in mind—a wooden ceremonial seat housed in the large monolithic sacred cave—I consider an alternate reading for *La Catedral*, one that considers Taíno and Yoruba mythology and materialism (Figure 13).

One plausible example of how Christian forms, the structure of the church, can be viewed from the perspective of the Taíno sacred-aesthetic is the ceremonial *duho* placed in the capacious stone sanctuary. The episcopal seat that is part of the *Retablo de las Doce Columnas* (Altar of the Twelve Columns) is placed deep in the cavernous space of the nave (Figure 14).⁴⁹ The retablo also sits in the space of the presbytery, which separates this sacrosanct space from the space of public congregation. Carved masterfully from local oak, a religious object that served as the seat for the most holy *behique* of the Christian church could not only have been understood according to Taíno mythology of the cave but also appreciated for its liminal spiritual significance.

The cave shrine devoted to the legend of Ogun, the deity of iron, located in the region of Ilere, Nigeria, provides a good comparison for sacralised sites. According to myth, Ogun accompanied by his dog, traveled to the neighboring communities of Owa and Ofaro reminding the peoples to petition him in time of need before he disappeared into the cave. The *àjà ile* (underground tunnel), according to locals, was made a shrine to Ogun.⁵⁰ Could this legend and shrine site lend itself to an understanding of the monolithic site of the *La Catedral* as an *àjà ile*, further signified by the canine sculptures, Ogun's animal helper on the surface of the cave shrine?

Moreover, the shrines and altars of the Yoruba religion employ the same concept of

outer-inner connectivity. As the location that “binds the community together” in matters of the sacred, the shrine also connects the devotee to the *orisha* world, and is the site where worship and sacrifice is given to the divine.⁵¹ As a mediatory site between devotee and divine, the shrine provides a physical platform for the activation of two separate but already connected parts, matter and spirit.

These sculpted figures surrounding the altar seat are the teachers of the gospel who also mark the façade of the church creating a double *retablo* effect, a spectacle or “theatre of conversion” rendered in the conceptual dualism of the Taíno and Yoruba alike.⁵² To wit, the central polychrome statue of the Virgin Mother holding the Christ Child, is surrounded by the four writers of the Christian gospels who are depicted with their animal avatars (and who are also representations of the pioneering orders—Dominicans, Franciscans, Mercedarians, and Jesuits, respectively).⁵³ This double-*retablo* can be read as the opening chapter in the book of Imperio-Christian expansion, announcing the army of missionaries. However, it can also be read as deified ancestors with their animal spirit helpers.

A decentering analysis of *La Catedral* shows this site to have been an extremely dynamic location where people, structures, systems of knowledge, and public/private spaces were entangled. Yoruba, Taíno, and Euro-Christian perspectives bear forth *La Catedral* as an architectural composite of meanings. For its Yoruba and Taíno audience, it is a sacred cave whose decorated façade functions like the inner-out (attractions) flows of the head, where the religious leader performs for the community of followers, where the Supreme Being is called upon. With this structural similarity across belief systems, the story of the church can no longer stand solely as a signifier of Empire, labeled as Isabelline Gothic. “No object of culture is purely one thing.”⁵⁴ Instead, the dynamically hybrid church is in constant motion, constructing for and

with its different users the most appropriate sites and customs for sacred practice. In other words, the structure and story of *La Catedral*, its space, imagery, and materiality open the scope of meanings to reveal the cross-cultural currents present there. Attention to these components decolonizes the European view as the only one and establishes the cathedral as a composite Taíno, Yoruban, and Christian structure.

Notes:

¹ Du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies*, 8.

² Ibid.

³ Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, "Creativity and Cultural Improvisation: An Introduction" (London: Berg Publishers, 2007), 9.

⁴ See Dana Leibsohn, "Colony and cartography: shifting signs on indigenous maps of New Spain." In *Reframing the Renaissance: visual culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450-1650* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 265-282; This compelling work demonstrates how our reading of maps is influenced by the way we translate (or interpret) the project of colonization.

⁵ Luis S. Eocbal, Escobal, *Biografia de la Catedral Primada de las Indias* (Santo Domingo: Alfa y Omega, 1977), 46; Flores Sasso, "Obra de Fabrica," 273.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Flores Sasso, "Obra de Fabrica," 272-3.

⁸ Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1959), 4-5. Describing a church façade from the same period, *Casa del Montejo in the Yucatan* (1549), Hanke points to the "the medieval mélange of man, beast, and mythical creature" that characterizes the façade of the church. Also see Kirk Ambrose's recent study on the "monstrous," in which he argues for alternate readings of so-called monstrous images. He makes an astute point about the "negative glossing" of medieval period architectural sculpture, which perceives the "Dark" past only in light of the presumed superiority of contemporary scholarship.

⁹ The monstrous faces that appear in low relief all over the ornamented surface of *La Catedral* allude to the ornamental arrangements of Ancient Roman frescoes and later to the vignettes in the margins of illuminated manuscripts.

¹⁰ Flores Sasso, "Obra de Fabrica," 271-3; Ray Laurence et al., "Assembling the city 1: forum and basilica," in *The City in the Roman West: c.250 BCE-c. AD 250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 173. This is also a possible reference to Roman temples dedicated to the triad of deities—Jupiter, Humo and Minerva.

¹¹ These decorative panels also allude to the ornamental arrangements of Ancient Roman frescoes and later to the vignettes in the margins of illuminated manuscripts.

¹² In "Postmodernism/Postcolonialism" Homi Bhabha proffers a postmodern cultural temporality as a mode of envisioning an "interstitial future" of art and identity, Homi Bhabha, "Postmodernism/Postcolonialism" in *Critical Terms for Art History* ed. Robert S. Nelson (Chicago, University Chicago Press, 2010), 311. This facet of postmodern thinking serves the

field of postcolonialism by problematizing the dichotomy of actor and author. This, in turn, poses a call to dwell in a place of fragmented time and space, a space as “open question” where social agency is not determined by master narratives.

¹³ Suzanne P. Blier, *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power, and Identity, c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 188-89.

¹⁴ The carving of the doors is attributed to the artist Olówè of Ìsè-Èkìtì, Babatunde Lawal, *Visions of Africa: Yoruba* (Milan: 5 Continents Edition, 2012) 130.

¹⁵ Lawal, *Visions of Africa*, 24 & 16.

¹⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁷ “The term zemi (also cemi) refer variously to gods, symbols of deities, idols, and bones or skulls of the dead—in short any object presumed to have magical power,” Peter Siegal, “Ancestor Worship and Cosmology among the Taíno” in *Taíno: Pre-columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean* (New York: Montacelli Press, 1998), 106.

¹⁸ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemi Idols*, 142.

¹⁹ Ibid., 68 & 142.

²⁰ The Taíno basis for art is tied to an ancestral worship that is rooted in nature called *Cemism*. Latin Americanist and archaeologist, José Oliver calls this a “multinatural, animistic perspective of the cosmos.” José R. Oliver, *Caciques and Cemi Idols: The Web Spun by Taíno Rulers Between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 45.

²¹ This represents the three-denomination title of the Supreme Being Yucahu-Bagua-Maórocoti, The Spirit of the Yucca and the Sea Without Grandfather (no male ancestry); Marcio V. Maggiolo, *Arqueologia Prehistorica de Santo Domingo* (Singapore: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 254; Oliver, *Caciques and Cemi*, 238.

²² José Arrom, “Taíno Mythology: Notes on the Supreme Being” in *Latin American Literary Review*, Vol. 8, No. 16 (1980): 30.

²³ Peter G. Roe, “Just Wasting Away: Taíno Shamanism and Concepts of Fertility,” in *Taíno: pre-Columbian art and culture from the Caribbean*, ed. Fatima Bercht et al. (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 141.

²⁴ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemi Idols*, 68 & 142.

²⁵ Roe, “Just Wasting Away” 126-27.

²⁶ Samuel M. Wilson, *Hispaniola: Caribbean Chiefdoms in the Age of Columbus* (Tascaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1990), 48-49.

²⁷ Lawal, *Visions of Africa*, 54.

²⁸ Roe, “Just Wasting Away” 128-29.

²⁹ Lawal, *Visions of Africa* 58.

³⁰ Ibid., 14.

³¹ Ibid., 23

³² For the Taíno of the Caribbean, beaded necklaces include cylindrical skulls in bone and wood (not dissimilar to Buddhist prayer beads), oblong beads with an anthropomorphic effigy pendent, as well as simple necklaces of small discs, and round beads.

³³ Lawal, *Visions of Africa*, 15.

³⁴ Flores Sasso, “La Arquitectura de La Catedral,” 218; Walter Palm, 76.

³⁵ Flores Sasso, “La Arquitectura de La Catedral,” 223.

³⁶ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, 4.

³⁷ Other cemified materials included shell, clay, cotton, and bone, Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, 54, 61, 64; Joanna M. Ostapkowicz, “To Be Seated with “Great Courtesy and Veneration”: Contextual Aspects of the Taíno Duho” in *Taíno: pre-Columbian art and culture from the Caribbean*, ed. Fatima Bercht et al. (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 59.

³⁸ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, 59; Its is interesting to note that the Taíno system for interacting with the world, that of an animistic belief in the dynamism of all matter, has emerged as a contemporary body of thought on the agency of objects known as “dynamic materialism.” This has been most recently articulated in Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). In her elaboration of thing-power, Bennett cites John Frow to assert a horizontal reading of human and nonhuman matter/actants, versus a vertical, hierarchical reading. Contemporary art theorists like Jae Emerling encourage the Deleuzian call for an “ethical turn” as a relay played out between subject-judgement. That is, the constant dislocation and the reflexive awareness and action of a subject (the scholar) in terms of one’s locus (and purpose). In her chapter titled “Political Ecologies” Jane Bennett draws on Darwin and Latour’s observations of worms to illustrate her analogy between an ecological and political system. By contrasting the behavior of worms to the behavior of a public—both comprising of interconnected actants continually reworking the system—as the foundation for her call to cultivate a sensitivity for non-human matter, a horizontal plane of connectivity, which honors the process of all actors.

³⁹ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, 59.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60-61; Ramon Pané, *An Account of the Indians*, Introduction by J.J. Arrom, translated by S.C. Griswold (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 25-26.

⁴¹ Lawal, *Visions of Africa*, 24.

⁴² Ibid., 29.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Stone was used architecturally as engraved monolithic stone cemí that lined the parameter of the *batey*, and as pavement, but mostly for three-pointer stones, *duhos*, effigy figures and domestic tools like mortars.

⁴⁵ Joanna M. Ostapkowicz, "To Be Seated," 72; Maria Poviones-Bishop, "The Bat and the Guava: Life and Death in the Taíno Worldview" in *The Collection of the Jay I. Kislack Foundation* (Miami: Library of Congress, 2001), 11, <http://www.kislackfoundation.org/prize/200103.html>

⁴⁶ Pané, *An Account of the Antiquities*, 5-7; William F. Keegan et al, *Talking Taíno: Caribbean Natural History from a Native Perspective* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2008), 94-96; José Juan Arrom, "The Creation Myths of the Taíno," in *Taíno: pre-Columbian art and culture from the Caribbean*, ed. Fatima Bercht et al. (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 72.

⁴⁷ Keegan, *Talking Taíno*, 95.

⁴⁸ Ostapkowicz, "To Be Seated," 64-65.

⁴⁹ Maria Ugarte, *La Catedral de Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Amigo del Hogar, 1992), 111; Flores Sasso, "Obra de Fabrica," 311.

⁵⁰ This shrine persisted until the seventeenth century when the communities became uninhabited; Toyin Falola and Aribidesi Adisa Usman, *Movements, Borders, and Identities in Africa* (Rochester: University Rochester Press, 2009), 108.

⁵¹ Charles Obafemi Jegede, "Shrines and Divine Essence in Yoruba Religious Traditions in Osun Osogbo Shrines, Experiences and Expressions" in *Elite Research Journal of Education and Review* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2014): 71 & 73.

⁵² *Retablo* facades become popularized in the seventeenth century in Mexico, for example, Michael Werner, *Concise Encyclopedia of Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 14-15.

⁵³ Flores Sasso, "La Arquitectura de la Catedral," 311-312.

⁵⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 336.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION: REBUILDING THE CHURCH

This study examines the participation of historically erased Taínos and West Africans in the construction and meaning of *La Catedral Primada de América*, not simply as “contributors,” but as active agents and creators of its form and meaning in the culturally plural place of Hispaniola during the sixteenth century. A critical review of literature on *La Catedral* demonstrates how the early configurations of Imperio-Christian narratives of superior/inferior helped to shape later art-historical configurations of nationalism by carrying forward models of racial superiority from the time of Imperial Christian expansion to the nationalism of the post-revolutionary period of independence. The general literature on the church has not yet moved beyond the exclusive architectural canon of European supremacy and therefore does not decenter the canon from its privileged place, a place that must secure its position by casting alternatives meanings into the shadows. Future studies, therefore, must consider how the church has been represented in historical writings and in scholarship, who helped construct the church, how the Taíno and West Africans used it and operated in its space, and what the cultural mechanisms that regulated its meaning and use were.

When colonial narratives or the European tradition frame architectural histories, we dismiss the matrix of connections that link various stories, peoples, and places. Scholarship that continues to dismiss Taíno and West African co-creators perpetuate the Renaissance configurations of “master” and by virtue, dismiss the demanding creativity of improvisation of those who had to “cajole the materials into doing what the architects” wanted “to accommodate the inflexible design to the realities of a fickle and inconstant world.”¹ The skilled artisans and workers of *La Catedral*, and of many of the churches of the Americas, were build by the hands

of enslaved Native Americans and West Africans and they abide in the “kink” in-between reality and the “architect’s idea of it.”²

Further, these co-creators used the sacred site of *La Catedral*. Understanding how performance contributes to this matrix would provide even more ways of understanding what the church means. In other words, “It is *who*, through the process of using words and images to form concepts in our heads which *refer* to objects in the real world, construct meaning, who made [the church] mean something.”³

Early literature on the church may answer some of these questions and provide valuable insight on the early church and its builders. These include the collective works by Fray Cipriano de Utrera (1886-1958), and *Teatro eclesiástico de la Primitiva Iglesia de las Indias Occidentales* by Gil Gonzalez Davila. For example, a 1649 chronicle identifies four confraternities founded by “negros” and “negros criollos” (Africans born in America) constructed some time between the late sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.⁴ The *Capilla de San Cosme Y San Damián*, located in the north nave of the church (Figure 15) was dedicated to the martyred twins Saints Cosmos and Damian, who were physician-scientists born in Arabia and active in ancient Turkey and Syria. They are famously known for grafting the leg of a deceased African onto the body of a European man.

In the side chapel confraternities of Africans created a place for African rituals to persist⁵ by investing the Christian twins with new meaning as the divine child twins, the Marassa of Vodou, via the Yoruba twins *Ibeyi*, and the possibly the Taíno cave twins Boinayel and Márohu.⁶ Afro-Dominican religious brotherhoods, *confradias*, still exist today in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.⁷ Exploring Utrera and Davila’s work might provide answers about how the structure and space of the church was understood by an Afro-Caribbean imaginary during the sixteenth

century. It may also lead to new questions about how sacred performance contributes to the meanings of the church.

Due to the separation of publishing and dissemination between English-language and Spanish-language literature, there is still much to be learned. Although this thesis takes a step toward eliminating this gap, there remain many avenues of exploration. For example, what else can the archives tell us about the names and identities of the people who built the church, including those brought from other areas of the Caribbean? What other forms and materials can be understood in terms of a dualistic sacred aesthetic? The precious metals on the exterior, the shell motifs, and skulls found carved all over the exterior and interior might provide new opportunities for alternate meanings. Moreover, how can a conversation about gender and sexuality contribute to the meaning of the church?

Historical documents in the *Archivo General de la Nación* and the archives of the *Arzobispado Arquidiócesis de Santo Domingo* are two sources that must be further mined in order to begin answering these questions. Additionally, at the time of this writing, the city of Santo Domingo is scheduled to open a museum on the church, *Museo de la Catedral*, which will house some of the precious relics from the church treasury.⁸ This would provide another valuable research opportunity in terms of understanding sacred materiality, but also in terms of experiencing the church as an object of study in the context of a museum setting.

To speak of *La Catedral Primada* is not to simply to discuss the structure, master architect, period-style, or the “discovery” of the Americas and the erection of Imperio-Religious glory manifest in stone. Rather, to speak of *La Catedral* is to speak of a multiplicity of connections, of how producers, consumers, mechanisms produce meanings and how this influences both the city’s and church’s development. It is also to speak of a place where many

people meet, where people lived for thousands of years, where others arrived to satisfy certain goals and still others were brought to satisfy those goals—all bringing systems of knowledge and representations and a fierce will to survive their circumstances. Between the enmeshed spheres of similarity and difference is the continual site of interaction, negotiation, and production. To understand *La Catedral* is to take into account the way the church is embedded into the larger matrix of visual culture.

As a Caribbean–American, I am reminded of how the erasure of two vital groups that help to build the Caribbean and the US influenced my sense of self as a child and young adult. It took thirty-two years for me to learn about the peoples and visual culture of my familial island home in the Caribbean. The people that carved the ceremonial *duhos* and the sacred *cemi* ancestor effigies are not a part of the history that is taught when we learn of the “discovery” of the Americas. What I think of today, however, are the possibilities. How would young Caribbean children understand who they were if they had learned more about their Taíno and West African forebears? What if they were taught that the architecture, monuments, and sculptures that dotted their cities reflected their own cultural hybridity and that they could be proud of their collective histories? How would the space of the church change if we introduced a new plaque that told the stories of the Taínos of Higüey and the Yoruba of West Africa who co-created the church?

Like the Taíno that rebuilt a “new world” atop their own Quisqueya/Aiti and the West African men who built alongside Taínos and continued to rebuild and care for the church, the *cofradías* (confraternities) created new meaning from Christian forms. I take my inspiration from these individuals by contributing to the “rebuilding” of the church as a site of contested meanings that decenters the Euro-Christian narrative and conjoins it to the matrix of meanings that endows this sacred site with the force of *cemi-ase*.

Notes:

¹ Ingold and Hallam, "Creativity and Cultural Improvisation," 4

² Ibid., 6.

³ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 8; my emphasis on "who."

⁴ Flores Sasso, "Arquitectura de la Catedral," 300, 327 & 337; They include *Capilla de Nuestra Señora de la Antigua*, *Capilla de Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón* (formerly *de Candelaria*), *Capilla de San Francisco de Paula* (formerly *de Maria Magdalena*), and *Capilla de San Cosme Y San Damián* (also known as *Arzobispo Meriño*); Flores Sasso also notes that this timeframe follows the Council of Trent (1545-1564), which was a time in which fraternities enjoyed the support of the Church; Flores Sasso, "Arquitectura de la Catedral," 238

⁵ The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and its abolition of slavery resulted in a gradual decline of African American confraternities towards the beginning of the nineteenth-century, as free men no longer required a place to congregate.

⁶ Flores Sasso, "Arquitectura de la Catedral," 338. (entire length of section 211-367)

⁷ Dr. Martha Ellen Davis, "Palos drumming of the Dominican Republic," a part of an online archival project of *La Médaithèque Caraïbe* (LAMECA) with the Archivo General de la Nación (Dominican Republic) & the University of Florida (USA), (accessed May 10th, 2015), http://www.lameca.org/dossiers/palos_drumming/eng/p2.htm; These brotherhoods exist all over the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Americas from the Caribbean to coastal Brazil, Venezuela, Panama, and Peru; The abolition of guilds was first ordered in 1783 by Charles III and many followed shortly after, such as the Cortes de Cadiz decree of 1813, which sought to address the monopoly of guilds in the Spanish colonies. Dorothy Tanck, "La abolición de los gremios," in *El trabajo y los trabajadores en la historia de México*, eds. Elsa Frost and Josefina Vásquez (México: Tucson: El Colegio de México/University of Arizona Press, 1979), 314.

⁸ Esteban Prieto Vicioso, "Dominican Republic" in *Protecting Heritage in the Caribbean* ed. Peter E. Siegel and Elizabeth Righter (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 40.

FIGURES

ENCOMENDEROS POR CIUDADES Y ENCOMIENDAS SANTO DOMINGO									
			SANTO DOMINGO	S.º	Na	Vi	Ni	All	Cqs Totales
1. EL REY	AB			645	87	105	125	0	5 967
2. COLON, DIEGO	VC	ALMIRANTE		300	0	36	61	0	1 398
3. COLON, DIEGO	V			174	26	34	41	0	1 276
4. PEREZ DE ALMAZAN, MIGUEL	AB	SECRETARIO REAL		155	45	21	15	0	2 238
5. VILLALOBOS, MARCELO DE (Lcdo.)	VC	JUEZ DE APELACION		198	2	50	50	0	1 301
6. GONZALEZ, GIL	V	CONTADOR/REGIDOR		158	42	39	2	1	3 244
7. TAPIA, CRISTOBAL DE	V	VEEDOR/REGIDOR		130	70	8	8	13	3 219
8. TAPIA, FRANCISCO DE	V	ALCAIDE FORTALEZA		187	13	30	22	0	3 255
9. GARAY, FRANCISCO DE	V	REGIDOR/ALCAIDE		38	162	7	10	24	1 218
10. VELAZQUEZ, SANCHO		FISCAL		50	53	11	16	0	1 131
11. SERRANO, ANTONIO (Lcdo.)	V	REGIDOR		43	37	1	4	3	2 87
12. GAMBOA, MARTIN DE	V			85	1	34	43	0	1 164
13. MOSQUERA, JUAN	V	ALCAID. VISIT. ESCRI.		86	17	84	69	0	1 257
14. ROLDAN, JUAN (bachiller)	V			7	29	2	2	7	1 41
44. ORTIZ, BARTOLOME (bachiller)	C	ABOGADO POBRES		40	0	0	0	0	0 40
45. ALARCON	VC	JURADO		40	10	0	0	0	0 50
46. IGLESIA (para la obra de la...)		OBRA IGLESIA		50	0	0	0	0	0 50
47. LUMBRERAS, PEDRO DE	V			31	2	0	0	0	0 33

CACIQUE	CIUDAD	ENCOMENDERO	S.º	Na	Vi	Ni	All	INDIAS	TOTALES
CARRYOS, GASPAR DE LOS (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	CARDENAS, JUAN DE	16	0	0	0	0	0	16
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica de (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	GUTIERREZ, ALONSO	43	0	0	+	0	0	43
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	ALARCON	40	0	0	0	0	0	40
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	ASTUDILLO, GASPAR DE	40	0	0	+	0	0	40
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	BUSTAMANTE, (bachiller)	40	0	0	+	0	0	40
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	IGLESIA (para la obra de la...)	50	0	0	+	0	0	50
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	LUMBRERAS, PEDRO DE	31	0	0	0	0	0	31
CATABANO DEL HIGUEY, cacica (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	ORTIZ, BARTOLOME (bachiller)	40	0	0	+	0	0	40
CATABAVUEX, CRISTOBAL (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	FERNANDEZ, MAESE	19	0	0	0	1	0	19
CAXARONEX, RODRIGO (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	DIAZ, HERNANDO	27	0	0	0	0	0	27
CAXARONEX, RODRIGO (-)	SANTO DOMINGO	RUIZ, ALONSO	22	0	0	2	0	0	24
CAYACOA (FERNANDEZ, GONZALO) (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	COLON, DIEGO (ALMIRANTE)	300	0	36	61	0	0	397
CAYACOA (FERNANDEZ, GONZALO) (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	COLON, DIEGO (tio del almirante (+))	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
CAYSEDO, FRANCISCO (+)	SANTO DOMINGO	EL REY	38	0	5	3	0	20	46

151. MARTIN DE LA MILLA, FRANCISCO	CARPINTERO	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
152. GARCIA, JUAN	ALBAÑIL	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
153. GOMEZ, JUAN		0	2	0	0	0	0	2
154. RODRIGUEZ, JUAN	ALBAÑIL	0	2	0	0	1	0	2
155. CONEJO, FRANCISCO		0	2	0	0	0	0	2
156. PALENCIA, DIEGO DE	PESCADOR	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
157. SALAMANCA, BARTOLOME DE (ciego)		0	1	0	0	0	0	1
158. CARO, CRISTOBAL	HERRADOR	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
159. CABALLOS, JUAN DE		0	2	0	0	0	0	2
160. LOPEZ, JUAN		0	1	0	0	0	0	1
161. RUIZ, ALONSO	CARPINTERO	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
162. JARANDILLA, ALONSO DE	ASERRADOR	0	2	0	1	0	0	2
163. PALACIOS, BARTOLOME DE	CARPINTERO	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
164. MARTIN RETAMALES, ALONSO	c PREGONERO	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
165. LOPEZ, FRANCISCO	c HERRERO	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
166. PEÑA (yerno de Beatriz de Ocaña)		0	2	0	0	0	0	2
167. FERRANDEZ (FERNANDEZ). LUIS		0	2	0	0	1	0	3

Figure 1. Records from the *Repartimiento de 1514*. Source: Arranz Márquez, *Reparimiento y Enconmiendas en la Isla Española: El Repartimiento De Alburquerque de 1514*, Pages 536-531.



Figure 2. *La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo* (Wall of west entrance), 16th century, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.



Figure 3. *La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo* (Faces and figures from the west façade), 16th century, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.



Figure 4. *Yoruba divination trays*, Top: 17th, Republic of Benin, Bottom: 19th century, Fowler Museum, wood. Source: Babtunde Lawal, *Visions of Africa: Yoruba*, Plates 29 & 30.

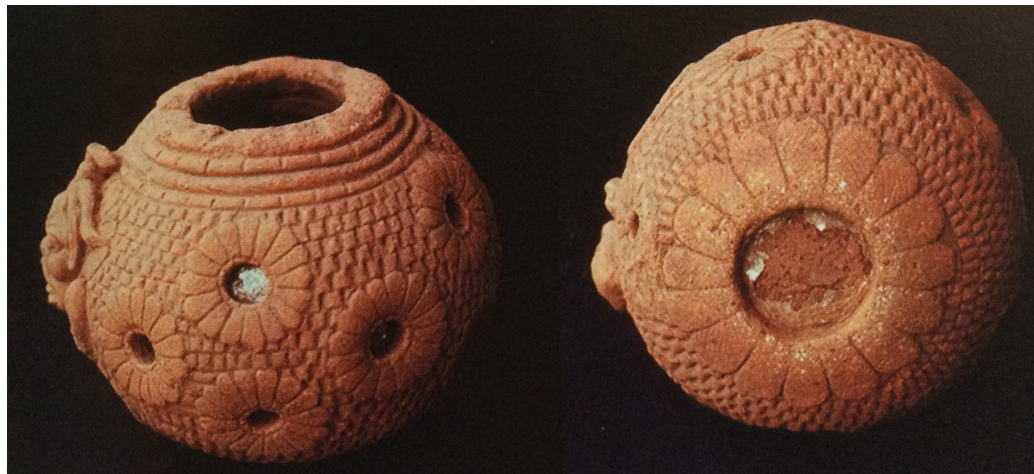
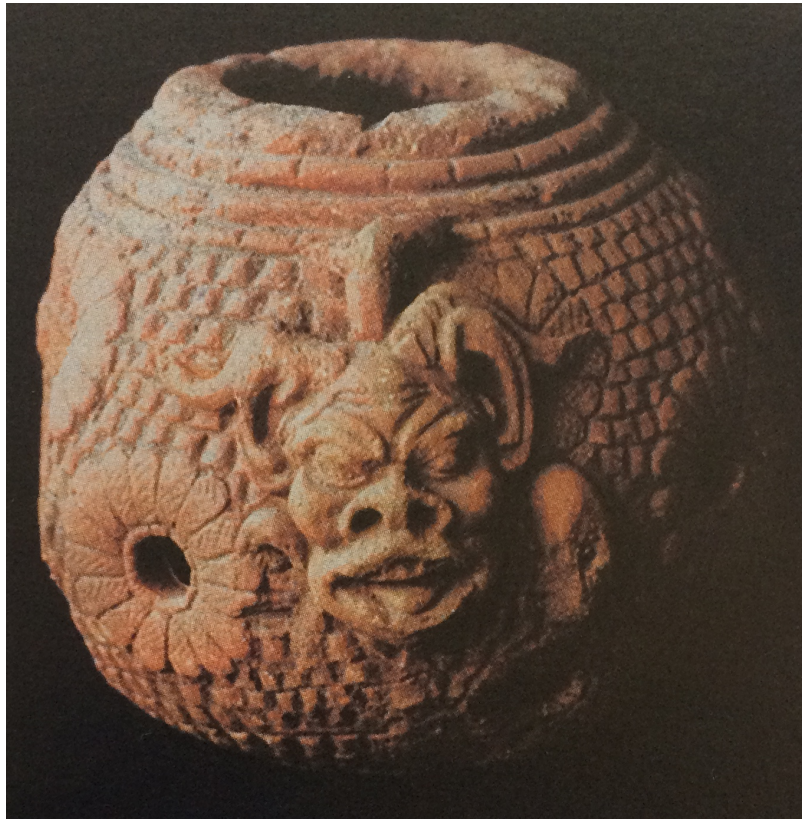


Figure 5. *Aroye Terracotta Vessel*, 14-15th century, Ife. Source: Suzanne Blier, *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power, and Identity*, c. 1300, Color plate 13.



Figure 6. Olówè of Isè-Èkiti, *Palace Doors*, 1925, wood, pigment, beads, metal. Source: Babatunde Lawal, *Visions of Africa: Yoruba*, Plate 8.



Figure 7. *Taíno Three-pointer Cemi*, 15th-16th century, stone, Dominican Republic. Source: Fatima Bercht et al, *Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, Color plates 10 & 11.

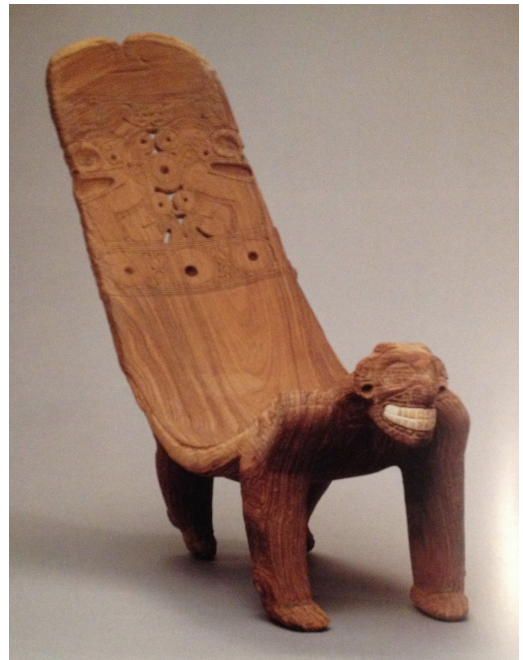


Figure 8. *Duho* (Taíno ceremonial seat), 16th century, wood, Dominican Republic. Source: Fatima Bercht et al., *Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, ed. Fatima Bercht et al., color plates 45 & 46.



Figure 9. *La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo* (Canine gargoyles), 16th century, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.



Figure 10. *Taíno dog cemi and amulet*, 15-16th century, Dominican Republic, clay and shell.
Source: Fatima Bercht et al., *Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, ed.
Fatima Bercht et al., Color plates 100 & 102.



Figure 11. *La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo* (Decorative beading), 16th century, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.



Figure 12: Calcified Coralline. Left: *Columns of La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo*, 16th century, Dominican Republic; Right: *Cemí stone*, 13th-15th century, Museo del Hombre Dominicano, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.



Figure 13. *La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo* (West façade & central nave), 16th century, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.



Figure 14. *Retablo de las Doce Columnas* (Altar of the Twelve Columns), 17th century. Source: Boris Kester. "Altar of Catedral Primada de las Américas." *Around the World in 80 Clicks*.

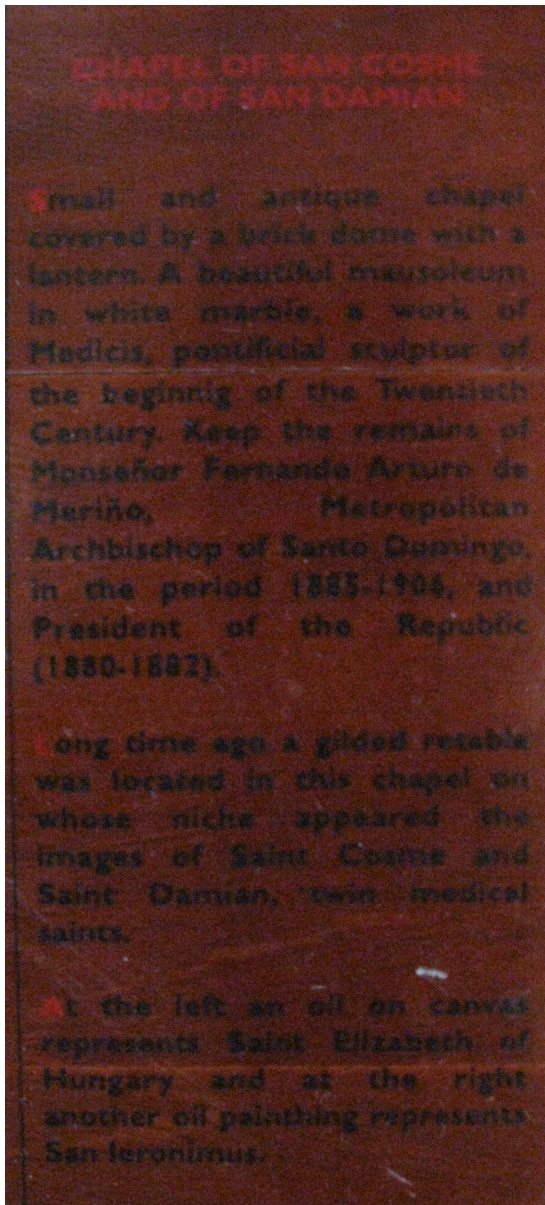


Figure 15. *La Catedral Primada de Santo Domingo* (The Chapel of the twin Saints Cosme and Damian), 16th-17th century, Dominican Republic. Source: Author's images.

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