Chapter 8
Spanish Shipwrecks on the Dominican Republic's Coasts

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1 Introduction

The large number of shipwrecks on the coast of Dominican Republic has a double explanation. On the one hand, it was the place that Christopher Columbus chose to establish a settlement, first temporary and then permanent, from which to explore the territory he had just discovered and from which other Spanish navigators would depart for different parts of America throughout the sixteenth century. And on the other, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dominican coast would be a place of passage for the galleon fleets between Spain, New Spain, and Tierra Firme. If we add to these unique circumstances that, between the months of June and September, the entire area is the constant epicenter of tropical storms and hurricanes; and that its seabed is full of shallow shoals and reefs, we have the perfect environment for this coast to be among the most shipwrecked in the Caribbean.

The first remains of Spanish-sunken ships, that we know of, were located by the fishermen of Miches who found ancient objects among their nets, recovering them to decorate their houses or sell them as souvenirs of the seabed. In the early 1970s, these increasingly frequent and valuable discoveries alerted the Dominican authorities who tried to put an end to the looting, guarding the coasts, and requisitioning all the historical objects stolen from the sea. On Saturday, June 26, 1976, the national newspaper, Listín Diario, published the discovery and recovery, by the Dominican Navy, of 39 cannons from a sunken ship in the Bay of Samaná (Perez Montás 1997).

The same year, the American treasure hunter, Tracy Bowden, who was then on the island investigating the location of the Battle of Palenque, examined the material

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recovered by the Navy, stating that they belonged to a Spanish ship. At the same time, the Dominican researcher, Pedro J. Santiago, identified the shipwreck as one of the ships of *la flota española de azogues* (the Spanish mercury fleet) lost in 1724, an event described by the Banilejo chronicler Joseph Peguero, in 1762 (Borrell 1983a). Given the significance of the find, the directors of the Museo de las Casas Reales and the National Directorate of Parks, Eugenio Pérez Montás, and Manuel Valverde Podestá, respectively, made the decision to launch an Underwater Archaeology Program to rescue the assets of shipwrecks that were being looted and exhibited in Dominican museums as part of the colonial history of the country.

To carry out this program, two contracts were signed with two treasure hunting companies: first with Tracy Bowden, and later with Burt Webber. According to these contracts, the costs of the future rescue operations would be assumed by their companies, Caribe Salvage S.A. and SeaQuest International Inc., with the Dominican State receiving 50% of the recovered assets. Of the 50% belonging to the salvors, the government reserved the right to acquire all the pieces that, due to their historical or archaeological value, should be accessioned into the collections of the Museum of the Royal Houses, compensating the salvors with coin recovered from the same shipwrecks. The National Parks Directorate was responsible for coordinating this program, while the *Museo de las Casas Reales* and the Cultural Property Inventory Centre were in charge of the historical aspects and the inventory, conservation, and restoration of the recovered material (Perez Montás 1997).

In 1979, the President of the Republic created the *Comisión de Rescate Arqueológico Submarino* (Submarine Archaeological Rescue Commission), based in the *Museo de las Casas Reales* (Museum of the Royal Houses), appointing the Dominican architect and pioneer diver, Pedro J. Borrell, as the first secretary. He would demand that the salvage companies, in strict compliance with the clauses of their contracts, permit the presence of a state official for the duration of each intervention and that the works and inventories of salvaged material were published to make the results known with total transparency.

Although these early interventions very positively disseminated the importance of submerged history, the damage caused by the treasure hunters' recovery methodology was irreparable. Their underwater work techniques did not consider the documentation of the archaeological context of the shipwreck, but simply the recovery of the objects, with a selection based on the financial value of the objects rather than their historical or archaeological value. A common method of removing sediment underwater consisted of the use of large articulated metal elbows or "mailboxes" connected to the ship's propellers to direct a strong current of water toward the seabed leading to the violent scouring of seabed sediments. Explosives were even used to destroy the coral masses that covered the shipwrecks.

In no case was there an archaeological project, nor specialists to undertake the lifting and conservation of the recovered objects. On very few occasions were the wooden remains belonging to the hulls of the ships drawn or surveyed, and in none of the interventions were the sites squared, nor were the objects accurately positioned in their archaeological context. In addition, the extraction of some pieces, such as ceramics or concreted metals, and the elimination of the calcareous and coral crust that had protected the shipwrecks for centuries, left the most sensitive

materials, such as wood, leather, bone, or esparto grass discovered, causing immediate destruction.

For a few years the work of this type of commercial rescue companies, almost all North Americans, coexisted with those of the first submarine historians and archaeologists who began to work in the country until, finally, less than a decade ago, contracts with companies of rescue were eliminated to give way only to agreements with universities, foundations, research centers, and museums. Some of the most relevant works carried out with archaeological methodology have been those carried out by the Indiana University Center for Underwater Science, under the direction of Charles D. Beeker, on the shipwreck of the *Nuestra Señora de Begoña* ship and on the Quedagh Merchant pirate ship; those of the Institute of Nautical Archeology of Texas, in the Dutch ship of pipes, directed by Jerome Lynn Hall, or the works of the team of the Project *Galeones de Azogue*, coordinated by Cruz Apestegui, Manu Izaguirre, Pedro J. Borrell, and the author of this work, on the ship *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, in the Bay of Samaná.

Currently, the Dominican government is working on the ratification of the UNESCO Underwater Archaeological Heritage Convention, and on the reopening of the Royal Shipyard Museum, dedicated monographically to shipwrecks and the maritime history of the Dominican Republic, with a selection of 1300 pieces' exceptional items corresponding to twelve shipwrecks from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. The new museum, financed with a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank and carried out under the direction of the Ministry of Tourism, presents a modern exhibition, in an air-conditioned space, with magnificent conservation display cases and numerous exhibition resources, such as audiovisuals, models, recreations, interactive, and aquariums. Its opening to the public, scheduled for September 2018, will undoubtedly mark a milestone in the dissemination of underwater archaeology in the Caribbean.

In turn, the National Office of Underwater Cultural Heritage, dependent on the Dominican Ministry of Culture, which preserves some 100,000 historical objects from different sinks, is preparing the Underwater Archaeological Charter of the Dominican Coast, to have a complete and valued inventory of historical shipwrecks, evaluating its state of conservation and its possible risks of destruction or looting.

For our part, the members of the *Galeones de Azogue* Project have carried out in recent years a systematic search of archival information on Spanish shipwrecks, locating documents related to 53 sunken ships off the Dominican coast, from two ships of the Pinzón brothers from 1500 to the ship *San Juan y San Severo*, shipwrecked off the coast of Santo Domingo in 1759.

2 Main Historical Shipwrecks Found on the Dominican Coast

Next, we take a chronological tour of the main historical shipwrecks of the Dominican coast that have been located, intervened through recoveries or archaeological excavations, and of which materials that are currently preserved in the

Laboratory of Underwater Cultural Heritage of the Dominican Republic have been rescued or in the new Museum of the Royal Shipyards (MAR).

3 The Fleet of Nicolas de Ovando in the Sixteenth Century

Nicolás de Ovando arrived in Santo Domingo to replace Francisco de Bobadilla in the government of Hispaniola, who in turn had removed the command from Christopher Columbus by the order of the Catholic Monarchs. Ovando arrived at the port of Santo Domingo on April 15, 1502, after an eventful journey, with some 2500 people embarked on thirty-two ships. Prepared a part of the fleet to return to Spain and ignoring the words of Columbus, who had announced a strong storm, a dozen ships left Santo Domingo. When crossing the Mona Channel, at the height of Saona Island, the presaged storm sank part of the fleet, saving only three of the ships and Francisco de Bobadilla, a staunch enemy of Columbus, died. The strong tropical storm also affected Hispaniola with great damage to the city and the loss of many lives. In 1983, the treasure hunter company SeaQuest International Inc. organized an expedition to search for the remains of this fleet in the area between Saona Island and Catalinita Island, an extremely complex passage in which several objects were found that due to their typology they could belong to one of Ovando's ships, including two artillery pieces: a falconet and a bombard (Fig. 8.1).

Other objects recovered by the Anchor Research & Salvage rescue company, directed by the underwater explorer Robert H. Pritchett, on the coast of Punta Cana, also date from the same century. They are objects that correspond to these first commercial navigations, among which the most notable, a magnificent collection of pewter plates and bowls, several bronze candlesticks, and some extraordinary sets of measures that were used to accurately weigh and value the merchandise. Some personal items were also found in the shipwreck, such as a gold ornament in the shape of a small, decorated basket, a ring, and a decorative bell (Fig. 8.2).

In the archive of the Indies of Seville, news of other sinkings corresponding to this century have been found shipwrecked in different parts of Hispaniola. In Montecristi, the ships *Salvadora* (1522), *Santa Catalina* (1551), and *Santiago* (1583); in Puerto Plata, the Pedro Muñíz ship (1526), the *San Miguel* (1551), and the *San Roque* and *Santa María de las Nieves* ships (1565); in Samaná, the ships *Santa Cruz* and *San Lucía* (1540) and *El Carmen* (1542); on the coasts of Santo Domingo, the ships *Santa María* (1541), *San Juan* (1549), *Santiago* (1552), *Santa Catalina* (1553), *San Pablo* (1553), *San Bartolomé* (1556), and *Consolación* (1564); and off the coasts of Haiti, a Rodrigo de Bastidas ship (1501), a Juan Gómez ship (1552), and the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* ship (1595).

Fig. 8.1 Lombard and falconet found in the vicinity of Saona Island exhibited in the Museum of the Royal Shipyards of Santo Domingo. (Photo Francis Soto)

Fig. 8.2 Set of weights with oriental decoration from the Punta Cana shipwreck exhibited in the Museum of the Royal Shipyards of Santo Domingo. (Photo: Carlos León)

4 The Galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Pura y Limpia Concepción*

In 1641, a fleet that loaded products brought from China by the route of the Manila Galleon, departed from Veracruz (Mexico). In front was the captain, the galleon *San Pedro y San Pablo*, commanded by Juan de Campos. At the end of the convoy, the admiral, *Nuestra Señora de la Pura y Limpia Concepción*, of 600 tons, built in Havana, in 1620, was sailing. In its warehouses it transported most of the monetary production of the mints of Mexico and Potosí de los last two years, nearly 25 tons of gold and silver, thousands of coins, and a large collection of top-quality ancient Ming porcelain (Fig. 8.3).

Nine days after stopping in Havana, a tropical storm hit the fleet, dispersing it. The galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Pura y Limpia Concepción* managed to save itself, but the ship was damaged. The galleon sailed uncontrollably trying to reach Puerto Rico until, on October 30, at 8:30 in the afternoon, it violently collided with reefs located north of the Dominican coast.

At four in the morning, the ship moved from the place where it had run aground and drifted aimlessly, carried by the wind, to another area of coral against which it collided violently again, this time from the stern. The hull was gradually flooded with water. The passengers and crew took refuge in the sterncastle, but there was no room for so many people. The captain ordered the urgent manufacture of several rafts from the ship's timbers to try to bring the people ashore. Despite attempts to save the crew, more than half lost their lives, in part due to attacks by sharks that flooded the area (Borrell 1983b). On November 11, the *Concepción* split permanently and sank among the coral reefs, about 15 m deep. The cargo was also lost, which was one of the greatest economic tragedies for the Spanish Crown of that century. A year later, the recovery of the cargo was attempted with the help of three ships, but a severe storm and continued harassment from several pirate ships led to the company being abandoned. In 1686, William Phips, a New England sailor, discovered the legend, located the shipwreck, and salvaged part of the cargo for the English Crown. He had the help of fishermen in the area who plunged freely with the help of ballast stones. In their dives, they managed to extract 64 tons of silver in coins and bullion, a good booty that he had to share with the English king in exchange for the title of Knight.

According to Phips' descriptions, the remains of the galleon were found in the middle of the reef, resting between three large heads of coral whose crests jutted out of the sea surface at low tide. Most of the timber had already disappeared, and the coral had grown so large over the remains that, had it not been for its canyons, it would never have been found. For three centuries, the admiral of the New Spain fleet was forgotten, although her cargo gave its name to the place that has since been known as the "Banco de la Plata." Jacques Yves Cousteau himself organized, in 1968, an expedition in search of the remains of the *Concepción*. The famous Calypso tried to find the shallows in which the Spanish galleon was trapped. After several weeks of work, Cousteau and his team of divers found four cannons, two anchors,

Fig. 8.3 Finds from the galleon Nuestra Señora de la Pura y Limpia Concepción, exhibited in the Museum of the Royal Shipyards of Santo Domingo, (**a**) Porcelain foo dog. (**b**) Ming porcelain plate, (**c**) Astrolabe. (Photos: Francis Soto)

and other objects, although they never confirmed whether they really came from *Nuestra Señora de la Pura y Limpia Concepción*.

In 1977, the rescue company SeaQuest International Inc., owned by Burt Webber, organized a localization campaign with the permission of the Dominican government using all kinds of technological means, but after several months of tracking

through the coral heads they decided to abandon the search. The following year they tried again with new historical information, and this time they found it. They recovered 60,000 silver coins from Philip IV, plates, trays, spoons, forks, silver ingots, swords, musket balls, kaolin pipes, iron levers, gold chains, a trunk with 1440 coins in a double bottom, jugs, and glass bottles. Years later, the North American company, Caribe Salvage S.A., of Tracy Bowden, signed a new contract to locate the historic ships between Samaná and Banco de la Plata. They had to move many more tons of earth than the previous ones to find three thousand more coins, jewels of great value, and a good part of the cargo in the form of Chinese porcelain.

The seventeenth century supposed how we see the consolidation of a constant trade between Asia, America, and Europe with key ports in Central America, such as Acapulco, Veracruz, Santo Domingo, or Havana an the proliferation of piracy in the Caribbean waters. These maritime routes and the struggles for their cargoes left numerous shipwrecks in Hispaniola. In addition to the aforementioned, our team have collected news of other sinkings: in Saona Island, a ship wrecked in 1603, the *Candelaria* ship and a filibote (1626); In Santo Domingo, the ships *Santa María de Gracia* (1611), *Nuestra Señora de la Regla* (1625), a *urca* and a galleon sunk in 1658; and on the South Coast of Hispaniola, *Nuestra Señora de las Aguas Santas* (1654).

4.1 The Azogue Shipwreck in 1724

The Azogues fleet transported mercury from Almadén (Ciudad Real, Spain) to the port of Veracruz every year or every two years, to later take the mercury to the American mines and carry out the process of amalgamation of the gold and silver extracted. That year, 1724, the quicksilver left Cádiz on July 13. Their commander, Lieutenant General Baltasar de Guevara, gave the order to leave for the west, although the lack of wind made them lose two days at the height of the city of Rota. As far as the Canary Islands, the ships that made up the fleet the *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y San Antonio*, with 52 guns, and the *Conde de Tolosa*, with 60 guns, were escorted by the frigate captain Vicente de la Torre, to continue the trip with no other protection than that of his own artillery and his embarked infantry. In its cellars were 8000 quintals of mercury from Almadén, packed in leather *baldres*, placed in small wooden barrels and these, in turn, in wooden boxes. In addition, both galleons transported a batch of bulls, pieces of iron, plowshares, boxes with nails to build a galleon in the Havana shipyard, and cargo of individuals: oil, wine, brandy, and saffron (León Amores and Apestegui Cardenal 1996; Apestegui et al. 1997).

After 37 days of navigation, they sighted the island of Puerto Rico, where they rested for four days while they repaired the *Tolosa* mast that had departed on the journey. On August 23, the commander gave the order to leave for Veracruz (Mexico), the final destination of the trip they never reached. The *Guadalupe* set sail and prepared to leave the cove, however, the *Tolosa* did not set sail. A group of Franciscan religious refused to board because they suffered from a strong sea

hangover. A few hours later, the captain managed to convince them to come aboard, promising them good weather and a magnificent navigation. During the night, as they crossed the Mona Passage and sailed north of Espanola Island, the north wind rose. At dawn it seemed impossible to overcome the cape that closes the bay of Samaná. The two ships kept fighting against the north wind that pushed them against the reefs. In the midst of the storm the *Guadalupe* dropped her anchors to hold the ship, but the maneuver was unsuccessful. Suddenly, it collided sharply with the bottom. In the impact, she lost the rudder and suffered serious damage to the stem. She had run aground. More than 80 people jumped into the water to try to save their lives. The *Tolosa* was already out of sight, it also hit the reefs and sank violently at a depth of 20 m. About 600 people died. The next day, with the weather calmer, the commander of the *Guadalupe* decided to take a boat to reach the land and call for help, but a wave overturned the boat and Guevara drowned. Gabriel de Mendinueta, the captain, took charge of the situation despite being seriously injured. They decided then to throw the boat into the water and make several rafts and with them they managed to take everyone ashore.

On the beaches of Samaná, near the Jayán Point, they found the bodies of those who had jumped into the sea the night before. Three days after the shipwreck with no news from *Tolosa*, they decided to divide into groups to seek help by different routes. Some of them boarded the boat heading north, to a place where they believed there was a French port. Others, almost 300, walked south of the island, along the coast, hoping to one day reach Santo Domingo. The third group, which included the sick and injured, waited on the beach until, after 14 days, two shipwrecks from *Tolosa* who were wandering the beaches in search of food, found them and explained that their boat had sunk and that they had all died. Crabs and shells became the only food that kept them alive, in addition to some barrels with wine and brandy that they took from the remains of *Guadalupe*. The third group, made up of some 250 people, also decided to walk along the coast to the south. On the way, dying, without water, without food, and under the extreme heat of the tropical summer, passengers, soldiers, and sailors died (Peguero 1762).

The end of the tragedy of this group came on September 20, when they met some fishermen who came from the town of Higüey, in the interior of the island. The silver master, Francisco Barrero Peláez, then set off on horseback from there to Santo Domingo where he learned that the first 300 who had left the beach had been located a few days before in front of Catalina Island, more than 300 km from the place of the shipwreck, by a small boat that gave notice to the governor of Santo Domingo. Nothing else was known about the boat that left Santo Domingo, when the sloops that left Santo Domingo reached the Bay of Samaná, they found seven survivors from Tolosa who were still on the top of the boat that was sticking out of the water, after 32 days without water or food. A month after arriving in the city, Francisco Barrero Peláez wrote a letter to Don Antonio de Sopeña, president of the *Casa de Contratación de Cádiz*, recounting the shipwreck and the irreparable loss of the King's mercury. This letter, preserved in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville, has served to reconstruct step by step the sinking of the Azogues fleet in 1724.

After 253 years of that tragic event, a group of fishermen from Miches found some jars of oil and other objects from *Guadalupe*. The Navy learned of this discovery and requisitioned the looted material, forcing the fishermen to tell them the place of the shipwreck (Fig. 8.4).

That same year, an agreement was reached with Tracy Bowden's rescue company, Caribe Salvage S.A., for his team to recover objects from *Guadalupe* and find the remains of *Tolosa*. Under the water, you could still see the remains of the two galleons with the boxes that kept the mercury barrels perfectly stowed, boxes with nails, the large barrels with iron pieces, amphorae of oil and tar, cannons with their ammunition, swords, pistols, and thousands of personal items, including many religious medallions, crucifixes and amulets of the embarked Franciscans, a spectacular collection of decorated glass vases, a magnificent Windmills table clock, coins, surgeon's instruments, valuable gold and diamond jewelry, necklaces, brooches, rings, earrings, and a silver bracelet found in *Tolosa* with the engraved name of Antonia Franco (Fig. 8.5).

Between 1994 and 1995, the team of the Azogue Galleons project led by Cruz Apestegui documented the remains of the *Guadalupe* and followed the investigations into this shipwreck, which continues today.

5 *The Frigate* Nuestra Señora de Begoña

A year after the disaster of the quicksilver fleet, a Spanish frigate called *Nuestra Señora de Begoña*, alias Tres Hermanas, ran aground in Caleta de Saucedo, on the coast of Santo Domingo, in a place where there was a small Taino village. The frigate had left Caracas on April 30, 1725, bound for Spain, when a strong storm reached it without being able to take refuge in any port. On May 21, the captain, Teodoro

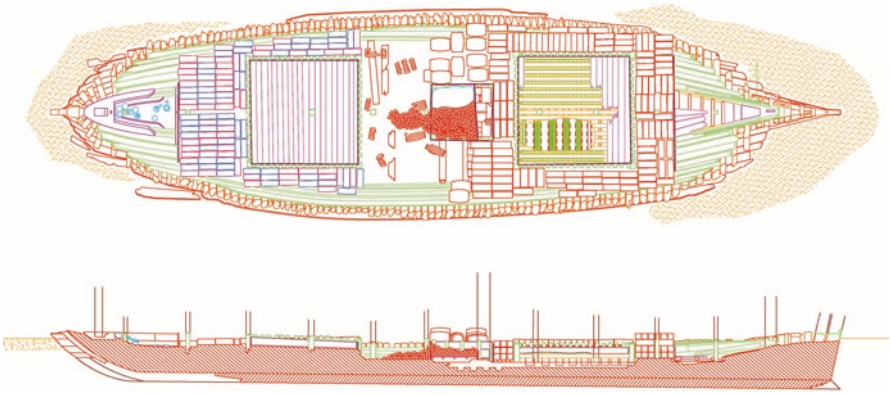

Fig. 8.4 Plan of the shipwreck of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. (Drawn by Cruz Apestegui and Manu Izaguirre)

Fig. 8.5 Windmills table clock found on the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and exhibited in the Museum of the Royal Shipyards of Santo Domingo. (Photo: Carlos León)

Garcés de Salazar, seeing that he could not manage the ship, decided to take it close to land to try to save lives and goods. The ship was wrecked, half-sunk off a small beach between cliffs, but it was able to save the entire crew and most of the cargo of cocoa, wood, and silver coins it was carrying. However, in the investigation carried out by the governor of Santo Domingo, Francisco de la Rocha Ferrer after the shipwreck, a large volume of contraband coins was discovered that the crew hid on the ship. The captain was arrested, charged, and jailed for three years. A team of divers from the area then recovered personal belongings, coins, and two anchors from the frigate, but the difficulties in diving at that time forced the search to stop.

In 2009, a team led by Charles D. Beeker, of Indiana University, in collaboration with The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, The Ely Lilly & Company Foundation, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), located the site and has been working on this shipwreck for several years with interesting finds, including concrete blocks of silver coins from the mints of Mexico and Lima, musket ammunition, a cannon, Spanish ceramics, Taino ceramics, a barrel tap of wine, and silver dishes with remains of the trunk that transported them, among others. In addition to the findings at sea, Bekeer's team has carried out extensive historical research work in the Spanish archives to learn firsthand the testimonies of the survivors and the court records. Some sailors mention that the coins were in bags of one

thousand to one thousand pesos, a common measure in the transport of Spanish silver coins. This has been verified in some finds under the sea that effectively still preserve the shape of the bags and contain a thousand silver coins.

Among the remains of this shipwreck, the state of preservation of the elements that made up the kitchen is surprising, huge metal cauldrons with their lids, saucepans, pans, saucepans, and skimmers, which tell us about the food on eighteenth-century ships. Another group of recovered objects have to do with navigation, among them a magnificent sextant made of wood, bronze and ivory, and several pointed compasses. But if something characterizes this shipwreck, it is the weapons and clothing accessories of French soldiers and sailors: swords, sabers, buttons, buckles, insignia, pectorals, a rifle, a pistol, a wooden holster, flintstones, and ammunition of different calibers. Also, as in other shipwrecks, the presence of wine bottles and common tableware, ceramic, or pewter, is very numerous. The discovery of the key to a wine barrel in perfect condition and several bottles of wine still with the liquid inside is surprising. Research work carried out in archives tells us about other ships sunk in the eighteenth century off the coast of Hispaniola: in Montecristi, the ship *San Sebastián* (1782); in Puerto Plata, a shipwrecked urca in 1718; off the coast of Santo Domingo, 13 ships sank in 1751, the ship *San Juan y San Severo* (1759), *San José y las Ánimas* (1784); a sloop sank off the South Coast in 1731.

6 The Future of the Underwater Cultural Heritage in Dominican Republic

These historic shipwrecks are a sample of the archaeological potential of the Dominican coasts. Their future depends on the decisions that the government will take in the coming years with regard to the implementation of a true master plan on the investigation, protection, surveillance, and dissemination of this unique heritage. The termination of contracts with treasure hunter companies has undoubtedly been an essential step on this path, but it is also true that institutional neglect and the scarcity of resources available to the country can be so damaging, like looting. And this problem is aggravated each year with the progressive increase in the number of sport divers exploring Dominican waters, and with some large-scale port infrastructures that threaten with the dredging of huge extensions of the seabed in hitherto virgin areas.

The model followed so far by the Dominican government has generated a varied typology of treasure hunters and underwater pseudo-archaeologists who join the clandestine plunderers. Many of them have sufficient infrastructure to remove sediments and deepen the deposits, causing great damage to shipwrecks. They have boats with their permits in order, diving equipment with their qualifications, compressors, metal detectors, ROVs, side-scan sonar, magnetometers, cranes, and other accessories. Among these companies are some that are publicly traded and have known capital partners or shareholders, and other sole proprietorships or family

businesses. They tend to alternate wreck "rescue" jobs with other professional diving jobs, or even rent their resources to third-party companies. Given their size, they are companies that hire historians who work in the archives with the aim of gathering information on the shipwrecks, sometimes through intermediary companies, so as to not give many clues when it comes to state ships on state missions. Pseudo-archaeologists, quite numerous in these waters, usually work under the umbrella of renowned universities, although they are not specialized professionals, or they are in other subjects that are very different and far from archaeology. They usually collaborate with international foundations or with sponsoring brands. Their lack of scientific criteria leads them to report great findings with little proven evidence. In general, they are not very destructive interventions since, almost always, they focus on a specific shipwreck and not on an area, as rescue companies do. In addition, due to their pedagogical nature, it is common for them to work with university volunteers and therefore, their campaigns are usually short-lived. In most cases they do not have large media and tend to publish their results, although with weakly founded conclusions.

For our part, those of us who make up the team of the Galeones de Azogue project, which began its activity in the Dominican Republic in 1994, have fought against these forms of work by proposing as an alternate a different model of research, strictly archaeological, on the ship *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* with periodic cargo documentation campaigns and studies on architecture and shipbuilding, publishing the results in various books and research articles and giving numerous conferences in different museums and universities. The fact of working on two ships that had already been investigated by a rescue company in the 1970s has not been an impediment to continue obtaining a large amount of information and documentation from the two sites. This new archaeological information has been the basis for generating new hypotheses about this shipwreck, about the transport of mercury, and about the Creole shipbuilding of the eighteenth century.

In 1997, we participated in the *Huracán 1724* exhibition, financed by the La Caixa foundation, with an innovative museum proposal, presented at the Barcelona Science Museum and at the Cosmo-Caixa Museum in Madrid, with a selection of archaeological materials Dominican underwater. Between 2016 and 2017, we participated in the selection of all the materials for the new Royal Shipyard Museum (MAR) and in the technical direction of the museum's contents, drawing, among others, the construction plans of a longitudinal section, at size real, from the first battery of the ship *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, which shows how the artillerymen fought, slept, and ate. We have also directed the documentary "The Shipwreck of the Azogues fleet of 1724" and drafted the "Museum Guide" with a clear educational vocation. This museum, modernized within the framework of the Colonial City Tourism Promotion Program directed by the architect Maribel Villalona is, today, the country's greatest commitment to the dissemination of underwater archeology, and will be the perfect setting for the future ratification of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, announced by the Minister of Culture and president of the Dominican National Commission for

UNESCO, Pedro Vergés Cimán, at the National Workshop on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, held in Santo Domingo, in December 2017, with the collaboration of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID).

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