THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS

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SOUTH AMERICA
PART 1

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Nature has often raised the most formidable barriers ever experienced by humans in their developments; oceans, deserts, forests, and mountains have served to divide and isolate peoples from the very beginnings of human existence. Landscapes have also presented situations that on the contrary have favored and even encouraged human interaction over vast areas. Maritime basins surrounded by continuous stretches of coastline are likely to have had this stimulating effect not only around their coastal periphery but also directly between various points across their shores, when adequate seafaring technology had become available. This is not a matter of environmental determinism but more properly of opportunistic circumstances.

The Mediterranean is a classic example. Peoples and civilizations emerging around its shores were bound from the earliest prehistoric times, not only by the uniformity in climate and landscape but culturally by a common Palaeolithic substratum, and later by a shared subsistence basis of wheat, olives, sheep, and marine fishes. Although political integration was only once and briefly accomplished by the Romans, the area never escaped a cultural interdependency that at times bounded France to the Holy Land, or Spain to Morocco.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS

In the New World the only geographical setting that could have led to a similar situation is the Caribbean Sea. This unique maritime basin is essentially a division of the Atlantic Ocean that overlaps both North and South America; indeed, a true maritime basin even extends as far north as the Gulf of Mexico (see Map 8.1). The more precise boundaries of the Caribbean Sea originate in the north at the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico.
The Caribbean Region: 3000–1500 B.C.E.

- Blades and flakes
- Shell gouges
- Edge grinders
- Archaeological site or locality
- Culture area boundary
- Southern boundary of the Caribbean region

Map 8.1

Early ceramic Tecomate Tradition
Early ceramic in Caribbean Area: the Saladoid Tradition
Early ceramic in Mesoamerica's Caribbean shores
and Belize, reaching south as far as the island of Trinidad and the delta of the Orinoco River in Venezuela. The mainland of the South American continent set the Caribbean’s shores to the west, and the West Indian islands mark its eastern and northern boundaries in the form of a massive barrier to the open Atlantic. Continuous communication was at least potentially feasible all around its periphery even before European contacts, and despite stretches of difficult coastlines, simple open boats could progress along the coasts even without sails. Overland communication along coastal plains and valleys must also be considered in spreading peoples, commerce, and ideas to the entire region.

At the time of the earliest European contacts, communication by land or by sea was regularly maintained between almost all contiguous points of the periphery of the Caribbean Sea. The highlands of Guatemala were in touch with Central America as far away as Costa Rica, mainly across well-traveled overland trails. Contacts between Panama and the Caribbean lowlands of Colombia – that is, between lower Central America and South America – are also known to have existed, albeit infrequently, by either land or sea, possibly across the Gulf of Darien. From Colombia to western Venezuela, a long-established overland route out of the Magdalena lowlands followed the Río Cesar and Río Ranchería along the foot of the Andes leading to the Goajira Peninsula, and bypassing the high mountains of the Sierra de Santa Marta. Further east, all the Caribbean islands, including the Bahamas, maintained continuous and regular contacts with simple watercraft. This is also well illustrated by the historic Island Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, whose peoples are well known to have regularly plied the sea from Puerto Rico to the Guianas in the east, and the Cumana Area of Venezuela to the west, in their simple dugout canoes.

The Orinoco River in Venezuela opened communication beyond the coast from not only the Venezuelan Llanos but also the heart of the Amazonian Basin itself through the interconnected systems of the Río Negro and the Casiquiare Canal – hence, the important Amazonian element in the development of cultures in the eastern parts of the Caribbean region that must never be ignored. Accordingly, the Gulf of Paria that today separates Trinidad from the mainland must be seen as a major crossroad of trade and influences reaching far into the Guianas and the Amazon. The only areas where contacts seem to have never occurred are the narrow channels between Cuba and Yucatan or Florida, each within a few kilometers of the Greater Antilles. Likewise, it may be possible to
identify an area of less frequent communication between the Maracaibo area of Venezuela and its central and eastern coast, where the aridity of the coastal region seems to have been a major impediment to regular coastal navigation. Yet the historical situation suggests that communication in the ancient Caribbean consisted of little more than a linear coasting navigation; there are no historical records of circumnavigation or direct crossings ever taking place among its native peoples between the mainland and the islands.

The Caribbean Sea

As the unifying element of this entire region of the New World, the Caribbean Sea is recorded as the world’s second largest sea (with its surface area covering some 1,900,000 km², about two-thirds the size of the Mediterranean). It expands in the form of a broad T-shaped configuration, which from east to west reaches 2,735 kilometers, and 805 to 1,287 kilometers from north to south, the widest distance being between Haiti and Panama. Its deep ocean floor (an average 2,400 m) is noted for its extremely deep trenches (7,685 m in the Cayman Trench south of Cuba) and for broad basins separated by submerged ridges and platforms, which are at the origins of many smaller islands and reefs, located mostly near its mainland coasts or its major islands. There are no major isolated islands in the middle of the Caribbean sea, if we except the smaller Cayman Islands south of Cuba, which seem never to have been occupied in prehistoric times, and a few major gulfs or peninsulas along its coasts. The small Jamaica keys that stretch from Nicaragua to Jamaica are a series of barren and waterless sand bars and reefs unfit for human occupation.

Of particular importance for early marine transportation is the nature of its winds and currents. The entire area is dominated by easterly trade winds that push warm surface currents west, then north through the Caribbean Sea; water flows out through the Yucatan Channel to the Gulf of Mexico. A general east to west pattern dominates the flow of the Caribbean. The hurricane season from August to November makes it unlikely that the period was favored for island-oriented voyages; an element of seasonality is therefore indicated in the area’s potential for voyages at sea. During the periods covered by this chapter, climate and environment were stable and comparable to modern conditions. Sea levels stabilized around 5000 B.C.E., but local variations, possibly in the
Louis Allaire

order of several meters, may have occurred because of tectonic activity or shore erosion in areas most likely to have been occupied by human settlements. No land bridges ever existed between any points of the Caribbean Basin within the time of its human occupation.

A Caribbean Landscape

There is something undeniably unique and distinctively “Caribbean” that is shared by the region as a whole, be it the coast of Yucatan in Mexico, the island of Antigua in the Lesser Antilles, or Cartagena in Colombia. Like the Mediterranean, one associates the Caribbean with distinctive characteristics of climate and landscape, natural resources, and basic nutrition. This reality should not be ignored, but it certainly oversimplifies the actual diversity in its environment. The entire area lies within the tropics, where temperatures average 27°C on the islands and seldom fall below 24°C. Temperatures vary in altitude, however, for those areas with major mountain ranges; this is especially the case for Central America and northern South America, where it is usual to differentiate between the hot tierra caliente of the lowlands, the temperate tierra templada above 750 meters, and the tierra fría, or “cold” area above 1,800 meters. Various regions are affected differently by a seasonal pattern of rainfall, felt more especially on the mainland where rain occurs mostly between June and October. This period is the hurricane season in the northern part of the region, especially on the Atlantic watershed. This serves as a reminder that the potential for catastrophic events is ever present throughout the Caribbean region. Volcanism is still active along an axis that runs from Guatemala through Central America with a more or less parallel counterpart through the Lesser Antilles; major earthquakes may occur anywhere at any time. Exposure and topography affect precipitation in the islands, producing drier ecological systems on lower islands where seasonal water shortages are a problem even today.

Environmental diversity is well represented in Central America, where five major vegetation zones are represented. This ranges from dense tropical rain forest on the Caribbean lowlands to the mangrove belt along its coastline, in sharp contrast to the Pacific littoral, which is much drier with its deciduous woodlands and patches of grasslands. Cooler high altitudes are covered with a more temperate pine and oak vegetation that degrades into scrub and cactus in arid sectors of the uplands.

The Caribbean coastline of northern South America also displays a
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marked contrast between the humid conditions of the Magdalena Basin in the lowlands of Colombia to the arid climate of the coast of Venezuela. Humid conditions prevail throughout most of the Caribbean islands, which are in many ways similar to Central America, with the exception of those without sufficient relief. Once covered by a lush tropical rain forest, the islands today suffer from extensive deforestation; Cuba, however, is mostly dominated by grasslands.

The coastal areas of the Caribbean Basin offer a rich variety of natural resources and raw materials significant for prehistoric populations both on the mainland and the islands. These include essentially minerals, such as copper and gold, and rocks, such as flint and obsidian for making tools, as well as many types of semiprecious stones (amethyst, carnelian, jade, crystals), hard rocks for making axes, and even salt. All these had the potential for the development of extensive trading networks. Obsidian, while widely traded in many parts of the world, was limited to Mesoamerica and Central America; it never reached the islands, thus depriving archaeologists of a valuable index of long-distance relationships. Jade, however, may have been more widely circulated, certainly between Mesoamerica and Central America, as well as potentially between Venezuela and the Greater Antilles and even out of the Amazon Basin. Salt, likewise, may have been traded widely through the Greater Antilles.

Whereas the more humid tropical areas of the Caribbean were associated with dense vegetation and an overwhelming fertility, enhanced in many places by deposits from a long history of volcanic eruptions, faunal resources in their distribution display a contrasting pattern between the mainland, where large mammals such as deer and peccaries were at all times prized as valuable suppliers of much needed and often scarce proteins, and the islands, which beyond Trinidad only supported an impoverished fauna that never allowed the dispersal of large animals. The islands’ land fauna was limited to small rodents or reptiles, such as the iguana; this paucity was somewhat balanced, however, by the richness of marine and shore resources, which the islands shared with other parts of the Caribbean coasts where shallow waters have allowed the development of mangrove swamps, reef formations, and their abundant populations of fish and shellfish, or crustaceans. The less common sea mammal, the manatee, whose hard woodlike ribs were traded all across the Caribbean, was valued everywhere not only as food but as raw material for small carvings.
Cultural Divisions

Anthropologists have long speculated on the cultural-historical significance of the geographical situation particular to the Caribbean region. By the 1940s the concept of a circum-Caribbean area as a distinctive cultural phenomenon, or type of culture, was introduced by Paul Kirchhoff and developed by Julian Steward in the now classic *Handbook of South American Indians*, which was published by the Smithsonian Institution. The hypothesis sought to explain the many striking sociocultural similarities encountered around the entire periphery of the Caribbean region, dominated in early historic times by chiefdom-level societies, as the result of common origins and shared history, which everywhere revealed intriguing features that appeared to be derived from the distant highland societies of the Central Andes.

The circum-Caribbean hypothesis may have been an oversimplified theory in the light of more recent evidence, especially on the earlier prehistory of the area, and the more varied potential for influences that now challenges the preeminent role formerly attributed to the Andes. Indeed, a considerable amount of diversity must not be ignored among the original human populations of the Caribbean region, especially as they appeared at the eve of European contacts. Three major culture areas, each characterized by different levels of cultural and social developments, converged on its shores: (1) the *Mesoamerican Area* in Mexico and Belize and the part of Central America most influenced by Mesoamerica — that is, El Salvador and northern or western Honduras, with what proved to be a shifting frontier through the centuries; (2) the *Intermediate Area*, which includes those areas that lie between the high civilizations of Mesoamerica and those of the Central Andes, and which in the Caribbean region include lower Central America as well as the lowlands of Colombia and the western and central coasts of Venezuela; and (3) the *Caribbean Area* proper, which includes not only the West Indian islands and the Bahamas but the eastern coast of Venezuela and the lower Orinoco River. The latter area witnessed the highest degree of diversity, ranging from the sophisticated Taino chiefdoms of the Greater Antilles to simple agricultural village societies, and ultimately to "marginal" groups of hunters and collectors, best represented by the Warraus of the Orinoco delta. This diversified situation also characterized much of the earlier periods of Caribbean prehistory. One must not ignore either, because of its influential and fundamental role, the *Amazonian or Tropi-
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The geographical unity of the Caribbean, as opposed to the Mediterranean, is a phenomenon that has been largely ignored by archaeologists, even within the context of the circum-Caribbean theory. The task may have appeared as amounting to an idle collage of disjuncted local sequences of unrelated prehistoric peoples and cultures with little more
than a documentary interest to offer. Yet the potential for a more comprehensive approach is enticing and well worth exploring but without any preconceived ideas about distant interaction or claims of trans-Caribbean contacts, which have been occasionally raised but which are more often spurious and unsubstantiated by facts.

The story to be told is an anonymous history, without names of rulers and their peoples and nations. The prehistoric past, with the exception of areas of civilization in Mesoamerica, evolves before the formation of major states and ruling dynasties, when class struggles and political decisions were not yet the basis for social changes and economic developments. It is more a material and domestic history that archaeologists are able to unravel, more akin to a natural history in which the documents may be mute yet remain relatively unbiased, and in which social and cultural changes and progress in technology and subsistence play the major roles. These realities are often reflected in cases of human expansion in search of new lands to colonize, leading at times to a degree of militarism and warfare, as well as to the hazards and vagaries of human interaction and communication over vast distances and varied environments through the ages. It is in such events that archaeologists hope to be able to detect the interplay of new ideas and new peoples acting on particular environments that leads to all those cultural and social changes that make the backbone of human prehistory.

In the Caribbean region proper, more of the story concerns three basic phenomena: (1) the spread of agricultural colonization to island environments, and the intensification of these systems to support larger populations; (2) contacts with and role of neighboring great powers in challenging local adaptations; and (3) the distinctive rise of chiefdom societies and their varied, sophisticated, and often enigmatic art forms.

This ancient past may appear as an historiography without writing, yet it is not entirely without its inscriptions; as a history of form, very much an art history, archaeology seeks to identify changes in style and meaning recorded on the otherwise mute material remains revealed in these innumerable potsherds and ceramic styles that may seem to appear too frequently and in such fastidious manner throughout this chapter. Their role is no mere display of worthless erudition; it testifies to our only mute messages from the past. The native voice of these ancient Caribbean peoples may have been silenced; they nevertheless have left their very own images and symbols, certainly to be variously interpreted.
and understood by archaeologists, yet never to be distorted as historical documents might have been. They remain as the only testimony for changes and interaction whose other dimensions may have forever vanished. They are still vividly present as a global recollection of the dynamic trajectory of these populations, who for more than 5,000 years existed in a closed universe left entirely to their own devices until the fatal years that brought Europeans to their shores.

In this perspective, the Caribbean region may be looked at as part of a “World System” – that is, as a part of the world that may have been affected by events which occurred among the most developed and more powerful of its elements, under the assumption that more developed peoples, qualifying as centres of cultural developments, are more likely to have sent influences to greater distances than is the case for peoples of more modest achievements distributed around their periphery, without inferring necessarily any economic interdependency. Certainly the powerful Mesoamerican states that bordered the Caribbean region had a profound influence on their immediate neighbors, as illustrated by Central America. The more precise role of the powerful Andean civilizations and their complex periphery, which rises above the Caribbean region proper, is still more difficult to assess. There are suggestions that it may also have been active, perhaps even as far as the Greater Antilles, and there are hints that the Caribbean area is the ground where the two centers of civilization may have overlapped, albeit ever so briefly.

Although political integration was certainly never achieved in the Caribbean, except perhaps at the very dawn of the colonial period under Spanish rule, it may still be worthwhile to look at this geographical phenomenon as an integrative force in the hope of understanding better its role in the course of human interaction and cultural diffusion throughout its considerable and complex prehistoric past, as the following survey of its major prehistoric events illustrates.

**Villagers and Colonists: 4000/3000–1500 B.C.E.**

The emergence of a circum-Caribbean reality dates to the peopling of the Caribbean islands and to the beginnings on the mainland of sedentary village life and its close association with pottery making and eventually agriculture. This may be seen as nothing less than a major revolution in the early prehistory of the Caribbean region because sedentarily marks
the beginnings of population growth and its impact on the later course of social developments. The earliest peopling of the Caribbean Islands is also the last major human expansion to a significant part of the world.

An approximative baseline for this phenomenon may be set anywhere between 4000 and 3000 B.C.E., as suggested by the most recent radiometric dating evidence. Human groups had by the beginning of the fourth millennium B.C.E. already occupied the entire mainland shores of the Caribbean region for at least 7,000 years, during the Paleoindian and Archaic (or Preceramic) ages. The Archaic Age especially is the period of the first experimentation with plant domestication, especially the two major staples of the Caribbean region, corn in the west and manioc in the east. Although precise knowledge of these significant events is still far from satisfactory, it may be assumed that domestication had developed through most of the mainland by 3000 B.C.E.

The beginning of the third millennium B.C.E., or the end of the fourth millennium, also witnessed the development and spread in coastal areas of the first shell middens — that is, heaps of empty seashells mixed with other archaeological remains that became a type of site closely associated with Caribbean archaeology until much later times, as well as a subsistence resource that will remain important to all coastal adaptation throughout the region's prehistory. The appearance of the first shell middens is often attributed to the stabilization of the oceans' shorelines by 3000 B.C.E., which now allows for the development of stable and abundant shellfish populations. A new orientation toward more permanent resource bases and settlements could thus be achieved even before full agriculture had spread.

Another distinctive achievement of this period was the appearance of pottery making, which in the Caribbean region is among the earliest in the New World, earlier than in either Mesoamerica or the Andes. Ceramics first appeared in the same context as the intensification of food-gathering techniques, and perhaps of incipient cultivation. This marks the time of the Archaic Age, with its relatively mobile lifeways and dependency on wild resources for subsistence, as well as on simple tools made of chipped or ground stone or of bone and hard shell, representative of conditions of life that survived in many coastal areas of the Caribbean alongside the rise of the first Ceramic Age villages until historic times.
The origin of pottery making in the New World is a subject usually discussed around two early centers. Valdivia, on the coast of Ecuador, belongs to the Intermediate Area and is outside the Caribbean region proper. The Valdivia people, dated to circa 3000 B.C.E. or just before, may have already grown some maize, and they also exploited fish and shellfish on the dry coast of Ecuador, as their shell middens demonstrate. It is the ceramic tradition however, dating to around 3000 B.C.E. (and perhaps even to 4000 B.C.E.), found at several coastal sites on the Caribbean coast of Colombia and in the flood plain and adjacent hills of the Magdalene River, that is of greater significance for the development of pottery making in the Caribbean region.

The best-known manifestation is Puerto Hormiga. The site is a ring-shaped shell midden, a pattern characteristic of early midden sites, which may be suggestive of village occupations, and it is composed of oyster shells and fish bones. Ceramics were relatively sophisticated there from the very beginning. Shapes are characterized by an emphasis on large globular bowls, or *tecomate*, and the clay is tempered with plant fibers. The pottery is elaborately decorated with incisions and punctations; small modelings in the form of human and animal heads, known as *adornos*, are frequently attached to vessel rims. This type of ornament remained closely associated with Caribbean ceramics both on the mainland and the islands throughout most of their prehistory.

Other evidence for technological advances is limited to large stone flake tools and perhaps basketry. In this context the true nature of Puerto Hormiga subsistence is still difficult to determine. The local environment is unsuited to agriculture, but artifact types may indicate the processing of wild plant food. Other ceramic sites in the general vicinity of Puerto Hormiga, some with a more interior location, such as Monsu and Tumbana, have recently been reported with radiocarbon dates predating 3000 B.C.E. San Jacinto, located still further inland in the interior hills of the Magdalena Valley, claims a 4000 B.C.E. antiquity. This may support the idea that pottery first appeared in interior sites before spreading to coastal areas. Yet all these early sites share many basic features: They are ring-shaped shell mounds, they include many preceramic tool types, and they all belong to a same tradition of shapes – that of the *tecomate* (globular) – despite decoration styles that varied but always within a modeled and incised tradition. Subsistence might have consisted essentially of coastal...
or lagoon fishing and shellfish collecting, complemented by riverine fishing. Although digging of wild tubers and plant collecting is suggested by stone artifacts, it is still impossible to ascertain the presence of food production.

The significance of this early pottery-making center in Colombia for the further spread of ceramics in the New World must not be underrated. Whether this early fiber-tempered pottery is also at the origins of the earliest pottery of North America – which is also fiber tempered and dates to before 2000 B.C.E. in various sites of Florida and Georgia – is a matter that calls for more substantial evidence and the solution of considerable geographical and chronological problems. The idea, which has some serious supporters, involves a direct diffusion all across the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico; it may be supported by the presence on the Gulf coast of Florida of a linguistic family (Tucuma) believed to be related to the distant Warraus of the Orinoco delta. The Warraus were expert seafarers but practiced neither agriculture nor pottery making.

The further spread of pottery making from Colombia leads directly north to a neighboring area of Central America, where another early center of pottery making has been identified in the Paria Bay area of the Pacific coast of central Panama and its adjacent foothill area. The region was already well known from its earlier preceramic occupation dating to circa 5000 B.C.E., a practically unique occurrence in Central America as best represented by the coastal Cerro Mangote culture, and many rock shelter sites of the hilly interior. The earliest ceramics are represented by the Monagrillo culture, currently dated to circa 2900 B.C.E. and lasting until about 1300 B.C.E. Known essentially from the Monagrillo shell midden site, and such inland rock shelters as the Cueva de los Ladrones, ceramics are found in sites that have revealed a continuous occupation dating to earlier Archaic times, and where ceramics only appear in the midst of earlier technology represented by such artifact types as edge grinders, milling stones, and pestles.

Monagrillo pottery is sand tempered, and only a few late specimens are decorated with incisions, excisions, and punctations as well as simple painting in single red bands. The simple style differs markedly from Puerto Hormiga and other traditions from Colombia. Vague similarities with Valdivia in Ecuador, however, have been noted. The ecological context of this coastal shell midden is one of unfertile mangrove swamps, but conditions suggest that some maize may already have been grown as
a pot vegetable. Edge grinders and milling stones may have been used for processing wild tubers such as manioc, as well as palm nuts and other seeds, but this idea is still speculative. Conditions were more suitable for maize agriculture inland, near rock shelter sites, where the earliest experimentation with plant domestication, including both maize and manioc, may actually have taken place. Indeed, Central America, judging from an evidence so far limited to central Panama, may have been instrumental in spreading maize cultivation to Mesoamerica and even perhaps to South America, as suggested by the dating and distribution of plant pollens and phytoliths found there (c. 5000 B.C.E.). Yet the Monagrillo people are not believed to have resided in permanent settlements; instead, they seem to have engaged in a pattern of seasonal transhumance between coastal camps near marine resources and inland rock shelters, where they practiced slash-and-burn agriculture. Pottery itself does not seem to have been associated with the introduction of any new conditions of life; it was simply added to existing technologies.

The later spread of pottery making in Central America after circa 2500 B.C.E. may still appear somewhat erratic. At first, both ceramic and nonceramic occupations tended to occur in the Parita Bay area of Panama before pottery had established itself everywhere toward the end of the third millennium. Further north in Costa Rica, early ceramics are represented by the Tronadero culture, dated to circa 2000 B.C.E. or before in the hinterland of the Atlantic watershed of that region. Tronadero origins, based essentially on ceramic evidence, show no definitive affiliations with either Colombia or Mesoamerica, but the culture is certainly ancestral to later developments in that part of Central America after 1500 B.C.E. Both Tronadero and the interior ceramic caves of Panama may suggest that ceramics were first introduced among inland hunters and collectors, who perhaps already had incipient maize cultivation but whose more precise traces still remain to be found.

**Venezuela**

The spread of pottery making eastward from Colombia also betrays some delays. In Venezuela, and within the boundaries of the Caribbean region, the earliest Ceramic Age people belonged to the Kusu culture on the western coast, known from the earliest occupation levels at the La Pitia site on the Goajira Peninsula, around circa 2000 B.C.E. Not unexpectedly, its pottery is consistent with the *tecomate* tradition, which must
have spread there through the Río Ranchería. As in Colombia, the Kusu people were not yet agriculturalists; at least, no clay griddles, a distinctive clay artifact used for processing bitter manioc, are associated with their ceramic production. Their simple pottery decoration included incision and punctation, consistent with the tecomate tradition, but some white painting is also found. Fish bones are abundant in their site, where catfish alone accounts for 90 percent of the faunal remains; turtle hunting also seems to have been important. Some burials near the site are the only indication of semipermanent habitations, but no sedentary villages are suggested at that early stage.

In the middle Orinoco, however, the situation is somewhat different and more complex at the onset of the second millennium B.C.E. This fertile riverine area, which appears to have been largely unpopulated until then, witnessed the beginnings of both pottery making and agriculture. Of particular significance is the Ronquin locality, where a series of sites and cultures initiated an uninterrupted local sequence of related traditions that lasted until historic times. The earliest pottery at Ronquin appears in the La Gruta culture, dated to the very beginnings of the second millennium B.C.E., or to shortly before. Its excavators, however, favored a calibrated radiocarbon date of 2750 B.C.E., which has been received with some controversy. Until the issue is further substantiated, it is nevertheless safe to assume that La Gruta initiated a long series of ceramic and cultural developments that remain distinct from the tecomate tradition. Instead of globular vessels, new styles of shapes emphasize keeled or composite vessels also often associated with elaborate flanged rims. Decoration is still essentially plastic with modelings and adornos as well as an emphasis on finely incised, or hachured, designs. Of greater significance is the first emergence of a painted pottery tradition associated with the distinctive white-on-red decoration that survived locally for an extended period and became the hallmark of early ceramic styles in the eastern Caribbean until the beginning of the Common Era. With its composite, or bell-shaped, vessels, decorated with white-on-red painting or fine incisions, the La Gruta occupation of Ronquin marks the earliest appearance of the Saladoid series (named after the later Saladero site on the Lower Orinoco), which held such a prominent role in later events in eastern Venezuela and the Caribbean islands.

As opposed to early ceramic occupations of Colombia and Central America, the phenomenon in the middle Orinoco is now firmly associated with agriculture at La Gruta, in the form of bitter manioc cultivation.
Manihot esculenta), a root crop widely distributed as a staple in the tropical lowlands of South America to this day. The evidence itself is of a secondary type, because the plant itself is not likely to be preserved, but it is unmistakable. It consists of numerous fragments of budares, or clay griddles, and small stone chips used in making grater boards, both being essential instruments in the processing of this toxic root crop for human consumption.

The origins of La Gruta suggest a homeland in the Amazon Basin, where related ceramic styles are widely distributed after 2000 B.C.E. within the so-called Zoned Hachured Horizon. Because the Amazon and the Orinoco are joined by the Casiquiare Canal, the river system allows for possible cultural connections between the tropical lowlands and the Caribbean region through the middle Orinoco. The question bears also on solving the problem of the origins of manioc agriculture. An Amazonian origin favors the La Gruta ancestry. The alternative would involve the fertile Magdalena Basin in Colombia, an early population center far in advance of its neighbors by 2000 B.C.E., where a wild endemic form of manioc (Manihot carthaginensis) is still found on mountain slopes. This wild manioc may possibly have been more widespread in the Caribbean lowlands of Colombia in the prehistoric past, when it may have been the staple food among peoples of the tecomate tradition.

Initiated by La Gruta at Ronquin, the Saladoid series further evolved in the lower middle Orinoco toward 1500 B.C.E. into the Ronquinar Saladoid, which spread farther down river taking full advantage of the agricultural potential of the river levees, which became small islands in flood season and received annual deposits of fertile alluvium, not unlike the situation, as Rouse has observed, in the Nile Valley. Permanent villages were widespread on the middle and lower Orinoco. Their ceramic art elaborates upon the previous painted and modeled-incised techniques of La Gruta to which they contributed painted cross-hatching, a powerful motif that achieved more prominence, as an incised design, on the coast and the islands a millennium later.

While agricultural and pottery-making villages were developing in the middle Orinoco and the Maracaibo Basin, coastal peoples further east in Venezuela, as well as on the offshore islands of Cubagua and Margarita, remained the same Archaic Age shellfish gatherers who had developed there before 3000 B.C.E. They reached their modest cultural climax around the middle of the second millennium with the Manicuaroid cultures. Archaic peoples, whose sites are now exclusively shell middens,
emphasized shell — especially the large and very common conch *Strombus gigas*, itself a major food resource — in the manufacture of their simple artifacts. Tools made from shells, such as axes, adzes, and especially gouges made from the inner whorl of a large conch, were probably used for woodworking and perhaps canoe manufacture. Some shell beads and pendants were produced as ornaments, and a distinctive type of small bipointed bone artifact was probably used as spear or harpoon barbs. Ground stone artifacts, typical of Archaic Age technology, include some edge grinders, essentially a flat smooth rock deeply ground along one or two edges, not unlike similar artifacts from preceramic and early ceramic sites of Panama.

Similar bone points and edge grinders are also associated with the earliest known occupation of Trinidad, as represented by the Ortoiroid cultures. This large island must be considered more representative of mainland events than those of the Caribbean islands proper; it was attached to the mainland until the recent past, and the development of the Gulf of Paria still keeps it within easy reach of Venezuela and the Orinoco. Earliest traces of human occupation in Trinidad date to the sixth millennium B.C.E. for the Banwari Trace culture (actually 5230 B.C.E. for the earliest of many radiocarbon determinations), which produced a typical Archaic Age technology that included conical ground stone pestles and crude flake and cobble tools, including the edge grinders, suggestive of the processing of wild plant food along with shellfish collecting. Other small Ortoiroid sites have been reported from other areas around the Gulf of Paria, and they are representative of the preceramic occupation of this part of eastern Venezuela after 3000 B.C.E. Relationships with coastal Manicuaroids further west in Venezuela are suggested by some artifact types, but the lack of emphasis on shell tools (including the lack of shell gouges) in Ortoiroid technology, as well as an emphasis on amorphous stone flakes, justifies a separate classification. Ortoiroid sites are certainly earlier and may ultimately prove to be the Manicuaroids’ ancestors.

*The Western Caribbean*

West of Costa Rica little is known about the early archaeology of Central America and adjacent parts of Mesoamerica until circa 1500 B.C.E. The evolution of a maize-based agricultural adaptation in central Mexico, well documented in the Tehuacan Valley by MacNeish, would have had little
direct effect on the Caribbean region despite the fact that maize agriculture might have also developed early in a parallel manner between the two areas in lower Central America. The earliest pottery manifestations in Mesoamerica belong to the Pacific coast of Guatemala, and they seem unrelated to developments further south except for the presence of smaller tecomate-shaped vessels in the Barra culture, dating to circa 2000 B.C.E.

Of far greater significance is the Archaic sequence recently uncovered by MacNeish in coastal Belize. Although the successive cultures believed to have developed there since 7500 B.C.E. (the Lowi-Ha phase) are poorly dated, the presence of a developed and diversified lithic industry – which includes finely made large prismatic blades (10–15 cm in length), a technology uncommon in the New World and more reminiscent of the Upper Paleolithic of Europe, as well as many other types of artifacts such as scrapers, adzes, and even bifacial projectile points, and which culminates between 4000 and 3000 B.C.E. in the Sandy Hill phase – offers intriguing similarities with the earliest archaeological remains later to be found in the Greater Antilles. Grinding stones and manos (hand-held grinding stones), reliable indicators of the growing importance of maize agriculture, also appear at that time, predating the rise of the first sedentary villages and the first ceramics around 2000 B.C.E. Unfortunately, the lack of faunal remains in the sites leaves us with little evidence on the adaptation and subsistence of these unique preceramic peoples of the Mesoamerican area. A distinctive inland orientation is indicated by artifact types, and there is no evidence of any seafaring technology. Yet the Belize preceramic sequence offers the most attractive similarities with the earliest technology revealed in the archaeology of the Caribbean islands. No preceramic occupation is known otherwise for the remaining Caribbean coastal areas of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico.

THE PEOPLING OF THE WEST INDIES

The origins of a human population in the West Indies – that is, in all the islands between Cuba and Trinidad – is a phenomenon that represents the last major human expansion in a major part of the world. As such, the subject has attracted considerable attention, but the research often has proved inconsistent and the data frustrating. The issue is far from being entirely resolved. Accordingly, theories still vary about the actual date of the first human colonization, its precise mainland origins
(whether single or multiple) and the number of separate migrations, and
the processes responsible for its occurrence, not the least being whether
it involved an accidental or deliberate crossing of the Caribbean Sea.

On the basis of current models of biological dispersals in the Carib-
bean region, it appears that the West Indies flora and fauna are essentially
South American in origin. Biologists explain the introduction of these
species as a series of accidental drifts mainly from South America toward
various locations of the West Indies. This theory has been attractive to
archaeologists who have adopted a similar model to explain the appar-
ently erratic distribution of preceramic sites and artifact types around the
Caribbean periphery. The most obvious natural route of entry into the
West Indies from South America are the Lesser Antilles, which form
stepping stones between Trinidad and the Greater Antilles. Unfortu-
nately, the lack of supportive evidence in the Lesser Antilles makes this
corridor unlikely. Alternative routes have been sought along a mid-
Caribbean chain of islets and cays that stretches between Nicaragua and
Jamaica, especially at the time of potentially lower sea levels, but the
suitability of this route is questionable because preceramic remains are
notoriously lacking in both Jamaica and Nicaragua.

The earliest radiocarbon dates so far available for the West Indies
(excepting Trinidad) as a whole are from both Cuba and Hispaniola. A
recent radiocarbon date for Haiti of circa 3600 B.C.E. is the earliest. It
appears to support the long hypothesized date of 4000 B.C.E. for the
event as postulated by Rouse. The date, however, comes from a shell
sample retrieved from a surface scattering of shells and a few stone flakes.
A date of 3100 B.C.E. had already been known for the Levisa site in
eastern Cuba, in association with a substantial assemblage of stone blades
and flakes, is reminiscent of Old World Paleolithic archaeology, as in the
preceramic of Belize. Otherwise, sites associated exclusively with lithic
remains are known mainly from the Dominican Republic (the Barrera-
Mordan culture) where they appear generally later than 2500 B.C.E.
Remains at Casimira, also in the Dominican Republic, are responsible
for the Casimiroid series of Archaic cultures whose emphasis on large
blade tools survived in many areas until the introduction of agricultural
peoples. The presence of sites on the more substantial river systems of
these large islands indicates the importance of terrestrial resources (essen-
tially small rodents and iguanas) in Casimiroid subsistence. An extinct
giant ground sloth may even have survived to the last millennia B.C.E. and
have been hunted by these early island colonists. Bypassing Puerto Rico
toward the Lesser Antilles, early dates in excess of 2000 B.C.E. for the small island of Antigua in the Leeward Islands, where the Jolly Beach culture has revealed an Archaic Age blade technology based on the abundant local supply of flints and cherts, may be the Casimiroids’ easternmost distribution.

The addition of new artifact types and raw materials in the preceramic technology after 2000 B.C.E. becomes more characteristic of an Archaic Age. This includes ground stone and shell and bone tools, as well as the first ornaments. Whether this innovation reflects a second, Ortoiroid wave of migration out of Trinidad through the Lesser Antilles is still conjectural.

The search for a continental homeland to this original West Indian population, based on cultural similarities, has encountered all kinds of difficulties. If we consider the artifact evidence alone, we must exclude such a likely population center as the Caribbean lowlands of Colombia in the Magdalena Basin, because pottery was already known there by 3000 B.C.E., and because the area lacks a developed lithic technology comparable to the fine Casimiroid blade tools. It is true, however, that large stone knives and daggers, practically identical to Casimiroid specimens from Hispaniola, are also known from Central America, and this lent support to the idea that the chain of small mid-Caribbean islets may have been the most likely route of entry in times of lower sea levels. Unfortunately, stone knives and daggers in Central America, as in central Panama, date to a later Ceramic Age context. Moreover, no archaeological remains have yet been found on the barren mid-Caribbean islands, and no preceramic remains are known for Jamaica.

More attention has recently been focused on the shores of Belize, where MacNeish has brought to light the early preceramic sequence described above earlier, but despite tantalizing similarities, the islands’ technology lacks many diagnostic features common in Belize, such as chipped adzes, scrapers, and bifacial projectile points. Preceramic remains on the northern coast of South America beyond the Magdalena lowlands tend to appear later than 3000 B.C.E., with the notable exception of the Paleo-Indian Jobo tradition, whose fine bifacial lithic technology is on the one hand too early to be ancestral to the islands, and on the other is more complex than the technology evidenced among the Casimiroids.

Much of the problem depends on understanding more precisely and realistically how human groups could have reached the islands from the mainland across substantial spans of ocean. This long-neglected problem
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has recently been addressed in Richard Callaghan's computer simulation study for the potential of various accidental drifts from the mainland to have landed successfully on the Greater Antilles. Results show that the most likely successful crossing would originate from the coast of South America, from Colombia to central Venezuela, in a westerly direction conditioned by prevailing winds and currents, aimed toward Cuba, Jamaica, and Hispaniola. Unfortunately, no obvious homeland may yet be identified on that part of the coast on the basis of artifact type similarities or compatible radiometric dating.

After 2000 B.C.E., Archaic sites began to show a greater diversity, as well as a wider distribution. New cultural complexes appeared in western Cuba as represented by the Cayo Redondo and Guayabo Blanco cultures, which emphasize ground stone tools, some ornamental, and shell tools including the ubiquitous shell gouge. Unusual new ground stone artifacts are "gladiolitos," a dagger-like implement possibly associated with ceremonial activities. Fishing, hunting, and wild plant collecting provide the subsistence basis. Settlements had likewise spread with these innovations in Hispaniola, as represented by the Couri culture of Haiti and El Porvenir in the Dominican Republic, which display the most diversified and elaborate remains in stonework (such as fine stemmed daggers made on large prismatic blades), and ground stone artifacts, including distinctive conical pestles certainly associated with the preparation of plant food, as well as small incised bowls and occasional pendants. No shell gouges or much emphasis on shell tools are found there, however. None of these cultures are known in Puerto Rico, where the period is still poorly known, and where preceramic sites are usually associated with a simple inventory of hammerstones and crude flakes, as in the Coroso culture.

**The Spread of Village Life, and the Development of a Mesoamerican Frontier (1500–500 B.C.E.)**

*The Western Caribbean*

The Formative Age marks the time of the first farming villages and early chiefdoms in the Mesoamerican side of the Caribbean basin (map 8.2). The phenomenon is introduced rather suddenly around 1500 B.C.E. near the coast of Belize with the simple Swazey culture, which is believed to be ancestral to the later Maya civilization of this area. Still identified with *tecomate*-shaped pottery, ceramic production adds large flat-bottom ba-
sins to its inventory. Decoration emphasizes painting in simple linear patterns, unrelated to contemporaneous styles of Colombia and Venezuela. Other artifacts are distinctively Mesoamerican and include finely worked chert bladelets but not the larger blades of earlier preceramic sites. Manos and metates (essential stone tools for grinding corn) are a certain indication that maize agriculture had been introduced from central Mexico. Simple ceremonial structures may already have been standing at the center of small thatched-hut villages.

Shortly thereafter, this simple agricultural village life spread to the Pacific coast of Guatemala, where the Ocos people practiced maize agriculture with sedentary lagoon fishing in the low-lying Pacific coastal plain as early as 1500 B.C.E. Their pottery also emphasizes flat-bottom bowls decorated with a distinctive rocker stamping design, created by impressing the jagged edge of a seashell in the clay, which stylistically links the Ocos people with the Olmec and as such may represent the further effects of their seminal influence on the Pacific coast of Mesoamerica.

The Olmec civilization was the first in Mesoamerica to develop a great and complex art style as well as major ceremonial centers and monumental architecture. It may also have developed the religion, writing, and calendrical systems ancestral to the Maya and other areas of Mesoamerica. Because the Olmec also were the first people to engage in long-distance trading, their influence may have extended as far as Costa Rica in Central America. Olmec culture seems to have first developed on the Gulf Coast of Mexico, an area that was poor in stone and other raw materials but was agriculturally fertile, and where they built elaborate centers and the earliest pyramids, often surrounded by carved monuments. Some hold that they had only reached the level of a theocratic chiefdom; others insist that the Olmecs had by then already developed the first great civilization of Mesoamerica.

The Olmec can be identified by their distinctive art style, displayed on massive monuments such as large stone stelas or statues erected around their ceremonial centers or near trading colonies, which may also have been the focus of elaborate religious activities. Their art emphasized a "were jaguar" iconography, combining human and feline features associated with a number of deities that may be the prototype for the later Mesoamerican pantheon. It is the Olmec who introduced the prominence of jade, rather than gold, as the highest valuable in Mesoamerican elite symbols. As a result, small jade or pottery figurines with "baby-face"
characteristics were widely distributed in the regions influenced or controlled by the Olmec.

Central America

Because of their wealth and their need for jade, the Olmec were in a position to have been the first people to engage in long-distance trade, which is known to have extended over most of Mexico and Guatemala as well as to Central America and as far south as the Gulf of Fonseca in Nicaragua. On the Atlantic coast, however, and near the base of the Yucatan Peninsula, Olmec influence bypassed the western Caribbean to reach directly south into Honduras, revealing their early presence at such sites as Playa de los Muertos or Yarumela, or Chalchuapa in El Salvador, soon after 1000 B.C.E. Planned settlements, artificial mounds, and small pyramids built around courtyards, as well as stone monuments, mound burials, stone columns, and carved stelae and altars, all testify to the Olmec's direct interference. The phenomenon is reinforced by the prevalence of the jaguar motif in local arts; by "baby-face" figurines, distinctive styles of pottery decoration, and stone axes, all associated with jaguar, birds, and serpent themes; and even calendrical inscriptions. Beyond all these cultural manifestations, the Olmec are believed to have also been responsible for the early introduction of jade and social stratification.

The situation is well represented at the site of Chalchuapa in El Salvador, which is interpreted as an important, distinctively Olmec trade center dominated by a 20-meter-high conical pyramid. A question remains: What were the Olmec seeking in El Salvador, some 850 kilometers from their homeland? If not jade, they may have been after cacao beans, a form of exchange currency in prehistoric Central America, while also trading for obsidian from the local volcanic interior mountains. Cotton textiles may also have figured in Olmec trade. Chalchuapa is the earliest known occupation of El Salvador, yet archaeologists are still uncertain whether it was an actual Olmec colony, or whether it represented the effects of trade with a local population, in view of some apparent relationships with the Pacific coast of Guatemala and its Ocos culture. Specialists are tempted to speculate that, as possible colonists, the Olmec might have introduced their original Mixe Zoque languages to Central America, more especially to El Salvador and Honduras, languages that were still spoken there in historic times. There is no evidence that the Olmec engaged in a maritime trade, however; in Honduras overland
trails along the Ulua River were their major thoroughfare, largely avoiding the Caribbean watershed.

The first known human occupation of Honduras dates to around 1000 B.C.E.; it is as expected related to the Olmec presence of El Salvador, and it likewise exhibits similarities with Ocos. At Playa de los Muertos, a major settlement and cemetery located in the drainage of the Río Ulua, pottery decoration displays even more distinctive Olmec features (straight-sided bucket-shaped pots, bottles, effigy vessels, etc.), which do not occur in Guatemala, and whose nearest similarities are with central Mexico. Indeed, their clay figurines show similarities with figures carved on Olmec stelae. Platforms and defensive features, in the form of ditches surrounding settlements, were erected. Being associated with elaborate jade jewelry and differential burials, the remains suggest a stratified, probably chiefdom-level society thriving at Playa de los Muertos.

This must have been the case at Los Naranjos in the region of Lake Yojoa, and also in Honduras, where a settlement dominated by a 6-meter-high platform was surrounded by a deep ditch. Elsewhere, the caves of Cuyamel in central Honduras have preserved an ossuary associated with artifacts and ceramics decorated in typical Olmec style. The site, dated to just after 1000 B.C.E., may relate to the Yarumela site for its pottery reminiscent of the Ocos culture. These similarities serve to reinforce the significant role of the Pacific coast as a center in Olmec trading with its Central American frontier.

**Lower Central America**

Beyond the Ulua River and western Honduras, we leave the Olmec world and the first manifestations of a Mesoamerican frontier. Further east into lower Central America, the earliest ceramic occupation of the Atlantic watershed of Costa Rica, as represented by the Tronadora culture, had evolved locally by 1500 B.C.E. into more diversified farming-village societies, of which La Montaña is a good example. At La Montaña the ceramic assemblage contains at least 40 percent *tecomate* vessels, although only a few are painted with simple red lines. Plastic decoration dominates; it includes punctations, pellets, cord markings, and the widespread rocker stamping. One particular shape of vessel may belong to *budares*, or clay griddles, because of a very distinctive raised rim similar to manioc-baking griddles of South America. Also distinctive are *manos*, but these and *budares* are unrelated to earlier assemblages of the area or of Panama. Relationships instead point toward northern South America and the
north coast of Colombia, as suggested the finding of *budares* and the distinctively small *manos* stones that may have been used for pounding manioc rather than for grinding corn. No sets of *manos* and *metates* are present, suggesting a lack of both maize and relations with Mesoamerica. The La Montaña culture, already established by 1000 B.C.E. in Costa Rica, may thus be an example of early manioc cultivation in Central America, originating in South America, only later to be replaced by the maize-based subsistence typical of later periods.

The intermediary situation of Central America is well reflected in other simple village societies of Costa Rica that are contemporaneous with La Montaña. The Chaparron culture, which developed on the Atlantic watershed after 1000 B.C.E., is somewhat anomalous. As opposed to La Montaña, the bichrome-painted decoration of its pottery, and the major presence of *tecomate* vessels (85 percent) as well as the lack of *budares* griddles, is interpreted as a Mesoamerican manifestation that well reflects the fluctuations of this cultural frontier. None of the more elaborate developments already encountered further north in Honduras and El Salvador, nor any Olmec influences, have been detected in these two Central American cultures.

The situation may be different on the Pacific coast, more precisely in the Greater Nicoya area of Costa Rica, where close to 800 B.C.E., the Loma B culture, despite clear relationships with La Montaña, had yielded larger settlements, such as the Vidor site, and a more sophisticated painted ceramic decoration style, which may be ancestral to the later "Zoned Bichrome Horizon" cultures that developed in that area after 500 B.C.E. Low-level chiefdom societies may be indicated. This phenomenon raises the possibility of a more direct Olmec influence into this region of lower Central America that to this day remains a controversial issue. Olmec influences are usually discussed around the identification of jade objects that may have reached Nicoya from Olmec centers to the north, as suggested more especially by the so-called Olmec heirloom of jade artifacts from Tibas. Jade sources have not been identified in Central America, and it is generally assumed that all local jades must have come from sources in the Motagua Valley of Mexico. Jade obviously may have been worked locally from imported blanks or fragments.

**Northern South America**

In the Caribbean lowlands of Colombia, after more than a millennium of Puerto Hormiga cultural tradition, and through a sequence of related
styles (essentially Tesca and Barlovento), the most significant innovations are represented by the Malambo culture (c. 1100–1000 B.C.E.). Its people lived in simple villages, and their subsistence was based definitively on the cultivation of bitter manioc as indicated by the many griddle fragments in their sites. The Malambo site itself is located in the delta and lagoons of the Río Magdalena. The new ceramic style emphasizes plastic decoration that includes deep incisions, modelings, *adornos*, and clay masks, suggesting some continuities with Puerto Hormiga. Malambo was eventually followed by another significant culture, that of Momil I (at c. 1000 B.C.E.), represented by a small sedentary farming village adaptation oriented to the lagoons of the Río Sinu, and where bitter manioc was also the staple crop as evidenced by *budares* and possibly stone chips from manioc grating boards. Momil I pottery may still belong to the *tecomate* tradition and perhaps is also distantly related to Puerto Hormiga. New shapes were introduced, later to become more widespread, such as footed and keeled (composite) vessels, while plastic designs and painting in red, white, and black were added to the decoration inventory. Figurines were introduced. In search of distant relationships, some archaeologists go as far as suggesting a link between the Momil I culture and the manioc-growing La Montaña people of Atlantic Costa Rica, on the basis of similarities in ceramic decoration.

Manioc cultivation also extends further east into western Venezuela to the shores of the Guajira Peninsula, where the Hokomo style (1000 B.C.E.) at La Pitia develops out of the earlier plastic decorated Kusu pottery, and still hints at connections with Colombia and the Puerto Hormiga tradition; this is indicated by broad incisions, curvilinear designs, and punctations. But Hokomo is also associated with the earlier patterned painted designs in red, white, and black, utilizing earlier broad-lined incised curvilinear designs that forshadow the later developments of painted traditions in other parts of Venezuela and Colombia (respectively, the Tocuyanoid cultures and the First Painted Horizon).

Hokomo ceramics may in fact be the earliest expression of polychrome pottery in northern South America. This is not without significance for the fact that polychrome painting is usually associated with more developed cultures appearing in Mesoamerica and later found in Central America. It was first believed that polychrome painting derived from Mesoamerica, but radiometric dating now indicates that Central America and northern South America were either earlier or as early as Mesoamerican developments. Hokomo subsistence still emphasized fish and shell-
fish. On the evidence of manos and metates, some maize cultivation, as opposed to manioc, might have been introduced there early. Villages may have been semipermanent, but more complex burial patterns, including funerary urns, argue for more sedentarity. In the Venezuelan llanos to the south, the prehistoric Cano del Oso pile dwellers (dated to c. 920 B.C.E.) may also claim to have produced some of the earliest polychrome pottery in northern South America. Otherwise, Cano del Oso villagers simply lived on collecting snails and growing maize in their poorly drained areas of the Venezuelan llanos.

In Eastern Venezuela beyond the llanos and the coast, the valley of the middle and lower Orinoco, an earlier cradle of the Saladoid cultures, brings us further away from a Caribbean reality and closer to the Amazonian universe. In the last millennium B.C.E., the area witnessed the development of the Barrancoid culture, whose settlements were typically always closely associated with the best agricultural lands near river banks and levees. The distinctively sculptural Barrancoid pottery emphasizes bucket-shaped vessels with a predominant flange usually at the rim. Decoration involved broad incisions and curvilinear designs as well as a distinctive emphasis on modeled and incised elements. Beginning with the more simple initial Barrancas culture around 1500 B.C.E., the long evolution of pottery style led to the more elaborate designs after 700 B.C.E. of the Los Barrancos style, on the lower Orinoco at the head of the delta. Bowls, bucket-shaped vessels, and boat- or hammock-shaped containers are typical of the basic shapes, but noteworthy are some unusual double-bridge handles and stirrup spouts, which are usually associated with Andean ceramics, and in Mesoamerica with the Olmec. Monochrome red or black painting is the only Barrancoid venture in ceramic painting, in sharp contrast to their Saladoid neighbors and predecessors. Barrancoid subsistence was based on slash-and-burn manioc cultivation, and the people resided in large permanent villages where they also left dense shell middens.

Barrancoid origins have been a longstanding matter of controversy in Caribbean archaeology and is not yet fully resolved. It has been argued that the Barrancoids were the original introducers of manioc cultivation into Venezuela. This theory is favored by Meggers and Evans, who trace Barrancoid origins through the Malambo in Colombia, because of similarities in the modeled-incised pottery decoration, from the Andean highlands area before spreading to Venezuela. Others believe, like Rouse and Rooseveldt, that the Barrancoid cultures developed in situ in the Orinoco
Valley out of the previous Saladoid occupation, as represented by the Ronquin Sombra culture established there around 1000 B.C.E., before expanding toward the delta area and the coast of Venezuela and even further west into the Guianas. If so, the Orinoco peoples may have been ancestral to the Malambo in Colombia; this idea is still speculative but would account for striking similarities, in pottery decoration. Ultimately, like the Saladoids, the Barrancoids may trace their deepest roots out of the Amazonian area, which may still be the cradle of manioc cultivation. What is certain, however, is that once established on the lower Orinoco, the Barrancoids had rapidly displaced the short-lived occupation of the Saladero style, later to reemerge on the coast, thus initiating a pattern that persisted in other coastal areas, including Trinidad and possibly even the Lesser Antilles, near the time of the European contact.

Despite the relative antiquity of these events, archaeologists have long speculated on the intriguing linguistic implications of these stylistic developments and the ethnic diversity they are likely to reveal. Linguistic reconstructions and the distribution of historic languages in northern South America suggest that Saladoid peoples were the ancestors of the Arawakan language family, as speakers of proto-Arawakan introduced from the Amazon Basin. Later archaeological changes are likewise believed to reflect the further history of this linguistic family. In this context the Barrancoids have been associated with the Maipuran branch of Arawakan languages, to which belong many dialects still spoken today. The implications of these identifications are far reaching and involve directly the later Ceramic Age archaeology of the West Indies, where developments have often been discussed in terms of linguistic changes.

The coastal area of eastern Venezuela, in comparison with the dynamic conditions encountered further west from the Goajira Peninsula east of Maracaibo to the Llanos and the Orinoco Valley, is associated with the spread of agriculture and village life, as well as substantial population increases. This area lingered in the hands of Archaic Age peoples, essentially those same Manicuaroid fishermen and shellfish collectors, with their distinctive artifacts, such as shell gouges, inherited from the previous millennium. This is also true of Trinidad and the Paria area, where Ortoiroid peoples survived with their old lifeways and simple lithic technology.
Regional developments characterized the surviving Archaic Casimiroid cultures during much of the period between 1500 and 500 B.C.E., until they were replaced by Ceramic Age peoples. The period nonetheless witnessed the first peopling of Puerto Rico and possibly also some of the Lesser Antilles south of Antigua.

The Coroso culture of Puerto Rico may have appeared by 1000 B.C.E. It boasts a few artifacts from cave or shell midden sites, such as Cayo Cofresi; simple tools include edge grinders as well as some conical pestles and crude flakes and choppers. Lacking a fine-blade technology, the Coroso were influenced by their Casimiroid neighbors in Hispaniola, judging by their decorated pendants and pieces of stone bowls. Despite the lack of good diagnostic artifacts, archaeologists tentatively may assign them an Ortoiroid connection suggestive of a Trinidad origin, despite much evidence still missing from the Lesser Antilles.

As in the Greater Antilles, some diversity in artifact types still hampers attempts at more precise cultural classifications. The Virgin Islands, for instance, immediately east of Puerto Rico, are best represented by the Krum Bay culture and its distinctive chipped and ground celt blades, unique to the region. Other sites have revealed edge grinders similar to those of the Coroso in Puerto Rico. An Ortoiroid context may even be more speculative in their case. This only illustrates how blurred the Lesser Antilles route still appears when trying to trace the origins of Archaic cultures in the West Indies.

Within the Lesser Antilles, well beyond the Virgin Islands, the Jolly Beach culture in Antigua (c. 2000 B.C.E.) seems to have taken advantage of rich supplies of flint deposits on its beaches for developing a blade-and-flake technology that is reminiscent of Casimiroid remains. Ground stone artifacts have been found, but no shell gouges. South of Antigua, the Windward Islands are the major population area. The only known Archaic sites between Antigua and Trinidad have been found in the interior hills of Martinique; this Boutbois culture is undated, but it includes the typical inventory of edge grinders, crude flakes, and grinding surfaces usually associated with other edge-grinder sites in Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Venezuela, and even Panama. Could this be the missing link in the Ortoiroid expansion toward the West Indies, if indeed such was ever the case?
THE FORMATIVE MILLENNIUM (500 B.C.E. TO C.E. 500)

The period beginning in 500 B.C.E. was marked by almost universal changes. In the Caribbean region, human groups had now colonized all areas including the islands, and agriculture had established itself almost everywhere on the mainland. Nonagricultural Archaic Age peoples were by now simply relegated as “marginal” groups. Times were ripe for a population explosion. The idea may be simplistic yet it is not without reality. The year 500 B.C.E. may therefore be regarded as a convenient baseline for a wave of new technologies, cultural differentiation, and social evolution, well reflected in Gordon Willey’s concept of a Regional Developmental Period, whose significance extends far beyond the Caribbean region.

The Western Caribbean

In distant Mesoamerica this seminal period is known as the “Middle Formative” or “Preclassic.” The coasts of Belize and Honduras witnessed the rise of monumental architecture in settlement centers ruled by powerful chiefs and their élite in key areas later to be associated with the Maya civilization. This is especially well illustrated by the early prominence of Kaminaljuyu in the highland valleys of Guatemala, near the Ixtepeque volcano, an economically important source of obsidian.

The florescent Miraflores phase at Kaminaljuyu developed out of the Formative highland cultures with the first evidence of monumental religious architecture. Step pyramids built around large courtyards were not only erected as temple platforms but were also used for élite burials associated with objects of great value, an unmistakable indication of rising complex social stratification. The deceased were covered with cinnabar, a red pigment obtained through long-distance trade. That women and children were offered as sacrifice in the burials reinforces the impression of authoritarian rule. Wealth was expressed everywhere through an abundance of jade objects. The major ceremonial center at Kaminaljuyu, the nearest proto-metropolis to the Caribbean region, has no counterpart elsewhere in Mesoamerica or Central America. Following the demise of Olmec influences, Kaminaljuyu’s aura was felt more strongly on its immediate neighbors in Central America.

The evidence comes from a distinctive type of Central American ceramics known as the Usulatán Ware (a decoration of bundles of
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combed or wavy lines done in negative painting), which serves as a time marker for the Middle Formative, and which was traded to Kaminaljuyu as well as throughout Central America. Also typical of Miraflores is a distinctive style of monumental carving consisting of large heads that were once thought to be Olmec but which are now believed to be different stylistically. Carvings are set on pillars or pedestals, and themes include jaguars, humans, and mushroom stones with a carving at the base. The theme of the toad is pervasive on the pottery; along with mushrooms, toads may also have been used as hallucinogenic substances. The Miraflores culture may have been a source of influence for monumental architecture and especially stone sculpture well throughout Central America.

Central America

Beyond the immediate cultural boundaries of Mesoamerica, the parts of Central America most directly under Mesoamerican influence were Greater Nicoya, Costa Rica, and the Gulf of Chiriqui in Panama, where a substantial development in ethnic diversity was beginning to emerge, certainly concomitant with a population explosion. The phenomenon is subsumed archaeologically under a "Zoned Bichrome Horizon," which (as on chronological charts) overlaps with a "Scarified Horizon" that reached well into Panama, as revealed by distinctive styles of pottery decoration.

Zoned Bichrome ceramics, with their red and black painted areas surrounded by incised lines, emphasize feline and serpent motifs. Zoned rocker stamping also occurs on the pottery, as well as on clay figurines that retain some degree of Olmec features; some figurines may even perhaps have been traded from Mexico. Zoned Bichrome peoples probably maintained contacts with distant areas through trade for the obsidian or salt produced on the Pacific coast. Exterior influences derived essentially from the north. They eventually spread to the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica, as represented by the Early Diquis culture. Subsistence still involved manioc cultivation, but maize was also extensively grown as indicated by *manos* and *metates*. Beans, avocado, chili peppers, fish, and shellfish complemented their diet.

Zoned Bichrome society seems to have belonged to low-level chiefdoms built around federations of large sedentary villages. This is certainly suggested by their finest cultural manifestation, the Aguas Buenas culture
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of Panama, which became one of the most widespread cultures of coastal Central America between 500 B.C.E. and the beginning of the Common Era. Their original ceramics, however, were not entirely similar to the Zoned Bichrome styles of northern Central America; they associated plastic decoration with some painting, and their distinctive tall-footed vessels had flaring elbow-shaped legs. Their particular significance is in the first truly monumental sculpture that they produced in Central America, well represented at the Barriles site, a major ceremonial center believed to have been the capital of a large chiefdom. Ceremonial architecture typically included artificial mounds with stone cobble facing and shaft grave burials, whose surroundings are often associated with massive and enigmatic stone spheres, a unique type of Central American monument. Aguas Buenas artists were also the first to produce large carved, hammock-shaped ceremonial metates. They are often decorated with trophy heads, indicating warfare and competition between rival chiefdoms, and with Atlantean figures for legs. These metates were more likely used as ceremonial seats for powerful chiefs whom the Aguas Buenas people may have deified and may have represented in free-standing statues. Ceremonial seats of various kinds as symbols of political powers are common to many chiefdom societies throughout the Caribbean region, including the Greater Antilles.

Cultural diversity is well illustrated by the contemporaneous Concepción culture, centered on the Pacific coast of Panama, which by contrast is assigned to a “Scarified Horizon” based on a distinctive style of ceramic decoration. The Concepción were not as highly developed as the Aguas Buenas; they were essentially coastal oriented and seem to have avoided the highlands. Maize agriculture was practiced as indicated by manos and metates. The Concepción people are mostly remembered for their elaborate stone-lined shaft graves with a distinctive shoe-shape, which are distributed in cemeteries probably adjacent to large villages that have yet to be identified. This burial practice was likely reserved for a powerful elite. They manufactured “Scarified” pottery marked by deep incisions set in rows. This culture is also associated with the beginnings of sedentarism and maize cultivation on the Pacific coast of Central America. These cultural traits differ from Aguas Buenas and are believed to indicate a more direct influence from Colombia.
Northern South America

The Caribbean lowlands of Colombia became the scene after 500 B.C.E. of an economic event of consequence, as revealed by the upper levels of the Momil site (Momil II, c. C.E. 0), where manioc was replaced by maize as a staple, and where there was more potential for a substantial surplus accumulation, which could support higher populations and more elaborate public works. This event is marked, somewhat more modestly, at Momil by the disappearance of clay griddles and the appearance instead of manos and metates in the remains. Maize agriculture, which has no local antecedents in the Magdalena Basin, must consequently have been introduced fully developed, along with its processing technology, from the north in Central America. New pottery shapes, such as tripod vessels, also suddenly emerged, which despite locally developed decoration techniques hark to Central America and possibly even to Mesoamerica as a more direct inspiration. Parallels with contemporaneous cultures of Costa Rica have been suggested, including the Atlantic littoral, which would have played an important role in the diffusion of these innovations to lower Central America and Colombia from Mesoamerica. There is no question that the introduction of maize cultivation allowed for the later diversification of Formative cultures in this region. Archaeologically, this new development belongs to the “First Painted Horizon,” as represented by the La Loma and El Horno cultures of the Río Ranchería, east of the Magdalena Basin, and on the major route to Venezuela. Similarities between the Hokomo culture at La Pitia and its polychrome pottery on the Guajira Peninsula, and the early polychrome Tocuyanoid cultures of Venezuela, as opposed to the rest of Colombia, have been noted. Elaborate curvilinear designs in red and black, such as scrolls and the typical and ubiquitous comb motif, were painted over a cream or white slip background. Simple farming villages that left deep shell middens suggest an essentially riverine adaptation. Maize was undeniably the staple crop, but remains of large clay griddles may indicate the survival of bitter manioc in the diet.

In Venezuela, contacts with Colombia certainly followed the most obvious route east of the Magdalena Basin through the Río Ranchería and the Río Cesar, which bypass the formidable Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the coastal region, thus spreading the “First Painted Horizon” directly into the Guajira Peninsula. Yet beyond the Maracaibo Basin and the coastal mountains, the northern llanos and the central coast remained
in the Archaic Age at the beginning of the Common Era. Northwestern Venezuela, however, soon gave rise to the influential Dabajuroid cultures, whose initial Guasare style is at the origin of many later developments all over the area. Simple plastic and simple red-painted decoration were by then typical of the pottery; fabric impressions, or corrugation, were also common decoration techniques.

In the northern llanos behind the Caribbean mountains, polychrome pottery spread with the long-lived Tocuyanoid cultures. Tall Tocuyanoid globular vessels display a distinctive curvilinear design, painted in red and black on white, that emphasizes the ubiquitous snake motif with a human face. Black paint is applied over white (like Momil II in Colombia), indicating that the Venezuelan Tocuyanoid may also be considered the eastern expansion of the “First Painted Horizon” of Colombia, its western frontier reaching even further into Central America. Little else is known of Tocuyanoid culture besides the pottery, and simple villages are the only types of settlements known. None of the more complex ceremonial developments of Central America are thus in evidence anywhere in northern South America.

On the eastern coast the Archaic Manicuaroid series survived practically unchanged until the first centuries C.E., until at least when contact with Ceramic Age peoples of the Orinoco Valley contributed some intrusive pottery to their remains. The Orinoco is where Barrancoid cultures developed and multiplied and became even more elaborate in their ceramics, as represented by the ornate Los Barrancos style. The lower Orinoco must indeed have been the center of much prosperity and demographic growth in view of the Barrancoids’ relatively sudden expansion to many parts of Venezuela, beginning before C.E. 500. Barrancoid peoples introduced the first Ceramic Age on the central coast of Venezuela and the highland basin of Lake Valencia, bringing with them manioc cultivation, pottery making, and sedentary villages, in the process replacing existing Archaic settlements on the coast. To their distinctively ornate and complex pottery, which includes double-spout and bridge vessels, the western Barrancoids added such unique and exotic objects as clay earplugs and clay pipes. Yet there is otherwise little evidence of complex society or social stratification. Their burials, for instance, were simple and lacked valuable or luxury grave goods. Detailed studies of Barrancoid settlement patterns are still lacking, but the unusually large size of their archaeological sites, and the distinctive abundance of their ceramic remains, warrant further investigation into the nature of their society.
Further Barrancoid expansion followed the Orinoco down to the eastern coast of Venezuela into adjacent territories of Guyana (beyond the Caribbean region proper) as far away as Suriname. Their presence there is more difficult to identify precisely because of the close relationship they seem to have maintained with the existing Saladoid peoples. Vanishing from the lower Orinoco, Saladoid peoples reappeared several hundred years later on the eastern coast of Venezuela, replacing earlier Archaic (Manicuaroid and Ortoiroid) populations. Radiometric dating shows no indication of an occupation before circa C.E. 100, but much research remains to be done in this remote area of Venezuela. The earliest sites (the El Mayal culture) are typical of the Cedrosan Saladoid cultures already present in the West Indies at that time. By C.E. 500, however, following a pattern that is also encountered in the islands, their pottery increasingly betrays a significant degree of Barrancoid influences (Chuare culture), which has prompted some archaeologists to be hesitant in assigning some sites a cultural label or to make reference to a Saladoid-Barrancoid phenomenon. Sites were essentially coastal, and although manoic cultivation was practiced, fishing and shellfish gathering contributed to their subsistence, in the same manner as on the islands.

In this context the situation on Trinidad is the most significant, albeit still poorly investigated, considering the cross-road situation of this major island on the Gulf of Paria that is practically an extension of the mainland rather than a truly oceanic island. The Cedros culture there dates to the first century C.E., and it is stylistically close, as the label Cedrosan Saladoid indicates, to the styles encountered on the coast and in the islands. Close contact with eastern Venezuela and efficient seafaring technology must be assumed, but this Early Ceramic Period of Trinidad is still poorly known otherwise. The same phenomenon observed for the mainland reappeared after circa C.E. 300, when the Saladoid Palo Seco culture began to display unmistakable Barrancoid influences and actual Barrancoid trade sherds – to such a degree that by C.E. 500, a distinctively Barrancoid occupation predominated in Trinidad, making the island a veritable gateway to the West Indies (the Erin culture).

The West Indies

The period that follows 500 B.C.E. emerged as particularly dynamic both culturally and demographically in Venezuela and the lower Orinoco, being dominated by population expansions. It may not be surprising then, on the basis of several recent radiocarbon dates, that it is precisely
in this period that the original migration of agricultural and pottery-making peoples into the Caribbean islands through the Lesser Antilles is known to have taken place. The process was certainly well underway around 250 B.C.E., and the event belongs essentially to Cedrosan Saladoid peoples. Saladoid colonists apparently pushed out into the islands from their lower Orinoco homeland, likely under ongoing Barrancoid pressure, practically at the same time they were establishing themselves on the coast (radiocarbon dates are actually earlier in the islands), Trinidad, and the Guianas. Sometime before 100 B.C.E., they were able to colonize all intervening islands between eastern Puerto Rico and Trinidad, before spreading out to eastern Hispaniola in the first centuries C.E., their westernmost occurrence in the West Indies.

We must assume that before reaching the islands, Saladoid colonists first had to adapt to a coastal situation to which they were already predisposed by the earlier riverine environment of their homeland, where they must also have been able to develop a fishing technology as well as canoe navigation. The islands, however, offered no great incentive for many resources abundant on the mainland; their impoverished fauna was limited to a few land animals, such as rice rats (Megalomys), agoutis, and iguanas (now all extinct), while lacking such major game animals as deer and peccary common in Trinidad and the mainland. This scarcity was certainly compensated by the abundance of marine and riparian resources available in the islands. Indeed, the earliest Saladoid sites are generally associated with such dense layers of the remains of land crab, in particular, that the culture itself was originally designated as the "Crab Culture." Saladoid subsistence, nonetheless, remained essentially based on manioc cultivation from the earliest beginnings, as evidenced by the abundant remains of clay griddles, and by a close association with the most fertile areas in the choice of their settlements.

That such a phenomenal migration was able to take place within hardly 200 years is an indication that the process must have involved a substantial population, or that considerable mobility between all the islands must have been the rule. Each island from Grenada (the Pearl style) to Puerto Rico (at Hacienda Grande) has yielded substantial remains of these early colonists, who seem to have selected the best agricultural regions. Their distinctive pottery is decorated with fine incisions, modelings such as adornos, and the diagnostic white-on-red painted designs. We know much less about their technology. They left few artifacts other than fragments of clay griddles and small crude stone chips from
local jaspers and chalcedonies. Ground stone tools are uncommon and consist of petaloid celts; other axe blades, which must have been essential for clearing land, were fashioned out of the thick outer lip of the conch shell *Strombus gigas*.

When they are associated with shell middens, Saladoid sites reveal more evidence about subsistence practices where fishing and shellfish collecting was a major complement to manioc cultivation. The prominent role of the land and sea crabs in their diet is still enigmatic, however. It may have provided them with a means to withstand the stress of early colonization of an unfamiliar environment. Their taste for crab subsided in the first centuries C.E., however, perhaps because they had partially depleted the local populations. We know about the ceremonial aspect of their culture from the elaborately decorated ceramics and modeled-incised *adornos* in the shape of small anthropomorphic or zoomorphic heads or effigy vessels. Many animal species can be identified; prominent are the frog, the bat, and the turtle, but parrots, manatees, and even dogs were occasionally represented. Of the ceremonial artifacts, the most distinctive and the finest are the so-called incense burners, hollow cylinders open at both ends and elaborately decorated. Uncommon on the mainland, these unusual objects may have been an invention of the first island colonists.

This simplified scenario of the agricultural colonization of the Lesser Antilles and Puerto Rico has recently been disrupted by the discovery in the northernmost parts of the area (eastern Puerto Rico and its small offshore island of Vieques) of an early distinctively aberrant ceramic style despite obvious relationships with Saladoid pottery. Dated to circa 200 B.C.E., the La Hueca style is currently a subject of much bitter controversy among specialists, and its true role in events remains to be more precisely determined. La Hueca pottery emphasizes the same fine incisions and cross-hatching as the Cedrosan Saladoid but with the further exception that it has yielded none of the distinctive white-on-red painted decoration common everywhere else. Motifs and designs in their details also vary from Cedrosan types. Distant similarities with a much later style of the central coast of Venezuela, Río Guapo, have been singled out to suggest a direct initial migration from the mainland. The style is not known elsewhere on the mainland or in Trinidad and the Windward Islands. It may have spread to the Leeward Islands, however, and as far south as Guadeloupe and Marie-Galante. Whatever its true significance, La Hueca is also associated with an unusual development of lapidary
work in semiprecious stones (amethyst, carnelian, greenstone) and mother-of-pearl. Besides many types of beads, carved pendants were produced including a type of birds head (probably parrots rather than condors) that has received much attention. Other early Cedrosan sites of the Lesser Antilles have also yielded evidence of lapidary work (in Montserrat and Grenada), and the situation is suggestive of an early trading network throughout the islands that included the mainland potentially as far away as the Amazon.

The Huecan presence was short-lived. By the first centuries C.E., all the Lesser Antilles were bearers of a more typical Cedrosan Saladoid style, with its elaborate white-on-red painted and zone-incised cross-hatched decoration. This is also true of eastern Puerto Rico with its Hacienda Grande culture. That interaction with the mainland is still active is well illustrated by the fact that after C.E. 100, Saladoid styles on the east coast of Venezuela are so similar to those of the Lesser Antilles as to justify their classification as a single cultural manifestation. The more precise nature of this interaction has not yet been explored fully. The entire area was certainly part of a common interaction sphere.

This situation only serves to emphasize that the role of the mainland must at all times have been instrumental in relation to cultural change in the islands. This is especially true after C.E. 350 of the strong influences over the Saladoid ceramic styles of the Lesser Antilles, derived from the thriving Barrancoid population of eastern Venezuela, that led toward a more baroque expression of ceramic decoration and the appearance of a local manifestation of polychrome painting. That ceremonialism also developed in this particular context is further indicated by the early appearance, and perhaps even "invention," of small three-pointed stones, later to become so much a part of Taino art and religion in the Greater Antilles.

It may still be premature to assess the proper role of the mainland Barrancoids in the archaeology of the Caribbean islands. Their presence on Trinidad, well established by C.E. 500 may well justify the concept of a "Barrancoid of Saladoid Tradition" in the Lesser Antilles, suggestive of deeper sociocultural and possibly also linguistic and demographic changes in the entire West Indies than is warranted by the usual reference to a "Saladoid with Barrancoid influences" in the current literature. The particularly dynamic conditions of the period were also marked by the first peopling of the small but remote island of Barbados, and by the spread of the Puerto Rican Saladoid to eastern Hispaniola, that became
the westernmost frontier of ceramics and agriculture in the Greater Antilles, a position it maintained for several centuries.

THE PROTO-HISTORIC MILLENNIUM (C.E. 500–1500)

Early Developments

The entire 1,000 years that preceded the fateful coming of the Europeans in the New World may be qualified in the Caribbean region as the Proto-Historic Period because of the first rise of strong continuities that led it to the ethnic situation encountered by the Europeans around 1500 (Map 8.3). Although this was especially true after the year 1000, historical documents now begin to be useful for acquiring a deeper knowledge about these prehistoric peoples. Indeed, the full realization of many of the developments previously ongoing in the Caribbean region, especially outside Mesoamerica, during the preceding millennium now fully manifest themselves. This became the time for the achievement of the greatest degree of cultural and social complexity in the form of advanced theocratic and militaristic chiefdoms and even proto-urban societies, essentially the period with which the former concept of a Circum-Caribbean phenomenon is most closely attached.

Mesoamerica and its southeastern frontier experienced after C.E. 500 some of the most consequential series of cultural, social, and political events yet to have happened there since the collapse and demise of the Olmec, almost a millennium earlier. The powerful city of Teotihuacan had sent far-reaching influences that extended as far away as the Maya, who were themselves approaching the height of their own civilization. Major Maya centers like Tikal were thriving, and the magnificent site of Copan represented a Maya metropolis at the very edge of Central America and the Caribbean region. By C.E. 900 both Teotihuacan and the Maya centers were devastated, terminating their potential political influence beyond the boundaries of their realm.

To the south, however, and beginning soon after 500 B.C.E. powerful chiefdoms in the highlands of Guatemala, following the demise of the Olmec, had taken over an extensive trading network that reached to the Pacific coast, perhaps involving some degree of maritime ventures. A major volcanic eruption in El Salvador led to the sudden abandonment of the area, fatally disrupting trade with highland Mexico. The highland Maya of Guatemala soon collapsed, however, preparing the rise of the
The Caribbean Region: C.E. 500–1500

- Archaeological site or locality
- Boundary of the Caribbean region

Map 8.3

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lowland Maya who, in turn, took over the trade with Central America, using cacao beans as a form of currency, and for this reason giving preferences to those humid regions more favorable to growing the precious plant, especially in Honduras and El Salvador.

After C.E. 700 most Maya sites began their decline and collapse, leading to the depopulation of the central areas. Copan itself was abandoned early, around C.E. 800. A vacuum in Mesoamerican influences was thus created over the southeastern frontier and Central America, whose major consequence was symbolically reflected in the disappearance of jade ornamentation as far away as Costa Rica. As the most prestigious material and symbol of wealth and status, jade was replaced locally by gold objects and a technology derived from Colombia. This marks the end of the “Age of Jade” in vast areas of the western Caribbean region. Lost wax, soldering, casting, hammering, and “mise en couleure” with acids, are typical of this complex new metallurgy, which also produced the distinctive tumbaga, a gold-copper alloy, whereby only the surface was transformed into pure gold.

During the first half of the millennium under consideration, the Mayoid area of Central America extended to the Ulua Valley of western Honduras, where mound sites have been found. This area of Mesoamerican “veneer,” as revealed in artistic decoration, remains quite limited, however, not extending even to eastern Honduras. The Mesoamerican frontier follows a southern line that reaches south into the Nicoya Peninsula, more or less hugging the Pacific coast. The entire Atlantic watershed is consequently entirely outside its sphere of influence.

Mesoamerican styles are reflected archaeologically in the fine ceramics of the “Early Polychrome Horizon” and its distinctive Maya inspiration. Nothing there is truly Maya, yet local ceramics were traded with Copan. In the Greater Nicoya area (the Rivas region and the Nicoya Peninsula), the remarkable “Nicoya Polychrome” ceramics developed independently and were less derivative of the Maya sphere, with tripod and tall annular-based vessels. Colors consisted of light orange, white, red, and dark orange, with the addition of black and brown. Monkeys, serpents, birds, and humans were represented. Influences on the so-called Tepeu pottery of the central Maya area have been noted. This artistic phenomenon in painted pottery decoration is associated with the development of elaborate stone carvings, such as those found in the Isthmus of Rivas region of Nicaragua. These tall stone columns, on which are supported sculptured figures, are perhaps even more reminiscent of the San Agustin
"alter ego" statues in the highlands of Colombia. The carved columns seem to have belonged to ceremonial structures built on platform mounds. Similar large stone sculptures, in the style known as Chontales, are also found on the eastern shores of Lake Nicaragua. A man holding a spear and wearing a prominent headdress is typical of the iconography. The style, which is believed to have survived until C.E. 1000, may be more closely related to the Caribbean watershed.

The centuries between C.E. 500 and 1000 are those of the most sophisticated cultures of lower Central America, in which the Cocle culture of central Panama is the best known and the most spectacular. Cocle, which still belongs to the extensive Polychrome Horizon, is known from the site of Sitio Conte, a river bank burial complex. The culture is highly representative of the powerful and wealthy theocratic chiefdoms that ruled over Central America. Wealth was reflected in sophisticated polychrome pottery, such as their famous painted plates, and their metalworking reached new heights. Cocle is indeed the first major culture to have replaced jade with goldworking, probably derived from Colombia, as symbols of political authority and status. The painted pottery remained essentially different from Mesoamerican styles; stylized alligators, birds, humans, or monsters, painted in white, purple, red, and black, decorated the inside of flat plates or the walls of tall urns and jars. Gold was used in the form of the tumbaga alloy, derived from the Quimbaya technology of the Colombian highlands. Colombian emeralds also decorated their gold jewelry, essentially represented by varieties of alligators, frogs, or bat pendants worn as insignia of rank and status by a powerful elite. Burial practices were highly developed at Cocle, where most of the fine artifacts were found in chiefly graves, often also associated with sacrificed wives and retainers laid to rest in deep pits.

Interestingly, on the Atlantic watershed from Costa Rica to northeastern Honduras, a somewhat original contemporaneous cultural development preserved a stronger element of Mesoamerican influences. This Curridabat culture in Costa Rica (and its Selin counterpart in eastern Honduras), for instance, built stone-faced mounds and stone walls in the rain forest and lagoons where they lived, and where they erected carved stelae and monoliths. Whether their structures were ceremonial or defensive is still undetermined. Likewise, their ceramics are still revealing of distant Maya influences.
THE WESTERN CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA  
(C.E. 1000–1500)

At the end of the first millennium C.E., a series of profound changes appeared throughout the Caribbean region. The collapse of major Mesoamerican societies, the Maya especially, could not have failed to have had serious repercussions over Central America where the frontier of Mexican influences tended to shift repeatedly in response to the intensity of trading activities.

While Guatemala and western Honduras were reduced to a power vacuum, the mighty Toltec ruled out of central Mexico and their new capital at Tula, after taking over many Maya cities in Yucatan, especially the famous Chichen Itza. After the collapse of the Toltec in the thirteenth century, the Maya people were allowed to experience a cultural revival, known archaeologically as the "Decadent Period" because of a marked artistic decline. This led them immediately, however, to renew their involvement in a maritime trade with their neighbors, which was based essentially on a coasting navigation in conjunction with the old Toltec networks, which they may have simply revived.

By now, ethnohistorical documents reveal that trading became more especially the role of the Putun Maya, who occupied the Caribbean coast of Mesoamerica. Although the Putun Maya originated on the Gulf Coast of Mexico, they were able to extend their commercial activities through various ports-of-trade around Yucatan, perhaps as far south as Honduras. They are remembered as the "Phoenicians of the Caribbean" due to their large seagoing canoes and large cargo rafts. The presence of sails has been suggested, but there is no definitive evidence of its use. Maritime transportation would have made dealing in bulk commodities far easier and cheaper than overland trade routes. Their Caribbean trade operated out of the island of Cozumel as well as the nearby coastal site of Tulum, where they flourished until Spanish times.

In the hands of the Putun, long-distance trade dealt essentially in Mesoamerican resources such as salt, obsidian, jade, copper, quetzal feathers, cacao beans, cotton, and copper bells and axes. Moreover, they mainly supplied Honduras not only with mass-produced pottery but also with slaves for the local élites. The effect of this Maya revival in Central America is well represented by the Naco culture, and more especially the Naco site on the Ulua River of eastern Honduras. This site must have been a substantial town with a population estimated at 10,000 inhabi-
tants, which also boasted one of the few Mesoamerican ball courts of Central America. The local population may have been a trading colony of ethnic Maya or even Nahua-speaking Pipil from central Mexico.

On the Pacific coast of Central America, Toltec trade had been traced through the distribution of a characteristic type of monochrome pottery known as Plumbate Ware, a veritable horizon marker, which because of particularities of the clay developed a metallic sheen reminiscent of glazed ceramics (a technique otherwise unknown to the New World). Pacific coast trading networks survived the Toltec, when later revived by the Aztec through the intervention of their specialized class of merchants, the famous pochteca, who established colonies as far away as Costa Rica, from where they were responsible for supplying Nicoya Polychrome pottery and Panama goldwork to Mesoamerica.

That this unsettled period was a time of widespread conflict and warfare is well reflected in the relatively sudden appearance of hilltop fortresses in Guatemala and Honduras. Putun traders, who had introduced Plumbate Ware, obsidian, and the theme of the feathered serpent, may well have been regarded as fearsome "Caribbean raiders" against whom these defensive structures had been built. This is especially true of the Cocal people of eastern Honduras and northern Nicaragua, who lived in such fortified hilltop villages as in the Rio Claro site. Their Central American roots, however, are clearly revealed by stone cist graves and carved giant grinding stones.

An unexpected glimpse of the kind of trading activities in which the late Maya of the western Caribbean area were engaged can be found in Columbus's diaries, in which he recorded having observed a probably Putun trading raft, laden with resources, plying the ocean between Belize and the Bay Islands of Honduras. Further south, in the Nicoya Peninsula, the Nahua-speaking Pipil ethnic group, with their distinctive monolithic stone axes, bark beaters, and large carved and complex table-like metates, may have been descendants of pochteca traders or of even earlier Toltec merchants. The colorful Nicoya Polychrome pottery was replaced locally by the more linear and graceful Luna Polychrome (after c. C.E. 1100), reflecting a curious admixture of central Mexican with local styles.

In Panama and eastern Costa Rica, new more powerful chiefdoms, such as the Chiriqui, had emerged, revealing exterior associations with the Pacific coast, although essentially based on the Atlantic watershed. The Chiriqui people built large burial sites and ceremonial centers of a scale unknown previously; the most famous is at Las Mercedes in Atlantic...
Costa Rica, where a group of mounds was erected according to a planned layout on the banks of a large river, a rather unique architectural feat in Central America. Large stone statues of various humans and animals are representative of their monumental art; trophy heads, however, are still often depicted along the edges of ceremonial metates, an unmistakable sign of militaristic pursuits. Chiriquí pottery is complex; it emphasizes negative painting, a technique new to Panama despite a long history elsewhere in Central America.

On the Caribbean shores of Panama, the Veraguas people had replaced the sophisticated Cocle culture. They are best known for their deep shaft tombs with side chambers dug into hill sides. Breaking away from the Polychrome Tradition of the Pacific coast, Veraguas ceramic art emphasized instead modeled monochrome vessels with tall legs carved in the shape of alligators, frogs, or reptilians. The technique is more consistent with the Atlantic ceramic tradition in Central America. Their large stone metates were carved as jaguar effigies or three-legged ceremonial seats, as expected of Caribbean chiefdoms. It is their metallurgy, however, that distinguishes the Veraguas people, especially their unusual use of gilded copper rather than purer gold for their metal ornaments.

Northern South America and the Greater Antilles (C.E. 500–1000)

In the Caribbean lowlands of Colombia, the fertile and now densely populated Magdalena Valley became the home of a “Second Painted Horizon” characterized by bichrome rectilinear designs, as in the widespread Zambrano culture and its large villages built on the banks of major rivers. Strong stylistic affinities with the much earlier Machalilla culture of coastal Ecuador (c. 1500 B.C.E.) have been noted by Colombian archaeologists but without solutions to the extreme chronological gap. Cultures also diversified regionally. The Crespo culture located in the lagoons and mangroves of the Caribbean littoral, for instance, is known for its diversified use of conch shell for the manufacture of axes as well as a variety of pendants and ornaments. The technology is reminiscent of the West Indian islands’ shellwork across the Caribbean Sea, but no direct links can be reasonably established.

Perhaps of greater significance was, by the end of the first millennium, the formation of the Tierra Alta culture in the same areas of the Magdalena lowlands. Its pottery, essentially flat bowls and pedestal vessels, has been characterized as a “real international style” because of similarities
Louis Allaire

with the northern ceramics of Darien and Panama, certainly along the Atlantic coast. Gold became more common, an unmistakable index of wealth and power. The first evidence of public work in the form of small hillside agricultural terraces (a form of intensive agriculture) and artificial mound platforms in this part of South America is also attributed to Tierra Alta chiefdoms.

The last few centuries before European contacts are marked by the late spread of deep shaft graves, which seemed to occur as a cultural horizon when the lowlands of the Magdalena Basin became the home of the Betanci chiefdoms with their distinctive ceramics. To an even greater extent than Tierra Alta, the Betanci people built artificial mounds everywhere, including temple platforms 8 meters high, and some 40 to 60 meters at the base; entire villages were also built on mounds. All these features serve to classify Betanci in the sub-Andean cultural pattern in spite of its lowland distribution. Burials were also repositories for gold artifacts, as well as a distinctive type of carved shell ornament. Following upon earlier practices, labor-intensive agricultural techniques produced extensive ridged fields, which are today the most distinctive and visible remains of the Betanci people. What was grown certainly included maize and perhaps also sweet manioc as a staple. It is believed that the Betanci people were directly ancestral to the historic Sinu chiefdoms, builders of impressive temples, encountered by the first European explorers of the Magdalena Basin of Colombia.

Even by the standards of the Betanci’s notable achievements, the cultural climax of this part of South America is to be found further to the east of the Magdalena Valley in what are the foothills and upper valleys of the high Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, an impressive mountainous formation that rises directly above the Caribbean Sea and that is separated from the Andes by the Río Ranchería. These mountains were the home of the famous Tairona culture. Probably derived from lowland groups, as suggested by their shaft tombs with side chambers in which they deposited their urn burials, the Tairona, while living mostly in small villages, also built towns of elaborate masonry structures temples, and palaces, from where the chiefs of large village federations ruled. This is the case at their major site at Pueblito with its 3,000 dwellings and public buildings of dry stone slab masonry, in addition to bridges of stone slabs and stepped mounds. These Tairona still represent the most complex architectural remains ever built in northern South America and, as such, must be representative of the highest degree of social complexity ever
Archaeology of the Caribbean Region

achieved there, or anywhere outside Mesoamerica and the Andes. Accordingly, the qualification of "proto-urban" has been assigned to these advanced chiefdoms, despite the lack of clear Andean antecedents.

Tairona technology provides further evidence of their developments. They were sophisticated goldworkers, and their pottery emphasizes plastic decoration rather than painting. Their monolithic axes are similar to those of lower Central America and, to some degree, those of the Greater Antilles. Central Mexican influences, especially from the Toltec, were once suggested on the basis of similarities in the iconography of their many decorated artifacts, in which the image of Tlaloc, the Mesoamerican rain god, had been recognized. This theory has not recently been revived; it would certainly raise the question of the extent of earlier Maya trading at the time of Toltec rule, or the possibility that the Tairona might have ventured out to sea toward the western Caribbean and Mesoamerica.

In Venezuela, however, a radiation of more modest cultural developments that began its spread after C.E. 1000 is in sharp contrast with the more uniform and more advanced cultures of the Colombian lowlands. Based on the central areas of the coast and adjacent coastal mountains, the phenomenon resulted in such stylistically varied cultures as the Tierroid, Ocumaroid, Valencioid, Guayabitoid, Dabajuroid, and Arauquinooid, as well as some isolated styles. Old Barrancoid enclaves still survived, but Saladoid groups were virtually gone. These diverse peoples and their cultures were essentially the direct descendants of earlier groups such as the Tocuyanoid and early Barrancoid; some also had a long local history of development. None achieved the level of development of the Tairona or Betanci of Colombia, and few left any forms of structural or architectural remains.

The more developed among the Venezuelan peoples were found near the Andean area and the coastal mountains. This is the case of the Tierroid cultures (named after the site of Tierra de los Indios), which dominated western Venezuela after C.E. 1350. The Tierroid were likely descendants of the Tocuyanoid because of their distinctive polychrome pottery, which hints at closer relationships with Colombia, and even with some late painted ceramics of Panama (the Herrera style), as suggested more specifically by the presence of a distinctive comblike motif in their pottery decoration. Tierroid structural remains are limited to low platform mounds. None of the Tairona architecture seems to have filtered east from the Santa Marta area.
In the more centrally located area of Lake Valencia, an inland lake basin rising above the Caribbean coast, the contemporaneous Valencioid cultures may have been the most influential. They are known for a famous style of female figurines with prominent buttocks. Their unpainted ceramics include the use of the “coffee bean” element especially for eyes, and they used human faces modeled on the upper parts of urnlike pots as ceramic decoration. Some urns were actually used for burying the dead under earth mounds, which are their only structural remains. The Arauquinoids were located toward the east coast and Orinoco Valley, and they replaced the Barrancoid. They reveal a degree of Valencioid influences with their “coffee-bean” pottery decoration. Their Barrancoid ancestry is not universally accepted however; their distinctive pottery belongs more properly to a pan-Amazonian horizon (the Incised and Punctate Horizon) distinguished by rows of incised or punctated geometrical motifs and more especially by the use of sponge spicules as temper in the clay, a practice then widespread in the Amazonian lowlands for the production of a fragile, greyish ware.

One still wonders at the reasons for this unique cultural radiation in central and eastern Venezuela at the eve of European contact, and at its social, political, ethnic, and linguistic implications. The ethnic and linguistic diversity it reflects may even raise the specter of a “Balkanization” of this part of the Caribbean region, a situation that may not be entirely unrealistic. Indeed, the situation appears to have been extremely dynamic everywhere in Venezuela, resulting in a significant amount of late culture changes that are not yet fully understood. This may be especially true of the series of cultures grouped into a “Macro-Dabajuroid phenomenon,” according to an expression developed by Oliver, and which affected more directly the western and central coasts of Venezuela. Without much evidence for social complexity or chiefdom formations, these cultures more likely consisted of village farmers; nevertheless, they were responsible for the population growth and expansion reflected in the peopling of the small islands off the western coast of Venezuela (Curacao, Bonaire, and Aruba), and which may have had far-reaching repercussions as far away as the eastern fringes of the Caribbean region, even to the Lesser Antilles and Barbados. The further association of this Macro-Dabajuroid expansion with the spread of Arawakan languages, so widely spoken in that part of South America, reinforces the importance of their role in the late prehistory of the eastern Caribbean region, and the formation of the diverse historical ethnic groups encountered there by the Europeans.
In sharp contrast to the mainland, the entire area of the Greater Antilles— from Puerto Rico to Cuba, including Jamaica— experienced shortly after C.E. 500 a single uniform evolution that resulted in the local emergence of chiefdom societies among the Taino, encountered there by Columbus on his first voyage of 1492. This unique event follows upon the demise of the earlier Saladoid colonists, who after expanding to eastern Hispaniola (the La Caleta culture in the Dominican Republic) had established a long-lasting frontier with their Archaic (Casimiroi) neighbors, who still occupied the greater part of that island as well as all of Cuba. The earliest manifestations of these changes have now been traced to eastern Hispaniola, where the Late Saladoid Cuevas culture developed into an Ostiones culture which may have been seminal to the sequence of events that led to the formation of the sophisticated culture of the historic Taino. Whereas the Saladoid had maintained obvious traces of their earlier mainland origins, the new developments appear to have been entirely the result of local processes, and no clear influences from the mainland can be satisfactorily identified in their archaeology.

Ostiones ceramics differ from previous Saladoid wares by their simplicity in shapes as well as in their incised and modeled or painted decoration. The Ostiones' initial contribution was twofold: (1) They were the first to colonize Jamaica, while introducing pottery and agriculture to Cuba before expanding eastward toward Puerto Rico; and (2) they were the first to have systematically colonized the forested and mountainous interiors of these large islands. The origins of this new manifestation must have involved some population increase to justify such an expansion; the reasons for the changes are unclear. We can reasonably assume that no actual migration from a mainland origin can be detected from the archaeological remains to account for these events. What is not clear either is the nature of the Ostiones people's relationship to the Archaic population they encountered in their expansion, except in Jamaica where they seem to have been the original human colonists.

The rise of the Ostiones culture is further associated with the emergence of cultural diversification and social complexity in the Greater Antilles, not only within the Ostiones pattern but also regarding the somewhat enigmatic Meillac culture, which replaced them in the fertile Cibao Valley of northern Hispaniola. There the Meillac people introduced artificial ridged fields before following the steps of the Ostiones to
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Jamaica and Cuba, where they appear to have survived until historic times; the Meillac culture remained marginal in Puerto Rico. As opposed to earlier styles, Meillac pottery was never painted; it is highly distinctive by its decoration technique of texturizing vessel surfaces with incised lines, punctations, appliqué clay ridges and trellis, and a few small modeled lugs. The almost exclusively rectilinear style of the incised decoration is also in sharp contrast to all other pottery decoration in the Greater Antilles, before and after the Meillac.

Although many other types of artifacts seem to belong to an Ostiones background in the Meillac culture, the unusual ceramic style has led to a variety of interesting speculations about a possible exterior origin of this culture in the Greater Antilles. One theory favored by Dominican archaeologists emphasizes strong similarities with a contemporaneous late ceramic culture of Guyana (the Taruma phase), which are indeed intriguing. Venezuelan archaeologists propose instead an origin in the middle Orinoco and adjacent llanos (the Memoid series), outside the Caribbean area proper. It is difficult, however, to determine how such a stylistic diffusion or migration could have spread over vast areas of both sides of the Caribbean Sea without intermediary connections in the Lesser Antilles. One would have to infer direct contact across the Caribbean Sea, bypassing the Lesser Antilles and most of Puerto Rico, by peoples aiming directly at the northern coast of Hispaniola, where the Meillac culture first appeared. It would have been more difficult to migrate from Guyana, even though it is suggested by many uncanny stylistic similarities. Interestingly, Callaghan’s simulation studies of marine navigation on the Caribbean tend to indicate that direct crossings between Venezuela and Puerto Rico (where the Meillac culture is only marginal) might have been nautically easier than hopping along the Lesser Antilles, where winds and currents would have made sailing conditions more perilous.

As an alternative theory, Meillac origins may be attributed to contacts with local preceramic peoples, who are known to have decorated small stone bowls with incised chevrons and hatchings, reminiscent of Meillac pottery decoration. The Meillac culture survived in an uneasy relationship (at least from the viewpoint of archaeologists) in northern Hispaniola, where it existed alongside later cultures until historic times, and where it may have been ancestral to the Ciguayos, a somewhat marginal Taino-speaking group encountered in eastern Hispaniola by Columbus.

The native population that first saw Europeans in the New World is known today as the Taino. Their culture was found throughout the
Greater Antilles and the Bahamas. Their greatest achievements, however, were centered in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, and to some extent in eastern Cuba; in comparison, other areas are characterized by a sub-Taino culture. Archaeologically, these Taino were distinguished by their particular ceramic style (known as Chican Ostionoid), which almost entirely lacks painted decoration, emphasizing instead elaborate modeled and incised vessels reaching sculptural proportions in the finest specimens such as their effigy vessels. Although their pottery belongs to a stylistic tradition introduced by the Ostiones people, their work is unlike anything in the Caribbean region, and it displays no obvious connections with ceramic styles of Central America or South America. Distant Barranoid influences, perhaps even a Barranoid revival, have been noted, however, because of the emphasis on modeled and incised decoration including the ubiquitous *adorno* rim decorations.

Taino developments were first noticeable in the eastern part of Hispaniola, more precisely on both sides of the Mona passage between that island and Puerto Rico, where they began to emerge from the previous Ostiones culture just before C.E. 1000. This initial Atajadizo style developed locally before spreading westward, around C.E. 1200, as a fully developed Taino culture to eastern Cuba, then eastward to Puerto Rico, before reaching its easternmost outposts in the Virgin Islands, and as far as Saba, their gateway to the Lesser Antilles.

Population increase and the rise of a complex of the chiefdom type, as encountered by Columbus, as well as diversified art forms of a complexity unknown elsewhere in the islands and eastern Venezuela, are everywhere associated with the phenomenon. Prominent in their art is their unique development of small stone carvings that are free-standing statuettes, all portable in size, characterized by three basic types of object unique to the Greater Antilles: (1) three-pointed stones or trigonoliths; (2) stone collars; and (3) elbow stones. These stone objects may be simple or plain; most are elaborately carved to represent zoomorphic beings identified with the deities or "zemies" they worshiped.

The only structural remains of the Taino consist of a number of unique ball courts, which are vast open spaces, lined with standing stones or earth embankments, in places associated with causeways or "roads" found throughout Puerto Rico and Hispaniola. A ball game described by the early Spaniards may have been played in these courts, which may also have held religious ceremonies and dances. Some of the stone paraphernalia, the collars especially, may have been used in the ball game, a
striking parallel with Mesoamerica. Indeed, Maya influences have often been cited in connection with the introduction of ball courts in the Greater Antilles. Because of the total lack of other evidence to argue for contacts or influences from Mesoamerica in the Greater Antilles, and because of great differences in scale and structure, it may be more reasonable to trace the ball courts to a local development out of earlier plazas or courts simply delineated by dwellings that may have developed since Saladoid times. This would be more consistent with the simple ball game played in the lowlands of South America. It is also interesting to note that the ball game and ball courts never spread to Central America, an area otherwise strongly and unmistakably affected by the Mesoamerican civilizations.

Usually located in the hilly interior valleys of the islands, these ball court sites may have been the seat of major chiefdoms; large ceremonial buildings or chiefly residences of perishable materials may have been built near the courts. Another major evidence of rank among the Taino is the large wooden *duho* seats, hammock-shaped and carved, which survived the period of initial European contact. We can only speculate about the true nature of Taino woodcarving, which must have been quite sophisticated, based on the few remains. The technique of black polished wood carvings is common to many areas of the Caribbean region, including Central America; it has often been claimed to be one of the few genuine circum-Caribbean features.

Although Columbus seems to have encountered full evidence for similar chiefdoms in Jamaica, the incomplete archaeological evidence reveals instead a sub-Taino pattern beginning with what appears to be the initial colonization of that large island by Ostiones peoples (the local Little River culture) after C.E. 500. The later White Marl culture, a typical representative of the Meillac pattern, survived until historic times. This is essentially what happened in Cuba, where the classic Taino culture had simply crossed over the Windward Passage into the eastern part of that island to replace an earlier Ostiones occupation. In central Cuba as in Jamaica, the Meillacoid Bani culture was that of agricultural colonists expanding after C.E. 1200 among existing Archaic groups remembered as Ciboney, who may have survived on the more barren eastern tip of Cuba until European times.

On the outer northern frontier of the Caribbean region, the small Bahamas islands, essentially those offshore from Cuba, are the site of the first European landing in the New World. They were occupied at that
time by a sparse population of agricultural natives known as the Lucayo, who were closely related to the people of Cuba. An Ostiones origin, somewhat after C.E. 500, has been suggested for this island population. Beginning after C.E. 900, however, most of the archaeological remains belong to a distinctive culture named after its plain and scarce pottery, the Palmetto, who represented the Lucayo's most direct ancestors from the Greater Antilles, and who may have been attracted to such barren islands by salt quarries and a favorable climate for growing cotton, both important trading commodities, as well as by fishing and shellfish collecting opportunities.

**The Lesser Antilles and Trinidad**

The climax reached in the Lesser Antilles, from Trinidad to Puerto Rico, by the Barrancoid trends that characterize local ceramic styles around C.E. 500 gave way probably no later than around C.E. 650 to the same phenomenon of stylistic simplification evidenced earlier in the Cuevas culture of the Greater Antilles. So many hallmarks of Saladoid decoration, the white-on-red painted designs in particular, had disappeared that a new classification of a Troumassoid series is warranted. Yet it must be emphasized that no migration from the mainland is evidenced by the remains, and culture changes must be regarded as entirely indigenous to the islands. They are not without parallels, however, with events occurring in Trinidad and the mainland, where Barrancoid peoples had established themselves practically everywhere after C.E. 500. Indeed, the new Troumassoid cultures may still have shared similarities with some of the more simple Barrancoid manifestations of the mainland. No further evolution took place in the Lesser Antilles, however, and this degenerative trend lasted until the very end of prehistoric times, giving rise after C.E. 1100 to the distinctive Suazey culture of the Windward Islands and Barbados.

The general coarseness of Suazey pottery, with its plain and roughly shaped cooking pots often decorated with finger indentations around the rim, contrasts sharply with the earlier ceramic technology of the islands. The style includes finer decorated vessels that hint at the earlier Saladoid and Troumassoid continuities. The Suazey favored areas of mangroves and sand beaches, and their sites consist essentially of scattered shell middens that reveal a diet based on shellfish, fish, and turtle hunting. The presence among the Suazey and their neighbors of the Leeward
Islands of a type of large clay griddle attached to three sturdy legs, which they seem to have invented, and which will always remain unique to the Lesser Antilles, nevertheless indicates the importance of manioc cultivation in their subsistence.

Although no Suazey remains have been encountered in Trinidad or the mainland, it is possible to detect contacts and interaction with their neighbors at both ends of their distribution. For instance, the Suazey's simple art and pottery decoration includes evidence of direct Taino influences, and many carved three-pointed stones have been found in their sites. Likewise, the presence of footed vessels, griddles, and painted Caliviny linear designs may hint at influences from the mainland, especially the widespread Macro-Dabajuroid peoples then expanding all along the Venezuelan coastline from the west and rapidly colonizing offshore islands such as Curacao and Bonaire.

The hope of finding the ancestry of the Island Caribs, also known to the Spanish explorers as Canibales, has been the focus of much of the archaeology of the late Lesser Antilles. Because the Island Caribs are so closely associated with an area of the New World, which after all still bears their name, and because they have long been considered the prototype of the fierce New World native populations that the Europeans encountered and were meant to conquer, it has often been argued that most archaeological remains of the Lesser Antilles might have belonged entirely to them, especially the latest ones, represented by the Suazoid cultures.

Recent research, however, warrants a more sober perspective. Historical documents reveal that, first of all, Island Carib pottery was entirely different from Suazoid ceramics; their cooking pots and pans instead belonged to a widespread tradition of the Guianas from where the Caribs claimed to have recently migrated to the Lesser Antilles. A late migration is thus the best interpretation for their sudden appearance in the Lesser Antilles, from where they were relentlessly raiding Puerto Rico as well as the mainland when encountered by the Spaniards.

CONCLUSIONS

The Caribbean region was the first part of the New World ever to be seen by Europeans, if we exclude the extreme northern edges of the continent. Columbus practically touched on all four corners of the Caribbean Sea between the time of his initial voyage of 1492 and his fourth
and last venture of 1503. This included all the islands from Martinique northward to Cuba, which Columbus appears, however, never to have circumnavigated himself. He later explored the coasts of Trinidad and the Gulf of Paria, as well as the entire Caribbean coast of Central America. Later Europeans were soon to intrude on the coast of Venezuela and Colombia, not visited by Columbus, who had also entirely missed the coast of Yucatan and thus failed to reach the Maya. One can only speculate about what a landing by Columbus at Tulum would have meant for the later course of European colonization in the West Indies.

The events that followed upon this European discovery of 1492 belong to another era of world history better left to historians. The Caribbean world described by archaeologists from their incomplete evidence soon came to a sudden end; disease, displacement, forced labor, failure to reproduce, slave raiding, and warfare, all contributed to a collapse everywhere of the native societies and cultures that had evolved there at least since 3000 B.C.E. The case of the Taino is the most dramatic, with a practically total depopulation within a single generation of initial European contact.

But were the greatest achievements of this archaeological world exactly the scene encountered by Columbus and his immediate followers? It cannot be denied that inconsistencies have been pointed out often. The Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, for instance, have left no identifiable prehistoric archaeological remains, and the local Suazey culture must therefore have belonged to an earlier, probably ethnically different, population that shows closer ties to the Greater Antilles than to the Guianas. It is still difficult to correlate with any precision the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic complexity encountered in Venezuela between late prehistoric and early historic times. The most advanced peoples outside Mesoamerica, the Tairona, were never described while still thriving in their masonry towns; likewise many chiefdoms of Central America no longer produced the sophisticated arts of earlier centuries, or they had simply vanished. The Maya, certainly, were no longer anything more than a back province of the Aztec-dominated Mesoamerican civilization, having long lost aspects of their original writing and calendrical systems. We may argue that the Taino of the Greater Antilles had probably already experienced a decline because few of their more distinguished remains, including the ball courts, are included in European descriptions. Almost everywhere on the Caribbean coast of South America by the end of the fifteenth century, the sophisticated and highly decorated pottery styles had given way to
plain, coarse, and poorly decorated wares, even in the Lesser Antilles. The situation encountered all around the Caribbean region unmistakably suggests that the world of 1492 was not the time of the climax of any of the most developed cultures or the height of these chiefdom societies. Likewise it may not have been the time of the highest population densities either. The Europeans had missed out by a few centuries a Caribbean world at its most populous and powerful.

It is intriguing to wonder if these general events are in any way related, an issue that raises the question as to whether there ever was in reality anything that could qualify as a true prehistoric Caribbean unity. Even today the vision of a unified Caribbean region remains unfulfilled; this brief and somewhat simplified chronological survey leads to the same conclusions. Yet a pattern emerges which demonstrates that although the existence of a prehistoric Caribbean region is very real, it was never a truly circum-Caribbean phenomenon—that is, a self-contained “cultural” basin.

That communication and contact always existed between neighbors at all times along the Caribbean coastline cannot be doubted, but it existed in a linear rather than circular manner, as if we were to stretch out along a single plane the coastline of the Caribbean sea from the tip of Yucatan to western Cuba, with contact extending from one extreme to the other in a chain-link fashion. There is no evidence that mainland peoples had any knowledge of the islanders, except perhaps for Carib marauders near the Gulf of Paria and adjacent coast of Venezuela; the people of the Greater Antilles, however, may have had some vague ideas about the existence of a distant mainland represented by the hostile Caribs that appeared to them as foreigners from a distant, quasi-mythological land. After all, the fleur-de-lis-shaped gold ornament observed by Columbus around the neck of a chief from Jamaica, so highly suggestive of the winged ornaments favored in Colombia and Central America, must have made its way there from the mainland.

Yet the lack of evidence for direct crossings across the Caribbean Sea is most intriguing in view of the fact that it must have been responsible for the earliest peopling of the islands at a time of primitive technology and sparse population everywhere. There are no recorded historic trans-Caribbean voyages and no archaeological evidence, despite some weak theories favored by Venezuelan archaeologists. The problems raised by the origins of the Meillac culture of Haiti may also be cited in this context. That crossings were feasible has been demonstrated; had they
occurred at all, we must conclude that they would have been of practically no consequence to later cultural developments in the islands.

We may wonder whether the people themselves visualized their world as that of an enclosed maritime basin or as the "Center of the World," like on the Mediterranean. No cultures, even the most advanced, have left any cartographic documents or mental maps of their Caribbean territories. We may also question the reality of a common, earlier prehistoric substratum. Certainly the initial peopling of the mainland in distant Paleoindian times was divided between apparently unrelated traditions: the Clovis Tradition, present as far south as Panama, and the Joboid series, also known as the "Andean Biface Horizon," in northern South America and western Venezuela. Neither seem to have contributed directly to the earliest completed peopling of the Caribbean Basin that was first achieved in Archaic times with the first human migration to the Greater Antilles. We may be able to find the best case for regional unity within a pattern of diversity that included shell middens and a subsistence based on fish and shellfish, as well as a technology that somewhat erratically spread flint blades from Belize to Cuba, edge grinders to Panama, Venezuela, Trinidad, Martinique, and Puerto Rico, and shell gouges from Venezuela to Cuba.

Later events belong to the agricultural colonization of the entire area that proceeded between 2000 B.C.E. and, in some places only a few centuries before, the coming of the Spaniards. The basic dichotomy between maize and manioc was established early almost everywhere, except perhaps in Colombia and the Orinoco, but its impact on later developments endured just as the world of the Mediterranean remains divided between Islam and Christianity. Eventually it was the rise and spread of chiefdom societies around the periphery of the Caribbean Sea that most distinguished the prehistory of the area. The phenomenon is not without diversity, especially between the militaristic societies of Central America and the more theocratic groups of South America and the Caribbean. Beyond typology, which may be a simplification, the levels of development varied greatly, especially from an archaeological perspective. Art, monuments, and architecture were variously distributed, as were population densities and wealth; many of these features were distinctively absent from the lowland areas of northern South America, and to a degree from the islands, where, nevertheless, thriving chiefdom societies were observed in early historic times.

Lacking a true maritime orientation, and the technology necessary for
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its development, peoples around the Caribbean were by necessity bound to their shores and to their island chains, mainly for fishing and limited trading. No true "sea peoples" ever developed to engage in massive long-distance migrations (if we exclude Carib marauders in their attempt to reach the Greater Antilles). The more developed societies of the Tairona and the Cinu of the Magdalena lowlands were not oriented toward the sea in either their economy, subsistence, or settlements. They left no major harbors or ports-of-calls and no evidence for territorial expansion outside their sierras. Even their arts lacked emphasis on maritime themes and iconography. Maritime trade was therefore always limited, and technology prevented the use of ships for the transportation of commodities in bulk. Was there even a need or a demand? Resources and materials may not have been regularly distributed but were nevertheless accessible within a restricted network that cannot qualify as long-distance trade. Luxury items — jade especially — may have been more extensively distributed, and this may have been true of the islands. The Taino in the Greater Antilles were the most significant peoples to contact across the Caribbean; yet we still cannot determine precisely if they ever were aware of the presence of other chiefdom societies on the mainland. There is no record of Taino contact with South America, as opposed to the Caribs' frequent incursions as far away as the coast of the Guianas, and they may have had only a vague idea of quasi-mythical land masses to the southeast through their interaction with their Carib enemies.

Trying to find similarities with the Mediterranean, where cultural developments were allowed to follow their natural course well into their own historic times, may be a hopeless task for archaeologists. Indigenous Caribbean developments were brutally interrupted between 1492 and 1517, and any comparison must be made with an earlier more properly Neolithic Mediterranean, when Egypt was only beginning to radiate toward the eastern coast of the Levant as the earliest and only civilization on its shores. The Maya, with their pyramids and hieroglyphs, are perhaps too facile an analogy to be meaningful, yet they were also beginning to venture timidly along the neighboring littoral while Aztec pochteca were establishing trading colonies in lower Central America. We can hardly doubt that the process would have pushed even further southward (if we ignore the illusion of Toltec influences on the Tairona) and that direct contacts with South America and the chiefdoms of the Magdalena, or more likely the sub-Andean chiefdoms of the highland areas, would have been the scene of the first encounter between the Mesoamerican
and Andean worlds, an event that would have had revolutionary consequences on the future course of social and cultural developments in the New World.

Influences from other geographical as well as cultural areas were instrumental in the process. Whereas Mesoamerica radiated toward Central America along its Pacific coast, and only marginally on the Caribbean littoral itself, its influence was to become more profound toward North America. In contrast, northern South America displays more originality in the lowlands of Colombia, but further east and throughout the West Indies it was the Amazonian area that ruled supreme and was at the origins of half the area. This part may be qualified as an offshoot of the lowlands, and potential from Mesoamerica, both in Central America and ideally toward Cuba, was left unfulfilled.

Ultimately we may wonder whether the concept of a “world system” would apply to the ancient Caribbean region as revealed in its prehistoric archaeology? Far from seeking the interplay and economic dependencies of a center on its less developed periphery, we may still question what effects such powers as Mesoamerica might have had on its nearest neighbors (e.g., Central America) as well as on more distant peoples, all linked through a chainlike relation. The particular geography of the Caribbean region may have served to diffuse these repercussions along its shores not in a circular manner, as a maritime basin would suggest (because the gap to Cuba was never filled), but in a linear way, like a domino effect. Did the collapse of Teotihuacan in the sixth century C.E., or that of the Maya in the tenth century, send shock waves all the way to Hispaniola or Barbados, not to forget Venezuela all along continuous shorelines? Interconnected disruptions of trade, depopulations, collapses of local chiefly centers, and displacement of populations, all may offer a still largely unexplored and still tentative model for explaining the rise of chiefdoms in the Greater Antilles or the Barrancoid expansion in Venezuela in manners unsuspected before. We are only now beginning to understand this process, and the more precise details of the complex relationships remain to be determined.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

No single book or article covers the archaeology of the Caribbean region as presented in this chapter. Cultural and political boundaries have imposed their own divisions on the region that have even affected geograph-
ical works, such as *The atlas of Central America and the Caribbean* (Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1985). The basic reference for the physical and oceanographic aspects of the Caribbean region remains the volume edited by A. E. M. Nairn and F. G. Stehli, *The ocean basins and margins: Volume 3, The Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean* (Plenum Press, New York, 1975), whereas E. C. F. Bird and M. L. Schwartz's *The world's coastline* (Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, n.d.) is another valuable reference. The concept of a circum-Caribbean cultural phenomenon, exclusive of Mesoamerica, was developed by the anthropologist Julian Steward as editor of the *Handbook of South American Indians*, published between 1946 and 1950 by the Smithsonian Institution, especially its Volume 4, *The circum-Caribbean tribes* (Washington, 1948), which still remains an essential reference for ethnography and much archaeology as of 1945. The entire *Handbook* was later condensed by Steward and Faron in a single more theoretical work, *Native peoples of South America* (New York, 1959), whose chapter on the circum-Caribbean chiefdoms may be more useful. The same subject also receives more recent coverage in the *Cambridge history of Latin America* (1984), with emphasis on postcontact native populations; the complex subject of primary sources on the early historic native populations of the region are not included in this essay. For archaeology alone, there is no recent detailed summation of New World prehistory that supersedes Gordon Willey's earlier massive two volumes of *An introduction to American archaeology* (Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey, 1971), now obviously in need of revisions after 25 years. The question of the first New World ceramics receives a definitive discussion in the recent volume edited by W. K. Barnett and J. W. Hoopes, *The emergence of pottery* (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1995), especially the paper by Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo for Colombia, and those of Richard Cooke and John W. Hoopes for Central America.

Because the Mediterranean has been used as a source of analogy in this chapter, and its study also served as a model for its organization, it may be worth citing a useful summary of early Mediterranean prehistory by D. H. Trump, *The prehistory of the Mediterranean* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1980), or Sarah Arenson's *The encircled sea* (Constable, London, 1990) for the beginnings of the historical period and for many insights on how the region was ever unified in antiquity. The historical period in the perspective of a fundamental unity is discussed by Fernand Braudel in *La Méditerranée: l'espace et l'histoire* (Flammarion,
Articles and reports on the Caribbean region outside of Mesoamerica number in the thousands since the turn of the century. These bibliographical notes must therefore be selective; they emphasize recent book-form publications and only a minimum of very recent articles of particular interest published in major journals. Other publications of historical significance are also cited, as are a very few unpublished Ph.D. dissertations. Early historical populations are not the major topic of this chapter, and the complex issue of references to primary sources is not included in these notes.


Besides Mesoamerica, Central America and especially lower Central America is the most advanced of the entire Caribbean region in the state of archaeological research, and for this reason bibliographical notes must be more drastically selective. Several well-illustrated books and edited volumes are devoted to this area as a whole, and to lower Central America in particular. I list them here alphabetically: C. Baudez, *The ancient civilizations of Central America* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976); Elizabeth P. Benson, *Between continents/Between seas: Pre-Columbian art of Costa Rica* (N. H. Abrams, New York, 1981); F. W. Lange and D. Stone (eds.), *The archaeology of lower Central America* (University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Doris Stone, *Pre-Columbian man finds Central America: The archaeological bridge* (Mass.: Peabody Museum Press, 1972). On the Preceramic Period of Panama, recent research is presented in Olga Linares and Anthony J. Ranere (eds.), *Adaptive radiations in prehis-

In the context of Atlantic or Caribbean Colombia, for many years the basic reference to the complex archaeology of Colombia was the book by Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Colombia* (Ancient Peoples and Places, Praeger Publisher, New York, 1965); an updated revised edition of the book, *Arqueología de Colombia: un texto introducciones* (Funbotanica, Bogotá, 1985) seems to have been published only in Spanish. For want of more varied sources, one may be reluctantly tempted to cite a recent book by Sam Enslow, *The art of prehispanic Colombia: An illustrated cultural and historical survey* (McFarland and Co. Inc, Publishers, London, 1990), for a useful comprehensive overview, if readers ignore the author’s obsession with transoceanic contacts and other esoteric theories! More reliable is Armand J. Labbé’s *Colombia before Columbus: The people, the culture, and ceramic art of prehispanic Colombia* (Santa Ana, Cal.: Americas Foundation and Bowers Museum, 1986). The intriguing problem of the earliest ceramics perhaps in the entire New World deserves special attention; original publications on the Puerto Hormiga and related early styles are those of Reichel-Dolmatoff, “Excavaciones arqueologicas en Puerto Hormiga, Departamento de Bolivar,” *Publicaciones de la Universidad de los Andes, Antropologia 2* (Bogotá, 1965); and *Monsu: un sitio arqueologico* (Biblioteca Banco Popular, Bogotá, 1985). The famous Tairona culture is fully described in an early publication by Alden Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia* (Anthropological Papers, Vol. 20, Nos. 1–3, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, 1931–1939), as well as several papers by Reichel-Dolmatoff published in Colombian periodicals. More
recent papers can also be found in the Boletins series published by the Museo del Oro in Bogotá.

Venezuela has a long history of research by American archaeologists. A basic reference, albeit now somewhat out of date, is the two-volume technical report by Jose Cruxent and Irving Rouse, *An archaeological chronology of Venezuela* (Social Science Monographs, Pan American Union, Washington, D.C., 1958); a later updated summary version, *Venezuelan archaeology* (Yale University Caribbean Series, No. 6, New Haven, 1964), was also published by Rouse and Cruxent. A different theoretical perspective is offered by Mario Sanoja and Iraida Vargas, *Antiguas Formaciones y Modos de Produccion Venezolanos* (Monte Alban Editores, Caracas, 1978), who emphasize Barrancoid and Saladoid occupations of eastern Venezuela and the preceramic period, as well as by Sanoja in his monograph on the Barrancoid series, *Las Culturas Formativas del Oriente de Venezuela: la tradicion Barrancas del Bajo Orinoco* (Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, Caracas, 1979). A more recent book by Anna Roosevelt on her middle Orinoco research, *Parmana: Prehistoric maize and manioc subsistence along the Amazon and Orinoco* (Academic Press, New York 1980), is also relevant to the region. I must also include Jose Oliver's recent Ph.D. dissertation, *The archaeological, linguistic, and ethnohistorical evidence for the expansion of Arawakan into northwestern Venezuela and northeastern Colombia* (University of Illinois, Urbana, 1989), which has contributed significant new ideas about the late prehistoric dynamics of the entire coastline. Recent views on the possibility of cultural contact across the Caribbean Sea from Venezuela are discussed in a brief publication edited by Erika Wagner, *Relaciones Prehispanicas de Venezuela* (Acta Cientifica Venezolano, Caracas, 1984).

The West Indies area is represented by a scattering of short publications that go back to the turn of the century. These are found in a very recent bibliographical essay published by John M. Weeks and Peter J. Ferbel, *Ancient Caribbean* (Garland Publishing Inc., New York, 1994), which suffers from poor organization and lacks authoritative editorship but remains useful for the Greater Antilles, especially Cuba. The most recent summary of the entire area, with special emphasis on the Greater Antilles, is still Irving Rouse's *The Taino: Rise and decline of the people who greeted Columbus* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992). The recent volume *Taino: Pre-Columbian art and culture from the Caribbean* (The Monacelli Press, 1997) is so far the best illustrated account of
this intriguing art. A simulation study of the feasibility of cross-
Caribbean human passage to explain the original peopling of the Carib-
bean islands from various points of its shores is the subject of a recent
unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by Richard T. Callaghan, Mainland ori-
gins of the preceramic cultures of the Greater Antilles (University of Calgary,
1990). The period of agricultural colonization is covered in several papers
edited by Peter E. Siegel, in Early ceramic population lifeways and adaptive
strategies in the Caribbean (BAR International Series 506, Oxford, 1989). From a historical perspective, works by Fewkes on the Dominican Re-
public and the Lesser Antilles, published by the Smithsonian Institution,
are still useful references. Numerous important papers and reports have
been published over the years in the series Yale University Publications in
Anthropology, and more recently works by Ricardo Alegria Ball courts and
ceremonial plazas in the West Indies (No. 79, New Haven, 1983), and by
Rouse and Alegria, Excavations at Maria e la Cruz Cave and Hacienda
Various series and collections of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano,
especially their Boletin series, include many significant reports and mon-
ographs, among which the most representative are those of Marcio Veloz
Maggiolo, Las Sociedades arcaicas de Santo Domingo (Serie Investigaciones
Antropologicas, No. 12, Santo Domingo, 1980), and Veloz Maggiolo,
Ortega, and Caba Fuentes, Los Modos de vida Meillacoides y sus posibles
origines (Santo Domingo, 1981). The Lesser Antilles are a major subject
of the sixteen published proceedings of Caribbean archaeological con-
gresses held biannually since 1961; their entire contents are listed in the
Ancient Caribbean volume cited earlier. Accounts of the Taino include
those of Sven Loven, Origin of the Tainan culture, West Indies (Goteborg,
1935), and more recently, Samuel N. Wilson Hispaniola: Caribbean chief-
doms in the age of Columbus (University of Alabama Press: Tuscalosa,
1990). The Bahamas have received a theoretically and methodologically
sophisticated treatment in a provocative book by William F. Keegan, The
people who discovered Columbus: The prehistory of the Bahamas (University
is still represented by a multitude of journal articles or proceedings papers
that go back to the turn of the century. It may be worth citing for its
influence on later work a short report by Ripley and Adelaide K. Bullen,
two archaeologists closely associated with the archaeology of the Lesser
Antilles in the 1960s and 1970s, on their work on Grenada, authored by
Recent books include a detailed account of the late prehistory of the Leeward Islands as seen from the small Dutch island of Saba by Corinne L. Hofman, *In search of the native population of pre-Columbian Saba* (Part I, Leiden 1992); recent work on Montserrat coauthored variously by investigators David Watters, James Petersen, John Crock, and their colleagues, in several recent issues of the *Annals of Carnegie Museum* (Pittsburgh,) and an overview of the archaeology of Barbados by Peter L. Drewett and colleagues, *Prehistoric Barbados* (London, 1991). The most recent account of the Lesser Antilles for nonspecialists is found in Samuel M. Wilson’s (ed.), *The indigenous people of the Caribbean* (University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1997).