

EARLY SETTLERS OF THE
**INSULAR
CARIBBEAN**

Dearchaizing the Archaic

edited by

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Dearchaizing the Caribbean Archaic

Andrzej T. Antczak and Corinne L. Hofman

Introduction

In this chapter, we focus on broad topics related to human/environment interactions, time, scale, and complexity in the insular Caribbean. However, these topics are diversely entangled with tightly interrelated concepts that include power, gender, mobility, identity, ethnogenesis, language, warfare, islandscapes, places, animals, spirits, things and affect, and emotion, among others. The material manifestation of some of these concepts and their participative roles in forging, sustaining, and changing the Archaic Age communities are variably reflected in the chapters that follow. Finally, we outline avenues for future research.

Recent archaeological research has created significant fissures in the traditionally accepted, monolithic definitions of the Caribbean Archaic Age. Thus, more than ever, the question “was the *Archaic* a specific age, a definable stage of sociocultural trajectory, or a socioeconomic mode of life?” requires a more studied reply. In fact, cracks in the conceptualization of *Archaic* or *primitive* peoples in precolonial South America can be found in the anthropological writings of many decades ago. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, noted in the ‘60s that under the increasing scrutiny of anthropologists, the *archaism* of Amazonian societies appeared less certain than before (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 105). During our session, we realized that different opinions – not disagreements – also exist regarding the conceptualization of what is and what is not *Archaic*. But undermining all these opinions requires challenging certain unchallenged critical preconceptions that lie at the very foundation of the *Archaic* concept itself (cf. Nash 2003, 200).

Lévi-Strauss’s call for the disengagement of anthropology from “philosophical residue surrounding the term *primitive*” (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 117) is being taken up by scholars who work within the stream of the ontological turn in the social sciences. In this approach, according to Martin Holbraad and Morten Pedersen (2017, 152), “the only thing that may be deemed ‘primitive’ in anthropological parlance is the impoverished framework upon which anthropological analyses sometimes rest.”

Here, we call for the archaeological reassessment of the adequacy of the term and concept *Archaic* to denominate the early indigenous settlers of the insular Caribbean. This aim can be achieved through critical recalibration of the epistemological and ontological levels at which the archaeological analyses of the Archaic Age past take place: the level of Western scholarly projects and that of the non-Western grounding of the world's understandings (Course 2010, 248). Continuing with the inadequacy of the current terminology hampers our understanding of the Archaic Age peoples at each of the abovementioned levels and contributes to the preservation and even further pollution of their current biased perception; these concerns were expressed by the participants of the SAA session.

Conceptual conundrums

The concerns begin with the very pertinence of the term *Archaic*, widely used in Caribbean archaeology to denote one of the earliest stages in the indigenous settling and inhabitation of this macroregion. Irving Rouse and José M. Cruxent (1963, 22; Cruxent and Rouse 1958) used material culture signatures of early indigenous technologies and subsistence strategies to define four subsequent “epochs” of the Caribbean’s cultural history: Paleo-Indian (15,000–5000 BC), Meso-Indian (5000–1000 BC), Neo-Indian (1000 BC–AD 1500 [further subdivided into three periods]), and Indo-Hispanic (AD 1500 to the present). Later, Rouse (1972, 136–138) redefined the epochs, based on mostly technological terms, into four consecutive “ages”: the Lithic (4000–2000 BC), Archaic (2000–500 BC), Ceramic (500 BC–AD 1500), and finally Historic Age, which brings us to the present. Other scholars have considered the Archaic as a developmental stage in which subsistence was largely centered on the exploitation of marine environments. This was conceived as a stage of subsistence largely dependent on mollusk-gathering (Davis 1982), which precedes a further stage of terrestrially-oriented subsistence (Willey 1976). Meanwhile, Rouse and Allaire (1978) defined the Archaic as an “age” technologically marked by the absence of pottery and the use of ground stones and shells (Goodwin 1978; Veloz Maggiolo 1972; Veloz Maggiolo and Vega 1982).

Despite these divergences and the ensuing debate, the starting point of the Archaic Age or period in the entire Americas is still largely considered to coincide with the beginning of the Holocene (Browman *et al.* 2005, 313). In this volume, we favor a tripartite chronostratigraphic subdivision of the Holocene into the Early (11,700–8200 BP), Middle (8200–4200 BP) and Late (after 4200 BP) intervals, as this organization coheres well with the chronological conceptions used by the contributors. The boundaries between these temporal series have been marked by nearly globally documented climatic shifts, and interrelationships between these events and historical processes around the world have been largely correlated (Braje and Erlandson 2013; Siegel *et al.* 2005; Walker *et al.* 2012, 654–655). It is still debated whether the term *Anthropocene*, coined to designate the epoch in which Earth’s “natural” systems became dominated by humans, should replace *Holocene* for its entire time span (Braje *et al.* 2014; Erlandson and Braje 2014; Rivera-Collazo 2015). The heat of the recent debate about the conceptualization of the Anthropocene (Erlandson and Braje 2014; Malhi 2017; Morton 2014; Whitmore 2018; Williams *et al.* 2015) can

particularly be felt in the controversy over the very dating of the beginning of this epoch: some put it at the Pleistocene/Holocene boundary (ca. 11,700 BP), others at the Mid-Holocene rise of agriculture (ca. 7000 BP), others at the onset of the industrial revolution, ca. AD 1800 (Steffen *et al.* 2011; Young *et al.* 2006), and still others at the onset of the Atomic Age, i.e., the mid-twentieth-century (Ellis *et al.* 2013, 1).

Transitioning from the archaeological terminology and adapting the notion of *dearchaization* (Michaluk 2014) to our purposes, we briefly revise the usefulness of the term and concept *Archaic* as it has been applied thus far in Caribbean archaeology. We do this amid increasingly precise and sophisticated cutting-edge technologies as well as shifting research paradigms that enable the investigation of human beings in deep-time perspective. We also acknowledge the role of the swiftly changing economic, sociopolitical, ideational, and environmental realities of the modern world, which is to say the world surrounding the scholars active in academia. In this context, the meaning of the term *Archaic* has been in constant flux, broadening, or narrowing due to the exponential increase in the use of metaphors and analogies as well as the constant birth of new, interrelated terms and concepts.

The widespread use of the term *Archaic* in the modern Western world has often been related to the notions of *primitivism* in art and cultural colonialism (e.g., Hiller 1993, 11; Price 1989; Rhodes 2008). But the scenarios that have emerged from recent interdisciplinary archaeological research into the deep human past became strikingly counterintuitive to the above notions and incentivized us to undertake the task of *dearchaization* of the Caribbean Archaic Age. Among the building blocks of such scenarios are the variables related to human/environment interactions, time, scale, and complexity that we discuss in the sections below. Critically defining these variables and operationalizing them interdisciplinarily in specific case studies may help us not only to better understand this deep past but, at the same time, to dearchaize the conceptual grounding of the Caribbean Archaic Age as a chronological period. Any change in chronological conceptualization, moreover, translates to substantial shifts in the overly qualitative perceptions of these early indigenous peoples and their historical roles. Were the early indigenous peoples simply wiped from the historical-geographical record by later, more advanced migrants? Or did they contribute, and if so how, to subsequent sociocultural dynamics in the Caribbean? Throughout this volume, the attempts at replying to these questions will provide a better scholarly understanding of the early settlers of the Caribbean. Moreover, we are confident that it will also contribute to changing the essentializing and pejorative perception of these early indigenous peoples as “walking stomachs and talking heads” or “sitting ducks” (Gamble and Roebroeks 1999, 10; Rouse 1992, 70; see also Antczak *et al.* 2018; Hofman *et al.* 2006; Rodríguez Ramos *et al.* 2013).

Humans and the environment: Two sides of the same coin?

For more than a century, the impacts of paleoenvironmental and paleoclimatic factors on the developmental trajectories of human societies have been the focus of archaeologists, environmental scientists, and historical geographers (Dincauze 2000; Fisher *et al.* 2012; Joyce and Goman 2012; Reitz and Shackley 2012; Terrell 2006). Evolutionary-driven environmental determinism focused the attention of the twentieth-century

scholars on the rise of agriculture and its revolutionary role in the trajectories of human societies (Barker 2009; Roosevelt 2016; Terrell *et al.* 2003). Demonstrable environmental impacts on the trajectories of past indigenous cultures in the precolonial Americas have also been compellingly proven (e.g., Meggers 1996; Peterson and Haug 2005; Sandweiss *et al.* 2009). However, skeptical voices consider that the establishment of contemporaneity between climate change and culture change “is not enough” claim of a causal correlation between them, but only a starting point for further investigation into such a hypothetical causality (Contreras 2017; Hulme 2011).

In recent decades, deterministic approaches were abandoned in favor of bidirectional interactions rather than unidirectional causality (but see Hulme 2011 for a recent variant of climate determinism). They aimed at the conceptualization of changes in socionatural or socioecological systems including historical ecology, cultural niche construction, landscape management, and human ecodynamics (Antczak and Cipriani 2008; Balée 2013a/b; Crumley *et al.* 2017; Hofman and Hoogland 2018; Holm *et al.* 2001; Kennett and Beach 2013; Kirch 2007; Laland *et al.* 2016; McGlade 1995; Rick *et al.* 2013; Rostain 2016; Schaan 2016; Siegel 2018; Smith 2015b; Zeder 2016). Recent developments also add approaches from political ecology, ethnobiology, sustainability, and several more specific perspectives that aim at pulling apart the divide between nature and culture by exploring the differences between Western and non-Western ontologies (Descola 2013; Ingold 2000a, 2017; Kohn 2013; Menon and Karthik 2017; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Wolverton *et al.* 2014). In these approaches, albeit to varying degrees, the factors conducive to change come from natural and social domains in largely recursive and mutually constitutive interaction. Therefore, the aim would be to establish sound chronological sequences for both archaeological and paleoenvironmental data, then move on to deeply grounded causal and inter-causal explanations, thereby bridging the theoretical divide between the social and the ecological (Joyce and Goman 2012).

The theoretical preoccupation of current archaeological discourse not only focuses on the recursive interplay between the ‘realms’ of the sociocultural and the natural (if not on entirely dismantling the nature/culture divide), but also considers the sociocultural consequences of gradual, punctuated, and catastrophic environmental change. The release of powerful natural forces such as tsunamis, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes, not to mention asteroid impacts, seems to remove choice from human survival (e.g., Cooper 2013; Cooper and Peros 2010; Hofman and Hoogland 2015; Malaizé *et al.* 2011; van Nooren *et al.* 2017; see chapters by Rivera-Collazo, Cherry and Ryzewski, and Haviser this volume). But the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean Archaic Age were attentive to and monitored these happenings in order to respond to them accordingly; whatever the sociocultural shifts were, they were tightly interrelated with changes that occurred in associated ecosystems (Mayewski *et al.* 2004, 244–245). The response to catastrophic events could involve significant changes and promote societal sustainability or collapse (Butzer 2012; Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2008). Such post-cataclysmic transformations and reorganizations of the socioecological or socionatural landscape(s) were a product of conscious choices and unintended actions and operated at different scales of space, time, and social organization (Cooper 2012; Redman 2005) across the entire macroregion. The transgenerational management practices could mitigate the effects of catastrophic events (Terrell 2006; see also Hill 2011;

Sassaman 2016), effectively dealing not only with subsistence-related stresses, but also with indigenous experiences of material absence or loss in the material post-cataclysm worlds (Bille *et al.* 2010, 3; Samson *et al.* 2011). In long-term diachronic perspective, such sudden catastrophes should be examined *alongside* the long-standing effects of the unintended anthropogenic environmental changes that indigenous societies put in motion as a result of the strategic interplay of sustainability and resiliency (Tainter 2006). All the abovementioned topics are important opportunities for further interdisciplinary studies on the Archaic Age societies. But the socioecological resilience that can be perceived in the deep archaeological past cannot be taken for granted in the rapidly changing present-day Caribbean, where the modern understanding of natural phenomena goes hand in hand with active management and deterrence (Adger *et al.* 2005; Stancioff 2018).

Time

Time is one of archaeology's heuristic tools *par excellence*, used in defining the historical flow of past cultures and, indeed, separating them from the present (Thomas 1996). Therefore, the notion of time plays a critical role in the archaeological determination of what could be and what cannot be *Archaic*. Scholars working in the Circum-Caribbean beyond the insular archipelagos use different terms, concepts and corresponding time ranges than the already mentioned Roussian categorizations (e.g., see Rosenswig 2015, 116–117; cf. Joyce 2004, Figures 1.4–5, 15 for the Archaic Age in Mesoamerica). Despite these differences, however, all Archaic Age peoples were traditionally defined by what they were missing in comparison to those who came later (see Fowles 2010): they were missing not only pottery, but also material signatures related to agriculture and sedentism. This initially clear-cut distinctiveness of these peoples with respect to their predecessors (the Lithic Age peoples) and successors (Ceramic Age peoples) has been increasingly questioned in recent years.

Under critical scrutiny, foraging, long considered the opposite of farming (or agriculture *sensu stricto*), emerges as not always being as different as has been commonly thought. “Farming” in the Caribbean is a loose term encompassing a diverse range of human behaviors and relationships with other-than-human species (Reid 2018). In this sense, advances in archaeobotanical research have had a profound impact on the recent way of looking at Caribbean Archaic Age peoples' subsistence (Pagán-Jiménez *et al.* 2015). At some Archaic Age sites, the initial recovery of macrobotanical remains from fruit trees (e.g., avocado and several Sapotaceae species such as yellow *zapote* and *sapodilla*) and seed plants (e.g., Mexican-poppy and iguana hackberry), remains known to be exogenous to the Caribbean islands, led Newsom (1993) to argue that intentional cultivation of these and similar plants may have begun during Archaic Age times. Her findings partially supported previous notions posited by Davis (1988), who suggested that at least some cultivated plants historically used in the insular Caribbean could have been carried to the islands before the Early Ceramic Age. Despite these realizations, until recently, the predominant narrative regarding Archaic Age subsistence strategies maintained the ideas originally proposed by Rouse (1956, 1960, 1992), namely that Archaic Age peoples were basically hunter-fishers and gatherers who simply adapted their continental subsistence strategies and skills to their new insular environments. By

the same time, other narratives used concepts such as the appropriator (*apropiador*) or the gatherer mode of life (*modo de vida recolector*) (e.g., Guarch Delmonte 1990; Veloz Maggiolo and Vega 1982; see also Sanoja and Vargas 1974, 1995) to describe a similar subsistence-oriented perspective on Archaic Age peoples.

In 2005, all of these previous interpretations were firmly questioned by Pagán-Jiménez and colleagues (Pagán-Jiménez *et al.* 2005; see also Pagán-Jiménez 2009, 2013) after performing an archaeobotanical analysis of lithic grinding tools from two Archaic Age sites in Puerto Rico: Puerto Ferro and Maruca. Direct microbotanical data (starch residues) extracted from two groups of tools revealed, for the first time in the insular Caribbean, the use of some of the most important domestic plants known in the Neotropics, such as maize, manioc, sweet potato, bean, and *achira* (*Canna* spp.), in addition to high-yield wild plants like *marunguey* (*Zamia* spp.), palm, and yam. This new data was used (Pagán-Jiménez *et al.* 2005) to critically open the debate on the assumed simple and preagricultural sociocultural structure of the so-called Archaic Age populations in the Caribbean islands. Similar realizations made in other parts of the Americas set the stage for discussing aspects of early indigenous interactions with plants and animals as well as their mobility. In eastern North America, for example, the hunting of small game animals and plant gathering has also been discarded as factors separating Lithic (Paleo-Indian) and Archaic subsistence practices (Stoltman 1992). By the same token, the evidence of plant cultivation or the presence of pottery has not been taken to mark the end of an Archaic Age and the beginning of the following stage. Willey and Phillips (1958, 108), nearly 60 years ago, had already found evidence of plant cultivation to cohere with the then-existing conceptualization of Archaic Age peoples' subsistence pattern. Thus, several decades ago in eastern North America, archaeological evidence of plant cultivation was widely accepted as a feature of the Late Archaic stage. It has also been recognized that pottery was consonant with Archaic Age innovation. In Mesoamerica, the Archaic period is considered to end with the first evidence of pottery use during the Early Formative Period. However, in the Maya area specifically, pottery appeared at the end of the second millennium BC, that is, nearly 1000 years later than in other adjacent regions (Rosenswig 2015, 122). Coupled with similar evidence of differing regional-temporal appearances of horticulture, this data suggests that the populations of the Archaic and Formative periods coexisted and interacted in various ways during the second millennium BC (Rosenswig 2015). Interaction between foragers and horticulturalists has been documented throughout the entire Circum-Caribbean, both in the form of ongoing sequences of events varying by locality or region, and as a segment of a larger-scale phenomenon. Either way, such interaction should not be straightjacketed *a priori* into any given block of time (Joyce 2004, 18).

In the insular Caribbean, local pottery production on the part of Archaic Age peoples has been demonstrated in recent research side by side with the use of imported pottery that was made by “others” (e.g., Kozłowski 1974; Rímoli and Nadal 1983; Rodríguez Ramos *et al.* 2008a; Ulloa Hung and Valcárcel Rojas 2002, 2013; see also several chapters in this volume). Moving even further back in time, the purported lack of ground-stone technology among Lithic Age predecessors of the Archaic Age peoples has also come into question (Keegan 2006; Rodríguez Ramos *et al.* 2008a). Some researchers have suggested that the pre-Arawak Pottery Horizon was developed in the

Antilles prior to the arrival of the Arawakan-speaking Huecoid and Saladoid pottery makers. Therefore, a more appropriate term for Lithic or Archaic Age insular groups, or both, might be “pre-Arawak” (Keegan 2006; Keegan and Rodríguez Ramos 2007; Rodríguez Ramos *et al.* 2008a). This conceptualization, previously signaled in diverse ways by Latin American archaeologists (e.g., Chanlatte Baik 2000; Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1986; Pantel 1996; Ulloa Hung and Valcárcel Rojas 2002; Veloz Maggiolo and Ortega 1996), emphasizes the dynamic nature and technological sophistication of indigenous societies before the inception of the Ceramic Age, which, according to the periodization of Rouse (1972), had happened by 500 BC.

When discussing time, however, we should also ask ourselves how much confidence may be placed in the absolute dating of Caribbean Archaic Age sites/materials – especially those dates determined during the first decades of the ^{14}C boom. Since the discovery of the radiometric dating method based on the isotope carbon-14 in the late 1940s (Curtis *et al.* 1981), thousands of archaeological samples from the Caribbean macroregion have been processed in various laboratories across the world. The dates obtained have constituted the backbone of the cultural-chronological charts (Rouse 1955). Recently, however, the fast-evolving sophistication of the techniques of radiocarbon corrections and calibrations has occasioned serious concern about the accuracy or even the very validity of early and uncalibrated dates. If the uncalibrated radiocarbon dates are wrong, then the synchronization of sociocultural events and the environmental episodes in which these dates were used is also wrong. In addition, Caribbean absolute chronology is heavily dependent on samples coming from the remains of marine animals and from the bones of humans whose diet could have included a significant intake of marine food. Such samples require critical application of local reservoir corrections as well as comparison and contrast with the results of alternative chronometric techniques (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2015, 8; Pettit 2005, 317; Pollard 2009, 159; Thomas 2015).

Finally, we emphasize the recent recast of scholarly attention on the topics of continuity and interaction. In the Old World, for example, research on coexistence, assimilation and interbreeding between Neandertals and early modern humans in western Eurasia, as well as investigations on diverse forms of interaction instead of the previously suggested clear-cut displacement of the European Late Mesolithic hunter-gatherers by the first farmers incoming from the Near East, has been increasingly supported by relevant genetic data and novel approaches to old problems (e.g., Villa and Roebroeks 2014). But in the insular Caribbean, is our move in direction of continuity and interaction decisive, or is it still at the stage of wishful thinking? Despite the claims of some scholars who believe that much of the archaeology in the Circum-Caribbean continues within the cultural-historical framework (Webster 2009, 20), we consider that the move in the abovementioned direction is unstoppable. Several chapters in this volume clearly indicate that many Archaic Age populations of the Caribbean leaped out of the time frames traditionally assigned to them by cultural-historical archaeology and continued to thrive until AD 600–800 or even later (e.g., see particularly the chapters in this volume by Kelly and Hofman, Rodríguez Ramos *et al.*, Ulloa Hung and Valcárcel Rojas, and Valcárcel Rojas and Ulloa Hung). Perhaps, if we want to maintain the notion of the Archaic Age as a useful epistemic tool in Caribbean archaeology, then the term should be defined in a more fruitful way than by positing a chronologically

bounded period. Can we consider the Caribbean Archaic Age an assemblage of specific socioenvironmental parameters, a type of subsistence economy, a sociocultural pattern loaded with ideational meanings or as a locally contingent admixture of all these characteristics? We do not have a ready-at-hand reply to these questions, but we already know that several lifeways-defining conditions and activities related to sedentism, agriculture, pottery-making, and non-egalitarianism have lost their persuasiveness as characteristics restricted exclusively to the “following” Ceramic Age peoples. Moreover, we also know that Archaic Age peoples were not simply replaced by more advanced pottery makers and sedentary agriculturalists. Instead, they functioned as vital but still barely understood agents of interaction who channeled the foundational shifts of the post-Archaic Age (Hofman *et al.* 2011, 2014b, 2018b, this volume; Rivera-Collazo 2011a/b/c; Rodríguez Ramos *et al.* 2008a).

Scale

In the insular Caribbean, distinct Archaic Age peoples could employ subsistence strategies variably dependent on hunting, fishing, gathering, horticulture, and pottery production, and could be characterized by diverse residential mobility. Similarly, across the Circum-Caribbean, we probably confront an array of resource use strategies that changed over time (Rosenswig 2015). Although such variability is more reasonably to be expected than homogeneity (Zeitlin and Zeitlin 2000, 46), concrete examples that could support one side or the other depend on the scale of analysis that is used in approaching the ancient peoples and their worlds. This heuristic tool allows the deactivation of micro-foci placed on local scenarios in favor of opening a wide lens on the scale of macroregional *longue durée*, in which we miss the fine-grained resolution of everyday lives of Archaic Age communities. To change the focus of analysis from local and eventful realities to macroregional and *longue durée* conceptualizations is to change from nuanced and admittedly messy pictures of events, peoples, and things to a single, much neater broad-brush picture of a large time and place. Such a perspective often exhibits convincing overall patterns of operating forces, factors, variables, and parameters, and may be achieved by the application of people-free system theory and other functionalist approaches (Harris 2014).

On the macroscale of deep-time history, the *ultimate causes* of the changes observed along sociocultural trajectories have often been attributed to coincidental climate change (Rosenswig 2015, 120; see also Hodell *et al.* 1991). For example, there is an increasing indication that many transitions from one cultural period to the next occurred at times of major ecological and environmental change (Barker 2009, 472; Kennett *et al.* 2012; Rosenswig 2015, 145). Nonetheless, synchronizing sociocultural and environmental events within a sound chronological frame of interrelation and causation persists as one of the main challenges archaeologists face (Munoz *et al.* 2010). Understanding these interrelations not only requires sound dating of both long- and short-term processes, it also requires special attention to the intersections – the antecedents, causes, and results – of microscale events and long-term large-scale phenomena (Robb and Pauketat 2013, 3). We may know *when* something happened, but that does not mean we understand the nature and dynamics of the relationship between *before* and *after* the something, and any “archaeology which cannot apprehend [that]...

is a mere work of fantasy” (Pollard 2009, 164). Clearly, such research demands that the close conceptual correspondence between natural and cultural variables be compared.

The search for *proximate causes* brings the *longue durée* perspective down to the microscale of specific historical cases or the *social time* (Braudel 1980, 3). On a microscale, we may start to (re)populate the deep Caribbean past with early indigenous communities composed of peoples and things (see Harris 2014, 92). It is on this scale that we may also realize that the Archaic Age communities could have coexisted on certain Caribbean islands, perhaps much more closely related to each other than we have been able to imagine. To understand the strategies that might have been applied by a specific sociocultural formation to cope with perceived ongoing climate change, the microscale focus is placed on the interrelations between peoples and the material circumstances of their encounters with their surroundings. This move away from generalizing and reductionist trends toward multiple pathways or trajectories or locally variable socational configurations accords with a general “postmodernist turn” in anthropology and archaeology (Harrison-Buck 2014). The possibility of an interpretative shift goes even further. An especially attractive approach to the early Caribbean settlers may construe humans as parts of relationalities rather than objects (as in traditional large-scale approaches) or subjects (traditional agential approaches) (Robb and Pauketat 2013, 28). In general, the microscale offers the chance for Archaic Age Caribbean archaeology to transform the dots on distribution charts depicting so-called “natural processes” into locales inhabited by communities of peoples with an embodied understanding of the surroundings they inhabited (Ingold 2000a; Lock 2009, 178–179).

Complexity

New archaeological discoveries, cutting-edge technologies, critical reevaluation of existing datasets (including museum collections) and, crucially, the adoption of novel theoretical frameworks have not only prompted exploration into hitherto unexamined interactions between Archaic and Ceramic Age peoples; these factors have also stimulated a critical evaluation of the social complexity characterizing early Caribbean settlers (Boomert 2000; Curet 2003; Curet *et al.* 2004; Keegan and Hofman 2017; Siegel 1989; Wilson 2007). Traditionally, complexity has been employed as a concept intimately related to the sociopolitical *hierarchical* stages perceived in the evolution of a social system. It was derived from the doctrine of progress rooted in nineteenth-century unilineal evolutionism (Sanderson 1990). In the 1970s and ‘80s, however, approaches to social complexity became increasingly more flexible and sensitive to specific historical and sociocultural contingencies while still being functionally associated with inequality. Recent research into social complexity aims to disclose attributes of human systems that might have resulted from interactions among human beings, other-than-human beings, things, and surrounding environments. Some researchers argue that focusing on how power is managed within society might be a better approach to social complexity than understanding how hierarchy emerges, especially because hierarchy is often purposefully discouraged (Angelbeck and Grier 2012; Borck 2016; Borck and Simpson 2017; Borck and Sanger 2017; Crumley 1995, 2003; Flexner 2014; Fowles 2010; Graeber and Sahlins 2017; Scott 2017; Wengrow and Graeber

2015). This approach may be particularly well-suited to the study of early Caribbean settlers, peoples often portrayed as egalitarian societies. Moreover, this approach may also assist in understanding simplicity in the modern world beyond helping to dearchaize the Caribbean Archaic.

Two decades ago it was argued that the presence of a stable food supply was a fundamental condition for the development of sociopolitical complexity (Feinman 1995; Hayden 1995). Accordingly, unpredictable subsistence-related resources were held likely to prevent the formation of hierarchical sociopolitical structures (Morgan 2009). The Lesser Antilles have been portrayed as unable to provide resources sufficient for sustaining substantial populations of human foragers (e.g., Keegan and Diamond 1987). Together, the above statements echo the decades-long debate arising from Betty Meggers's notion, on the one hand, of the Amazonian rainforest as an environmentally impoverished receiver of higher cultural influences from the Andes, versus Donald Lathrap's theory, on the other hand, that Amazonia is instead the donor of socio-cultural complexity, "the center and not the backwater of innovation, migration and cultural development" (Roe 1976, 73). The examples drawn from the northwestern coast's "complex chiefdoms" and Poverty Point groups illustrate an alternative argument, namely that sociopolitical complexity (i.e., hierarchy and division/specialization of labor) also occurs within resource variable areas as a means to organize against this variability (Borck 2016).

Returning to the Caribbean, the deterministic statements may be considered reiterations of the early colonial Spanish denomination of many of the small Antilles as "useless" (*islas inútiles*), islands sparsely populated by cannibal barbarians (Antczak and Antczak 2015; Hofman *et al.* 2018a). With the passing of time, all these statements have proved to be insufficiently supported by empirical data. It has been argued that the ecotonal areas in which diverse ecological zones intersect, and which are widespread across the Caribbean including the Lesser Antilles, could have provided resource stability to a considerable population (e.g., Pantel 1996). It has been recognized that the small islands are in fact important biodiversity centers, and as such, can offer – and could have offered – not only seasonally obtainable but also permanently available resources (Antczak and Antczak 2006; Hofman *et al.* 2006; Hofman and Hoogland 2018; Keegan *et al.* 2008; Miloslavich and Klein 2005; Rick *et al.* 2013). Scholarly debate has slowly moved beyond discussion of the purportedly determinant role of environment in societal trajectories, although much of the research is still fundamentally focused on environment. Tainter (2006) eloquently argued that social complexity, together with sustainability, emerges from successful problem-solving when a society faces difficulties – not from environmental constraints or affordances. If social complexity is the inclusion of hierarchical rulership roles and division of labor/specialization, Crumley (1995, 2003) and other scholars have regularly argued that complex or state-like societies are not sustainable, and only decentralized/heterarchical ones or those that can flip between centralized and decentralized (i.e., most recently Wengrow and Graeber 2015) have long-term sustainability. Therefore, any direct link between the small Lesser Antilles (with, in many cases, their often-reduced diversity of available resources) and the complexity of social organization should be critically revised with the use of adequate data and sound chronologies.

As mentioned above, Caribbean archaeologists now recognize that ceramics production and horticulture took place within previously “purely” Archaic Age contexts, and that some early indigenous societies were possibly sedentary. If the archaeological signatures of such subsistence-related realities have surpassed archaeologists’ expectations, then it is also possible that Archaic Age societies were socially and politically much more complex than traditionally expected (e.g., Emerson and McElrath 2009, 25); or, alternatively, that their simplicity has been inadequately understood. Organizational, sociological, and anthropological literature (especially Boehm 2001; Clastres 1987; Scott 2017; Graeber 2011) make it clear that horizontal organizations can be much more complex than vertically organized “complex” societies. Therefore, perhaps we should avoid using the *simplicity* terminology, except when discussing how states rework complex behaviors into less complex ones (*sensu* Yoffee’s [2005] legibility/simplicity work).

Archaic Age societies were traditionally portrayed as simple, nomadic, and egalitarian, whereupon they were inserted as such into neatly defined cultural-evolutionary frames. However, little attention has been paid to the question of how such systems featuring balanced power were attained and maintained over time within different Archaic Age communities (Borck and Sanger 2017). Contrary to the traditional perspective that still largely permeates the perception of Archaic Age islanders, these early peoples, as earlier noted, likely were not annihilated by or acculturated to more technologically advanced and socially complex newcomers. Instead, encounters and interactions with the so-called Ceramic Age immigrants could have evolved based on diverse forms and dynamics of transculturation (Ortiz 1995) or intercultural interaction. New approaches to socionatural dynamics in the Caribbean (Rivera-Collazo 2011a/b/c; Antczak 2018), along with further theorization and operationalization of concepts relating to neolithization processes (Hofman *et al.* 2018b), may help us discover strikingly new ways to support the non-linear reading of indigenous history. Non-linearity of social processes (Murray-Román 2015, 24) and hierarchy forms the basis of John McGlade’s theory of ecodynamics (Garnsey and McGlade 2006; McGlade 1995, 2005, 2014). This theory should be taken up more daringly by Caribbean researchers. We should be able to explore the sets of interactions – not simple but complex – that ruled the creation of human-modified landscapes in the precolonial Caribbean. We can do this in three ways: by operationalizing the concepts of socionatural systems as social constructs; by tracing the coevolution of historically determined structures and contingent processes; and by addressing the multi-scalar temporalities mentioned above. Applying such paradigms can avoid the essentializing of, and blind oscillating between, the poles of equality/inequality or egalitarianism/hierarchy in the precolonial Caribbean. Power as a force can indeed be used to create equal cooperation or enforce labor. But we may perceive a continuum within a dialogic process that incorporates interactions between humans, the environment, animals, plants, and the spirit world. These and other approaches should more audaciously emphasize fluidity, historicity, and contextuality to cope with the multidimensional variability of Archaic Age societies already established in the archaeological record. Using novel heuristic tools and merging independent lines of evidence resulting from interdisciplinary synergies, researchers will become more sensitive to the archaeological signatures of differences between non-linear and unpredictable trajectories, between complex and complicated

systems, and even between organized and disorganized complexity. Without delving deeper into this matter, we conclude that complexity can no longer be posited as an intrinsic ontological property of any specific past society. Complexity resides in the perspectives adopted by researchers.

Last, while stressing the interactions between Archaic Age and post-Archaic Age peoples, we should pay more attention to disentanglements, disruptions, and interruptions of connectivity, as well as to the temporalities, dynamics, and intensities of those separations (Antczak 2017; Semerari 2016). Intersocietal interactions could have been abruptly halted by non-anthropogenic catastrophic events, but we also have to focus our attention on those disruptions that are not always accidental or caused by environmental factors. Signals detectable in the archaeological record may also tell us about purposeful acts of social reorganization and internally triggered sociocultural changes that could easily have occurred within a single generation (Neff 2000, 427). On this scale of horizontal (i.e., between unrelated contemporaries) and heterarchical interactions, the causes of change might have been many but nevertheless amenable to identification through “thick” reconstruction of the past. Such an effort would involve interdisciplinary research incorporating archaeology, anthropology, geology, ecology, climatology, oceanography, and other related disciplines. The Archaic Age, approached in such a manner, can be rendered more palpable and three-dimensional. New insights may also be gained using sophisticated statistical packages, modeling and simulation, and applying them to ever increasing data bases (Kristiansen 2014). Although all our heuristic modeling, no matter how ingenious or extensive, cannot achieve a perfect portrayal of past reality (Beekman and Baden 2016), we believe that the Archaic Age, approached in such a manner, can be rendered as a socionatural unit more three-dimensional, vibrant and livable than it is perceived today.

Concluding remarks: Dearchaizing the past – dearchaizing the present

Upon discussing the antecedents and current understanding of the term and concept “Archaic” in the context of Caribbean archaeology in the previous sections, and introducing the content of this book’s chapters, it became clear that, although the contributors employ this term, none applies it in the traditional sense: i.e., early indigenous peoples without pottery, agriculture, or sedentism, who lived and acted within a rigidly determined time frame. Thus far, we agree that the first settling of the insular Caribbean macroregion began during the dramatic sea rise characterizing the beginnings of the Holocene at 11,500 BP and continued to the Mid-Holocene from about 7000 to 5000 BP. But it may be astonishing to some readers that purported Archaic Age populations were still present in the insular Caribbean at a much later date – some one thousand years later than the well-documented movements of Early Ceramic/Saladoid populations out of northeastern South America in the mid-first millennium BC. We recognize that even if recent research discussed in this volume continues to identify the presence of the descendants of early indigenous settlers in the further course of the Holocene, thus clearly slipping out of the time frame traditionally allocated to them, it also opens up a search for more robust replies to a series of pivotal questions. Were the early settlers genetically and/or phenotypically similar to or differ-

ent from their predecessors and later successors (e.g., Schroeder *et al.* 2018; Mendisco *et al.* 2015; Mickleburgh and Pagán-Jiménez 2012; Pagán-Jiménez *et al.* 2015)? Were the Archaic versus non-Archaic populations comprised of distinct “peoples” with a distinct way of life (*modo de vida*)? How did the Archaic Age populations interact with the incoming “other” known as the “Early Ceramic” or “Early Saladoid” peoples? What was the overarching contribution of the Archaic Age peoples to the subsequent course of Caribbean history? Both the new results discussed in this volume and the gaps identified in our knowledge invigorate the debate. They naturally produce new research questions and hypothetical scenarios, which in turn instantly launch a search for new theoretical and methodological tools to address them. For example, among the questions that require future interdisciplinary research is the topic of the visibility of Archaic sites, as William Keegan addresses with respect to Jamaica in this volume. This problematic is also relevant for the Windward Islands, as it relates to the sociodynamic of the landscape of the islands, including changes in paleoshorelines and the extension of mangrove swamps, as well as the impacts of natural hazards.

In reviewing this volume, we can also ask: what baseline of knowledge remains on which to build the future of studies encompassing Archaic Age peoples of the insular Caribbean? Can the Caribbean Archaic Age play a leading role in the next stage of research on the Circum-Caribbean scale and beyond? The construction of this baseline is among the major challenges that Caribbean researchers face and requires sustained interdisciplinary effort. Sociocultural factors in the reconstruction of the Archaic Age paleolandscapes should be carefully evaluated and chronologically synchronized by interdisciplinary teams in case-by-case studies (see Redman 2005, 76). But approaching these worlds of the deep past also requires attention to the fact that the social realities of the early settlers of the insular Caribbean were most probably characterized by the simultaneous existence of diverse timescapes and multiple worlds (*sensu* Goodman 1978; also consider the role of time in the cosmologies and everyday life of present-day indigenous societies [e.g., Halbmayr 2004; Overing 1985; Viveiros de Castro 1998]).

Diverse perspectives and narratives of the Caribbean Archaic Age existed and will continue to exist. However, future research should also move forward in constructing bridges of understanding between the diverse theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations characterizing the various scholarly traditions and ways of thought in today’s Caribbean. Conceptualizations such as *protoagrícola*, *agroalfarero*, *modo de vida*, Archaic, Mesoindian, pre-Ceramic, and pre-Arawakan, to mention just a few, are often entrenched in specific countries and associated with specific languages, histories of Caribbean scholarship, and sociopolitical stances. Even within the borders of a given nation-state, one finds strong adherence to the discrete bodies of work of specific researchers and their alumni. There are not only important semantic issues to be sorted out, but also conceptual ones. In a sense, this fragmentation is positive in its heterogeneity, but at the same time it severely hampers the productive exchange of ideas and a critical negotiation of shared perspectives on the Caribbean Archaic Age. Emerging from this predicament is an additional task for researchers in order to bridge the divides regardless of affiliation.

While recognizing the importance of science-oriented archaeology of early settlers of the insular Caribbean to current and future research, our dearchaization call is also related to the humanistic, culture-historical (*sensu* Kristiansen 2014, 15), and even

philosophically-conceived processes of dearchaizing. We are confident that all these efforts will succeed in further erasing the essentialisms that hinder intimate connection between contemporary communities and their ancestral pasts, dramatically impacted by centuries of colonialism. Old mega-narratives about the Archaic are variably grounded in the Western “idea of progress,” which has its roots in the unilineal evolutionism of the nineteenth century, in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and in even earlier social thought about the foundations of subjective and objective forms of understanding and knowledge (e.g., Glacken 1967; Hogden 1971; Targovnick 1990). This unilineal reading of societal developments impedes the creation of alternative scenarios and historicities, including indigenous constructions of history based on different, ontologically non-Western perspectives. Having said this, we know that dearchaizing the Archaic is still far from permeating mainstream thinking and praxis in contemporary academia, and beyond this, the public should also be involved in our dearchaizing efforts. If we are to spread this alternative way of thinking about the indigenous peoples of the deep past beyond the walls of academia we – the researchers – should endorse vigorous public outreach.

EARLY SETTLERS OF THE
**INSULAR
CARIBBEAN**

Early Settlers of the Insular Caribbean: Dearchaizing the Archaic offers a comprehensive coverage of the most recent advances in interdisciplinary research on the early human settling of the Caribbean islands. It covers the time span of the so-called Archaic Age and focuses on the Middle to Late Holocene period which – depending on specific case studies discussed in this volume – could range between 6000 BC and AD 1000. A similar approach to the early settlers of the Caribbean islands has never been published in one volume, impeding the realization of a holistic view on indigenous peoples' settling, subsistence, movements, and interactions in this vast and naturally diversified macroregion.

Delivered by a panel of international experts, this book provides recent and new data in the fields of archaeology, collection studies, palaeobotany, geomorphology, paleoclimate and bioarchaeology that challenge currently existing perspectives on early human settlement patterns, subsistence strategies, migration routes and mobility and exchange. This publication compiles new approaches to 'old' data and museum collections, presents the results of starch grain analysis, paleocoring, seascape modelling, and network analysis. Moreover, it features newer published data from the islands such as Margarita and Aruba. All the above-mentioned data compiled in one volume fills the gap in scholarly literature, transforms some of the interpretations in vogue and enables the integration of the first settlers of the insular Caribbean into the larger Pan-American perspective.

This book not only provides scholars and students with compelling new and interdisciplinary perspectives on the Early Settlers of the Insular Caribbean. It is also of interest to unspecialized readers as it discusses subjects related to archaeology, anthropology, and – broadly speaking – to the intersections between humanities and social and environmental sciences, which are of great interest to the present-day general public.



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