



NICHOLE BODIN

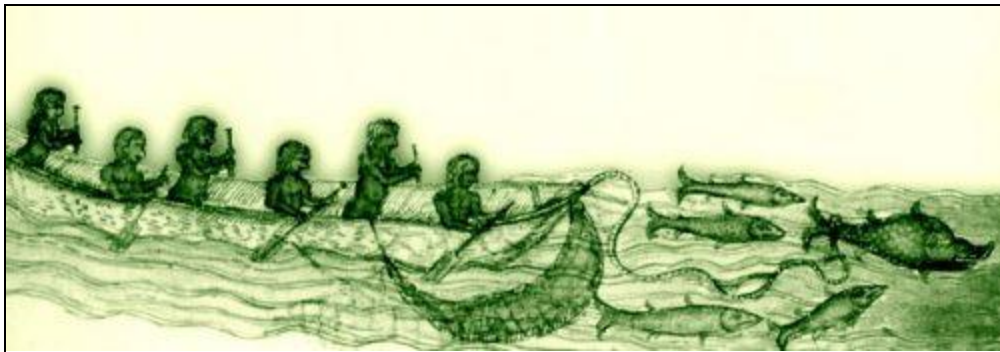
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# MODEL APPROACHES TO CULTURAL CHRONOLOGIES

**Relationship-oriented approaches to speculative chronological models prevail in Caribbean culture diversity studies.**

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Taínos travelling in a canoe. From Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés  
*La histórica general de las Indias*, Sevilla, Cromberger, 1535

Distinctive migrations and historical contacts of those who moved to the Caribbean and its American continent surroundings have created a particular pattern of diversification in the region's environment. Accidentally or intentionally, these patterns purposely serve aspects of transformation, mutation, acculturation, and evolution of cultures throughout the Caribbean islands.

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The process of tracking cultural diversity in archaeological records is an ongoing difficult matter. However, it is still a focus for historical research that is currently investigated by many archaeologists.<sup>1</sup> For example, clothing patterns, hair styles, tattoos and other aspects are not preserved in archaeological context (Wilson, 2007), as they can appear as part of a transition process pattern at the beginning of the 21st Century. Archaeological records modify or change their focus to cultural processes due to the diversity of ethnogenesis that vaguely represents a ethnic heterogeneity of the Caribbean region.



16th century image of a Caribbean native house.

Credit: The Drake Manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Samuel, 2007, Chap. 1 p. 6

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Caribbean Archaeology research has been able to confirm some ethnohistorical information, and has been strongly criticized by different scholars within the profession. Cultural areas have been conceived as confined spaces, where people share a series of traits that were largely defined as the basis of geographic patterns pertaining to ethnicity, linguistics, and cultural ‘makeups’ during the time of the European conquest and/or the ethnographic present (Rodríguez, 2010). Intercultural trajectories in historical culture determine an environmental role that directly affects the development of societies within these areas.

The ‘Caribbean’ has a disruptive history, which often refers to lands in contact with the Caribbean Sea, to a group of islands that were the first context of European colonization and to the response in relation to the indigenous resistance in that part of the hemisphere. The establishment of a massive migration from the Orinoco as an ancestral indigenous homeland has generalized the possibility of pre-Columbian interactions of the ancient inhabitants of the Caribbean area.



The Orinoco River is divided into many *caños*, or distributaries, which wind across the delta on their way to the sea, creating the fan-shaped Orinoco Delta.  
Photo: naturalistswb

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Rouse's greatest contribution was his early consideration of the sea as a bridge that united indigenous neighborhoods. (Rodríguez, 2010) These variants in archaeological evidence show the daily treatment of the aborigines and their close affiliation to protohistoric archaeology. Archaeological evidence involves an extensive process of exploration of these multiple interactions through material culture, its affiliations within styles and its specific contexts. There are research approaches to intercultural interaction that create a magnitude within perspective, innovation, transformation, integration of unusual symbols of cultural traditions and the articulation of all the internal elements of the landscape.

In addition, climatological and environmental aspects help to envision the year's seasons and their impacts on the Caribbean population. The periodization methods of different prominent archaeologists within the definition of historical environmental relevance emphasize events associated with privileged sectors, creating an investigative process that escalates to the fragmentation and dismemberment of the continuity of historical processes and ethnocentric perspectives.



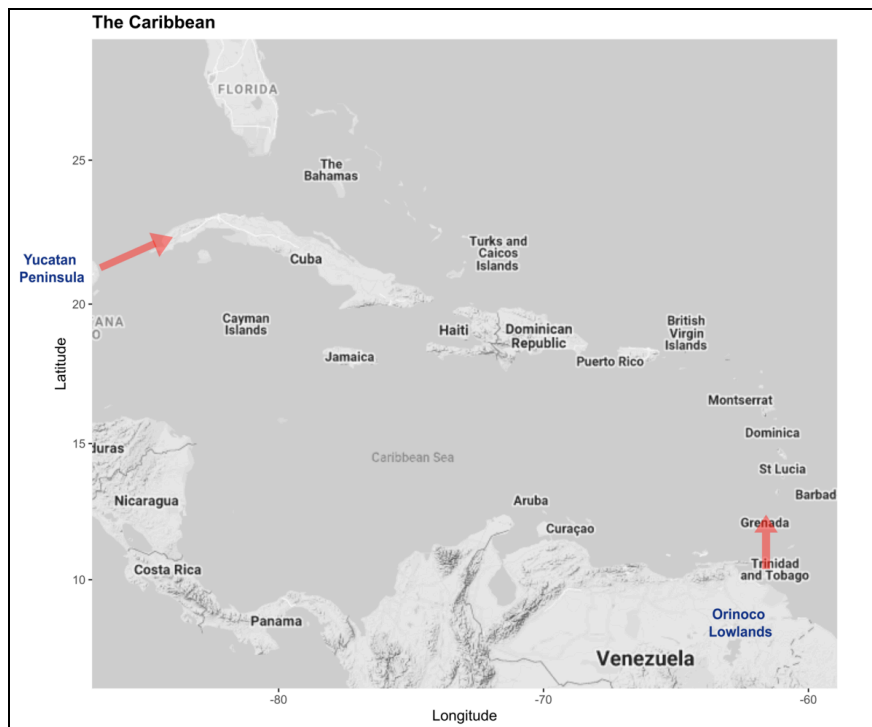
**Photo of a Jadeite Condor from one of the most important sites in Puerto Rico at La Hueca, with artifacts from amethyst, agate, turquoise, and jadeite.**

**Photo Credit: Wanda Bermúdez**

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La Hueca and Sorcé have valuable settlements with important contents on features and techniques found within the archaeological deposits. The territorial domains of the aborigines and their family groups and/or collectives are represented in representative evidence of Caribbean ancestral cultures. The integration of archaeological series and subseries on the cultural material found emphasizes research due to the variety of similarities in the groups, so more interpretations are necessary to discover information under the methods of multidisciplinary investigation.

Only emerging specialists in linguistics and anthropological physics went beyond the study of traits to investigate Caribbean ancestry (Rouse, 1992). In most studies, the world population is mostly organized into social groups or societies.<sup>2</sup> However, cultures are considered to be constituted by cumulative outcomes, which frame the contested actions of individuals and social factions (Rodriguez, 2010).



Map of Migration into the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean  
Photo: UC Berkeley/José L. Marrero

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<sup>2</sup> Rouse, Irving, The Taínos, Chapter 2, P. 47

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The early dates for the intrusion of these groups into Puerto Rico also raised Dr. Irving Rouse's contention about the directionality of their migration, arguing that on the basis of his analysis of radiocarbon dating from the Lesser Antilles, his sequence of dates indicates a movement from south to north during the second millennium B.C. The 1000 B.C. (Ortoiroid) peoples apparently arrived in Puerto Rico and established a border with the Casimiroids peoples on Hispaniola.<sup>3</sup>

However, Puerto Rican archaeological studies actually predate the earliest available records from the Lesser Antilles (with the exception of Trinidad, which was then part of South America) by more than a millennium. For example, Dr. Scott Fitzpatrick's recent survey of radiocarbon dating has shown that in the northern Lesser Antilles, the earliest records are approximately 1900–1800 b.c., while in the southern Lesser Antilles the earliest are ca. 900–400 b.c. (Rodríguez, 2010) The importance of social negotiations for the articulation linked in traditions has been the active role of material culture in associating social relations.

The importance of interactions, configuration of social cultural landscapes, and multiple scales at which such social interactions and negotiations fragment the spatiotemporal objective, have generally been applied to each other addressing issues that have a place within the diversity of archaeology. For Rouse, cultures were imagined as limited entities formed by the sum of the shared cultural packages.<sup>4</sup> New studies in archaeology should clearly distinguish cultural traits and their systems from internal and external influences. This distinction between two units between hereditary and foreign traits is obtained through the diverse linguistic and biological characteristics found in the Caribbean neighborhoods. With both types of traits, the units must be taken into consideration in the study of cultural ancestries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rodríguez Ramos, R. Rethinking Puerto Rican Precolonial History, P. 70

<sup>4</sup> Rodríguez Ramos, R. (2010) Rethinking Puerto Rican Pre Colonial History, Chap. 2 Culture History, P. 17

<sup>5</sup> Rouse, I.(1991) The Taínos, Rise and Decline of the People who greeted Columbus, Chap. 2 Ancestries of the Taínos, P. 46

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The earliest era of archaeological contexts in Puerto Rico is as early or earlier than the oldest in Cuba (Tabío, 1995).<sup>6</sup> Some scholars in the archaeology field, such as Veloz Maggiolo, have indicated that the dissimilarities between the assemblage of artifacts are the result of convergences between islands with certain cultural distinctions in the manufacture of stone.<sup>7</sup> Approaches to ways of life within the branch of Social Archaeology are precisely suited to focus on the cultural and social landscape of the Caribbean and possible multidisciplinary island studies. The historical approach to archaeology and general anthropology traces a different way of creating discussions that emphasizes the importance of social negotiations for the articulation of traditions, the active role of cultural matter within those relationships, the significance of social interaction within the configuration of cultural and social landscapes and the scale that constitutes such types of social negotiation.

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<sup>6</sup> Rodríguez Ramos, R. (2010) *Rethinking Puerto Rican Pre Colonial History, Cap. 2 Culture History*, P. 55

<sup>7</sup> Rodríguez Ramos, R. (2010) *Rethinking Puerto Rican Pre Colonial History, Cap. 2 Culture History*, P. 55