

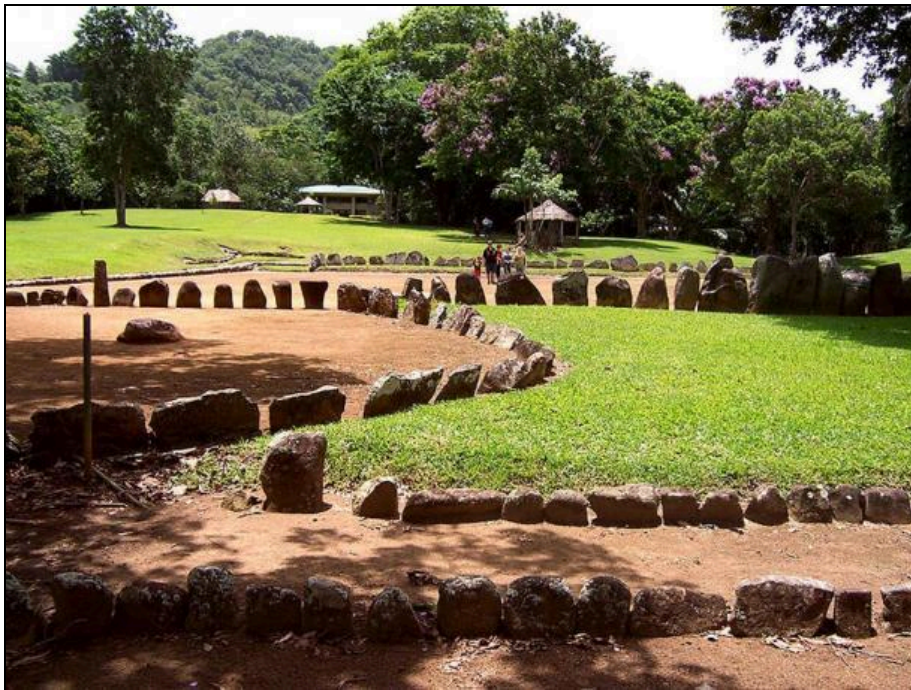


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# REGIONALISM IN CARIBBEAN ARCHAEOLOGY



*Caguana Ceremonial Ball Courts Site, Utuado Puerto Rico ([Wikimedia Commons](#))*

The different contributions of material culture in archaeological study transcend through historical documents and oral history in colonial societies. This manifestation creates an analytical and intellectual understanding (sometimes distorted and incomplete) regarding the cultural impact of the processes, concretizing results and effects of colonization in the Caribbean.

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The archaeological results on research in colonial American society transcends a dominant evidence of indisputable European material, giving space to a variety of opportunities for multifaceted studies. Some of the problems related to the enigmas of prehistoric research have given an adaptive approach to archaeologists for the exploration of prevalent themes to prehistoric topics. Contact sites are used to establish the limits within prehistory and the consequences of the colonial encounter on indigenous populations has documented monuments of the colonial era.

Both historians and architects have been engaged by archaeologists in order to assist in the documentation of these historic monuments with the purpose of refocusing the examination of the documentation, the effects of colonial regimes and their monumental structures. Linguistic issues, insularity and the residues of colonial political divisions have served to limit the ability of scholars to carry out comparative studies that deal exclusively with a particular region.



Petroglyphs at Cagüana, Puerto Rico (Photo: UC Berkeley)

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Regionalism and its research experience tend to focus knowledge within geographic boundaries and global networks of social and political interactions, with the specific sites studied by archaeologists being impacted by specific events, such as local, global, economic and political changes, engaging in interaction with global trends at the time of the research study.

Historical maps have been classified contemporaneously and have been created within the variations that occur over time with the optimization of technologies that allow the reconstruction of them in a more accurate manner for the benefit of archaeological work. Illustrations applied to maps for archaeological study have undergone modifications over the years, allowing for the opportunity for investigative comparison and oppositional contrast of different studies through the development of different research processes.



Photo credit: John Carter Brown Library, Brown University

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In Historical Archaeology practice, spaces, object evidence and texts are in the domain of professionals. The objects found in sites and the edited historical texts are based on a hermetic academic discourse that recover the last networks of people, their objects within meanings and translations of effective material objects valued through different cultural traditions. Those dramatic changes within society and economy in the 19th and 20th centuries left a large number of historical sites abandoned. However, these remain visible in the landscape while some others remain hidden as in the case of urban sites, found behind and under the walls of rapidly expanding cities.

The potential for the recovery of new information and interpretive perspectives from archaeological sites is in danger of being destroyed due to patterns of uncontrolled infrastructure development and the insolvency of historical cultural heritage sponsorship. Sources from auxiliary disciplines offer archaeologists a comprehensive analysis of different moments in the chronology of history. This allows for the recognition of exhaustive archaeological and historical work in relation to texts and oral history that arrive incomplete for various reasons, such as fires, wars, poor preservation or diversification in the interpretations of texts and/or documents.



Manuscript from the Archive of the Indies, Seville, Spain. Photo credit: Florida Museum



Táinos travelling in a canoe. Photo credit; Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *La historica general de las Indias*, Seville, Cromberger, 1535

Historical sources in oral history create a space for the analysis of memories, literature, iconographic sources and oral testimonies about monuments and historical sites. Analytical criticism of historical documents creates an overall idea of presenting historical archaeology that can be synchronized to global world history for the understanding of modern civilization. The contribution of data collection in surveys and comparisons of patterns in relation to other historical sites allow professionals to collect patterns of the most accurate interpretation models in documents and their independent bases create a better manifestation of the interpretation and execution of history in the modern era.