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# INTERACTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN INTERCONTINENTAL TRIBES

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Polished ax artifact found at an excavation site at Las Cabezas de San Juan Natural Reserve in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. The Reserve has a diverse ecosystem with a bioluminescent lagoon, mangroves, coral reefs, dry forests, sandy and rocky beaches set between headlands. Its land was acquired by the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust in 1975 and was designated as a Nature Reserve in 1986.

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According to archaeologists in the field of study in the Caribbean, geographical limits have benefited investigative studies to understand the demarcation of the process of dispersion and arrival of indigenous tribes through the Circum-Caribbean. After 3,500 years of pre-Arawak occupations and interactions in Puerto Rico, other indigenous groups began to disperse throughout the Antilles. A migratory trajectory from South America through the Lesser Antilles expresses speculative ideas concerning these migrations that absorbed the previously occupied lands. Archaeologists have been able to appreciate that this wave of migrations has created a Saladoid horizon, reaching as far east as the Dominican Republic and impacting the history of the Caribbean directly. Interactions of Archaic groups probably had a significant contribution to the advance of the Saladoids and their adaptation throughout the Caribbean.

Since 1950, the question of the provenance of the Saladoids has been a debatable topic among archaeological studies of the Caribbean. The Saladoid Indians arrived from the interior of South America, ushering in the Ceramic Era. They descended from the Orinoco Valley to the coast and proceeded toward the Lesser Antilles and as far as Puerto Rico, where they stopped at the Ortoiroid-Casimiroid<sup>1</sup> border. However, Saladoid sites have been found on most of the Islands of the Caribbean, where archaeological evidence contrasts that a migration process displaced, absorbed and/or overwhelmed previous occupants<sup>2</sup>.

Archaeological approaches have been oriented to the contemporary study of material culture and its possible decipherment of social diversity. These perspectives examine repopulation and material culture, considering information regarding the processes of migration, contacts, diversification, transformation, mutation, acculturation and evolution of cultures throughout the Caribbean islands. The Andes through Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.<sup>3</sup> Meggers proposed that an extensive tradition such as the 'parallel Amazonian zone' (Amazonian Zoned Hachure) included pottery from Puerto Hormiga in northern Colombia. Additionally, this tradition included early Saladoid ceramics from La Gruta and Tutishcainyo, from the Northern Amazon. This means that the archaeological aspects of the drainage of the Orinoco River and northeastern South America is more complicated than what happened later in the Caribbean with the traditions in the material culture and its clear reflection to the geographical culture

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<sup>1</sup> Rouse, I. (1992) *The Taínos (The Rise and Decline of the People who Greeted Columbus)* p. 71

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, S. (2007) *The Archaeology of the Caribbean*, Cap. 3, p. 59

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through the interaction of multiple groups. (Wilson, 2007). The differences in artifactual interpretations are understandable when approaching an illustration with the styles and their various technologies in poorly dated ceramics (either due to partial and fragmented documentation) that manifests more complex questions within archaeological contexts. Interactions across the Orinoco River could be determined through the use of historical linguistic techniques, which helps establish an estimated chronology at a certain moment in time in which two modern languages emerge from their ancestors. La Hueca in 1977 shook the foundations of the monolithic regime in a quite comfortable way (Oliver, 1999). The presence of the enigmatic remains at La Hueca in Vieques, Puerto Rico demonstrates that the complexity of the early Saladoid presence was not as homogeneous as had been contemplated, taking into consideration the artifactual interpretation and their differences in terms of cultural meaning and importance. The discovery of La Hueca (with its various quantities of micro-lapidary artifacts) and Punta Candelerero in Humacao, Puerto Rico provided an opportunity for the review of models and/or hypotheses in relation to the time and nature of the colonization of the Antilles by groups from from South America (Oliver, 1999).

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A.D. as far away as the Leeward Islands. Archaeological sites with Saladoid material culture are distinctive for their painted white-on-red (WOR) pottery, similar (or perhaps related) to ZIC pottery.

It is unlikely that the ZIC technique is derived from Ronquinan Saladoid ceramics although they bear a resemblance to their painted stripes (Rouse, 1992). Hueca is not a refined and/or well-executed pottery like that of early Saladoid sites, so it creates a challenge in classification rather than a difficulty in understanding the relationship between Saladoid and Huecoid. Cedros, located on the southwestern peninsula of Trinidad, has classical components that exemplify early Saladoid sites, its name being given to Irving Rouse's Cedrosan Saladoide series (Wilson, 2007). Sorcé (Vieques) has components immediately adjacent to La Hueca and has an estimated date to the Saladoid era of approximately 100 BC to 700 AD. Punta Candelero has adjacent non-Huecoid components with significant differences. The differences between Huecoid and Saladoid artifacts have cultural and historical ramifications beyond the suggested decorative and interpretive modes. The vision of La Hueca and Punta Candelero, as cultural keys to social and cultural speculations, is one of the most interesting topics in Caribbean prehistory for continued archaeological research. The changes at a theoretical level, for the most part, did not go hand in hand with the concomitant methodological changes in field and research strategies. (Oliver, 1999) The analogy of religious manifestations or culture in the prehistory of the Caribbean with a culture or mainstream is not applicable, since they had some characteristics that related them to each other. The evidence through the material culture of La Hueca and Punta Candelero led to understanding the continuity between archaic sites and the use of Huecoid lithics, these artifacts also being found in early Saladoid sites (e.g. Hacienda Grande in the ceramic sequence in Puerto Rico), with a variable level of technological interaction between places.

The most outstanding ceramic characteristics or features of the La Hueca cultural complex were vessels, lithics, artifacts (including lithic artifacts such as massive anvils, crushers—discoidal), micro flakes of different raw materials, shell and lithic amulets (biomorphs) made of diorite, agate and amethyst (Chanlatte, 1980). The descriptive models of Lauthrap-Rouse, Meggers/Evans-Sonoja/Vargas and Chanlatte/Narganes-Rodríguez summarize the historical and cultural schemes that are currently under debate in relation to the migration of groups from the ceramic eras to the Antilles. Straus and Keegan's explanatory models are based on ideas regarding the motivating processes and circumstances behind

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migration (Siegel, 1991). Keegan indicates that "in response to the increase in demand, a group could increase by intensifying a technological base or they could expand 'through the colonization' of new territories." <sup>3</sup>

## La Hueca

La Hueca in Puerto Rico demonstrates, through archaeological remains, that groups in the early Saladoid period were not as homogeneous as perceived, debating the artifactual meaning and their differences in terms of cultural meanings and their importance. '*La Hueca Problem*' clearly exposes the complexity of the early and late Saladoid presence and the many themes that emerge in relation to the discovery of this cultural complex. The similarities and differences in technological traditions manifest how the production of utilitarian lithics is involved to determine if it reflects a variation of the Cedrosan technology or its different practices in the creation of lithics. Archaeologists Luis Chanlatte and Ivonne Nergares have strongly debated Irving Rouse's findings in relation to the Huecoid manifestation which could have originated from the Northeast coast of Venezuela and not the result of the divergence of the Cedrosan Saladoid proposed by Rouse. The Cedrosan Saladoides spread and diverged into separate series and subseries, diversifying into four regional lines of development: mainland (Trinidad and Tobago), Barlomento Islands, Leeward Islands and Virgin Islands, and the rest of the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas archipelago. The distinction of the Saladoide series was one with bright red and white designs from the pre-ceramic era. The Río Guapo style has a radiocarbon date of 320 AD, so it is dated too recently to be classified as ancestral to La Hueca. Today's archaeologists do not think about the possibilities of the flexibility of migration processes when they try to explain the emergence of new cultures and societies. However, they do consider aspects of the processes of divergence, acculturation, transculturation and parallel development. These considerations in the hypotheses are based on conclusions according to distributions and their

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<sup>3</sup> Siegel, P. (1991) Migration Research in Saladoid Archaeology, p.84

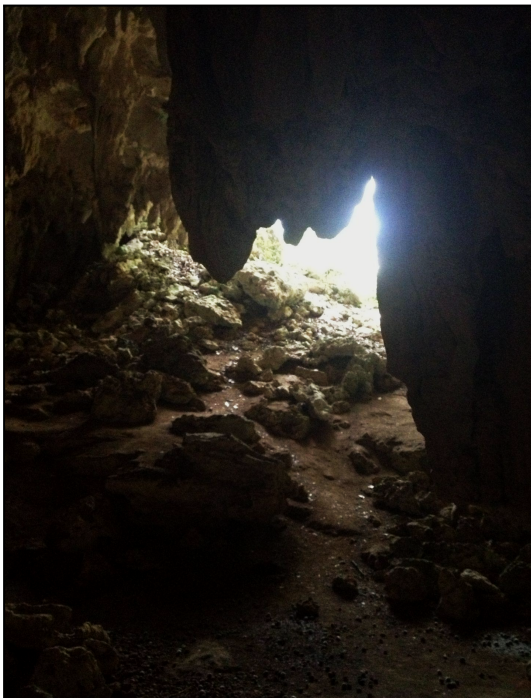
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developments of culture and society, allows to demonstrate the **pros and cons** of population movements and their alternatives in socio-cultural evolutionary processes.

Due to the lack of being able to identify the material culture like the Río Guapo style, particular styles with *'own personality'* have been declared. With the concern regarding the presence of guapoid styles in the styles of the Saladoide and Barrancoides series, it was contemplated that they could have been culturally contaminated upon arrival. La Hueca site presents an advanced cultural complex that arrived *pure* to Vieques, Puerto Rico and *'without Saladoide contamination'*. The Huecoids are considered the propitiatory cultural base for the creation of the style Ostionoid, transforming into the Taíno culture.

The issue of the dispersion and arrival of different groups in the ceramic era is a topic of greater discussion in archaeological research in the Caribbean. The debate regarding the associations of migratory groups reaches a point that questions the similarities and differences in relation to the assembly of artifacts. The evidence from the material of the Cedrosan Saladoide population shows that there was a significant dispersion of this cultural series that

directly impacted groups in the Caribbean. Post-processual critiques are now beginning to filter into the Caribbean.<sup>4</sup>



Cabachuelas Cave in Morovis, Puerto Rico

Therefore, multidisciplinary studies focused on historical documentation could reveal to archaeologists focused on studies in the Caribbean which were the different types of habitats that had an environment of survival strategies and opportunism versus competitive skills. This information would highlight the archaeological concerns regarding the era of ceramics and its economic-social level, revolutionizing in turn the trend of historical thought patterns in the colonial borders and their distinctive particularities.

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<sup>4</sup> Siegel, P. (1991) Migration Research in Saladoide Archaeology, p.84

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