

CHAPTER 10

CARIBBEAN

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

POTTERY figurines from precolonial times have been a relatively rare finding in the Caribbean. A few dozen recovered across the Greater and Lesser Antilles cannot ‘compete’ with the thousands known from the neighbouring mainland. Moreover, within the region itself, these often modestly modelled and undecorated miniatures are overshadowed by elaborate vessels left by the early pottery-making agriculturalists (Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde 2005; Petitjean Roget 1997, 2002; Roe 1989; Waldron 2016), as well as by imagery crafted by the ethnohistorically known Taíno people (Brecht et al. 1997; Ostapkowicz et al. 2011). Furthermore, the lack of sound contextual and chronological data has limited the role of figurines in the pageant of the region’s past. Rarely addressed in the archaeological literature (Dacal Moure 1972; Morbán Laucer 1980; Petitjean Roget 1991; Pons de Alegría 1983), figurines have been the focus of substantial research even more rarely (Antczak 2000; Antczak and Antczak 2006; Valcárcel Rojas 2000).

This chapter examines what is currently known about precolonial figurines in the insular Caribbean. It discusses the precolonial archaeology of the region in order to undergird the overview of figurines which follows. It also addresses existing figurine interpretations, and concludes with suggestions for future research.

10.2 PRECOLONIAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE INSULAR CARIBBEAN

The Greater and Lesser Antilles comprise thousands of islands distributed along a 4,000-kilometre arc of the eastern Caribbean. The four basic physiographic subregions are the Greater Antilles, the Bahamas, the Lesser Antilles, and the Southern Caribbean

Islands (Figure 10.1). This kaleidoscope of seascapes and landscapes, dotted with distinctive natural resources, enticed both Amerindian settlers and, later, European colonists. The following résumé of Caribbean precolonial archaeology utilizes terms and concepts from Irving Rouse's culture-historical taxonomic system (Rouse and Allaire 1978; Siegel 2013). Sequences presented by Arie Boomert (2014, figure 2.30.I) are used for a general chronology of the region.

Archaic Age hunters, fishers, and gatherers from present-day Venezuela and Guyana settled Trinidad by 6000 BC. Independently, settlers from the Yucatán reached Hispaniola and Cuba between 4500 and 4000 BC (Rodríguez Ramos 2013). Arawakan-speaking horticulturalists and pottery-makers known as Saladoid from the Middle Orinoco River region (Gassón 2002) transformed the Caribbean islands into their 'new world' after 350 BC. The permutations of socio-material baggage and constantly reworked echoes of Amazonian animism and shamanism produced locally distinctive spatial and material expressions. Bichrome and polychrome pottery in addition to exquisite stone and shell adornments achieved a high standard of workmanship buttressed by a long-distance exchange system connecting the islands to the mainland (Boomert 1987; Mol 2014).



FIG. 10.1 Map of the insular Caribbean indicating the regions and islands referred to in the text. (Copyright: Oliver Antczak.)

During the first centuries AD Saladoid artisans crafted a truly 'Antillean Baroque Age' (Bérard 2013: 190). Increasingly, Saladoid on the northeastern coast of Venezuela began interacting with other Arawakan speakers, including the makers of the highly decorated Barrancoid pottery. Some of the Barrancoid Amerindians had left the Lower Orinoco to settle amongst the Saladoid people of Trinidad (Boomert 2000). Thereafter, some Barrancoid stylistic traits spread as far north as the southern Windwards. Gradually, climate change and realignments in the social and ideological dimensions manifested in the loss of the stylistic unity and high craftsmanship of insular Saladoid wares. Concomitant changes in settlement patterns and deathways also occurred; Saladoid splendour vanished from the Lesser Antillean scene between AD 600 and 850, giving way to the Troumassoid ceramic tradition (Hoogland and Hofman 2013). Towards AD 1150, the uniquely Antillean character of the Suazan Troumassoid tradition was consolidated. This tradition endured until the advent of the Cayo tradition introduced in the Windward Islands by bearers of Koriabo pottery from the mainland Guianas. The makers of Cayo pottery were the Island Caribs known from colonial times (Boomert 1995).

In the Greater Antilles between AD 600 and 1200, the descendants of Saladoid immigrants and Archaic Age people already there catalysed the birth of increasingly non-egalitarian multi-village chiefdom polities (Keegan 2013). By AD 1200, the Taíno way of 'being in the world' began to flourish as a relatively coherent socio-cultural phenomenon, leaving material signatures in Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, eastern Cuba, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. Religion and mythology were conceived as a permutation of ancestral Amazonian-Orinocan templates (Alegría 1978). Shamans and caciques were living repositories of cosmological and mythological 'truths' and mediated with spirits by inhaling the hallucinogenic *cohoba* powder (Oliver 2009; Siegel 1997). One of the most striking effects of inhaling *cohoba* is visually kinetic reversion which brought Taíno imagery its double meanings. Such images appear in paired pottery adornos, biglobular vessels, and mirrored human effigies on vessel rims (Roe 1997). In 1492, the Taíno were the most culturally and socio-politically complex indigenous society in the Caribbean (Wilson 2007).

The Southern Caribbean islands of Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire were inhabited since at least 3000 BC (Haviser 1987, 1991; Versteeg et al. 1990; Hoogland and Hofman 2011), while Margarita and Cubagua islands were occupied since at least 2000 BC (Rouse and Cruxent 1963; Antczak and Antczak 2015). Other islands such as La Tortuga, La Blanquilla, and Los Testigos were visited by the Saladoid from the adjacent mainland from the start of the first millennium AD (Antczak and Antczak 2006). By AD 1000, La Orchila Island and the archipelagos of Las Aves and Los Roques began to be visited seasonally by task groups from the mainland attracted by abundant marine resources (Antczak and Antczak 1999, 2006). All these islands, being situated along the Venezuelan coast and thus of course in the Caribbean, merit inclusion here. However, they purportedly did not directly participate in the socio-cultural developments occurring in the indigenous societies of the Lesser and Greater Antilles, societies that were rather influenced by Orinoquia and the Guianas.

10.3 EARLY FIGURINES (PUERTO RICO, GREATER ANTILLES)

Over thirty years ago, Mela Pons Alegría (1983) reviewed the figurines of Puerto Rico and noted their overall scarcity in early ceramic assemblages throughout the Caribbean region. The first Puerto Rican figurines were excavated in 1948 by Ricardo Alegría at the early Saladoid site at Hacienda Grande on the northeastern coast of the island. The fragments of white-on-red painted torsos have since served as a basis for the identification of other Saladoid figurine fragments (200 BC–AD 600) (Pons Alegría 1983, figures 9–11; Rouse and Alegría 1990, figure 15).

Three figurines mentioned by Pons Alegría (1983, figures 1, 2) deserve closer attention. The first is a hollow naturalistically modelled torso of a seated male with arms separated from the body and hands resting on thighs (Figure 10.2). Buttons or flairs of pottery were applied to the elbows and shoulders. This specimen is unpainted. The second is a fragment of a solid, seated male figurine of similar form and size, but this specimen is painted. The third is a torso of a seated hollow figurine with arms that are bent at the elbow while a hand rests on a thigh. It is decorated with white paint on a burnished red slip (Pons Alegría 1983, figure 5). From the Hacienda Grande site, Peter Roe (1989, figure 18) illustrated a hollow figurine head that was probably painted white. A hollow foot with modelled toes painted in white on red slip was also reported from the early Saladoid site at Sorcé on the Island of Vieques, off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico (Pons Alegría 1983). Finally, a few animal figurines were found at the María de la Cruz Cave and Hacienda Grande early Saladoid sites as well (Rouse and Alegría 1990).



FIG. 10.2 Early figurines (Saladoid): painted figurine from Hacienda Grande site, Puerto Rico, 200 BC–AD 600, Museo de la Universidad del Turabo, Puerto Rico, height 10 cm; figurine from Diamant Plage de Dizac site, Martinique, AD 400–750, height 7 cm (Musée Départemental d'Archéologie et de Préhistoire de la Martinique, Fort-de-France); red-painted torso from Lagon Doux 1 site and figurine fragment from Atagual site, Trinidad; height 7 cm. (Photographs: R. Rodríguez Ramos [1, 2], B. Bérard [3], and A. Boomert [4].)

The mostly painted, skilfully modelled, flexibly bent bodies, with arms separated from the trunk and hands resting on thighs, seem almost exclusive to Puerto Rico. Painting on figurines purportedly resembles the body painting of their Saladoid human models and might have served as an ethnic group indicator (Roe 2011).

In the Lesser Antilles, Saladoid commonly modelled animal adornos, but human depictions were uncommon (Godo 2005; Petitjean Roget 2001; Roe 1989, 2011; Waldron 2010). In Trinidad, a solid, red-painted female figurine torso was found at the Saladoid shell midden at the Lagon Doux 1 site (Boomert 2000, figure 68: 2A), and another female torso at the Atagual site of the same Palo Seco complex (Figure 10.2). A large human head in pottery comes from the culturally related St Bernard shell midden on the southeastern coast of the island (De Booy 1917). The head morphologically matches a few standing female figurines found in the Barrancas and the Los Barrancos complexes of the Lower Orinoco (Rouse and Cruxent 1963). On Barbados, figurine fragments were found in terminal Saladoid deposits at the Heywoods site (AD 620–975). A torso of a solid figurine—narrow at the waist with broad shoulders, arms separated from the body, and a foot—echoes the Puerto Rican specimens (Hinds et al. 1997). A female figurine was found in late Saladoid deposits (AD 400–750) at the site of Diamant, Plage de Dizac on the southern coast of Martinique (Vidal 1995) (Figure 10.2). Other Saladoid figurine fragments were reported from the Tourlourous site on Marie Galante (Chancerel 2003), the Trants site on Montserrat (Watters and Petersen 1995), the Golden Rock site on St Eustatius (Versteeg and Schinkel 1992), Royall's (Murphy 2001), the Mill Reef sites on Antigua (Rouse and Morse 1995), the Hope Estate site on Saint Martin (Bonnissent 1995), and the Robin Bay site on St Croix, US Virgin Islands (Payne 1995).

Returning to Puerto Rico, Peter Roe (Roe et al. 1990) found that solid and crudely modelled specimens superseded the largely hollow and thin-walled early Saladoid figurines. Miguel Rodríguez (1989: 37, figure 14) reported two solid and apparently unsexed figurines from Ensenada Honda (east coast) and Martineau (Vieques Island) dated AD 600–1200. At the late Saladoid site of La Monserrate, Luquillo, a figurine was found with the eyes depicted by means of two incrustated *Nerita* sp. shells (Alegría 1983). According to Roe, the later figurine-makers continued depicting sexually explicit males and even added a phallic effigy to this overtly masculine iconographic repertoire. Interestingly, while male imagery in figurines persisted over time, a qualitative stylistic change occurred in pottery adorno imagery: naturalistic images of South American fauna shifted to heavily modelled fantastic theriomorphic depictions (Keegan and Byrne 1999; Roe et al. 1990). This shift seems to suggest the reconstitution of animal ontology. The novel and conspicuous femaleness of the standing Barrancoid female figurines, one of which entered the insular Caribbean through the island of Trinidad, might have been the harbinger of forthcoming tensions in social organization, gender, and ideology that convulsed the Lesser Antilles during late Saladoid times.

10.4 LATE FIGURINES (CUBA, GREATER ANTILLES)

The Amerindian populations in Cuba did not feature the socio-political complexity reported for their Taíno counterparts on Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. Their material culture did not attain the formal and functional diversity and expressive symbolism observed in those islands (Curet and Stringer 2010). However, the imagery from Cuba considered of Taíno manufacture comprises a wide range of objects. 'Idols' carved in stone or wood denoted humans or animals of non-portable size. They were used in rituals by caciques and *behiques* (shamans), often during hallucinogenic trances related to the *cohoba* ceremony (Oliver 2009). These 'idols' either evince male sexual attributes or are unsexed. Small 'idols' hung from or tied to the human body served as portable *cemís* (de Hostos 1923; Fewkes 1903) and their sexual organ is almost always male (Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1996).

Centres of political power existed in northeastern Cuba in the province of Holguín, and especially in the municipality of Banes, from AD 1000 to early colonial times (Rouse 1942; Valcárcel Rojas 2012). There, more than seventy large habitation sites indicate a high population density. The presence of sumptuary personal adornments and ceremonial materials suggests possible artisanal specialization, social differentiation, and territorial leadership (Ulloa Hung and Valcárcel Rojas 2013; Valcárcel Rojas 1990). A hierarchized web of socio-political, economic, and ideological traits differentiated these sites from contemporary ones on the rest of Cuba (Valcárcel Rojas 2004, 2012). Human and animal pottery figurines have been reported from Holguín; only a few specimens are known from eastern Cuba (Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1996; Domínguez 2001; Rouse 1942). In 1972, Dacal Moure examined thirty figurines including ten heads, all but one from Banes. He identified sixteen of these as female and attributed them to the sub-Taíno makers of Meillacoid pottery (AD 900–1500) (Dacal Moure 1972). One figurine from the La Patana site, in eastern Cuba, was considered to be of Taíno manufacture dating from the last pre-Columbian century (Dacal Moure 1972; Harrington 1921).

Roberto Valcárcel Rojas (2000) approached Cuban figurines as the aesthetic expression of the Arawakan-speaking agro-ceramists and examined sixty-two whole figurines and fragments from seventeen sites in Holguín (Figure 10.3). Of these, 61% were female, 4.8% male, and 17.7% zoomorphs; 16% were sexually undefined. They were found within the settlements, but their precise contextual associations are unknown (Valcárcel Rojas 2000, table 2). Using the complexity of figurine modelling as a categorization criterion, the sixty-two figurines were divided into two groups: tabular and volumetric (Valcárcel Rojas 2000, table 3). The first, accounting for 37% of the sample, are flat, frontally modelled specimens with poorly proportioned bodies and prominent heads. Arms and legs are schematic or absent. The use of appliqué, dots, and incisions is reduced to a minimum. The surfaces are smoothed, never red-slipped or painted. Sexual organs are



FIG. 10.3 Late figurines from Banes area, northeastern Cuba, AD 1000–1500, the second and fifth from the left are volumetric projection figures; the remaining are tabular figurines, height 11.4, 19.6, 10.3, 9.5, 8.7, and 7.3 cm (Museo Indocubano Baní, Banes, Cuba). (Photographs: R. Valcárcel Rojas. Reproduced with kind permission of Museo Indocubano Baní, Banes, Cuba, and Dr Roberto Valcárcel Rojas.)

overemphasized, and the exclusive femaleness of these specimens was concluded from the depiction of the vulva and breasts. The volumetric figurines are richly decorated specimens with either simple or complex projections (Valcárcel Rojas 2000, figures 4–13). The former featured more tridimensional sculptural bodies, more harmonious proportions, and more attention to detail and finishing than the tabular specimens did. However, the frontal structuring and overall rigidity is maintained. In sexually explicit female specimens, the vulva is present but not overemphasized. The breasts and buttocks are better defined. Hands may rest on a prominent abdomen, and legs may be spread. Two figurines in this category were identified as male, but one is possibly an effigy vessel (Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1996, figure 49; Valcárcel Rojas 2000, figures 5, A, 6).

Animal figurines denoting quadrupeds (possibly dogs or hutias) appear in this group, as well as fish, a parrot, a bat, and possibly a shark (Valcárcel Rojas 2000, figures 8, 9). Animal imagery depends strongly on modelling, giving artisans more liberty for the exploration of individual solutions; the expression of pervasive naturalism and vitality reflects such artisans' anatomic knowledge. Complex volumetric figurines are less common than simple ones. With the former, artisans stretched the formalism of all previous figurines and freely rendered decorative elements as well as stylistic attributes that were usually applied to imagery in stone, wood, and shell. Some figurines seem to 'copy' formal characteristics of tabular shell pendants or ceremonial stone effigy pestles. They also incorporate other non-ceramic iconographic elements such as dentures, headdresses, thickening of limbs, decorative bands on the arms, and the depiction of ribs and the dorsal spine (Valcárcel Rojas 2000, figures 10, 11). According to Valcárcel Rojas (2000: 30), in tabular imagery it is women who monopolize the sexual symbolism. Conventionalization of the image may suggest magical-religious values of great importance that—in practice—might have been expressed in highly normalized ceremonialism.

Analysing the artefactual assemblage from Banes, Valcárcel Rojas (2000: 30) suggests that imagery with explicit sexual attributes may be categorized according to the symbolic characteristics of raw materials. In lithic and wooden imagery, the masculine sex was frequently depicted or inferred from the robustness of the chest and shoulders, as well as from the crouching position, which is a common Taíno iconic expression related to the masculine *cohoba* ceremony (Veloz Maggiolo 1972). Clay might have become the favourite raw material used for the expression of feminine symbolism. In Banes, pottery expresses 93.7% of all female images, confirming the relationship between pottery and the female image. Based on the assumption that the Amerindian potters were women, Valcárcel Rojas (2000: 31) concludes that the figurine might have been conceived as the female's means of participating materially in the local religiosity.

Among the Taíno, the production of ceremonial pottery was considered a male duty (Veloz Maggiolo 1972: 226). However, Valcárcel Rojas argues that in Cuba, where socio-political organization and ceremonialism were less complex than in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, women would have been differently projected into society. Women might have had access to a certain degree of political control, given that chiefly lineages depended on matrilineal succession. Moreover, in the northeast of Cuba, associations of women that denied access to men might have existed (Valcárcel Rojas 2000: 33). If the archaeological evidence seems to link women to higher-status groups and high visibility in political and communal life, then they would also have had certain rights with respect to religion. In this scenario, pottery figurines could have been the redoubt of feminine symbolism as well as the material signature of women's social and spiritual projection. Within the magical-religious dimension, femaleness was directly related to fertility and fecundity rites in these agrarian societies (Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1996: 42; Valcárcel Rojas 2000: 20–1; Domínguez 2004: 35, 39).

Fernando Morbán Laucer, in a short analysis of pottery figurines from Santo Domingo, illustrated a few crudely modelled human and animal specimens and compared them to their Cuban counterparts (Morbán Laucer 1980). The former artefacts are presumably some of the 'numerous remains of very primitive idols of clay' recovered from the Macao site on the eastern coast of Santo Domingo (Veloz Maggiolo and Ortega 1972: 165). They are related to the pre-Taíno ceramic tradition and date to between AD 677 and 1252 (Ulloa Hung 2013). One figurine from an unspecified locality depicting a crouching male was attributed to Taíno manufacture (Morbán Laucer 1980, figure 8). Another was reported from El Atajadizo site in eastern Santo Domingo (AD 950–1300) (Veloz Maggiolo et al. 1976: 165). The Macao figurines were considered predominantly female and associated with rites of fecundity, agriculture, rain, and death (Morbán Laucer 1980, figure 3). However, nothing is known about their contextual association, or the proportions of male, unsexed, and sexually undefined fragments amongst the purportedly overwhelmingly female images. The conspicuous effigy vessels from Santo Domingo as a whole (Fewkes 1907; Herrera Fritot 1952) raise the interesting prospect of comparing pottery figurines with the human images depicted on various functional artefacts made from a range of raw materials.

10.5 LATE FIGURINES (ST LUCIA, LESSER ANTILLES)

The volcanic island of St Lucia has yielded the most notable Late Ceramic Age human figurines thus far recovered in the Lesser Antilles (Bright 2011). The assemblage is largely composed of casual findings and objects recovered in archaeological excavations of the 1950s and early 1960s and between 1983 and 1987 (Bullen and Bullen 1970; Bullen et al. 1973; Friesinger 1986; Haag 1965; Jesse 1967; McKusick 1960; Negrete Martínez 2015). St Lucia's most emblematic archaeological site, Anse Lavoutte (on the northeast coast), was re-excavated in the last decade, and this island's role in the web of Amerindian interactions on the macro-regional scale has received multidisciplinary re-examination (Hofman et al. 2008). Anse Lavoutte featured a small-scale Amerindian village established by AD 1000 with several houses, a burial ground, and a midden (Hofman et al. 2012). The artefacts recovered and features documented attest to both quotidian subsistence and ritual activities. They support inferences about gender differentiation of labour and the veneration of ancestors. Although contextual data is lacking, the figurines were presumably encountered in the superficial strata at the margin of a large midden, uphill and away from the beach (Bullen and Bullen 1970).

One of the better-known figurines from Lavoutte is a 33 cm female with a dish-like 'headdress' seated on a circular pedestal-like support; both arms and one leg are missing (Bullen and Bullen 1970, figures 4a, 10a, 13) (Figure 10.4). Incised lines extend from her nose to the bottom of her ears, and traces of black painted lines are visible along the sides of her body. One ear has semi-circular fingernail impressions and the lobe is decorated with a bead. The relatively rough surface, the coarse paste, and the way in which her nose and eyebrows were modelled have all been considered traits characteristic of Suazan Troumassoid ceramics recognized throughout most of the Windward Islands, Barbados, and Tobago (Bullen and Bullen 1968). In addition, the collection comprises seven figurine head and face fragments, one realistically modelled hollow torso, and a few legs and feet (Bullen and Bullen 1970, figures 4 i-j and 5 i-j).

A few figurine fragments were recovered on the eastern shore of St Lucia. According to McKusick (1960: 92), some 'pottery idols' were found at the Point de Caille site on the southeastern coast. Between 1983 and 1987 Herwig Friesinger from University of Vienna carried out large-scale excavations at the site of Point de Caille. Over fifty predominantly anthropomorphic pottery figurines and their fragments were recovered (Negrete Martínez 2015, Láminas 182–8). At the Massacr  site, on the central-eastern coast, McKusick found 'one broken state [*sic*] of a seated woman' (McKusick 1960, figure 3). In 1969, a hollow torso of a figurine with female sex markings was excavated at the Giraudy site on the southern end of St Lucia, together with the fragments of another figurine (Bullen et al. 1973, figure 7a). This torso is reminiscent of the seated figure from Lavoutte and was accompanied by Suazan Troumassoid pottery. One realistically modelled human face and another face with holes for eyes and mouth, interpreted as a 'mask', were reported from the Comerette site on the north-eastern coast (Friesinger 1986, figures 17, 1, 2) (Figure 10.4). At the Choc Point site,



FIG. 10.4 Late figurines from the Lesser Antilles: (left) seated figurine from Anse Lavoutte, AD 1000–1500, and (upper row) two faces or masks from Comerette, St Lucia, AD 800–1500, height 33, 9.6, and 11.8 cm (Saint Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society); head of a figurine, Anse Lavoutte, St Lucia, height 8.7 cm (private collection, Martinique); head of a figurine, Ilet Madame, Martinique, height 5 cm (DRAC, Martinique); (lower row) figurine fragment, Macabou, Martinique, AD 1100–1350, height 6.6 (DRAC, Martinique); figurine fragment, Paquemar, Vauclin, Martinique, height 9 cm (Musée du Père Pinchon, N° D.1994.1.5); and a figurine from Pointe Helleux, Guadeloupe, height 9.5 cm (DRAC, Guadeloupe). (Photographs: M. Hoogland [1–3], A. Antczak [4, 5, 6], courtesy of Musée du Père Pinchon [7] and André Delpuech [8]).

the only Leeward coast site where figurines were found, McKusick excavated three pestle-shaped pottery artefacts. One of these depicts ‘a dancing figure’ that rattles when shaken (McKusick 1960, figure 10, g). All known fragments to date account for barely more than sixty figurines the majority not surpassing 10 cm in height. They were produced somewhere between AD 800 and 1500 by the post-Saladoid Suazan Troumassoid potters.

St Lucia figurines were produced and used in small Amerindian villages scattered across the sandy bays that dotted the otherwise steep windward side of the island. These ‘idols’ purportedly represented ‘a goddess’ (McKusick 1960: 87). Bullen and Bullen (1970: 73, 77) suggested that the Lavoutte figurines might have been kept ‘in a separate structure’ like a men’s house or *carbet*. They then ventured to designate Lavoutte as a Carib ceremonial centre and the place where the figurines were manufactured prior to distribution to other Carib settlements on and beyond St Lucia. Later research demonstrated that historically known Island Caribs were not the producers of the Suazan Troumassoid pottery, nor the figurines (Boomert 1995). Nevertheless, the largest Lavoutte figurine has recently commanded attention as evocative of wide Caribbean entanglements. Its conspicuous headdress has been interpreted as a tray on which the hallucinogenic *cohoba* powder

might have been placed. It has been compared to the anthropomorphic stands made by the Taíno from the Greater Antilles (Hofman et al. 2008). In this sense, the figurine is seen as a syncretic material expression that combined Taíno iconography with Suazan Troumassoid stylistic traits. Its female sex, as opposed to the explicit male depictions on Taíno trays, has been viewed as masking some unspecified gender-related novelties that were extending northwards, countering the androgynous influx coming southwards from the Greater Antilles (Hofman et al. 2012). The identification with *cohoba* trays, is, however, more thematic than stylistic. Looking southeast from St Lucia, this figurine recalls, stylistically, the larger Maracá burial urns from the southern state of Amapá in Brazil (AD 1300–1700). The two forms share a columnar body seated on a stool projecting bent arms and legs (Guapindaia 2008). These similarities provide vigorous stimulus for future research.

Beyond St Lucia, a few figurines have been reported from post-Saladoid sites in the Lesser Antilles. The majority seem to have been produced in Suazan Troumassoid times (AD 1200–1500). To the south, a hollow figurine torso and leg were recovered on Trinidad at the Grant's Trace site (Boomert 1985). On Tobago, a headless standing figurine was found at the Great Courland Bay site (Boomert and Kamenef 2003) and a fragment at the Golden Grove site (Harris 1975). A solid figurine and two feet were reported from Caliviny Island (Bullen and Bullen 1968). In the Grenadines, Union Island yielded two solid figurines (Petitjean Roget 2002; Suttly 1976) and Carriacou two more, one a red-painted headless female with arms supporting her breasts (Petitjean Roget 1991; Pinchon 1952). Another female figurine was found on the island of St Vincent (Kirby 1978). A solid torso and a decorated leg emerged at the Hillcrest and Heywood sites on Barbados (Drewett 1991; Drewett and Hill Harris 1991; Hill Harris 2001). Moving north to Martinique, the site at Paquemar yielded a figurine that depicts a woman on her knees, with frontal-occipital skull modification, and apparently giving birth (Mattioni and Nicholas 1972; Pinchon 1952), as well as a figurine of an 'owl' (Delawarde 1969). Three specimens were reported from the site of Diamant on the southern tip of Martinique (Petitjean Roget 1991). A figurine head appeared from Ilet Madame Island off the eastern shore of Martinique (Antczak et al. 2012) (Figure 10.4). The island of Guadeloupe yielded one standing, unsexed figurine from Pointe Helleux (Hofman et al. 2004) and a leg from the Anse à la Gourde site (Hofman et al. 1999). Still farther north, a few figurine fragments were reported from the Mamora Bay site on Antigua (Rouse 1975) and another from the Clifton Plantation site in the Bahamas (Wilkie and Farnsworth 2001).

The minimum number of post-Saladoid Antillean figurines seems to be a few dozen. Bright (2011, table 5.6, figure 5.23) contrasted the number of archaeological sites on the Windward Islands yielding human figurines with the overall number of sites known in the group as a whole. He found that figurines were scattered on almost every large island, but were most common on St Lucia. This confirms the exceptional character of the St Lucia figurine assemblage, emphasized by Bullen and Bullen (1970) over forty years ago. The deep-running cause of this exceptionalism, however, remains largely undisclosed.

10.6 LATE FIGURINES (LOS ROQUES ARCHIPELAGO, SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN)

Turning to the Southern Caribbean's westernmost islands (Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire), a few figurines were found associated with Dabajuroid pottery-making sites (AD 800–1500) (Ayubi 1990; Haviser 1987, 1991). One figurine from Aruba carved in limestone was related to the so-called *sukia* figures from Costa Rica (AD 1000–1500) (Boerstra 1985). To the east, a large figurine assemblage was found on Los Roques Archipelago; still farther east, one figurine leg has been reported from La Tortuga Island (AD 900–1500) (Antczak and Antczak 2006); and a couple of figurine head fragments and one figurine foot from late precolonial and early colonial times were reported from Margarita and Cubagua Islands respectively (Antczak and Antczak 2015).

Los Roques Archipelago, situated 135 km north of central Venezuela, is an atoll-shaped coral formation with nearly fifty sandy cays. There are no freshwater sources, autochthonous mammals, or rodents, but marine life is abundant. Systematic excavations carried out since 1982 have revealed twenty-nine pre-Hispanic sites located on twenty-one islands (AD 1000–1500) (Antczak and Antczak 2006). The sites were temporary campsites used for the exploitation of resources such as queen conch (*Lobatus gigas*), turtles, and salt. The first visitors (around AD 1000) were the Ocumaroid pottery-makers from the adjacent mainland coast. By AD 1150–1200, the bearers of the Valencioid culture from the Lake Valencia Basin took control of the insular enterprise. Valencioid 'big men' sustained the endeavour by building and expanding the Valencioid Sphere of Interaction in the north-central Venezuelan region (AD 1200–1500) (Antczak and Antczak 1999). This network of convergent socio-material characteristics was strengthened through regional interactions whose nature is still poorly known.

The Valencioid were the descendants of the Arauquinoid Cariban-speaking migrants who arrived in the Lake Valencia Basin from the Middle Orinoco area c. AD 800 (Zucchi 1985; Antczak et al. in press). More than 1,000 human pottery figurines, the hallmark of Valencioid material culture, have been reported since the nineteenth century (Bennett 1937; Kidder 1944; Marcano 1971 [1889–1891]; Osgood 1943). There are humans standing on canoes or with bowls in their hands, masked individuals, men sitting on benches, and mothers carrying babies. Animal figurines are frequent. The majority of these artefacts have been approached as objects of ancient art (Arroyo et al. 1999), although their social roles were also pointed out (Delgado 1989). Three formal typologies of Valencioid figurines have been elaborated (Antczak 2000; Bennett 1937; Kidder 1944).

A total of 215 Ocumaroid figurines and their fragments have been recovered from the Los Roques islands, figurines virtually unknown on the mainland. All are smaller than 15 cm, solid, flat, crudely modelled, and poorly fired (Figure 10.5). These schematically reduced forms of the human body were included in the Heterogeneous stylistic category. Among them, 59% show female and 25% male primary sexual organs; some 16% are unsexed



FIG. 10.5 Selection of Ocumaroid Heterogeneous figurines from Los Roques Archipelago, Venezuela, AD 1050–1500: three figurines from Dos Mosquises Island, height 9.9, 10.9, and 11 cm; two from Domusky Norte Island, height 6.2 and 6.4 cm; and one from Boca de Sebastopol Island, height 8.1 cm (Unidad de Estudios Arqueológicos, Universidad Simón Bolívar, Caracas). (Photographs: C. G. Rojas.)



FIG. 10.6 Selection of Valencioid Standardized figurines from Los Roques Archipelago, Venezuela, AD 1200–1500: four figurines from Dos Mosquises Island, height 11.9, 15.9, 18.5, and 16.3 cm; one from Cayo Sal Island, height 13.5 cm; and one from Krasky Island, height 11.3 cm (Unidad de Estudios Arqueológicos, Universidad Simón Bolívar, Caracas). (Photographs: C. G. Rojas.)

(Antczak 2000). The Valencioid figurines appearing next in Los Roques were classified as belonging to the Standardized and Imitative stylistic categories. The Standardized examples, up to 32 cm, are hollow, sculpturally tridimensional, well modelled, often red- and beige-slipped, and well fired (Figure 10.6). The recurrent image is of a pervasively fleshy female with oversized head and headdress who may be standing or sitting. The Imitative figurines are morphologically akin to the Standardized, but the technology and skill involved in their manufacture resembles the Heterogeneous specimens. One hundred and seventy Valencioid figurines and fragments were recovered at the campsite on Dos Mosquises Island, thirty-two on Krasky, and seven on Cayo Sal Island. Except for three, all are female, both standing and seated. They were brought to the insular campsites from the permanent villages located on the shores of Lake Valencia (Pino et al. 2013).

The deposition of figurines with other objects making up possible shamanic ‘ritual kits’ (Lesure 2011: 197) such as mammal mandibles, oleoresin, landshell pendants, and



FIG. 10.7 Two depositional micro-contexts with figurines from Dos Mosquises Island, Los Roques Archipelago, Venezuela, AD 1200–1500; left, observe four Heterogeneous and one Standardized figurine (upside down and below the root) surrounded by micro-vessels; right, a figurine accompanied by large vessels and queen conchs. (Photographs: Ma. M. Antczak and A. Antczak.)

microvessels was initially observed at the Ocumaroid campsites. At the later Valencioid campsites, this initial patterning shows recurrent depositional coherence while other possible shamanic paraphernalia (pipes, bone flutes, mammal skulls, mineral ochre, as well as pottery ocarinas and burners) were being added (Figure 10.7). This process has been considered the gradual evolution of socio-material ritual *habitus* which developed through practices of ‘ritualization’ on the islands (Antczak 2000: 187). The corpora of shamanic paraphernalia would have helped in shaping these rituals, producing a universe of conspicuous multisensory experience which, in turn, influenced the way in which the ritual participants related to each other. In the hands of shamans, figurines became co-enactors. They interacted with humans and at the same time with other-than-human entities, including spirits (Antczak and Antczak 2006: 570). Recurrent depositional association of figurines with specific artefacts and ecofacts proved to be pivotal in interpreting the extent of the influence all these objects exerted on the Amerindians who were interacting with them. Thus, the interpretation of island figurines depended on reconstructing the social contexts of their use. It has been argued that the most frequent occupants of the insular campsites were adolescent and adult males who formed queen conch fishery task groups. Women were probably rare visitors to the campsites during the later Valencioid phase (Antczak and Antczak 2006: 407–13).

The success of the expeditions depended on exacting coordination of logistics, knowledge, and technology, as well as on the beneficial assistance of the spiritual forces. At this juncture, the interpretative path turns towards the most targeted island animal, the queen conch. Its large size, protruding eyes, human-like penis, and ‘mammal-like’ manner of copulation would have led the Valencioid to rank it higher in the hierarchy of ‘agentive’ beings than other insular creatures. In this ontological taxonomy constructed on the principles of agency and animacy, the conches emerged as selves with capacities to feel and act as persons. Calculations indicate that between c. AD 1200 and 1500, more than five million of these sentient and agentive beings were slaughtered in Los Roques, 75% of them on small La Pelona Island. This island housed the main conch

processing taskscape adjacent to the principal Valencioid campsite on Dos Mosquises Island (Antczak and Antczak 2008). Between three and five tons of queen conch meat were transported annually from Los Roques to the mainland for delayed consumption and distribution (Schapira et al. 2009). In animistic Amerindian society, slaughter on such a massive scale had to be intertwined with rituals directed towards the spirits protecting these animals. The intensity of such rituals would have dramatically increased when reduced in situ queen conch consumption gave way to large-scale exploitation. This shift might have led to male domination of specialized crews during the Valencioid phase, and would explain a counterbalancing increase in the number of female figurines as well as in the complexity of their depositional contexts. Both contrasts are evident when moving from the initial to the later campsites.

Here the interpretative path turns towards Amerindian women. Among the Cariban-speaking societies of the South American Lowlands, the crucial role of women in the ritual conciliation of hunted animals' spirits and then in (re)establishing the relationship with them has been documented (Mans 2012; Rival 2007; Roe and Roe 2012; Simpson 1944). The majority of feminine island figurines, then, may have metaphorically 'assumed' women's ritualistic role, standing in as miniature surrogates for the women who were left behind in the mainland settlements (Antczak 2000: 331). Highly experiential synaesthescapes were orchestrated in the Los Roques campsites through the multi-sensorial perception resulting from tobacco smoking, hallucinogen inhaling, oleoresin burning, body painting, chanting, and music playing, and perhaps dancing as the rituals were enacted. Indeed, the sites of these activities may merit the name *ritualscapes* in addition to conch-processing *taskscape*s. The petitionary and placatory rituals presided over by the shamans eventually concluded with the deposition of votive offerings that might have included figurines. The ritual enactment of the social category of women embodied in the figurines in the homosocial insular campsites would indeed prompt the Los Roques seafarers to reconceptualize their quotidian face-to-face relationships with the 'real' women in the heterosexual contexts of mainland villages.

The character of Los Roques ritualism seems to fall within the 'imagistic' mode of religiosity, which is based on seasonally re-enacted dysphoric rituals depending on collective involvement (Whitehouse et al. 2012). The rituals were performed on tiny islands located far from the ancestral homeland and associated with risky endeavours. Because of this, they were likely highly arousing rituals that, by stimulating long-lasting and vivid memories, would have created the powerful bonds among the members of the task groups necessary to secure high levels of solidarity and cooperation. Although the figurines were brought from the mainland with the purpose of playing the animated and agentive role, their performance on the islands was not a strict replication of their roles on the mainland. On the mainland, their roles were considered to be of a fluctuating, permeable, and flexible nature. They were conceived as readily available co-participants in the everyday prose of life (Antczak and Antczak 2006). Indeed, their physical mobility and malleable roles brings them closer to the 'notion of figurine as process rather than end product' (Meskell 2007: 154).

The nature and dynamics of interactions operating back and forth between Los Roques, the continent, and the Antilles should be investigated in future research. Among Los Roques figurines are crouching hunchbacked individuals with cranial modification and men sitting on *duho*-like benches reminiscent of counterparts in the Greater Antilles. The Ocumaroid specimens are strikingly similar to their Cuban counterparts. Furthermore, the Lake Valencia sites yielded allochthonous metal artefacts, possible vomitive spatulas, and other material signatures that may indicate entanglements with the Colombian coast and the Antilles. On the other hand, many Valencioid figurines recall quite closely, in a stylistic sense, the seated female figurines of the Marajoara phase at the mouth of the Amazon (Schaan 2001: Fig. 4.23), and even more closely the late prehistoric/protohistoric Santarém pottery of the Tapajos polity of the Lower Amazon (Gomes 2001: Fig. 5.4). Whether the Valencioid figurines might have been a late regional variant of the widespread pattern centered on the Lower Amazon and interconnected through the far-flung migrations and interactions (Lathrap 1970), and how these processes might have been related to the late Caribbean insular figurines, goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

10.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Current narrative holds that human pottery figurines with male sexual attributes appeared in the Caribbean islands with the Saladooid immigrants. Figurines, however, are thus far unknown in Saladooid ancestral sites on the mainland. If such artefacts were the result of autochthonous insular creativity, what phenomena explain the origin of their pervasive maleness? Could this origin be anchored in the Archaic, pre-Saladooid ceramic traditions? Arguably, the Archaization—or for that matter, the Saladoization—of the insular Caribbean was less a spread of a pre-existing culture(s) than the result of ongoing processes of creation and recreation in which the island people themselves were crafting objects locally, including figurines. Tangible and intangible entities were drawing, shaping, and entangling people into a multifarious array of relations (Hodder 2012). In this sense, the structuring power of the figurines on the early Caribbean societies has thus far gone largely untheorized.

Post-Saladooid potters from the Lesser Antilles demonstrated the power of modelling the human body more naturalistically. The emergence of these figurines has been related to changes in the previous structure through gradual transformation. Indeed, these shifts might have been associated with the expansion of the Cariban-speaking Arauquinoid people of Orinoquia to the Guianas, and Surinam after AD 650–700 and to the northern coast of Venezuela by AD 800 (Antczak et al. in press). Human figurines were repeatedly reported from Arauquinoid sites on the continent (Boomert 1980; Versteeg 2003). After AD 1200, during the latter part of the Antillean Suazan Troumassoid period, the figurines became still

more visible in the archaeological record (Hofman et al. 2008). The differences between Saladoid and post-Saladoid figurines may point towards new ways of understanding what it meant to be human (Bailey 2013), implying that by means of the figurines, the Amerindians may have reconceptualized the human body, its relation to other-than-human beings, and the differences between the sexes. However, thus far, these figurines have been almost unanimously regarded as female, interpreted as encoding fertility, motherhood and nurturing, and equated with the 'deities' of Tainan mythology. The majority of these interpretations have remained imprisoned within the straitjacket of structural templates anchored in South American mythology, as well as in universalist notions of the feminine. Several assumptions underlying these interpretations should be questioned in future research. This research faces three broad tasks: (1) recognizing the use of universalisms and figurative speech in figurine research analysis and interpretation; (2) re-examining already-known figurines and the sites from which they originated; and (3) applying new techniques, methodologies, and interpretative approaches to figurine research.

The re-examination of the figurines held in museums perhaps may indicate that the perception of overwhelming femaleness as a possible link between Late Ceramic Age figurines and their contexts across the Caribbean has been only a pre-analytical impression (Lesure 2007). Although in Caribbean archaeology the aspects of sex and gender in relation to the social and ritual roles of women and men were addressed (Petitjean Roget 1988; Waldron 2011), the fact is that femaleness or maleness was often assumed rather than demonstrated. However, even if the majority of late figurines were indeed depicted as biological women, should femaleness be considered the primordial social theme monopolizing Amerindian attention (Schaan 2006)? What if the concern was not male and female but the corporeality of the human body (Bailey 2013)?

Vital questions should address not only what the figurines might have depicted or represented, but what Amerindians might have been doing with and around them, and what they could witness. The material agency of the figurines should be taken more critically into consideration because material culture was as expressive as it was constitutive of the social realities of Amerindian worlds. What might have been the choreographic specificities of figurine-human interaction in different places or taskscapes? What kinds of worked and unworked perishable and non-perishable things might have been associated with the figurines' varied performances? What might have been the bodily movements, words and chants, music, and smells associated with figurine modelling, decorating, transporting, or simply the grasping and holding of them? Which specific emotional bonds might have been established between people and the figurines when both shared long and difficult journeys, such as the one to the Los Roques islands? How did the figurines interact with the other-than-human beings that populated the multi-natural animistic world of Amerindian societies (Viveiros de Castro 1998)?

Over the past two decades, Caribbean archaeology has become increasingly sensitive to local frames of reference (Hofman et al. 2014). This sensitivity creates the opportunity to explore the differences and 'otherness', and the socio-cultural trajectories that could generate world views diverging from the purported pan-Caribbean unity concatenated from continental structural inheritance. From local perspectives, it seems possible to investigate the structuring role human pottery figurines might have had on local people.

Beyond the local, interest turns to discovering meaningful connections between the archaeological sites that have produced figurines. One way to proceed is comparing the patterns of figurine deposition among various contexts before interpreting these patterns in social terms (Lesure 2011: 211). Another way is to reconstruct the social contexts of figurines at each archaeological site and then compare both the figurines and their reconstructed social contexts across sites (Antczak and Antczak 2006: 43–8). Locally oriented investigations will indeed produce a new, but critically evaluated, pan-Caribbean grand narrative, or even narratives. However, while navigating from one Caribbean site with figurines to another, the reefs of entrenched positivism and post-modernism, as well as the sandbars of figurative speech, should be avoided. If we want to understand the roles human figurines played in the lives of their indigenous makers and users, we must critically evaluate any concept or assumption used to link their ontologies to ours.

SUGGESTED READING

Comprehensive overviews of Caribbean archaeology can be consulted in Boomert (2014) and Wilson (2007), while for some recent trends in this region's archaeology research see Rodríguez Ramos (2013) and Hofman et al. (2014). Contributions by Siegel (1997) and Oliver (1998, 2009) offer sound approaches to the ideational world of the Taíno from the Greater Antilles, complemented by well-illustrated insights into their art and religion by Brecht et al. (1997) and Ostapkowicz et al. (2011). Discussion on the precolonial imagery on both Greater and Lesser Antilles can be consulted in Roe (1989, 1997, 2011), Keegan and Byrne (1999), Petitjean Roget (1988, 2001), Godo (2005), and Waldron (2016). There is no one comparative study of precolonial Caribbean figurines, thus a couple of main direct sources in Spanish remain valid; the Southern Caribbean figurines have been thoroughly approached and profusely illustrated in the book by Antczak and Antczak (2006), while the contribution by Valcárcel Rojas (2000) is the comprehensive study of Cuban figurines.

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